



It's All About Age



“The Lord disciplines those he loves” (Proverbs 3:12a).

- Why do you think God disciplines those he loves?
- When is a time you were disciplined by God? How did that change your life?

▼ Training Session

Knowing how to lovingly set appropriate boundaries and expectations is one of the greatest challenges of teaching—and one of the most necessary. But what *can* you expect from your kids?

Is it normal for a 4-year-old to have a temper tantrum if he doesn't get as many fish crackers as his friend? Should you be surprised if fifth-grade girls act like enemies every week?

Well, 4-year-olds *do* throw tantrums every now and then. “It's not fair” is often the argument. And fifth-grade girls can be best friends one minute and worst enemies almost on cue.

Here are a few things to expect at different age levels.

Preschoolers are

- intense with their emotions. When they're happy, they'll be all smiles. When they're unhappy, they're sure to let you know.
- able to be a part of a group. But they see *themselves* first. Preschoolers play together, but don't interact much. They're not quite to the stage of sharing yet. Don't expect them to understand the concept.
- fairness filters. They'll make sure everything's fair. This is where the temper tantrum might come in.
- adult pleasers. Simply say, “I'm not very happy with the way you're acting.” That'll give them something to think about.

Younger elementary kids

- like to be first. It's a pride thing. Don't play games that produce losers, and you won't see the tantrums show up.
- want to be your friend. Learn their names and some special things about them. You can reason with them on a more personal level.
- aren't ready to see things from another's point of view. When you reason with them, do it from their point of view: “How would it make you feel...”

Older elementary kids

- need approval. Validate their feelings. Applaud good behavior.
- bask in high expectations. Give them responsibility. They'll perform with excellence.
- can be reasoned with from another's point of view. Talk with them about how their actions affect the whole group.
- experience mood swings. Expect the unexpected—because it'll happen.

When you know how your kids can and can't behave, you can eliminate problems before they even occur. Set age-appropriate expectations. Make them clear. You'll quickly become a master teacher!





Take this training deeper as you think over these questions:

- How well do you know the age-level characteristics of the kids in your class?
- How can you better understand child development?
- What do you expect of your kids?

▼ Journal

*Lord, please help me to see how you've designed the kids in my class.
Give me wisdom and insight as I...*

It's no accident that you're teaching this particular class at this particular time. God has plans for your life and for the lives of the children you teach. Trust God to guide you as you prepare to teach.

▼ Application

Go to a library. Check out a book or two on child development. (Piaget and Erikson are good authors to start with.) Make a simple list of age-level characteristics of kids who are the same age as your students. Keep the list handy as you read through next week's lesson.