



## What to Expect from Preteens in Grades 5 and 6

### Physical

Preteens have mastered most basic physical skills. They are active and curious and seek a variety of new experiences. Rapid growth can cause some to tire easily.

**Teaching Tips:** Younger preteen boys will still participate in activities with girls, but as they grow older, they tend to work and play better with their own sex. In your class, provide some time for preteens to be grouped by gender, and some time when genders are mixed. This is a good age for exploration and research activities. Use active, creative ways to memorize Bible verses.

### Emotional

Preteens are usually cooperative, easy-going, content, friendly and agreeable. Most adults enjoy working with this age group. Even though both girls and boys begin to think about their future as adults, their interests tend to differ significantly. Be aware of behavioral changes that result from the preteens' emotional growth—they are experiencing unsteady emotions and often shift from one mood to another. Help them see that not everything is a big deal and that people are not always looking at them.

**Teaching Tips:** Changes of feelings require patient understanding from adults. Give many opportunities to make choices with only a few necessary limits. Take time to listen as preteens share their experiences and problems with you. If your class includes sixth graders who are attending middle school, realize that these kids are under great pressure from their peers. They may show signs of low self-acceptance and need your care and support more than ever.

### Social

Friendships and activities with their peers flourish. Preteens draw together and away from adults in the desire for independence. Each one usually wants to be a part of a same-sex group and usually does not want to stand alone in competition.

**Teaching Tips:** Preteens no longer think aloud. Keeping communication open is of prime importance! Listen, ask open-ended questions, and avoid making judgmental comments to help them feel that it is safe to share freely.



## Cognitive

Preteens are verbal! Making ethical decisions becomes a challenging task. They are able to express ideas and feelings in a creative way. By 11 years of age many preteens have begun to reason abstractly. They begin to think of themselves as adults and yet at the same time are questioning adult concepts. Hero worship is strong. (Good place for a Christlike teacher to be the hero!)

**Teaching Tips:** Include many opportunities for talking, questioning and discussing in a safe, accepting environment. These are good years for poetry, songs, drama, stories, drawing and painting. Give guidance in a way that does not damage preteens' efforts to become thinking, self-directed people. Be aware of the difficulty some still have in reading. Plan other ways for them to gain information and be sensitive if asking preteens to read aloud.

## Spiritual

Preteens can have deep feelings of love for God, can share the good news of Jesus with a friend and are capable of involvement in evangelism and service projects. Each one may seek guidance from God to make everyday and long-range decisions.

**Teaching Tips:** Provide opportunities for preteens to make choices and decisions based on Bible concepts. Plan prayer, Bible reading and worship experiences. Involve preteens in work and service projects.