

LESSON 5 Developing and Learning

Juan works as a farmer. He works hard in his fields preparing the soil, planting the seeds, spreading fertilizers, and spraying insecticides. His carrots, beans, squash, tomatoes, and other vegetables seem to grow faster and bigger than those grown by the other farmers in the area. Customers at the local market are willing to pay more for his produce because of its superior quality.

Juan understands an important growth principle: Given the benefit of favorable conditions, the life in the seed can be helped to develop to its maximum growth potential. Care and favorable conditions produce plants that reflect health and vitality as they ripen and mature. Juan has learned to recognize signs of proper development. He knows just what to do at each stage of growth to stimulate progress from tiny sprouts, to tender young plants, and on to fully ripened produce.

You may have seen that the same growth principle which makes Juan a successful farmer applies in the realm of spiritual life. In this lesson you will learn facts about learners that will help you to encourage their growth and development potential. By creating favorable learning conditions, recognizing the special needs of learners at each developmental level, and adjusting your nurturing strategy to respond to these special needs, you can stimulate the learning process. May you be sensitive not only to facts about learners but also to the leading and timing of the Holy Spirit, the Master Teacher, as you apply the knowledge you gain.

lesson outline

Understanding Human Development

Characteristics of Learners

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Explain how humans develop, identifying the major periods of human life.
2. Identify three factors that affect the development of human personality.
3. Describe the characteristics of learners in each of the major periods of life.

learning activities

1. Read each one of the lesson objectives and note the major divisions of the lesson in the outline.
2. Work through the lesson development as usual. As you do the study questions, be sure to write your own responses before you turn to the answers we have given. Take the self-test when you have finished and check your answers.

key words

abstractions
competitive
fascination
hygiene

inquisitive
intimacy
intricate
intriguing

perceptibly
senility
symbolism
temporal

lesson development

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

How People Grow

Objective 1. *Explain how humans develop, identifying the major periods of human life.*

Success in building relationships and in effective teaching depends to a large extent on our understanding of the nature of human beings. To understand ourselves and those we seek to nurture in spiritual growth, we must study human development.

People grow in many ways. As soon as life begins, we start growing physically. Our bodies continue to grow for a number of years, reaching maximum stature in early adulthood. We also grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Growth in these four areas can continue long after the physical growth of the body has stopped. In fact growth in the nonphysical areas can continue throughout life until either death, senility, or physical deterioration disrupts the capacity for growth.

Growth in each of these five areas, or facets of life, is important. To be properly developed in all five is to be whole. Wholeness is realized when one achieves an ideal balance in each of these areas. Imbalance exists when a person fails to develop properly in one or more of these basic areas of life, or when one area is developed to the neglect of the others. The goal of Christian nurture is wholeness—proper development in each area of life.

Christians often place high priority on spiritual growth. We value spiritual growth because the Christ-life is eternal. Other areas of human life are temporal and cease with death, but the spirit of the human being lives on after death and returns to God. Therefore, in Christian nurture we place great emphasis on spiritual development.

While growth is natural, we should not assume that growth in wholeness is automatic. It must be encouraged and nurtured. Teachers, as well as other Christians, have opportunities to facilitate growth.

Application

- 1** Circle the letters preceding the statements that are TRUE.
 - a)** People grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.
 - b)** To the Christian, growth in each area of life is important.
 - c)** Wholeness is when an ideal balance is achieved in each potential area of human growth.
 - d)** Christian nurture places the highest priority on physical growth.
 - e)** Christian growth is natural and comes automatically.
 - f)** Growth in nonphysical areas should continue throughout life.
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Major Periods of Life

We commonly identify three major periods of human life: childhood, adolescence or youth, and adulthood. Childhood refers to that period of life from birth to about age eleven or twelve years. Adolescence refers to the period of life from about age twelve to about eighteen or nineteen. Adulthood, the longest period of life, begins at about twenty years and continues until death. Since many people live to be very old, this period may extend to as much as two-thirds or three-fourths of a lifetime.

Have you noticed that as people pass through these human development periods their abilities, needs, and characteristics change? A newborn baby is very different from what he will be at age ten. A young adult in his early twenties is different from an adult of sixty or seventy. It is evident that three broad groupings cannot describe accurately the many stages of human development. Consequently, we divide each of these periods

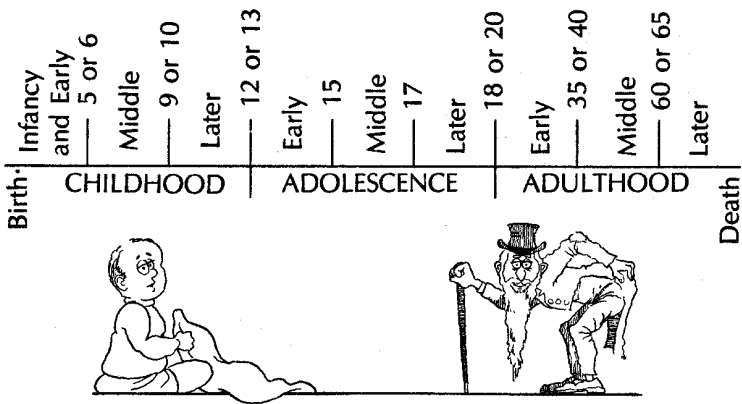
into three subdivisions for a more accurate description of the changes characteristic of each sub-stage of growth.

1. Childhood, the first major period of life, is subdivided in three categories: early, middle, and later childhood. Early childhood describes the period from birth to about age five or six. In many societies children begin school at the close of this period. Middle childhood is the period from age five or six to age nine or ten years. Later childhood covers the period from age ten to the beginning of adolescence at about age twelve.
2. Adolescence, the second major period of life, is likewise divided into three segments: early, middle, and later adolescence. Early adolescence includes ages twelve to about fifteen. In many countries adolescents in this bracket attend middle school or junior high school. Middle adolescence includes adolescents from fifteen to seventeen years. Middle adolescents in many cultures attend secondary or high school classes. Later adolescence includes youths from about seventeen to nineteen years. Graduation from secondary school usually comes at the beginning of later adolescence.
3. Adulthood, the third and final major period of life, is also subdivided into early, middle, and later categories. Early adulthood extends from about age twenty to about age thirty-five or forty. It is a period of many beginnings: vocation, home, and family, to name a few. Middle adulthood covers the period from about thirty-five or forty to sixty or sixty-five years of age. This segment of time is characterized by completion of some of one's earlier goals, for example, getting established in a community and getting the children raised, educated, and prepared for adulthood. Later adulthood reaches from sixty or sixty-five years on to the end of life.

Some years ago an insurance firm used three categories to describe the major periods of life. The childhood and adolescent years were referred to as the "learning period." Early and middle adulthood were called the "earning period." And later adulthood was named the "yearning period." Perhaps there is a lesson in this for us as we try to make the most of our

time and talents in nurturing Christian growth. May the facts we study here inspire us to apply the sowing-reaping principles employed by Juan so that we can help develop healthy, spiritual growth in people.

Differences of characteristics from one period to the next are much greater in childhood and adolescence than in adulthood. Neither the major divisions nor the subdivisions within them, however, are clearly fixed. Each person develops at a different rate.



MAJOR DIVISIONS AND SUBDIVISIONS OF HUMAN LIFE

Application

2-7 Circle the letter in front of the appropriate age level for each of the people described below.

- 2** A boy who is eleven years old
 - a) Middle childhood
 - b) Later childhood
 - c) Middle adolescence

- 3** A twenty-seven year old lady
 - a) Infancy
 - b) Later adolescence
 - c) Early adulthood

4 A man of seventy years

- a)** Later adulthood
- b)** Middle adulthood
- c)** Later adolescence

5 A girl of three years

- a)** Early childhood
- b)** Middle childhood
- c)** Early adolescence

6 A lad of fourteen years

- a)** Early childhood
- b)** Early adolescence
- c)** Early adulthood

7 A person of nineteen years

- a)** Middle adulthood
- b)** Middle adolescence
- c)** Later adolescence

Personality Development

Objective 2. *Identify three factors that affect the development of human personality.*

When people have balanced growth in the areas of life mentioned above, a state of wholeness exists. As people pass through various development periods, their needs, abilities, and characteristics change. First, we want to consider the parallel development of personality and the factors that influence it most strongly. This brief preview will give insight into yet another factor that influences one's learning capability.

People in the same age span are generally alike in many ways. They tend to follow similar patterns of growth and development, yet no one individual can be considered typical: no one conforms exactly to a list of general characteristics. Each person is unique, having his or her own particular temperament, character, and personality, but these are developed and modified through experience, nurture, and the learning process.

Personality is a term which refers to the total of what a person is. It includes one's thoughts, actions, attitudes, traits, temperament, and character.


Human personality is affected by complex forces over a long period of time. Here we will discuss three factors which affect personality development: 1) heredity, 2) environment, and 3) will.

1. *Heredity.* The specific traits which we inherit from our parents are referred to as heredity. Body size and shape, hair and eye color, disposition, and intellectual abilities are a few examples of the qualities which make up our personalities. Much attention has been given to the differences between people in their intellectual abilities due to heredity. These mental abilities seem to determine within broad limits the extent to which an individual has the capacity to learn. This heredity factor is especially seen in the way children learn and develop. The capacity for growth and development in each area of life is part of a person's natural endowment. However, due to the unique combination of traits which affect personality development received through heredity, each individual will grow and develop in a manner that is different from anyone else.
2. *Environment.* Environment refers to our surroundings. People develop in physical settings that have limiting and determining effects on their development. For example, life in a nomad's tent and life in a crowded apartment complex have different influences on growing children. Imagine, for instance, the difference between rural children who can dig, run, jump, explore fields, and engage in work and play activities in their physical environment, and city children who live in crowded apartment buildings and play on crowded streets and alleys in an asphalt jungle. The social environment, which also affects people's development, includes such things as: neighborhoods in which they live, occupation and education, family income, quality of available schools, opportunities available for recreational and religious activity, and other factors.

Culture is also a part of our environment. Every culture has established its own values and teaches conduct based on these values. Environment provides both limitations and opportunities to develop our mental abilities. We generally prefer an environment which provides broad opportunities for development to one which provides narrow, limited opportunities.

3. *Will.* One's will also affects one's personality development. People have been given the power to choose. They may choose to take advantage of the opportunities for development which are available to them, or they may choose to ignore or neglect these opportunities. Some people believe that the will is more important to personality development than either one's inherited mental capacity or one's environmental opportunities.

Application

- 8** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a) Every person is born with the capacity to grow, develop, and learn.
 - b) Intellectual ability is one area in which all people are equal.
 - c) Where a person lives has nothing to do with his ability to grow, develop, and learn.
 - d) People's surroundings can either provide specific opportunities to foster growth, development, and learning or to hinder each development.
 - e) A person's desire to grow, develop, and learn has a definite effect on whether he will make progress in these areas.
 - f) One is the victim of his heredity, environment, and will; therefore, it is useless to attempt to modify, develop, or otherwise improve his condition in life.
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CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNERS

Objective 3. *Describe the characteristics of learners in each of the major periods of life.*

Learning is affected by growth. However, as one begins to develop, the learning he acquires becomes the basis for continued development. The first major stage of development we will focus our attention on is that of childhood. Beginning in a very helpless state, the child grows through various identifiable stages. By the time the child has progressed to adolescence, he has developed perceptibly in the physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual realms. In this section, you will study the various stages of growth and the characteristics common to these stages.

Early Childhood

The period of life from birth to the beginning of a child's formal schooling brings many developmental changes. Some have suggested that more development and learning takes place in this period than any other period of life.

Physically

Throughout infancy and early childhood, people experience very rapid physical growth. At birth, a child is small and helpless and must depend on his mother and others for every need. But by the time the child enters school, he has grown considerably and has learned to turn over in bed, sit up, stand, walk, and run. The rapid growth of this period results from the development of the large muscles. These large muscles control the ability for large movements of the body which do not require much coordination or precision. At this age the small muscles one needs for fine movements are not yet fully developed. Therefore the child is not able to perform delicate operations such as tracing lines, cutting on lines, or coloring within lines of a picture. This control comes with time. Much of the child's development is evidenced through play. Movement activities such as running, jumping, throwing, kicking or hitting a ball, and stacking blocks are typical physical development activities for small children. This means that small children must be kept occupied with movement activities. They

cannot sit for long periods without becoming restless since their attention span is very short. Because they are active, they tire quickly and need a balance between physical action and creative involvement which is less demanding on their physical bodies.

Mentally

Early childhood is a time of mental discovery. The child discovers through his senses. This is why he tries to touch everything within reach and frequently puts things into his mouth. He is discovering and therefore needs the protective care of an older person, since he has not learned the dangers of swallowing or touching harmful objects. Small children tend to be inquisitive and ask many questions. This is their way of exploring the world around them.

In this period, children are learning to use language as a tool to express themselves. From the first spoken words, their ability to use language develops rapidly. By the time children reach school age, they have vocabularies of about 1,000 words, depending on their home environment and cultural influence. Their ability with language is usually limited to speaking. They have not yet learned to read or write. If you teach children of this age, you will need to use words they understand. They have literal understanding of what they are told; therefore, you should choose words which give your exact meaning.

During this early period of development, children's ability to focus attention on a single idea is very limited. At about two or three years the attention span is often no longer than two or three minutes, but by the time they begin their schooling this may have increased to seven or even ten minutes. Because of this fact, teachers should plan learning activities which recognize this time span. Activities should change before the learners' attention turns to other things.

Quite commonly, small children have vivid imaginations. They have the ability to bypass reality and live in a world of "let's pretend." This can be used to help teach many truths. In this same time frame, many parents challenge their children to memorize simple poetry,

songs and even short Scripture passages. Children's performance in this activity is amazing because of their high motivation and because of their unusual ability to retain what they learn.

At this early age children are usually emotionally secure in the presence of their own families but they may be fearful of the unfamiliar and unknown. You can enhance their security by becoming a true friend.

Spiritually

In this early stage of life, the child believes everything he is told and is easily influenced. He is impressionable and wants to do what is right, especially when this is properly reinforced with loving approval. While his ability to understand God is limited, the small child can understand certain basic spiritual truths. He can understand that God is a special friend, that church is a special place, and that God loves and cares for him. The small child can express loving worship to God in response to the warm feelings he experiences when he is learning about God. He can easily memorize very basic Scripture passages. He responds to love and can easily understand and respond to God's love.

Application

- 9** Circle the letter in front of each activity which would be appropriate for learners at the early childhood level.
- a)** Sing happy songs about God.
 - b)** Require the class to sit quietly through the period.
 - c)** Require the children to play with others all of the time.
 - d)** Include activities that require movement and intersperse short quiet times.
 - e)** Since the children are so young, avoid talking about God.
 - f)** Allow the children to play along part of the time.
 - g)** Put things up high so the children can see them but not touch them.
 - h)** Talk about God as the child's loving friend.
 - i)** Teach the class to memorize the Lord's Prayer.
 - j)** Provide things that go with the lesson for the children to feel and handle.

10 Carefully observe one or two children between the ages of three and six. Write in your notebook the characteristics you discover. Compare your discoveries with the characteristics described in this text.

Middle Childhood

The beginning of formal schooling is usually considered to be the distinguishing mark between early and middle childhood. This period marks the beginning of many developments in children's lives. Growth and development continue to be rapid.

Physically

During the middle childhood years, children are very active. They like vigorous physical activity, but they tire quickly. Much of their energy is expended in growing. Their physical growth is irregular. They may grow very rapidly for a short period; then their growth may slow noticeably for some time. During this stage the heart develops more slowly than the rest of the body. Because of this they tire easily. However, the coordination and muscular control children need for organized games develops, and their activities become purposeful. They enjoy making things, particularly toys and items to enhance their play.

Mentally

Children's attention span in this period has increased and they can now concentrate on a particular idea for 10 to 15 minutes. Although their reason and discrimination are not fully developed, they are, nevertheless, keen observers who often notice specific details. Probing interest in searching for information is a normal characteristic of their expanding knowledge. Frequently they overrate their own knowledge.

Children are learning to read and write now, and their vocabularies are increasing. As a result they may frequently express themselves with words that they either mispronounce or use incorrectly.

They tend to think literally and have not yet learned the use of symbolism, abstractions, and generalizations. They have good memories and can easily memorize songs, poems, and Bible verses appropriate for their developmental level.

In the middle childhood years children tend to be insecure emotionally. It is not uncommon for them to express themselves by crying. Their social world is broadening, and they often interpret this as threatening to the security they have known in early life in the loving environment of their families and homes. They need loving acceptance and approval from adults such as parents, teachers, and other respected adult leaders.

Socially

Since children are now in school, their social views are broadening. Their friendships have expanded beyond their families to include other children and teachers. They make friends of both sexes easily and learn to function as parts of groups. They learn to cooperate by giving and by sharing in responsibilities. Their focus in play begins to change from themselves to group activities. Their ethic of fairness and right and wrong is developing, and they are easily hurt if they believe they have been treated unfairly.

Spiritually

In middle childhood children possess tender consciences, implicit faith, and the desire to obey. They are spiritually inclined and readily respond to truth about God. They learn well by stories and especially enjoy Bible stories. Bible stories can be used both to teach moral concepts and lay the foundation for a future chronological understanding of the Bible. Children's consciences are developing, and right and wrong actions affect their peace of mind. They look to adults for standards of behavior and quickly follow their examples. Parents have a powerful influence here, as well as an awesome responsibility. Since teachers are highly respected, also, their spiritual example cannot be overemphasized. It must be

regarded seriously by teachers of all levels of learners, but especially so for children whose parents are not Christians. Non-Christian parents very likely do not reinforce spiritual values in the home life. Often children in the middle childhood group are ready to make personal commitments to Christ. This readiness is often dependent on the home experience, attendance at church, and the meaningful teaching and personal example of the teacher.

Application

11 Which would be appropriate teaching activities for a Christian nurture class for the middle childhood age group? Write **1** on the line in front of a statement if you agree that the activity it suggests is appropriate, and **2** if you disagree.

- ... **a** Teach the class to memorize the books of the Bible in the correct order.
- ... **b** Schedule long periods of physical activity and emphasize the need for physical fitness.
- ... **c** Make frequent use of the storytelling method of teaching.
- ... **d** Consider that your responsibility for influencing the child is limited to the actual lessons you teach during class hours.
- ... **e** Enrich the stories you tell with abstractions and symbolism.
- ... **f** Talk specifically to the children about receiving Christ as their personal Savior.
- ... **g** Play learning games that help mold the children's conscience by having to make right and wrong choices.

12 Carefully observe two or three children between the ages of six and nine. Write in your notebook the characteristics you discover. Compare what you discover with the characteristics described in the lesson content in this section.



Later Childhood

The pre-adolescent years are an exciting and challenging part of life. Children's potential in all areas of life is unlimited. They are active and noisy and they enjoy life. Their interests are many and varied.

Physically

In later childhood children seem to have boundless energy. They are stronger now than they were in earlier childhood, but their physical growth rate is slower than in previous years. They have healthy appetites and need plenty of food, sunshine, fresh air, and rest. Their muscle control is improving, and they have greatly improved coordination for more intricate work. They have a tendency to neglect proper physical care and hygiene. Consequently, they may tend to be careless about grooming and the care of their personal possessions, not treating clothing, books, and other items with care. Their abounding energy can be turned into worthwhile and helpful activities if they have the proper motivation and guidance.

Mentally

At this age, pre-adolescents are inquisitive and desire to explore and discover. They are beginning to observe accurately and to reason logically. They are alert and eager to learn new truths. They enjoy collecting items, from books to posters, stamps, bottle caps, stones, and insects. Their fascination with things often leads them to take apart and rebuild such things as mechanical toys or clocks and watches. They usually read easily and enjoy adventure stories. Books about missionaries or foreign places are frequently intriguing. Pre-adolescents usually identify with the hero of the story. They have the ability to memorize very quickly and are beginning to understand concepts. They may be able to repeat concepts without fully understanding them. Symbolisms need to be clarified with literal explanations and examples. While they are gaining self-control, pre-adolescents' emotions are sensitive and they respond quickly to supposed slights. They are quick to argue

and are easily disturbed; however, they soon cool off and rarely hold grudges. Pre-adolescents tend to jump to conclusions based on limited facts. They need to be taught to gather more information before they come to premature conclusions.

In later childhood, children are usually sensitive and fearful in spite of fearless, bold fronts. They have the tendency to hide their true feelings, which often go unexpressed. They are fun-loving, have a developing sense of humor, and enjoy jokes and cartoons.

Socially

Pre-adolescents begin to seek independence though they frequently retreat to the security of parental help. They are conscious of the likes of others their own age, that is, what is “in” or popular. They are joiners, organizing and joining groups and clubs among their peers. They admire people and identify with them, drawing their sense of values from them. They have a growing tendency to relate more to peers and less to adult leaders. Pre-adolescents are competitive and eagerly enter either group or individual contests. They participate with enthusiasm and consider the outcome to be serious. However, at this age the sexes often separate themselves socially. For example, girls usually are not permitted to join a boys’ club.

Spiritually

Since those in this period of life are “hero worshippers,” they should be challenged by the biblical heroes of faith. Quite frequently pre-adolescents are ready for salvation, and their relationship with God should not be taken for granted. During this important period, we must be sure to provide teaching about God’s plan of salvation, including the consequences of sin and the need to confess sin and seek forgiveness. This is an appropriate time to teach spiritual concepts of doctrine, meaningful Christian living, and Bible chronology. Preadolescents are capable of understanding spiritual truth when it is presented with an abundance of practical examples in ways that foster discovery and adventure. Ample Scripture memorization should be included in their learning and

experience. One should emphasize the value of developing good habits of regular Bible reading and prayer, as well as Christian living and service.

Application

13 In view of the characteristics of the late childhood period, which of the following would provide appropriate opportunities to nurture effective Christian growth? Write 1 on the line in front of each statement if you agree that the activity suggested would nurture Christian growth, and 2 if you disagree.

- ... **a** A camping trip for children sponsored by the church
- ... **b** A Bible memorization club
- ... **c** A lecture series on the “evidence for biblical inspiration”
- ... **d** A special class which studies church doctrine
- ... **e** A reading library at the church to provide appropriate and exciting stories and reading materials
- ... **f** A children’s evangelistic crusade
- ... **g** A panel discussion of the abuses of alcohol

14 Observe carefully two or three children between the ages of ten and twelve. Write in your notebook the characteristics you discover. Compare your discoveries with the characteristics described in the lesson content in this section.

Adolescence

During childhood, change and growth patterns are more predictable for various age groups than they are in the last two major stages of development. During the adolescence phase, individuals may vary a great deal in their development physically, socially, spiritually, and mentally, even though they may be very close to the same age. It is difficult to predict accurately that all adolescents of the same age will behave in

the same way. When studying this growth stage, we will look at trends of development rather than fixed phases of change which occur at specific ages. Of course there will be many similarities between individuals of the same age, but in many ways they will be very different than they were in the childhood phase.

Early Adolescence

Adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood. This transition includes a change from being dependent on parents to independence, and from simple, childlike trust and acceptance to independent decision making. As we discuss adolescence let us remember that those in this period may be referred to correctly as adolescents, young people, youths, or teenagers.

Early adolescence, as we have seen, includes roughly ages twelve to fifteen. It is a time of great change for young people, especially in terms of their physical changes and the social adjustments required by these changes. In many societies adolescents in this category attend middle or junior-high school.

Physically

Adolescents continue to grow and develop physically. Girls nearly reach their adult height by early adolescence. They grow to this level of physical maturity from two to four years earlier than boys. Vital organs grow rapidly: the heart doubles in size, the lungs grow, and the glands become more active. The uneven growth rate of bones may make one appear to be awkward, and this can cause some embarrassment. Vocal cords lengthen and cause adolescents to frequently have difficulty controlling their voices.

Early adolescence also signals the coming of puberty: the period in life which brings about the development of the sex glands and sexual functions. Girls' bodies begin to assume their adult, feminine shape and boys' physiques become more masculine. In some societies these changes are celebrated by

certain rites of passage, or ceremonies, which recognize the change from childhood to young adulthood.

Mentally

The mental abilities of teenagers are growing. They are capable of serious thinking and are often critical and doubtful. This is a wholesome development of the ability for independent reasoning.

In their quest for independence, teenagers may become severely critical of themselves. They often find it difficult to accept their abilities, appearance, background, families or any other personal uniqueness, and may even reject them. They also have a changing awareness of their own self-concepts. In this period, young people have a tendency to be overly idealistic as they begin to exercise their new-found powers of logical thought.

Socially

During early adolescence parental influence lessens, and parent-teen relations may be strained. The peer group has strong attraction. Youths in this period want very much to be accepted. To be popular is one of their primary goals. The drastic changes teenagers face at this time make them vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy and inability to face the increasing changes and challenges of life. Yet, in spite of this external drive for independence and identification with peer groups, teenagers often feel lonely and desperately need reassurance that they are loved, accepted, and understood by those who are mature and stable in life, especially by parents. Under peer pressure to conform to the expectations of the “in” group, early adolescents are tempted to experiment with a multitude of new experiences: drugs, sex, drink, the occult, false religions, and anti-Christian teachings. It is a crucial period for adolescents, parents, and society.

Spiritually

The frustrations and doubts that early teenagers experience in other areas of life may carry over to the spiritual area. Youths

who dislike themselves may find it difficult to believe that the God who created them is loving and kind. They need help and understanding in this crucial period. Parents and teachers must accept them as they are and endeavor to build a relationship with them in which trust can develop. As you relate to them both in and out of class, you can help them see that they need not walk alone in their struggles. With Jesus Christ in control of their lives they can have His power to help them lead victorious lives and His presence to encourage, comfort, and support them. You can help them face life's problems as you teach them to direct their lives according to biblical principles.

Middle Adolescence

Middle adolescence includes the period from about fifteen to about age eighteen. In most urban societies, middle adolescents attend secondary or senior high school; others attend vocational training schools. In traditional societies, youths of this age generally enter the work force and help to support their families. Let us take a closer look at four specific areas of development.

Physically

Middle adolescents continue to grow. While girls in general tend to reach their adult height in early adolescence, boys' development continues on into middle and even later adolescence. Both girls and boys demonstrate change toward physical maturity. Boys become more muscular and better coordinated. They have considerable strength and stamina. Boys begin to develop beards and begin the lifelong task of shaving. Girls continue developing into their adult, feminine physical identity. Middle adolescents enjoy action sports or activities, and they participate with a will, demonstrating both good form and excellent condition. Both girls and boys are concerned about their physical appearance, and they spend much time in grooming and personal care.

Mentally

The serious and critical thinking begun in early adolescence is maturing in middle adolescence. Reason and judgments are continuing to develop. No longer will another's answers satisfy. Adolescents individually must solve their own intellectual problems. At this time they begin to focus their attention on skills and interests that may be suitable for their respective vocations.

The idealism which young people develop in early adolescence may become even more pronounced at this time. The basis of adolescents' judgment is often what appears to be logical to them rather than what may appear to be realistic to an older, more mature person. During this phase of growth, young people may have difficulties distinguishing between their own idealistic ideas and the realities of the world around them.

Socially

This is the time of life for the development of social awareness and the acceptance of one's place in society. Probably one of the biggest issues for adolescents to cope with is that of personal identity. They have developed self concepts in which each sees himself as a totally different person from anyone else. It is a concept of self-uniqueness. Each becomes aware of his personal differences and characteristics such as likes and dislikes, talents, goals, aptitude, and the strength and purpose to guide his own destiny.

Quite naturally adolescents have an increasing awareness of their destiny and the future. These are new feelings. Often young people may experience a state of confusion which may lead to times of unnecessary self-consciousness. Their behavior may become inconsistent and unpredictable during this time of transition.

Spiritually

The searching, keen minds of adolescents may lead them at times to doubt absolute values or even the existence of God. They may ask such questions as: “What is the meaning of existence?” “What is of lasting value?” “What is absolute authority?” You can channel the questions of adolescents toward investigation of biblical truth, the claims of God on humans’ lives, and the value of biblical principles as a basis for daily living. You, the teacher, can direct learners toward finding God’s will for their lives, and you can challenge them to a complete commitment of their lives to Christ. You can lead them to see that the answers to life’s greatest problems can be solved as they seek God’s help in prayer, meaningful Bible study, and consistent Christian service.

Later Adolescence

The years from eighteen to twenty are the final years of adolescence. They bring young people to the threshold of adulthood, the next major period of life. In modern urban societies this period corresponds to the time when many young people begin the final phase of their educational program at the college or university level. In predominantly rural societies, young people are generally occupied with the problem of finding jobs to help support their families.

Physically

Late teenagers are moving toward the peak of their physical strength. Most of the physical growth has ended by this time, but body tone becomes better and physical fitness tends to be excellent. Generally, however, the changes in the physical body at this point are less apparent than during previous phases of adolescence.

Mentally

After many years of schooling, later adolescents are now reaching maturity in their intellectual abilities. With some experience and practical application of knowledge behind them, they demonstrate responsible decision-making. They tend to

be idealistic, but this is becoming tempered with some realism gained through experience.

As adolescents involve themselves increasingly in their adult roles and begin to assume adult responsibilities, they begin to develop a point of view seasoned with the realities of life. While they may continue to harbor idealistic ideas and dreams, they are able to adapt their thinking increasingly to the demands of the environment in which they live and work.

Socially

In some countries, as secondary schooling comes to an end, adolescents are faced with whether they should continue their education, locate a job, or move to their own dwelling places, and begin a new phase of life on their own. In others, the issues are clearer; one may not necessarily leave his family, establish his own independent residence, and seek his own future.

Adolescents encounter another dimension of development: the emergence of a sense of loyalty. This can be seen throughout adolescence, but it seems to culminate in this stage. As they are reaching a state of sexual maturity, they are also developing a sense of loyalty and fidelity. This sense of loyalty prepares each to commit himself to an adult pattern of life and the likelihood of taking a marriage partner.

Emerging from childhood into adulthood results in many changes in the individual. From dependence on parents to self direction in responsible decision making, one blossoms into a person who is prepared to enter the adult role in life and seek the intimacy of a marriage relationship. At this point one can receive a new sense of self; he can also receive a perception of his future and the destiny yet to be fulfilled during the adult stages of his life.

Spiritually

The educational, social, and intellectual background of many later adolescents is such today that they seek to involve themselves increasingly with issues which are “relevant” to

them. If we design our approach to nurturing with this in mind we can challenge adolescents to find answers to many of the pressing social, spiritual, and moral issues they face daily. Later adolescents are not content with traditional answers; they want to come to grips with the issues that affect their responses to a world with few standards. You may have to change your approach or prepare more fully, but teaching formats which include discussion groups, buzz groups, and panel discussions, to name a few, will meet with grateful responses.

Application

15 Which are appropriate Christian nurturing activities for adolescents? Write **1** on the line in front of statements that are appropriate and **2** in front of those that are not.

- ... **a** A series of lessons on self-acceptance
- ... **b** A series of stories about Bible heroes
- ... **c** A series of lessons on the Christian view of love, courtship, and marriage
- ... **d** A series of sermons condemning the care of the physical body as unnecessary vanity
- ... **e** A series of lessons on the practical application of biblical teaching to every day life situations
- ... **f** A series of talks on biblical teachings about interpersonal relationships
- ... **g** A series of lessons on current theories of behavior and one's need to conform his behavior to the expectations of society
- ... **h** A series of talks on parent-teen relationships to be attended by parents and their adolescent children
- ... **i** A series of lessons on finding God's will
- ... **j** A series of lectures showing the uselessness and unimportance of reason and mental pursuits



Adulthood

The final major stage we will consider is that of adulthood. This phase of life may cover a span of time greater than half a century. Previously, the childhood and adolescent stages were seen as learning periods. Adulthood may be labeled as the age when most people begin earning. The last period of adulthood may be characterized by yearning, looking back wistfully over the experiences that have enriched life and given it meaning. This study of adulthood has been divided into three phases with each phase representing characteristic events in life which are likely to occur during certain years. However, you should keep in mind that chronological age does not necessarily mean that everyone at a particular age will be experiencing the same things as others in that age group. People are now changing by choice rather than by solely physical development in many areas. They do continue to change physically, but the change is not as rapid as one may see in the childhood and adolescent stages.

EARLY ADULTHOOD

Early adulthood, which begins around age twenty, is characterized by the desire to find a marriage partner, establish a home, and raise children. Young adults begin to work at their occupations, establish themselves in their communities, and educate their children.

Physically

The word adult means “fully developed and mature.” The adult has reached his maximum physical growth. His strength, which reaches its peak in this period, begins to wane in later adulthood. It is appropriate that at the time when people face tasks requiring strength, stamina, and good health, they reach the state of greatest physical development.

Mentally

Young adults, having undergone intensive training and having experienced some of the realities of responsible decision-making, have seemingly unlimited intellectual capacity. They are sharp and idealistic, their reason is maturing and their interests are becoming more specialized. Many of the intellectual doubts of their adolescence are settled, and they tend to be stable, responsible people.

Socially

In adulthood, family relationships continue to be of utmost importance. Young adults develop relationships based on intimacy. Their relationships with parents develop, and they tend to enjoy a mature level of interaction. They no longer need to depend on parents to make decisions for them or to approve of the decisions they make. Out of mature love for their parents, healthy and whole relationships emerge. Young adults also seek to associate with others who share common goals and interests. Friendships may evolve out of their relationships from such areas as work, church, neighborhood, and schools. They are aware of the need to be integrated into the community in which they live rather than to be isolated from it.

Spiritually

For those who have been nurtured in Christian homes during their childhood and adolescent years, adulthood is a time for the application and reinforcement of the lessons they have learned previously. Adulthood for them should be a time of active involvement in Christian service. Some adults, however, have not been prepared for Christian service, either because of non-Christian background or inadequate Christian nurturing. In any case, all adults need to be encouraged to keep in mind spiritual priorities. As young parents study the Bible in depth, they need to be challenged to set up a family altar and create an atmosphere in which wholesome spiritual life can be nurtured. Without the concern of nurturing leaders, young adults can be

permitted to be absorbed into the busyness of modern life to the exclusion of spiritual life.

MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Around the ages of 35 to 40 adults enter another identifiable stage which is often referred to as “middle age.” Middle adults have reached many of their earlier objectives. This calls for some major adjustments.

The children have grown up, completed their education, and in many modern societies, left home. The activities that involved family finances, time, and energies during these fleeting years have ended. Now parents may experience feelings of emptiness and loneliness. They may appear at times to be “adrift.” The husband and wife may also have to make adjustments in their relationship to each other. Middle adults may question their occupational goals and the direction of their lives. They may even make major decisions to change their lifestyles.

One of the rewarding features of this period is grandchildren. They tend to bless the lives of the grandparents and give new purpose to their relationship. During this time many adults face the prospect of adjusting to the death of parents. This brings about the need for additional adjustment.

Physically

Middle age brings physical changes to both men and women. Men who enter adulthood with superb physiques may tend to develop the middle age spread, gaining excessive weight as they lose muscle tone. Or, becoming aware of aging and the loss of strength, they may be motivated to begin “reconditioning programs.” Women lose their reproductive function during the middle years. They, too, may tend to lose muscle tone, gain weight, and show some of the marks of aging: greying hair and wrinkled skin. Many women today are engaging in exercise and physical

fitness programs to restore lost body tone and regain some of the vigor they enjoyed in earlier years.

Mentally

In middle adulthood people's intellectual powers are devoted to production, and they are quietly persistent. The judgment of middle adults is generally sound and dependable, and this is reflected in a sense of self-confidence and feelings of competence. This is the period in life for achievement and full production. Perhaps you have noticed that the managers and executives in many occupations are middle-aged people. This is so because of their experience and proved performance.

Socially

During middle adulthood, whole, mature adults tend to develop a sense of caring which is expressed by their concern for others. They may wish to take care of others and share their knowledge and experience with them. Satisfaction and contentment come through nurturing and teaching others. Middle adults frequently feel a strong desire to share the truths which have come to guide and bless their lives with their children. They wish to perpetuate the customs and rituals, seeking to preserve and protect these enriching experiences which have sustained them throughout their lives.

Spiritually

At this stage in life there can be a tendency toward materialism and busyness with matters of secondary importance. Quite frequently these important matters crowd out the spiritual dimension of people's lives, robbing them of time, strength, and true vision. In contrast, however, faith in middle adulthood can be deep and personal.

Middle adults, being in their prime intellectually in terms of life experiences, need to be fed spiritual food consistent with their mature status, challenged to meaningful Christian service, and utilized wherever possible. Lessons geared

to nurture this level should be challenging, well prepared, and capably presented. Not only do those pillars of the church need solid spiritual meat, but they also need to be challenged to apply the lessons of their lifetime in practical ways.

LATER ADULTHOOD

Later adulthood begins around sixty to sixty-five years of age. In the final stage of this period, adults come to the realization that advancing years leave little time to fulfill their hopes and dreams. Grandchildren and great grandchildren now become an important part of their families, and they often feel the need to prepare the younger generation for the future. These people are faced with the fact that death is approaching; therefore, they characteristically make preparations for it.

Physically

As adults reach maturity and grow older, they often develop ailments with accompanying aches and pains. These physical problems alert one to the need to make both mental and physical adjustments. They must accept the fact that their strength has limits and that the total person can only be as productive as health permits. In many places today activities are planned which take into consideration the physical limitations of “senior citizens.”

Mentally

As adults leave the labor market at the end of middle adulthood, they represent the combined training, acquired knowledge and experience of over one-half century. They have made their contributions, directed their generation, and completed their vocational courses successfully. Older adults are a valuable asset to their families, churches, and communities for the wise experienced counsel they can give. Their accumulated knowledge and experienced

wisdom can contribute to the development of those in all other periods of life.

Socially

Later adulthood brings people to the closing years of life. One of the chief virtues which graces life at this season is wisdom. Mature people are able to review their lives and derive meaningfulness from them. They are able to face objectively both their successes and failures without either leaving them with an undue sense of pride or despair. To the younger person, they project an aura of completeness and wholeness which is representative of lives that have been successful and purposeful.

Older adults face many varied social demands. Probably the most difficult of all of life's adjustments is that of becoming dependent on the children who have depended on their parents for so many years. The second most difficult adjustment is learning to adapt to the death of one's spouse and loving life partner. Special attention should be given to the social needs of older adults: to be noticed, appreciated, and included in ongoing activities wherever possible.

Spiritually

With their occupational pursuits behind them, many older adults find that they have more time and opportunity to give themselves to prayer, Bible reading, and Christian service than they had in earlier days. In the context of Christian nurture, we must be sure to provide activities that help these people meet each challenge of life. They should not be excluded from the rest of the Christian body or made to feel that no longer do they have a significant contribution to make. Our programs should recognize the value of these spiritual warriors who have fought the good fight of faith successfully. We should utilize their talents, skills, and wisdom whenever possible. This effort will lend dignity to their station in life and bless the body of Christ.

Application

- 16** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a)** The process of change and development which characterizes childhood and adolescence ends as one enters adulthood.
 - b)** By middle adulthood one has achieved many of his earlier objectives; therefore, he is required to make a number of adjustments.
 - c)** As one enters the adult phase of life, he tends to develop a new, more mature relationship with his parents and with others who share common goals and interests.
 - d)** One of the characteristics of middle adulthood is a concern for others, which is often expressed through nurturing and teaching them.
 - e)** It is rather uncommon for one who has reached middle adulthood and raised a family successfully to experience vocational or marital problems.
 - f)** Christian nurturing classes should avoid topics related to marriage and partner adjustment.
 - g)** Christian nurturing classes should be conducted to help prepare adults for involvement in Christian service.
 - h)** The church should sponsor ministries that will help meet the social needs of older adults.
 - i)** Because older adults have passed the peak of their physical strength, they have little to offer the church that is useful.
 - j)** Adults are too old to receive Christ as their personal Savior.
 - k)** Adults need to be reminded to recognize and establish spiritual priorities.
-

Christian nurture is concerned about what is happening to people—individuals. While we often teach people in group settings, our concern is the wholeness of each person. Our concern is not that people have some knowledge of the Bible, but that they experience total life transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. We are concerned about the total person. Therefore, we need a good understanding of the

individual, his growth and development characteristics, how he is similar to most other people of his age group, and how he differs from them.

Through Christian nurture we seek to encourage the growth and development of each Christian's new life. The more we know about the nature of that life and about the nature of the individual, the more effective will be our efforts to help him grow and develop. Learning should be planned to meet the needs of growing and developing learners.

self-test

1 Match each description of the characteristics of learners (left) with the appropriate period during which it occurs (right).

2-10 In the following exercise, choose a word or words from the list below that either complete(s) the meaning or supplies the missing information.

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| will | heredity | abilities |
| intelligence | conduct | personality |
| imbalance | spiritual | nurtured |
| Christ-life | automatic | choices |
| whole | temporal | nonphysical |
| values | culture | environment |

2 Human beings grow and develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Growth in the areas can continue until either death, senility, or physical deterioration disrupts the capacity for growth.

3 To be properly developed in each above-mentioned area of life is to be

4 Christians place high priority on growth, because the is eternal; whereas, the other areas of human life are

5 Wholesome growth is not; it must be encouraged and

6 exists when a person fails to develop properly in one or more of the basic areas of life.

7 is a comprehensive term which refers to the total of what a person is, including his thoughts, actions, attitudes, traits, temperament, and character.

8 One of the factors which affects human personality, the capacity one inherits from his parents, is called

It seems to determine within rough limits a person's mental

9 (our surroundings) also affects one's personality development is also a part of one's environment. Each culture has its own and teaches based on them.

10 One's also affects his personality development. This component of personality is demonstrated in one's ability to make

answers to study questions

- 9 a)** Sing happy songs about God
d) Include activities that require movement and intersperse short quiet times
f) Allow the children to play along part of the time
h) Talk about God as the child's loving friend
j) Provide things that go with the lesson for the children to feel and handle
- 1** All but **d)** and **e)** are true.
- 10** Your answer. Often children in this age bracket are not well-coordinated physically as they play and color or draw. They wiggle and move considerably. They have limited vocabularies, but they often act out with gestures and facial expressions what they want to say. They tell stories very animatedly and employ graphic word pictures. They are trusting and loving.
- 2 b)** Later childhood
- 11 a** 1) Agree
b 2) Disagree
c 1) Agree
d 2) Disagree
e 2) Disagree
f 1) Agree
g 1) Agree
- 3 c)** Early adulthood
- 12** Your answer. One could expect to see more of a balance between physical and nonphysical activities in play. Boys and girls play together. You might hear words being used incorrectly or mispronounced as the children tell stories or relate experiences. It would not be at all uncommon to hear one child say to another "That's not nice," or "You'd better not do that." Nor would it be odd to see the children in tears over some supposed injustice. In a learning situation, such as a Bible class, the children are eager learners, warm and receptive to the truth, and responsive to an appeal to accept Christ as their personal Savior.

4 a) Later adulthood

- 13 a)** 1) Agree
b) 1) Agree
c) 2) Disagree
d) 1) Agree
e) 1) Agree
f) 1) Agree
g) 2) Disagree

5 a) Early childhood

- 14** Your answer. Children at this level display greater skill in the games they play. They give evidence of unlimited energy. You would find them enthralled by lab experiments, field trips, and guided study projects. You might overhear them making personal applications of spiritual truths or responding well to teaching on the responsibilities of Christians. Behind seemingly unemotional facades you undoubtedly would find sensitive youngsters who wanted attention, approval, and direction—even though they seem to be accepted by their peers and well adapted on the outside. There is also a tendency for girls and boys to segregate in their own groups.

6 b) Early adolescence

- 15 a)** 1) Appropriate
b) 2) Not appropriate
c) 1) Appropriate
d) 2) Not appropriate
e) 1) Appropriate
f) 1) Appropriate
g) 2) Not appropriate
h) 1) Appropriate
i) 1) Appropriate
j) 2) Not appropriate

7 c) Later adolescence

- 16 b), c), d), g), h), and k)** are true

- 8 a), d), and e)** are true.

