

## 4.1 How can we adapt teaching to the level of the students?

As the children's ministry grows, it would be a good idea to place each child in a class with others of similar age, experience and ability, much as they do in school. In this chapter, we want to consider the way a child grows and develops, from early childhood through adulthood. We then want to consider how we can best teach the children at each age and on every level.

### **The Mentally Impaired**

A mentally impaired child may learn at the level much younger than his actual age. Sometimes we can put these children in a class for younger children. There they will understand better. However, if the church is located in a city, it is likely there are many children like this. It is wonderful when the church can find a teacher who is willing to work patiently and kindly with these children. They could then have their own special class. The church could call the class a name like "God's Little Birds," "Little Lights," or "Happy Children."

### **The Illiterate and Unschooled**

Illiterate and unschooled children may be very intelligent or not. The reason they are illiterate and unschooled is usually not that they lack intelligence, but that they have not had the opportunity to attend school for one reason or another. Sometimes it works well to put them in a class below their age level. A better answer would be to have a basic literacy class for them so they can learn to read and write. Another solution in large churches is to put these children in a separate class of their own. The teacher can use teaching methods like skits, oral repetition, singing, and other methods that do not require the children to read. Best of all is a combination of these methods. The illiterate children start out in a special class, and literacy training is a part of their training each week. Gradually they use the skills they are learning until they are on the same level as the others and can enter their regular age level classes.

### **Preschool Children from Birth to Two Years Old**

#### ***Babies and Toddlers***

#### ***1. Physical Development-Birth to Two Years***

Preschool children are constantly in motion. They like to explore their limited worlds, putting everything into their mouths. They have to try to touch everything they see. It's impossible to keep them quiet by telling them to be quiet.

#### ***2. Mental Development- Birth to Two Years***

Preschool children understand many more words than they speak. All the nerve and brain cells are fully formed before the child is six months old. During his entire life, he will not add one more single nerve cell. Good nutrition is very important during this formative time.

#### ***3. Social Development- Birth to Two Years***

Preschool children are very self-centered. Their "world" consists only of themselves and their families.

#### ***4. Spiritual Development- Birth to Two Years***

Do not try to teach preschoolers long Bible verses. Teach short parts of verses—five or six words. Speak to him in short, simple phrases repeated often. Example: God loves you. I love you. Jesus is good. Jesus is our friend. God is our Father in heaven. The Bible is God's book. Etc.

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Parents should teach these children at home. Usually they do not come to Sunday school. The parents can teach them by giving them loving hugs, and showing love in their tone of voice and the way they interact with the child.

**Three to Six Years Old (before entering Primary School)*****Nursery / Kindergarten Class******1. Physical Development-Three to Six Years***

Nursery children are growing rapidly. For this reason, they have a real physical NEED to move constantly, even during teaching time. Because they are so active, they also tire easily. They need lots of opportunity for movement, but they also need rest times. Therefore, the teacher should plan for active teaching methods. Example: They can all make motions that go along with the story together. You can break the teaching up into segments and intersperse songs with motions and rhythmic activities with the teaching. After 20 minutes or so, there should be a little rest time. The rest time may begin with a quiet song.

***2. Mental Development- Three to Six Years***

Nursery children can give attention to teaching only for a short time—about 2 minutes. The teacher should plan many different activities from which to draw. Each segment should be very short. There should be a big variety in the kinds of activities in which the children participate. Bible verses should be short—still only 5 or 6 words unless associated with a song. Then maybe 10 to 12 words could be easily learned.

These children NEED to play; this is just the way God made them. Therefore, the teacher should look for ways to teach the children through directed play. Examples: Making gestures or motions as if they were the person being described in the lesson. Using finger play to show the movements described in the lesson. If you are teaching a Bible verse, they can clap their hands or feet on every syllable. Nursery children do not learn as readily by hearing a lesson as they do by doing something. That's why skits and motions and acting out of all kinds can be very successful.

Give the children things they can touch. Example: They can smell the fragrance of flowers God made; they can drink water like God gave the children of Israel when they were thirsty in the desert. They can handle boards like the ones the soldiers used to make a cross for Jesus, etc.

Nursery children love repetition and review, and they need it in order to learn. The teacher can continue the same lesson or the same idea for two weeks, or even, with some variety added, for an entire month. It is also important to review Bible verses (Bible words) and songs, saying or singing them over and over. Little children seldom get tired of this.

When the teacher teaches, he can repeat certain phrases in his teaching. Preschool children love the repetition and the rhythm of it. Example:

Joseph walked beside a donkey. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
Mama Mary rode on the donkey. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
She held little Jesus in his arms on the donkey. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
Joseph was going away. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
Mama Mary was going away. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
Little Jesus was going away, too. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
They all were going away. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
They were going to Egypt. Klop! Klop! Klop!  
God told them to go. Klop! Klop! Klop!

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Nursery children do not understand most symbols well. Usually they think in very literal terms, believing every word the teacher says in concrete terms. Example: If a teacher says Jesus is the door, they may think of him being a physical door made of wood with a doorknob. It is best to stay away from teaching and Bible verses that are largely symbolic.

On the other hand, Bible stories that show how Jesus is and how God is help them to understand God's character. When they see Jesus being kind and loving, they understand that He is kind and loving, etc.

It is obvious that nursery children, having not yet attended school, do not yet know how to read or write. Therefore, flashcards using words cannot help them, although flashcards using pictures can. The address of the verse (where it is located in the Bible) is not of great importance to them. It is enough to simply call memory verses "Bible Words".

Pictures should be realistic rather than cartoon-like or symbolic. Pictures of people should show the whole person, not just a part like a head or a hand. Backgrounds need not be complicated. Unnecessary detail should be eliminated from the picture.

Objects like wood shavings or metal pieces can be glued over appropriate parts of pictures to make "touch and feel" pictures.

Nursery children like bright colors like red, green, yellow, and blue.

### 3. *Emotional Development- Three to Six Years*

Nursery children are often very fearful. If anything in the classroom makes them fearful, remove it if you can. Do not use masks or costumes that may make them afraid. Speak to them in quiet, peaceful words, not in an angry tone of voice. The teacher should not show fear, but neither should he ridicule them if for any reason they are afraid. Their emotions can change very quickly, so it often helps to ignore their fear and try to distract them with some other activity.

These children will do almost anything to please their teachers. Therefore it is important not to be insistent on them receiving Christ. Certainly the teacher should never refuse to help any child who is ready to receive Christ, as some will be. But neither should he emphasize it so much that the child responds simply to please the teacher. Such a response is not real salvation and could confuse the child later on.

### 4. *Social Development- Three to Six Years*

Nursery children love the words "I, me, mine, my, myself." They use these words a lot because children start out basically self-centered. Nursery children are only beginning to become aware that there are others in the world besides themselves and their mommies and daddies. The lessons the children can most easily relate to are those that deal with people close to them—the family of Moses, Jesus with his mother and Joseph in their home, etc. Families they can understand. Kings and warriors and prophets are much more difficult. During prayer time, prayer should include the families of the children.

### 5. *Spiritual Development- Three to Six Years*

Nursery children understand things they can see and feel and touch—things that are concrete and real. It is hard for them to understand that God is a Spirit, but they can more easily understand Jesus, because of His humanity. They can understand some of the characteristics of God by seeing in stories what God (or Jesus) DID and SAID.

These years are for many children years of preparation. Most children will make decisions for Christ later on during their primary school years. However, some children are ready to come to salvation during the preschool years, especially if their parents are regularly teaching them the Word of God at home. Therefore, we should do a good job of teaching foundational truths: who Jesus is, what the Bible is, what

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sin is, what Jesus did for us. The teacher should not pull hard to get the children to come to Christ for salvation, but he should always help any who show a readiness to do so. He should faithfully teach all the children, because that will help prepare them to receive the Lord in later years.

The teacher should gently help the children develop their concepts of right and wrong. Often little children think of GOOD as being what makes their families or their teachers happy with them. They think of BAD as being something that brings them punishment or gets them into trouble, something mommy doesn't like. Teach them that God is the one who can tell us what is GOOD and what is BAD. This helps lay the foundation for understanding what sin is.

If they are loved in their families, they can begin to understand that God loves them. You should teach much about God's love. Teach them that God loves us, sinners. He loves us even when we do wrong. Never teach that God WILL love us IF we are good! That is not a true statement, and it is not biblical. The Bible is clear that God loved us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).

Preschool children do not need to worry about doctrines that are hard to understand. In-depth doctrinal teaching about many issues should be left for later years.

**Class 1-3****Primary Class*****1. Physical Development-Class 1-3***

Primary children tire easily because they are always in motion, doing, doing, doing. They get tired, but they do not like to stop and rest. Therefore it is important for the Sunday school program to have the opportunity for them to do a variety of activities, activities involving lots of movement, followed by quieter times of rest, using quiet songs.

Their large muscle groups are growing very rapidly, which results in a need to move and exercise. When these children sing, they should always use rhythmic exercises of some kind involving their large muscles. During teaching, they should be acting out the story a lot. They can all make the appropriate motions together as a group. You can also begin to assign parts in skits, each child acting out a different part. Before class and at other times, they should play many active games.

Their small or fine muscles, on the other hand, are only beginning to grow. So, although they may be able to write or color, they are often not very good at these activities because they use the fine muscles that are not fully developed.

***2. Mental Development- Class 1-3***

Primary children can listen attentively to teaching for longer than preschool children, but still not for very long. The teaching should not exceed 7 to 10 minutes. It helps if the teacher can divide the lesson into two parts, each 4 to 5 minutes long, and sing some active songs in between the two parts.

These children still need much review, but they no longer need to hear things repeated over and over like little children do. The teacher can teach a new lesson each week, but also allow for a review time each week (see chapter 19 for suggestions on how to do this.) They should also review the previous week's memory verse by repeating it or singing it twice, but also teach a new verse each week (saying or singing it at least 6 times).

These children primarily understand things that are RIGHT HERE AND NOW. They are not adept at understanding the other times like the future or the past, or other places, especially far-away, unknown

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places. They cannot learn historical dates or chronologies or geography with much understanding. Lessons need not follow chronological order. The teacher should emphasize the life application so they can begin to understand how to apply Bible truths to their everyday lives here and now.

Primary children are very curious. They ask lots of questions. Answering their questions can be a very valuable teaching method, because if they have asked a question, you know they have some interest in knowing about that topic or issue.

Their memories are also strong. It is very important for the teacher to carefully note and fulfill all his promises to them. Otherwise he may be considered unfaithful or even a liar. They can learn all but the hardest memory verses, usually the whole verse and the address (where it's found in the Bible). They should memorize many verses that show the need for and way of salvation.

Primary children are developing in understanding, but they still are not strong at understanding most symbolism. It is best to use verses and lessons that say exactly what they mean without symbolic language whenever possible. There is one symbolic approach, however, that in our experience seems to be well understood by children. It is the wordless book, which uses colors to symbolize Gospel truths. The gold page represents heaven, the black page sin which blocks our way to heaven, the red page the blood of Jesus shed for our sins, the white page cleansing from sin through faith in Christ, and the green page growth after we have received Christ.

Those who are learning to read and write in school are proud to show it off and eager to try to use their new skills. The teacher may now use word cards and flashcards with simple writing effectively, as well as writing on a blackboard or on the ground. However, remember that these children are only beginning to learn to read. Give them encouragement if they try hard and if they get even one word right. Ask for volunteers to read. Avoid calling on children and making them read.

Those who are not able to go to school, or those who are having difficulty learning to read in school often feel ashamed. Do not laugh at them or scold them about their reading, or push them into reading publicly before they are ready. The teacher's use of flashcards in Sunday school should help improve their reading level.

Primary children are also beginning to understand and use simple math concepts. They like Bible games and Bible lessons that specify numbers up to ten, like "two blind men" or "ten lepers".

### **3. *Emotional Development- Class 1-3***

Primary children have not yet developed patience or control over their emotions. The teacher should therefore talk to them quietly most of the time. He should avoid overly exciting their emotions. They become angry very quickly. However, if the teacher does not pay much attention to it, their anger often subsides quickly. They are still afraid of many things. Lessons showing God's care for people can be an encouragement to them.

### **4. *Social Development- Class 1-3***

These children are beginning to understand that there are others in the world. They can sympathize and identify with other people, especially through stories. Good Bible lessons can help them understand how they can help others. Friendship with other children is very important to them. Many times it is good to try to get all the children within a group of friends to come to Sunday school. The teacher also can encourage the children to bring their friends. Boys and girls can be friends and can be taught together in a single group. The teacher can be either a man or a woman. The children are always polite to those in authority. They will follow the Sunday school rules if they know and understand what they are. Discipline is not usually a major problem.

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**5. *Spiritual Development- Class 1-3***

Primary children ask many questions and are very curious about death. Some lessons should talk about heaven and hell, and how a person can be saved.

They want to do well. They can understand right from wrong, and can understand the concept of sin if it is well explained. This is a time when they can begin to understand how Christians should live—what they must do, and what they should avoid. Since they want so urgently to do well, they can understand what God approves and does not approve. They can understand that we have sinned because we do not always do what God approves.

Even though they are beginning to understand right from wrong and the reality of sin, they still often think of evil as being only what their parents disapprove, and good as being only what they like. They need teaching that will reinforce the idea that the Word of God shows us what is right and wrong.

Primary children can have very strong faith. They believe God will help them when they pray. Some lessons may show HOW God wants us to pray, what can STOP or HINDER our prayers from being answered, what prayers God is pleased with, and some different ways God can answer our prayers (YES, NO, WAIT, IF...).

If they are taught well, primary children can easily understand the Gospel. The lesson should include an invitation to receive Christ, but the children should not be forced or pulled or manipulated into responding.

**Class 4-6****Juniors****1. *Physical Development-Class 4-6***

Junior children are active and very, very noisy. They love to talk to one another, and they do it constantly. The wise teacher should plan for talking in some parts of the lesson. Examples: Reading the verse, giving a response, discussion, acting out parts that involve speaking, singing, etc. There must be a rule, however, that they all be quiet when the teacher or another child is talking. They should show respect and politeness. They need lessons on Christian politeness, and lessons that show how Christians can use their mouths in good ways that honor God.

They are physically very strong. They can walk long distances to sing in a choir at another village, and can become good helpers in the church. Examples: Making a garden, bringing thatch roofing, cutting sticks, cleaning the yard, sweeping the church, etc.

**2. *Mental Development-Class 4-6***

Junior children can follow a Bible lesson even up to 20 minutes if it is well taught.

Some of them are becoming good readers and strong memorizers. This is the best time to teach them the books of the Bible and to encourage them to buy their own Bibles. If Bible verses are written out on flashcards, blackboard or the ground, the stronger readers can read them to the others.

They can easily memorize Bible verses, even long verses, even many verses or whole passages. A teacher can give children a list



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of Bible verses to learn at home (write out the whole verse if the children do not have access to Bibles in the home). It is still important to review verses they have learned in the past. They may recite verses they have learned for the adults in the worship time.

They want to learn about many things. It is very important for the teacher to listen carefully to the questions they are asking, and that he look for good answers to them whenever possible. Clubs that teach new games and skills will be popular with this age group.

### **3. *Emotional Development-Class 4-6***

Junior children are no longer afraid—of anything! They have lots of confidence and courage. They love lessons about Bible and missionary “heroes” or people who showed great courage. Stories of African Christians who showed great courage would be wonderful for them. Children at this age are no longer afraid to witness for Jesus, and can become strong witnesses to friends, family and neighbors.

### **4. *Social Development-Class 4-6***

At this age, boys do not like girls very much, nor girls like boys. It is better, if possible, to separate the children by sex, assigning a man teacher to the boys and a lady teacher to the girls.

The children love being part of a group. They can have a big influence on other children, either for good or for evil. Sunday school could be treated as a club by choosing a name and officers for the class. Clubs that meet at other times under the authority of the church would also be good.

Junior children love competition. The teacher can make effective use of Bible games and contests.

### **5. *Spiritual Development-Class 4-6***

Junior children are quick to receive Jesus as Savior. These are the golden years for conversion. No lesson should ever be given without an invitation to receive Christ unless the teacher is positive every last child is saved. Many teachers of Juniors pray constantly that before the children leave their class and move on to Junior High School, every one of them will know Jesus as personal Savior.

These children can become strong believers. This is an excellent time to help them get settled in habits of Bible reading and prayer, and to give them many avenues for Christian service.

## **Class 7-8**

### **Junior Secondary School**

#### **1. *Physical Development-J.S.S.***

The bodies of junior high youth is in the process of great change or is about to begin that process (puberty). Puberty is a great change, but a good one. Young people, however, can be greatly afraid when these changes begin happening. Because their bodies are changing so rapidly, they think about their bodies all the time. It sometimes seems that they know longer know their own bodies. Every day their body keeps changing. They can be afraid what their bodies will end up like, whether they will be tall or short, good looking or not. Look for opportunities to talk with the young people privately one by one or in very small groups, to offer counsel.

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Their newfound interest in sex and their developing sexual desires can lead to many questions, problems, and fear. They want to know about every little detail. It is very important that the teacher give them true teaching according to the Bible. It is best to talk about sex with girls in one group and boys in another. If they know you can talk about sex without getting embarrassed or upset, they may come and talk with you about it.

Many problems that appear to be emotional or spiritual may have a physical cause. For example, a common problem for JSS'ers is fatigue—being very tired all the time. It may seem that they are lazy, but in reality their bodies are growing very rapidly, and this may cause them to feel tired. Another example is the way in which girls may be angry or easily upset before their period. The rapid chemical changes taking place in their bodies cause them to react emotionally, but the root cause is physical.

Malnutrition can be a problem at this time. JSS students are very active, they are growing very quickly, their understanding is developing, but often they do not want to eat or they do not eat foods that are healthy. Teaching on good nutrition is very important.

### **2. *Mental Development--J.S.S.***

The mental capacity or understanding of junior high youth is also developing rapidly. They are thinking very actively, and their understanding is growing, but they still lack the experience that life brings. Because of this they have many questions and many doubts. The teacher must have great patience with their constant questions.

They ask questions and have doubts even about things that they once believed firmly earlier in their childhood. It seems as if they must learn everything all over again. Do not become angry. Do not shame them. Just have patience. Don't think of their doubts as sin, but as an opportunity God has given you to help strengthen their faith. Listen to every question and every doubt without becoming angry. Encourage the thought that doubts do not lead us to throw away our faith, but to look for satisfying answers and explanations.

Junior high youth, if their education has been adequate, often like to read. A little library for the class or department or church is a good idea if possible. The teacher can loan them books to read.

These young people like to learn things for themselves. It is important that active teaching methods be used, not passive lecture. Just telling them will not be effective. Discussion can be a good teaching method if the teacher is able to guide the discussion by asking questions that steer it in a biblical direction. Asking questions can be very effective. The teacher may ask them what a verse or a phrase means.

Although their minds are full of questions, some young people may be ashamed to ask them. They feel that others will think they are stupid. A question box where they can place written questions without their names can help. Whatever they ask, the teacher should say something like, "That is a good question. I think many others probably are wondering the same thing." Do not discuss their questions or problems or tell anybody else what they have said. Make a list of things they are wondering and asking about. If you don't know the answer, don't be ashamed to admit it. You don't have to have all the answers. You might say something like, "I don't really know much about that, but I will look for an answer." Then, ask someone older and wiser in the faith, or look for an answer in the Bible or other books.

The class can plan many of its own activities. A class council is very important. They can plan together activities for the class.

Junior high youth learn through trial and error. They must try many new things and see what results. Don't make them feel ashamed if they try something and do not do very well at it. They are investigators.

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Interactive groups work well. Projects they can do are good, research according to their ability, and homework assignments that are like games.

These youngsters want to grow up, not to be children any more, but they are unable to act or to think like adults. It is best for them to be in a class of their peers. Speak to them respectfully as grownups, but avoid giving them difficult assignments. They are not yet adults.

They do not understand how they can do well in school, and this is very important to many of them. Practical help in study skills is useful.

**3. Emotional Development--J.S.S.**

Junior high youth are unstable and unpredictable in their emotions because of rapid changes in the hormones in their bodies. 1) They are not yet accustomed to those hormones. 2) Their bodies are making hormones in an irregular manner, in spurts. Therefore the teacher needs to have great patience and pray to God much for them.

Their emotions go to extremes. They may be very happy or very sad, but often they are very sad, and this sadness is caused only by changes in their hormone levels. The teacher should think of this as just the way God has planned for people to grow. It is a natural, God-given stage of development. The teacher should assure them often that he likes them and loves them. He should spend time talking to each young person individually as much as possible.

These young people are really asking in their hearts, "Who am I?" They want to be seen or thought of as someone unique and special. That is another reason it is important to get to know each one personally. Each one needs to know and feel that others accept them and like them. Greet each young person by name whenever you can, and talk a little with each one as they are coming and going from class.

They are often embarrassed about their physical and sexual development. There should be a firm class rule that no one laughs at anyone else.

**4. Social Development--J.S.S.**

Junior high youth need to get to know one another. They need to form friendships with others their own age. Friendly discussion is an important part of class.

They want to be seen as "OK" in the eyes of their friends. The teacher should never ridicule or embarrass them in front of their friends.

Social activities are very important. Games are important—both Bible and other learning games and games just for fun and fellowship.

They often find it difficult to talk with their parents. It is important that their parents be slow to scold them, but fast to listen to them. Their parents will not be very effective at telling them what to do, but they can ask questions like, "Have you thought about this....?" The teacher can be a friend in whom they can put their confidence.

Circular response is a good way to begin class times—

"It would be great if my parents would..." (The teacher suggests the beginning of the phrase and each student completes the statement briefly.)

"One thing that is very hard for me is....."

"I am very happy when....."

"My hero is.....because....."

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“I don’t like it when.....”

“My favorite song is.....because.....”

Man times, junior high youth begin to rebel against authority. They want to learn and to decide matters for themselves. The teacher can lead them to look at the Bible themselves and think for themselves about what it is teaching. The teacher can give them time to talk about their thoughts during class. The teacher should not such talk all the time, telling his own thoughts.

Boys and girls begin to like each other again, maybe way too much. The teacher should plan times and opportunities for healthy friendships to develop. If boys and girls begin to think only about one another so that they cannot think about the Bible lesson, the church may divide the class into girls (with a woman teacher) and boys (with a man teacher).

**5. *Spiritual Development--J.S.S.***

These young people can decide for Jesus Christ. In fact they often do make decisions for Christ, yet if these decisions are to be genuine, they must be the young person’s own. The teacher can provide an opportunity to decide for Christ, but he should never put pressure on the young people.

They need to learn how to USE the teaching they are learning from the Bible. The teacher should work hard to choose a good assignment that will enable the Christian youth to put the Bible principles they are learning into practice. Begin by discussing with them what the Bible says about their daily living. Give many examples and situations like the ones they might face in their daily lives.

They want to try out every new thing. They will try everything that they think will make them grown up: drugs, bad language, sex, rebellion.... Any and every evil thing can easily come into their lives in this manner. It is important that the youth see new ideas and new things in the church. There should be variety and interest in teaching methods and in activities.

You can use their strong friendships to draw in other youth outside of the church. Provide interesting activities and encourage them to invite their friends.

They need to know that they are important. You show them they are important to you when you greet them by name, spend time talking about their interests, and pray with them. They need to know that they are important to the church, too. The teacher should try to find service projects for the young people in the church.

They need to know that how they feel does not determine how God receives them. God can be happy with them even when they are feeling sad or tired.

They need to know what to do when they fail or sin. Teach them that God can give people a second chance after they have ruined their first chance by sin. Example: The story of Jonah can show them that when the confess sin and turn in God’s direction, God will forgive them and may allow them to begin again (1 John 1:9, Proverbs 28:13).

They are very quick to know when a person is genuine or false. The teacher needs to be real and to set a good example for the young people.

**Senior Secondary School (S.S.S.)****1. *Physical Development-S.S.S.***

Their physical bodies are close to full maturity.

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**Girls** are beginning to accept the roles of womanhood.

Their periods are becoming more regular.

Estrogen levels are up the first two weeks of their cycle, so they feel happy and loved.

Progesterone levels are up the last two weeks, and during that time they feel sadder. During that time, they are in need of assurance and love. Two days before their periods begin, they begin to feel argumentative. They need to realize that these swings in mood are normal, and they need to learn to control their actions in the days just before their periods.

Girls also need to know what to do when boys want to do things with their bodies that they do not agree to.

#### **Boys**

In general, androgens are at their peak level at age 17

(At this age sexual desire is at its greatest point, yet young men have not yet attained marriageable age.)

(In women, by comparison, sexual desire reaches its greatest peak at about age 30!) Boys need to learn how to control their bodies, their thoughts, and their sexual desires, therefore they need many good activities to take their time and attention.

Young men and young women, both need sexual limits for their thoughts and activities, limits that they themselves understand and agree to, and limits which meet God's standard of purity.

It is very important that the teacher of teens himself be a good example in sexual and family matters.

Teens like to be very active. They like to be always on the move—always doing things. Sports, dance, skits, preaching, games, singing—all these activities can be attractions to them.

#### **2. Mental Development-S.S.S.**

Teens mental abilities have developed to the point that they can understand everything that adults can understand, but still they lack the wisdom that long experience brings. Reading stories (biographies) of others can help them to grow in experience somewhat by profiting and learning from the experiences of others. They can also listen to the testimonies of others or of their teacher. This also adds experience. Acting in skits and role plays also helps.

They need to understand thoroughly WHY the church has set up certain rules. The teacher can help the teens think through why the church and even the Bible has given the rules it has. The teens need to know why the rules exist if they are ever to own them as their own.

#### **3. Emotional Development-S.S.S.**

Emotional ups and downs are beginning to even out. Reason is beginning to rule the emotions.

The questions about who they are continue, but for some this questioning begins to settle down.

They want to have a good time, to have “fun.”

#### **4. Social Development-S.S.S.**

Friends are very important. The thoughts of friends seem all important. They need to develop wholesome friendships between the sexes. These friendships can seem more important than family or kinship in their minds. They often think of their circle of friends as “family”, indeed, as their whole world. The church should consider ways to encourage good Christian friendships under careful controls. It is preferable for this class to be a joint class of young men and women together, although they may meet separately at times to discuss sensitive issues or topics of interest to one sex only.

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## 4.1 How can we adapt teaching to the level of the students?

**5. *Spiritual Development-S.S.S.***

Doubts and questions continue.

They have a great need to give themselves completely. They are crusaders at heart. They want to SERVE Jesus. It is very important to help them find ways to serve Jesus in the church: teaching or helping teach children, worshipping in a group as teens with their own teen leaders, witnessing and leading others to Christ, singing in a choir, serving in theatre groups, dance teams, tambourine corps, decorating the church, etc.

They need to understand the plan or the will of God for their lives. The teacher should choose the lesson application or assignment very carefully, taking adequate time to explain it and motivate teens for it, and asking for reports after it is completed.

Many high school youth receive Jesus as Savior if they have not already done so. The high school years give them their last opportunities in their youth. The teacher should pray much that they may all become believers in Jesus in these youthful years.

**College & Older Youth***Physical Development—College & Older Youth*

College age and older youth are often young adults physically. Their bodies are usually sexually mature. They can have great physical strength, but those who live promiscuous lifestyles are in great danger of getting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

*Mental*

These older youth have sharp minds. If well developed through education, reading, and conversation with stimulating people, they are capable of debating difficult topics. However, they still lack the wisdom that experience brings, and they can easily overrate their ability to make good decisions.

*Social*

Friendships and acceptance with a group of peers are still very important.

*Emotional*

There is a tendency to get emotionally involved with the opposite sex too early. Unwanted pregnancies can result. Abortions almost always result in much greater inner turmoil and feelings of guilt and worthlessness than was ever expected.

*Spiritual*

Older youth are still open to Christ, but every year without Him makes it more difficult to accept Him. After receiving Christ, a primary challenge is discerning Biblical teaching in every area of life, especially in areas that run counter to the currently accepted culture.

Teachers of college and older youth need to allow freedom of expression. Discussion and debate are good teaching methods. Storytelling and lecture are much less effective. College youth can enjoy and benefit from working out and presenting their own skits as responses to Bible teaching. With training, they can make effective members of evangelism teams.

## 4.1 How can we adapt teaching to the level of the students?

**LET'S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**

What age or grade level attracts you the most? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Write down four new things you have learned about that age group and how or why it may help you teach them better.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

Write down four teaching methods you could use with your chosen age group:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

Write down one idea you want to try right away with this age group:

.....

Do you think your church's Sunday school has grown to the point that the children can be divided into classes according to age or class? \_\_\_\_\_ If it has not yet grown to that point, what is hindering it? What is needed for it to grow? What should be done first?

**Adults**

Adults are no longer growing like children, so we may not think of them as developing. However...

- Adults can continue to learn throughout their entire lives. It is important to provide continuing education for adults as well as for children and youth.
- Experience, scholastic level attained, and interests of adults vary widely according to education, work, where they live and where they have previously lived and traveled, their position in the family, etc. It is vital that the teacher of adults get to know the level and interests of those he teaches and that he adapt his choice of topics and teaching methods accordingly.
- Great changes take place in the lives of every person. Often these changes follow the development of their family.
  1. Marriage—they need to be thinking a lot about the interest and desires of their mates.
  2. Birth of children—the mother is more restricted and has more work, while at the same time financial needs increase.
  3. Children enter school—the mother begins to have a little more free time, but financial needs still increase with the schooling needs of the children.
  4. Children become teens—problems of communication, rebellion, confusion, sex. Separation from children who are living away from home in high school.
  5. Marriage of children—problems involving the bride price. They have children of their own, which adds a new grandparent relationship to the lives of the original couple.
  6. All the children leave home—parents are alone in the home. Sometimes the children live far away and parents do not hear from them often.

## 4.1 How can we adapt teaching to the level of the students?

7. Changes of menopause—female hormone levels drop quickly, causing physical, mental and emotional problems.
8. Retirement—End of work. Increasing dependence on others for support.
9. Old Age—physical weakness, forgetfulness, dependence on others, possible sadness or depression and longing for death.

The teacher must think about where on this scale the adults of his class are. What are the interests and concerns that dominate their lives. What teaching can help them at the stage where they are?

Adults can listen to teaching for 30 minutes if it is interesting and important to them. But it is still preferable to ask them questions and help them discover truth for themselves in the Scripture if they know how to read. If not, the teacher can still ask a question, then read a very short verse or part of one—several times if necessary—until they are able to pull the desired truth from the Scripture themselves.

If a teacher is asking adults questions, it is very important that he avoid embarrassing them if they do not know the answer or do not respond as he desires. The teacher should not get angry, but simply say, “Listen to the verse again. Listen carefully. What does it say?” Then read the verse again, slowly and with emphasis and expression.

Some adults will not be able to memorize long Bible verses like children and youth can. The teacher should choose verses that they are capable of learning according to their understanding, reading level, education, and memory ability.

**LET’S REVIEW**

Name several characteristics of the age group you teach.

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**LET’S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE**

Look at the characteristics of the age group you teach and name three changes you will make in your teaching as a result of this knowledge.

1)

2)

3)

.....