

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

What age group doesn't enjoy discovering a treasure? Though unique in terms of interest and ability, participants ages five to fourteen can be engaged to joyfully, playfully, and passionately pursue "the hunt" of discovering new things about honoring the body together. Younger children are still learning many words and may find the activities to be "firsts" for them. The newness of some of the experiences will help them to come with eyes wide open. Their enthusiasm can be contagious. Those children ages eleven to fourteen will be able to bring their broader experiences and will have tools they have learned to help them discover new things. They may enjoy helping to create some of the activities, even leading them with you as they discover what it means to be a guide as well as a participant. Part of discovery will be helping each learner to be aware of his or her own gifts, talents, ideas, and experiences and identifying the gifts, talents, ideas, and experiences of others as also valuable. You may find it helpful to occasionally break into small groups for the youth to do a project or have a discussion and then return to the larger group.

About this Exploration

God not only creates our bodies, God also relates to us through the embodied form of Jesus Christ. We are moved to reclaim God's presence in the joyful and messy details of everyday life, a task more complicated and richer than depicted in the idealized images of bodies in the media. Through the senses, we experience and explore creation. We enjoy the sight

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 19:4–8
John 4:1–42

Leader Preparation

This session's activities are all about discovering how we can honor the bodies God has given to us. Think of some of the most significant things you have discovered about honoring your own body and the bodies of others. How has this changed in various time periods for you? Set up your room or area with items that will help your participants anticipate this as they come in. Place items such as magnifying glasses, canteens, hiking boots, detective hats, pictures of cartoon explorers and some historical explorers in your room. Be sure to have some pictures the participants will know and some that may generate curiosity. As you prepare the room, pray for your group to discover new things about God's gift to them—their bodies. As you welcome each person into your area, discuss informally the discovery theme until you are ready to begin an activity.

Prayer: God, open my mind to discover anew the gift of the body you have given me. Help me to encourage each person to value and use all of his or her senses today. May our sight, hearing, smelling, touch and taste all bring us closer to you. Amen.

of a rainbow, the smell of roses, or the taste of garlic. We connect with each other through the sound of a voice, the touch of a handshake, or the intimacy of a kiss. We can choose to use our bodies in ways that affirm that we are made in the image of God, discover that God's goodness is planted within our bodies, and express ourselves through our varied talents and limitations.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Does a Body Good (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. How easy or difficult is it for you to honor and care for your body? Think about your participants. From what you know now, how do they tend to feel about their physical bodies? Be aware of potential physical concerns or lack of access to resources the participants may have that could affect their engagement with this activity.

Supplies:

- Bible
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

As the children get settled in the room, tell them your body is feeling great today! You may even do some simple jumping jacks or pushups to show your energy. You have discovered just what your body needs to feel strong. Ask the participants to discover some of the things they've learned to do to help make their bodies feel good. If they think of things you have not yet thought of for the care of your own body, share this with them. Encourage them to think broadly and go beyond the obvious answers.

List their ideas on the newsprint or whiteboard, and display in your room. Put a heading above, such as "My Body Likes . . ." Multiple answers are possible. Some include food (list the different kinds that are healthy), exercise, playing with friends, sleeping, dancing, playing soccer, walking, stretching, breathing deeply, laughing, crying when you feel like it, reading, resting, and so forth.

Explain to the learners that there once was a prophet named Elijah. He told people about God and sometimes said things they didn't want to hear. This passage in the Bible tells about a time he got really angry and frustrated. Read 1 Kings 19:4–8 together. Ask some of the following questions:

- What kept Elijah from taking care of his body until he was told by a messenger from God to do so?
- What might keep us from taking care of our bodies?
- How does God want us to care for our bodies and the bodies of others?
- Who are the people who guide us to care for our bodies?

2 Looking Good

Leader preparation: View the artwork "Golden Rule" by Norman Rockwell, or find additional pictures on the Internet or in magazines with pictures of people from different countries and time periods. Consider what is cultural—connected to the culture or group in which we were raised—about how we dress and decorate the body. How have people from a variety of faith traditions claimed that certain clothes or decorations were acceptable and others were not? What do you believe is a faithful way to dress and decorate the body? How was

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

that belief formed? Be aware of the variety of generations and even cultures represented in your group as you explore what makes the body look good.

Supplies:

- magazines or Internet for pictures
- artwork: “Golden Rule,” by Norman Rockwell, <http://www.art.com/products/p9388041612-sa-i5446642/norman-rockwell-golden-rule-do-unto-others-april-1-1961.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=5000032&ui=6c6a730242504593a62db31e60ee1963&ssk=norman+rockwell>
- paper and markers
- picture of Jesus in clothing appropriate for his time

Ask the group to think about the many types of clothes and decorations people put on their bodies. Show them “Golden Rule” by Norman Rockwell and talk about specific clothes and decorations they see. You may also want to flip through magazines together. At this point try to focus the conversation on what is seen, not whether the participants like or dislike what they see.

Talk about what the children and youth wear. Some of the youth may be able to tell about how they dressed when they were younger and how they dress now. Do some of them wear earrings or other jewelry? Are there any piercings or tattoos (even temporary)? Ask some of the following questions:

- How do you know what to put on your body?
- How do you think other people decide what they wear or put on their bodies?
- If you were God, would there be any kind of clothes or decorations that would concern you? What are they, and why do you think this?
- Is it important that what we have on our bodies shows we honor or care about our bodies?

Show the group a picture of Jesus in which he is dressed appropriately for his time period and culture. Ask the children to talk about what they see him wearing. Jesus came to us in a human body to help us understand who God is in a way that people could see and hear and touch. Jesus held children on his lap, he laughed at parties, he went fishing, he enjoyed eating and all the different things we do with our body. Encourage the group to list some other things Jesus did with his body, and prompt discussion with these questions:

- If Jesus were a fifth grader today living in your town, what do you think he would wear?
- What would his hair be like?

Invite the participants to draw a picture of Jesus as he might look if he lived near them today. If they prefer to make him their age, encourage them to do so. Allow time for those who want to show and talk about their drawing to do so.

Consider closing this activity by thanking God for all the different styles of clothes and decorations that people create that honor their bodies.



③ Exploring What We Need

Leader preparation: Prepare an imaginary well for acting out the scripture. You may use large blocks, chairs, or a rope to make a circle. Participants who come early may help you create this. Read Attachment: Activity 3. You will need the artwork “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Consider the options you have to experience water together. Do you have an indoor fountain

to run in your room, a fountain you can walk to in your sanctuary or outside, or other kinds of bowls or glasses you could use to bring water to your group? Familiarize yourself with the scripture if you have not already done so.

Supplies:

- “The Woman at the Well,” Attachment: Activity 3
- artwork: “The Public Fountain,” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo or other picture of person and water, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1401636333?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- bowls with water, or a small fountain in your room, or go outside to a larger fountain if available
- glasses for each person to have a drink
- (optional) pool

Prepare for the scripture drama in Attachment: Activity 3 by picking a reader and persons to play the Samaritan woman, Jesus, the disciples, and the villagers. Designate the spots for the well and the village. Encourage the group to think about what each person in the story is physically needing or wanting to help take care of their bodies as you act out the scripture.

When finished, talk about what Jesus needed. What did the woman need? How about the disciples and the villagers? Discuss how important it is to give the body water, food, and rest. Show the group “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Discuss what each person sees the child doing. Imagine where the child lives. Ask some of the following questions:

- How often do you think this child comes here to drink?
- Does the child have to walk a long way or a short way to get to the fountain?
- Is the water clean and healthy for the child to drink?
- What happens to our bodies when we don’t get enough water?
- Talk about things that are good for the body that are connected to water.

Either in your room, in another part of the building, or outside, enjoy touching, drinking and possibly entering water. This activity could easily be connected with a swimming party for your group.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 We Are Valued! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read John 4:1–42. Notice how Jesus treats each person in the story. How does he receive the woman whom others do not like or want to be near? Prayerfully consider how you value others. What makes this difficult or hard for you? Come to this activity intentionally honoring and valuing each participant as well as yourself.

Supplies:

- children’s story Bible, or “The Woman at the Well,” Attachment: Activity 3

Before you read or act out “The Woman at the Well” story either from a children’s story Bible or from Attachment: Activity 3, ask the participants to notice how

Jesus treats each person in the story. Note with them some of the things he says and does. Does Jesus honor the woman? Discuss what the word honor means.

Why do the participants think the disciples don't challenge Jesus for talking to the Samaritan woman, even though they are shocked he has done so? Jesus shows us that God loves and honors all people. No one is to be ignored or left out. The disciples had to learn this as they watched Jesus talk to Samaritans, lepers, tax collectors, and others that people did not like. It was not an easy lesson for them. They had been raised to think it was okay not to honor certain kinds of people.

Invite the group to consider quietly some of the people or kinds of people who are hard for them to honor or accept. When each has had a few minutes to think, let them know you will be starting a prayer. You will stop, and they can silently say to God the names of the people or types of people they need help from God to learn to honor and accept. Begin the prayer: *God, thank you for loving each of us. Help us to love . . .* (Pause, then after a few moments, continue.) *Thank you for helping us to honor one another. Amen.*

5 Sensing God's Presence

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the song "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry." Consider what it means to you to know that God has been with you at each stage of your life. If you and your group are not comfortable singing, consider hearing the song done by an individual in your church or use the link provided or another you prefer.

Supplies:

- song: "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry," by John Ylvisaker (tune: Waterlife), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYnmtOI50ic>
- magazines that can be cut
- poster board
- markers
- scissors
- glue stick

Invite your group to listen to the song "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry." Then read the words together (in your hymnal or from the Internet) and notice the specific times the writer of the song, John Ylvisaker, describes God as being present with us. Discuss some of the following questions:

- What are some of the words the composer uses to describe how God feels about being with us?
- What does God's presence with us tell us about how God feels about our bodies?

Work together on a group poster with pictures and words that identify different things our bodies do at various times in life. Use pictures cut out of magazines, or draw your own. Can you think of some things we do in a lifetime that the author didn't write into his song? Play the song a few times while you work.

6 Ready, Set, Go!

Leader preparation: Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. Collect a variety of healthy food items, such as fresh vegetables, grains, meats (canned tuna is easy), fresh fruits, hard boiled eggs, and so forth, and two buckets. Avoid items that contain sugar. If pos-

sible, include raw vegetables and fruit. For the race, you may prefer to use plastic food rather than real food. In that case, save the real food for the snack.

Supplies:

- Bible
- two buckets
- healthy food items, enough to fill both buckets halfway, or plastic food, or pictures of food taped to boxes and cans
- clearance from parents that each participant has no food allergies to the snack you provide

Introduce 1 Kings 19:4–8 to the group. Explain that Elijah was a prophet who told people about God and what God wanted for them and from them. Sometimes Elijah got frustrated. In this passage, when Elijah is sad and angry, he doesn't want to take care of his body. God sends a messenger to remind Elijah that taking care of his body is an important thing to do. He honors God by honoring his body with good things. Talk about the good foods you brought that honor the body. Depending on a child's background, he or she may have differing views on what is healthy and what is not. Discuss what makes each food good.

The messenger helped to provide Elijah with food. Sometimes we bring food to ourselves, and sometimes we bring food to someone else. See how quickly your group can do this by running a race. Divide the group into two teams, and have them line up about 10 feet away from the food (either fresh or plastic) that you have arranged in two separate piles. The first person on each team runs with an empty bucket to the other side and picks up the food off the table, puts it in the bucket, and races back. The second person runs to the other side, unpacks the bucket, and returns with an empty bucket. This rotation continues until each person has had an opportunity to run the race. If you would like to get your group to work together, rather than compete, have the whole group be on one team and time how quickly the whole group can complete the race. If you have children with physical challenges, find ways to include them. Perhaps adapt the race, pair them with someone, or invite them to be the starter or time keeper for the activity. Celebrate working together by enjoying a healthy snack if you have the permission of caregivers to do so.

Close with a prayer. Form a circle and begin the prayer. *Thank you, God, for the foods we love!* (Invite the learners to name some of these foods.) *In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Measuring Love: Doing An Experiment (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read John 4:1–42. Consider how welcoming and honoring your learning space is. If you are meeting in a church building, how welcoming is that facility? Find out if there is a sidewalk area where the participants can make pictures with sidewalk chalk and write words that welcome people. If you cannot do this outside, prepare a banner for your learning space or for the larger church.

Supplies:

- Bible, or children’s story Bible with “The Woman at the Well” story, or “The Woman at the Well,” Attachment: Activity 3
- sidewalk chalk, or newsprint and markers

Invite the group to hear a story about Jesus and a woman. She was a Samaritan and many people did not like her, but Jesus still talked with her. Read the story in John 4:1–42 to the group. If you have read this in a previous activity, ask the participants to retell the story to you. Explain that sometimes we know when we are honoring and welcoming others, and sometimes we do not notice things we do or the way we set up our space that can cause people to feel excluded. Ask your group to describe what it feels like to be included and what it feels like to be excluded.

Explore together your learning space and/or the larger facility. *What do you see that make all kinds of people feel welcome?* These could include an elevator or having no stairs, pictures of all kinds of people, a space for small children to learn and play, a water fountain, and so forth. *Do you see anything that might make someone feel unwelcome?* This could be stairs that a wheelchair could not enter, pictures of only one race of people, no signs to guide people, chairs that aren’t sturdy, and so forth. You may want to write down these ideas and let the group know you will give them to the teams or committees who work to make people feel welcome.

To help create a more welcoming space, draw pictures or words on the sidewalks or create a banner for your area. Pray and ask God to help what you have done make others feel more welcome.

8 Sing and Dance the Hokey Pokey

Leader preparation: Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. Find a recording of the Hokey Pokey song, or be prepared to help your group sing this song. If you have participants in wheelchairs, be sure to provide needed assistance.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “The Hokey Pokey,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfPg_GzC-HA
- newsprint and marker

Read 1 Kings 19:4–8 to the group. *What did the messenger tell Elijah to do?* Elijah had a body just like we do. It had the same kinds of parts and some of the same challenges. He started life as a baby and grew into an adult just like us. Make a list of the body parts that Elijah and we have. If the group brings up sexual body parts, be sure to use correct words for them, such as penis, breast, or vagina. Acknowledge these as you do other body parts, with honor and thanksgiving. Pick a few of the body parts listed and talk about what that part helps us to do. For example, the eye allows many to see where they are going and to see a visual picture of people around them. As you talk, bring up the reality that everyone’s body is different. Not everyone has every body part. Not everyone has strength in the same parts. You might ask who in the group has strong legs and is a fast runner. Who likes to read and think and has a strong brain? Who likes to draw and has fingers that are easy to guide . . . and so on. Depending on the size of your group, you might talk about what each person enjoys doing with his or her body. Acknowledge that everybody has some parts that are stronger and some that are weaker. Affirm that each body is a one of a kind gift from God, and each is loved by God.

Tell the group you know a song that has fun using the body's parts. Ask the group if they have ever sung or danced the Hokey Pokey. Talk about where they did this. Stand in a circle and sing and dance the song together. If the group wants to add other body parts, enjoy the fun of taking turns making up new verses. When finished, ask the group to help you create a prayer.

Prayer: *Thank you, God, for our bodies. Thank you, God, for our elbows, and our [children name parts]. Help us to love our bodies like you do. Help us to take care of them and use them well. Help us to honor our bodies and those of others too this week. Amen.*

9 Gather Life-giving Gifts

Leader preparation: Perhaps your group has become aware of a specific need that people near you or far away have in order to keep their bodies strong and well. Most denominations have websites with lots of information about needs. Check out organizations near you, at your denominational site, or the Church World Service website for possible kits that are needed: http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kits_main. Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. Come to this session prepared with ideas, but also open to the group discerning a direction for a project together. Be aware of any children in your group who may have physical needs at this time.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) computer with Internet connection
- 8-to-10-foot clothesline, depending on your room size
- clothespins
- sign: “Gifts for Jesus”
- pieces of paper, roughly 3 inches x 5 inches
- markers
- (option) music such as “I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry” or other pieces the group enjoys

Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. (If you have not already read it to the group, see Activity #6 to set the context for this passage.) Elijah needed specific things for his body. All of us do. Ask what participants have seen that people needed for their bodies, but did not have. This could be clothes, food, school supplies, homes, and so forth. Read Matthew 25:40 together. Jesus tells us that we are to help those who are in need. Ask them who are “the least of these”?

Talk about specific things the group has seen others do to honor and care for others. If you have a computer connection, you might expand the conversation to include some stories from Church World Service, <http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer>; Heifer International, <http://www.heifer.org/>; or another organization that supplies aid to those in need. Hang the sign “Gifts for Jesus” on the clothesline. Give each person one or two 3-inch x 5-inch cards. Ask each person to pray and think about one or two things she or he could do this week that would help someone else care for his or her body. Invite each to hang his or her card on the clothesline when finished. You may want to play music as they do this.

Form a circle together and pray: *God, help us to love our bodies and the bodies of others, too. We pray that, one day, every person will have the food, clothes, shelter, and things they need. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Reflect

Consider what each learner showed as a strength in this session. What is your sense about how each one feels about the body he or she has been given? What discoveries do you think some of the learners made? Do you need any additional resources or assistance to learn with this group? Give thanks for the moments of learning together today

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The Woman at the Well

John 41–42 Paraphrased

(Identify the location of your pretend well and your village. You may want to use blocks to build a well or put a dark circle on the floor. Choose one person to be Jesus and one to be the woman. Part of your group can be the disciples and part of them the people from the village.)

Some of the people in Judea didn't like the way Jesus was teaching and talking to people. Jesus decided he would leave that area and go to Galilee. The shortest way to walk there was through Samaria. So, even though Jesus had been taught that the Samaritans did not love and serve God the way they should and he should stay away from them, he took his disciples and walked into Samaria.

(Disciples and Jesus walk toward a place in your room where you have a pretend well.)

He came to a town called Sychar (Sigh car). When he saw Jacob's well, a very sacred place to Jews and Samaritans, he realized he was tired. It was really hot. It was about lunchtime. *(Jesus can sigh, mop brow, and so forth.)*

He sent the disciples into town to buy food. *(Disciples head off as Jesus points them away.)*

A Samaritan woman came to the well to get water. *(Woman comes to the well.)* Most of the women came early in the morning, but she came alone late in the day when it was really hot.

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink of water." *(The two converse. Depending on your group, they may repeat after you and create their own inflections, or they simply act out the conversation.)*

She was shocked! "You are a Jew, and you are asking me for water?" She knew Jews and Samaritans never used the same cups and bowls. *(She shows her shock.)*

Jesus answered her, "If you only knew what God wants to give you and who I am, you would ask me for living water."

She said, "But mister, you don't even have anything to lower into this well to get me water! Do you think you can do things no one else has ever done?"

Attachment: Activity 3 *(continued)*

Jesus said, “Look, whoever drinks this water is going to get thirsty again. The water I give will become like a spring inside of a person and will give him or her life that lasts forever.

The woman said, “Mister, give me that water!”

Jesus talked more with the woman. He talked with her about the things in her life that were hurting her. She was amazed at what he knew about her. *(Disciples begin to reenter.)*

When the disciples came back, they were shocked! But none of them questioned Jesus. *(Disciples act shocked.)*

The woman was so excited, she left her water jar and ran back to the village. *(Woman runs off toward the village.)* To anyone who would listen she said, “I met a man who told me everything I ever did. Do you think he is the Messiah? Is he the one God is sending to us?”

Many went to meet Jesus. *(People come from the village to Jesus.)* When they heard what he had to teach, they believed his message too. *(They pretend to listen and nod their heads.)*

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

As you learn with participants ages five to fourteen, you will discover that they have a wide range of exposure to the scripture. You may have fairly young children who have been taught Bible stories since birth, and youth who are new to exploring scripture. Some of the younger children may still struggle with reading anything that is not simple and basic. Reading skills may present a difficulty for teens as well. Use a variety of gifts the body enjoys—art, movement, drama, music, in addition to reading—to engage each learner. When you find learners who like to lead small groups, engage them in helping you involve each learner by leading small group activities. Some learners may be good at using one-on-one time with younger members of the group to help. Each learner will bring his or her own experiences and understandings to the scriptures. Their attention to details that others may miss is a gift they can give to one another. Celebrate this diversity and honor one another with them.

About this Exploration

Through careful study and prayer, we discern scripture's guidance for faithful living. From the creation of human beings in Genesis to the Gospel accounts of God Incarnate in Jesus Christ, scripture references and celebrates the human body. The body is a source of wonder in the Psalms, of delight in the Songs of Solomon, and of hope in the New Testament. We learn of God's tender embrace of humanity, made in God's very image. We discover bodies of all ages, abilities, and healthi-

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Genesis 2:4b–25
Romans 12:1–8

Leader Preparation

As we begin the study of scripture, we find the stories full of people using well, misusing, honoring, and challenging their bodies. The Bible Focus Passages for this Exploration are full of body images. God creates men and women. Paul stresses that we are to use our bodies for God's glory. He even uses the metaphor of the body for the church. Prayerfully stand in front of a mirror. What parts of your body do you easily honor? What parts do you use well? Think of your group. From what you know about each person, how easy or hard is it for them to honor and use their body? Prayerfully consider ways you can affirm and encourage them to honor their bodies as you enjoy these activities together in this session. Are there specific ways you could engage some of the learners or other adults with any of today's activities? This could be helpful to you and to the learners in meeting the needs of this large age-range of learners.

Prayer: God, you made each of us in your image. You knew us even before we were born. You even love the hair on our heads. You bless us with talents, some we have used and some we have not. Help me today to be your voice and guide for this group. Help each one to know more fully how precious they are to you by what we do and say together. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

ness—multifaceted and diverse. While scripture cannot be used as an inerrant blueprint for modern living, it presents the opportunity to continually evaluate and reimagine the miraculous and amazing vessel that God not only gives but co-habits with us. Scripture is a living, breathing source continually growing and changing as it empowers persons in all ages and of all ages.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 My Body Is Wonderfully Made! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Attachment: Activity 1. Note the variety of body motions included in the reading. You may think of others to include. If you have learners in the twelve-to-fourteen-year age bracket, consider inviting one of them to read and/or have them coach and encourage the younger children with the actions while they do them as well. You might want to break up into small groups and have each group make a circle and face each other for this reading.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- “Genesis 2:5–9, 15–25,” Attachment: Activity 1
- paper and crayons or markers
- (optional) music

Take time to familiarize the group with the Bible. If you have learners who have read and used the Bible a great deal, engage them in telling what they know about it. At a minimum, give each learner a Bible and show them all where to find the Table of Contents in the front. Explain that this is the list of the books in the Bible. There are sixty-six. Some of the books are short, and some are long. Some are letters to people and churches. Some are stories of what happened to people and groups. Others describe what people learned about God and what God taught them through prophets, teachers, and Jesus. The first part tells the story of God's relationships with people before Jesus and is called the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament. The second part tells the story of Jesus' life and what happened with those who followed him. This is called the Christian Scriptures or New Testament. Today you will be exploring one of the first stories in the Bible. Ask the group to name and find the first book in the Bible.

In Genesis 1 and 2, there are two stories that tell us in different ways that God created the whole world and everything in it, including people. (See Activity 3 if you want to explore the uniqueness and sameness of these two stories.) Today you are going to read the one in Genesis 2. Invite the children to notice as you read the story how many different things God did and the man and woman did. Read Attachment: Activity 1 and act out the motions.

Ask the participants some of the following questions:

- What do you think God felt about man and woman after they were created?
- What do you think God feels about your body?
- What are some of the things about you God really likes?
- What are some of the things you really like? Are these the same or different?

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Invite each person to draw a picture of him- or herself. Enjoy drawing and talking about these together. You may want to enjoy music as you draw. It, too, is a creation we enjoy with our ears and our bodies as we tap our feet or dance.

2 You Got to Be in Pictures!

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 2:5–25. Consider for a moment the uniqueness of the creation of man and woman. In the first story of creation, in Genesis 1:27, God even identifies man and woman as being made in God’s own image. This activity is created to have fun and celebrate the beauty of our bodies and of creation itself, if weather is permitting. Gather several inexpensive digital cameras. Cameras with film are also a possibility, but they do not allow you to have immediate results and there is a cost for printing the pictures. This might be a great opportunity to engage teens to pair up with a younger child, or to invite other adults to come and help. You may be surprised how many young children are already very good at taking pictures. Before publishing any photos, be sure to get written permission from parents, guardians, or caregivers.

Supplies:

- Bible or children’s Bible storybook
- several inexpensive digital cameras, or a couple of video cameras could be used as an alternative
- signed permission slips to publish photos
- (optional) laptop or other computer—some means to show the pictures

Talk with the learners about some of the things they create. Ask them how they feel about some of the special things they have made. Do they keep them? Hang them up? Read Genesis 2:5–25 from the Bible, or find the story of creation in a children’s Bible storybook. Talk about how God may feel about creation. How do they think God particularly feels about men and women and children? How are we God’s special artwork?

Invite the group to go in pairs or small groups, depending on the number of digital cameras available, and take photos of each other. Encourage them to smile, dance, pose, make faces, frown, stand like statues, and so forth. If it is a nice day outside and you have plenty of adult supervision and a safe area with boundaries and without traffic, you may want to go outside and add some of God’s other creations in the photo. (As an alternative, use a couple of video cameras and have each child do a short piece. Make it possible for each person to see one of his or her photos on the camera screen.)

If possible, while you continue with another activity, have a few of your teens download the photos into a PowerPoint presentation. This can be used at the end of your session. If caregivers have given permission for the photos being used in worship, this could be a great piece to share a little bit of what your group has been doing together.

(Activity from *Dream Walking for Kids* by Donna Rose-Heim. Used by permission. Go to “Dream Walking with God,” <http://www.dreamwalkingwithgod.com/>, or www.amazon.com for more information.)

3 Different Voices

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 1:20–2:4a. Then read Genesis 2:4b–25. As you read, write a note or two about what you see as being the same and being different in these two stories of creation. Each tells us that God created the world

and all that is in it. Each describes creation in a distinct way. People who actually witness the very same event often describe it differently. Each person brings his or her own experiences, interest, and vocabulary to the stories. As we learn what the scripture tells us about the body, it helps us to understand that each scripture is distinctive. Even though it may describe the same event as another scripture passage, we hear a different voice that helps us to see and learn more about the event described. For example, two of the four Gospels (Matthew and Luke) tell the story of Jesus' birth. Each one focuses on the event from different perspectives, yet both tell about the birth. By first familiarizing yourself with the two creation stories in Genesis, you may begin to see how most of the stories told about creation today blend the two stories together. As we engage with scripture to learn more about honoring the body, it is important for us to understand what is actually written in the Bible and not what we think is there.

Supplies:

- Bibles for each pair of learners
- a youth or adult to help lead two small groups
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Stand in front of your whole group and do a dance, move chairs around, or do another physical activity. Do not ask for the group's attention; simply begin your activity. You may want to talk, or you may not. Do this for 30–60 seconds. Now ask the participants to get in groups of four and take turns telling one another what they saw happening "in your learning space." Do not focus their conversations on you or any other event in the room. After each one has told his or her version, ask the small groups to talk about how their stories were the same and how they were different. If time permits, ask each group to tell the total group one thing they had the same and something they had named that was different.

Explain that whenever more than one person experiences an event or tries to tell someone else about what he or she believes, things are not the same. Talk about what the learners think could make this happen.

Ask the group to work with you to collectively tell the story of creation. What do they remember that they have read before? What have they seen on TV? Write the highlights of what they say on newsprint or whiteboard. Do not correct or affirm items or the order, simply record them.

Explain that as we read scripture to help us understand how to honor our bodies, we will sometimes find stories about the same event or belief that are a little different. They come to us sometimes from different writers and from different time periods when unique or special words were used. Invite the group to help you explore two creation stories in the Bible.

Divide the group into two parts. Ask a youth or other adult to help lead one or both groups. Assign Genesis 1:20–2:4a to one group and Genesis 2:4b–25 to the other group. Ask the leader to pick one person to read their assigned passage from a Good News Bible or *The Message* to help make the words more understandable to your group; pick another person to write on newsprint the highlights or order of how creation is made. Have the leader start and stop the group to get several details from each story. Bring the group back together and have the leader talk about his or her group's creation story. Ask the group to notice what is the same and what is different. Does the story you told together have parts of each story in it? Ask the group to name what both of these stories tell us about our bodies.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 My Part (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Romans 12:1–8. This was part of a letter written by Paul to the Christians in Rome. He hoped to visit them one day. Notice the different ways Paul encourages his readers to care for their bodies. How does he encourage them to use their bodies for the benefit of the whole church? As you consider the passage, think about how you use your body to help to build the church. What body part(s) do you use as you work with this group of learners? In your family? In the church?

Supplies:

- Bibles for each participant or pair of participants
- (optional) marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Ask the participants how many of them like to get a letter in the mail or an e-mail. What makes getting a letter fun or not so fun? Do they ever write letters or e-mails? To whom do they like to write?

Ask the learners to open their Bibles to the Table of Contents and go to the list of books for the Christian Scriptures or the New Testament and find the book of Romans. You may want to read through the order of the books with them until they reach Romans (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, and then Romans). Explain this is a letter that a man named Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome. Some of them were having a hard time honoring or taking care of their bodies and the church. He writes to them because he wants to help them. Turn to the book and read chapter 12, verses 1–8 together one time. Read it a second time; each time the group hears something Paul is asking them to do with their bodies, invite them to raise their hands. You may want to write these actions on newsprint or a whiteboard. Older children may enjoy writing the list.

Invite the participants to talk about how they care for their bodies. Ask some of the following:

- What things do they do with their bodies?
- What things do they choose not to do?
- What do they think is their strongest part?
- What talents do they have with the help of their bodies, for example singing, jumping, running, dancing, sports, talking, and so forth?
- What happens if they don't care for their bodies?
- Does it change their ability to use their talents?

Paul describes the church, or body of believers, as being like a body. Each person has a specific part to make the church body strong. What do the learners see as their part? If they were to pick a body part that they think they are most like, what would it be? Some groups may enjoy talking about these with one another and possibly adding additional ideas or viewpoints. End this activity by giving thanks for all the unique ways each member of the group helps to make his or her body and the church stronger.

5 Finding Body in the Scripture

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the use of a concordance either on line, in book form, or in both. Look up the word “body.” It would be helpful to have several concordances available. Check your church library or get access to several computers, if needed, so each learner can see how a concordance works.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- computer and Internet access for <http://www.biblegateway.com> and/or a Bible concordance in book form

Explain to the learners what a concordance is. It helps you to find words and people in the Bible. Because the Bible is so big—sixty-six books in all—it can be very hard to find something, even when we remember what book it was in. A concordance also helps us to see how many times something or someone is referred to in the Bible. Using the website Bible Gateway with a computer (and/or a Bible concordance in book form), show the group how to use a concordance. The words will be listed alphabetically. Note which version of the Bible your concordance is designed for, or on Bible Gateway notice how many different translations can be reviewed. This is helpful as some translations will use a different word. For example the word *body* might be *form*, *person*, or *group*.

Look up the word *body* together. You will most likely find more than two hundred references. Bible Gateway counts these for you. If you are using a book, estimate the number of references listed. Are there other words about the body the learners would like to look up, possibly a body part like arm, head, or even nose? Invite each learner to look up a few passages until he or she discovers one to tell the group about. You may need to pair up older learners with younger learners for this activity. When the research is done, ask learners to state what they have learned about honoring the body from the scriptures that were picked.

6 Forming the Body

Leader preparation: Find either a children’s Bible with the story of Genesis or an easy to read Bible, such as *The Message*.

Supplies:

- children’s Bible or Bible
- (optional) video of creation, such as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxUmt4GG2kI>, or a Lego® version at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U_JYDMqfIU&feature=related
- clay or Play Dough (see <http://www.easy-child-crafts.com/play-dough-recipe.html> for some options)

Using a children’s Bible, Bible, or video, share a story of creation with the group. If reading from the Bible, read Genesis 2:5–25. Ask the group to notice how God created men and women. God breathes life into them. In Genesis 1, it says humanity is even made in God’s image. Just as God created and creates, so do we. Ask what the learners like to create. Using clay or Play Dough, encourage each learner to create a form of a body. It might be their body or another person’s. As you create together, talk about the parts of the body needed to create. This can include body parts you can see, like fingers and eyes, and those you cannot, like the brain, the heart that pumps blood to the whole body, the lungs that breathe the air so we can move and think, and so forth. The clay forms may be taken home, or the clay reused if you would like to create additional things together.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Encourage the Church or Family (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Romans 12:1–8. Have marker, newsprint, and a means of posting the signs in your facility, if you choose to do so.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint and markers
- sticky tack or other means of hanging signs, if you choose to do so

Invite the learners to read Romans 12:1–8. (If you have not already done so, see Activity 4 to help you introduce this passage.) Notice what Paul encourages the Romans to do to care for their bodies and for the church’s body. Name or list these together. Either in groups or as individuals, pick one thing people can do to honor their bodies or the church’s body. Make a slogan or drawing or write a word to express this message. This could be hung in the facility, in the homes of the participants, or in your room if you have the same space each time you meet.

Close with a prayer such as this: *Thank you, God, for giving us our bodies. Help us to take care of them and do great things with them for you! Amen.* Or invite one of the learners to close your activity with prayer.

8 When the Body Isn’t Working

Leader preparation: Spend time looking at the picture “Out of Work” by Käthe Kollwitz. What emotions does it raise in you? Does it raise any memories? Have you personally struggled with your health or the health of a loved one? Think about the group you lead. What do you know about their families’ experiences with illness and being jobless? Prayerfully prepare to encourage those that may find this picture very close to their home and hearts. Display the art where everyone can readily see it, although you may want to keep it covered until you are ready for the group to view it.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: “Out of Work,” by Käthe Kollwitz, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1502057828?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401

Discern which participants enjoy reading out loud and which do not. Invite someone to read if he or she would like to do so. Encourage each learner to engage in a way that he or she enjoys and is working from his or her strengths. Talk about God making us in God’s image. Read Genesis 1:26–2:4a out loud. Does this mean that all of us can do everything? Can everyone run? Can everyone bake well? Can everyone fix computers? Each of us does different things well and some not so well. Sometimes our bodies get sick, and we can’t do the things we normally do. Learners may want to talk about being sick or about those they know who have been sick. It is not easy to be sick, and it can keep us from doing some of the things with our bodies that we want to do.

Show the group the picture “Out of Work” by Käthe Kollwitz. Do not tell them its title yet. Encourage them to look at it from different angles. Ask them to guess what each person in the picture might say if he or she could speak. Pick one character at a time on which to focus your conversation.

Now, tell them the name of the picture. Ask: *Does this change any of your ideas?*

Whether our bodies are able to do all we want them to do or not, we are still made in God’s image. God still loves us, and God still thinks we are “good” creations. Ask them if they think what you have said sounds right or not. What do they remember from the Bible or your activities together that help them know whether or not this is right?

9 Made in God’s Image

Leader preparation: Read Genesis 1:26–2:4a. Think about what it means to be made in God’s image. Either get access to the song “Imago Dei” via the Internet or be prepared to sing or share the words yourself or have a musician come to do so.

Supplies:

- Bible
- song: “Imago Dei” by Jill Kirsten Warner, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2duLAakNyuw>
- (optional) rhythm instruments

Ask learners if anyone has ever said to them that they look like someone else, such as a parent or a brother or a sister. Have they ever noticed that they are speaking or acting like one of their family members or close friends? Sometimes we become like those we spend a lot time with.

Invite the group to read Genesis 1:26–2:4a with you. What do the participants think it means that we are made in God’s image or made to be like God? In what ways do we carry God’s image by what we say and do?

Introduce the song “Imago Dei” by Jill Christian Warner as one example of how to express being made in God’s image through music. You may use the Internet link in the supply list or sing it yourself for them. This could also be a time to recruit a musician. Invite the participants to dance, play instruments, and sing along as you are led. Close this activity by inviting a learner to pray.

Reflect

What did you or the learners discover today that was new about honoring the body? How well did each participant join in? Do any of them need some additional help from you or the learning space to participate more fully? How does your body feel as you have completed this session?

Genesis 2:5–9, 15–25

(Possible actions are included with this story. Encourage participants to add to these or create others, using all the body motions and senses they can.)

When God made *(demonstrate with hands making things)* heaven and earth, before any grasses or shrubs grew from the ground, there hadn't been any rain yet on the Earth. There wasn't anyone around to plant seeds and raise crops *(act like planting or hoeing)*. The whole earth was watered by springs under the ground. God created Man out of dirt from the ground *(pretend to take dirt and create something in your hands)*, and God blew into Man's nose the breath of life *(blow air)*. The Man came alive *(dance or jump as you choose to show being alive)*. Man was a living soul!

Then God planted a garden in Eden *(pretend to plant)* in the east. God put the Man he had made into the garden. God made all kinds of trees grow up from the ground. The trees were beautiful to see *(look all around, pretending to see beauty)* and grew good things to eat *(pretend to eat some kind of fruit)*. The Tree of Life was in the very center of the garden along with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God took the Man and set him down in the Garden of Eden *(pretend to sit)* to work the ground *(make hoeing motions)* and keep it in order. God commanded the Man, "You can eat from any tree in the garden except from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Don't eat from it. The moment you eat from it, you will die."

God said, "It's not good for the Man to be alone; I'll make him someone to help him—a friend." So God formed from the dirt of the ground all the animals of the field and all the birds of the air *(pretend to shape all kinds of animals, big and small)*.

God brought them to the Man to see what he would name them. Whatever the Man called each living thing, that became its name. The Man named the cattle, the birds of the air, and all the wild animals. He still didn't find a good friend.

God put the Man into a deep sleep *(pretend to sleep)*. As he slept, God removed one of Man's ribs and replaced it with flesh. God then used the rib from Man to create Woman. God introduced her to the Man.

The Man said, "Finally! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh! Name her Woman, for she was made from Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh. The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they didn't mind at all. They felt no shame.

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Whether the learners are five years old or fourteen years old, each has experienced someone leading or teaching them. Most will have had both good and bad experiences following someone else. The learners will be familiar with many cartoons and movies that contain people who help others to become more like them or to follow in their footsteps. Sometimes these characters help others to grow in love and peace; in other cases, they may lead others to grow in anger and hurtful actions. The younger learners may still see Jesus as a kind of “superhero,” while older learners may be at a point of sensing more of Jesus’ humanity and struggles that are not unlike theirs. Helping the learners to see discipleship as something we are and do wherever we are and whatever age we are can be a challenge in a world where learning is often very compartmentalized and graduations mark successful endings.

About this Exploration

When Jesus said to the first disciples, “Come, follow me,” he was speaking not only to their hearts and minds, but also to a reorientation of their entire bodies. He expected a physical movement from one place to another and a commitment of their whole person to a new way of living. All Christian disciples are incarnations of God’s love and compassion. For modern-day disciples, following Jesus remains an embodied task—one rooted firmly in practice and lifestyle as well as belief. As disciples we are still invited to follow Jesus with our whole selves, engaged body and soul, by God’s grace and love. As we care for and with our bodies, in the daily practices of eating, movement, resting, and relating to other God-created beings, we offer new and profound models of Christian discipleship as an embodied practice for others to embrace.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Psalm 71
Mark 5:21–43

Leader Preparation

Following Jesus, or becoming his disciple, is a lifelong journey of learning to follow him with our whole mind, body, and strength. Just as he had a body, so do we. We can use our bodies in ways that bring life and God's love to others. Consider when you first became a disciple of Jesus. How did this happen for you? As you live your life day by day, consider where you demonstrate your discipleship the best by what you say and do and who you are with others. Now think about your learners. Where are they on the road to discipleship? What can you affirm about each one's faith walk? What opportunities can you give one or more of the participants to help lead a small group or activity? With a wide age range, you may even find your younger students able to lead others when given the opportunity to do so.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus. As he brought you to us in a human form, we have been able to see and understand your ways more clearly. Help me to use my body and all of its talents to help bring me and this group closer to you today. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Make a Human Statue (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about how many learners might be in this session. Decide in advance whether to break into groups of three or four to work separately on portions of this scripture, or to work as a total group to create human statues that illustrate the sections of Psalm 71. A reader reads the section, and then the small group or total group works together to use their bodies to stand or sit, and so forth, in such a way as to demonstrate what the scripture is saying. No one moves for a few moments after the sculpture is completed. The seven suggested passages of Psalm 71 are: 1–3, 4–8, 9–13, 14–16, 17–18, 19–21, and 22–24. You may choose to divide Psalm 71 differently or do only a few of these sections depending on the time available to you and your group's interest level.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Ask the group if they have ever seen a sculpture. (You may need to describe what a sculpture is if you have a young group or show them an example or picture.) What kind have they seen and where have they seen them? There may be some near your learning space; if you are meeting in a church, you may have some very close at hand. A person who creates a sculpture is called a sculptor. He or she uses rock or clay or other material to create something beautiful to share. Most sculptures are also created to share a message with the viewer.

In this activity the learners get to be sculptors. Either in small groups or as a total group, learners will help sculpt the passages using human bodies from the group. If you are doing small groups, choose one person to be the sculptor, but change that person with each verse grouping. The sculptor guides each person to stand or sit or lie down, to raise arms or legs, and so forth in such a way that together they demonstrate the message of the scripture. If you are working in small groups, give each group a chance to read their portion of the scripture and show the others their sculpture. If working as a total group, you might have the sculptors use only three or four people at a time so there are people to view and talk about the sculpture. Possible passages are listed in the leader preparation section of this activity. Sculpt all or a part of these passages together.

Close this activity by talking about how it felt to be part of a sculpture. *What was it like to be positioned by someone else? What was it like to create a sculpture with other people's bodies? How did you honor one another as you worked? Could you have honored one another more?*

2 Following Jesus with Our Whole Body

Leader preparation: Make up individual newsprint sheets with the headings Touch, Taste, Sight, Sound, Smell. Lay these on the table or floor where your group will gather to hear scripture. Read through Mark 5:21–43 and consider the variety of senses used as these people interacted with Jesus.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint titled with each of the senses
- markers

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Ask the learners what they know about our five senses. Encourage the group to name them. The youth in your group might also list “intuition” as a sense. Lay the newsprint on the table or on the floor. If possible, give responsibility for each of the five sheets to individual members of the group who like to write. Ask the group to listen as you read Mark 5:21–43 (or have a member of their group read). Invite them to notice what senses Jesus and the people he meets use in their experiences together. Some may be specifically named, and others will be suggested by the story. After the scripture is read, name together some of the senses used. It may help this process to focus on one sense at a time. As you list these together, discuss how the use of this sense gave life to those involved. Were there people in the story who used senses in a way that didn’t honor or respect the body? Depending on your conversation and the time limitations, you may want to read the story again and see if you discover additional senses that were used.

Ask the group to think about what senses you have used in your activities so far in your session. Are there other senses they could have used, or could they have used some of senses more?

③ Who Is Jesus?

Leader preparation: Either use an Internet connection to get a diverse group of pictures of Jesus, or collect ones from friends and your church. It is important for the participants to see a great diversity of pictures of Jesus. Consider what is most important to you about Jesus that made you choose to be his disciple. You may want to tell the group what this is later in the activity.

Supplies:

- pictures of Jesus from a variety of perspectives and cultures
- website: “Images of Jesus,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPeNsd9XJzI>
- paper, markers
- concordance, either online or in book form
- Bibles

Talk with the group about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Listen carefully to their responses. Explain that if we want to be Jesus’ disciple, that is, follow him, it is really important that we know who he was and is, what he stood and stands for, and what he did and does not stand for. What ways can the group name that they can find out who Jesus is? List these together. At some point the Bible will be named. Show the group a concordance, either online or in book form. If they know what a concordance is, let them explain to you how it works. If not, explain that the words we find in the Bible are in the concordance in alphabetical order, like a dictionary. You can look up a word and discover how many times and where it is listed in the Bible.

Look up the name “Jesus.” How many times is it listed? Today you want to know what stories the learners remember from the Bible that tell them about Jesus. They may want to look in a children’s Bible to see pictures that may remind them of stories they have learned. Try to identify with them the things about Jesus they really know from stories.

Explain that people have tried to draw Jesus for a long, long time. People have drawn Jesus in ways they thought he should be. So, sometimes, even though we know Jesus was born in the Middle East and had darker hair, skin, and eyes, we will see a really light-skinned, blue-eyed Jesus. Or we may see a Jesus looking like a Spanish person or a Native American or a black person. Each of the artists

is trying to show some part about Jesus that is important to him or her. Look at several different pictures together. Use pictures available to you or in books from your library, or go to the Internet for a collection.

After you see the pictures, ask the learners to draw a picture of Jesus that shows what they believe is most important about Jesus. As the learners are willing, invite them to show their picture to the group and talk about what it is about Jesus that makes them want to be his disciple.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Who's My Leader? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Who do you learn from and follow today? How is this person the same or different from the people you followed when you were five or fourteen? Read Psalm 71.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Ask the group to think of someone that they follow. This may be someone whom they know or someone on television or the news. Invite those who want to, before they name the person, to verbally and with motions act out some of the things the person has taught them. If this is someone others in the group know, encourage them to guess who it is. If not, ask the demonstrator to tell who the person is after they have acted out what they would like to show the group.

Invite the group to turn to Psalm 71. The Book of Psalms is a collection of song lyrics that were written to help people talk to God and also listen for God. Read the identified passages, stopping after each one to allow participants to identify some of the reasons the writer has chosen to be a follower of God.



5 Limitations and Stretches for the Body

Leader preparation: Study the picture "Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope." What emotions and thoughts does it elicit in you? What do you imagine is part of the message its creator is trying to share? Be aware of learners who may be more in touch with physical challenges than some others because of their own or another family member's physical challenges.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: "Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope," <http://www.art.com/products/p13951106-sa-i2746744/man-in-a-wheelchair-on-a-tightrope.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=c5dd66dac7d541809fb8256c7d5aa3064&searchstring=wheelchair+and+tightrope>

Show the group the artwork. Ask participants simply to look at it and tell what thoughts and feelings come to them. Discuss some of the following:

- What do you think the man is doing?
- How do you think he is feeling?
- Are there people watching him?

- If you were this person, what would you do next?

Talk about the ways each of our bodies has strengths and challenges. Some of us see really well; some don't. Some of us run fast; some need assistance even to walk. What are some other differences? Whatever challenges we face, our bodies are perfectly made for us. The challenges we face make us, in part, who we are. For example, the person who doesn't see well may have an incredible memory. The person who uses a wheelchair may be more focused on the people nearby and take time to talk with them. Invite the group to talk about their challenges. What is difficult for their bodies to do?

Mark 5:25–34 tells about a woman who had been bleeding for a very long time. People in her time thought she was unclean or untouchable because of that. She had spent all her money trying to get well. She went to Jesus for help. Read the story together. The ask questions like these:

- What do you think the woman might have felt before she met Jesus?
- What about after Jesus healed her?
- Why do you think Jesus called her “daughter”?
- How do you go to Jesus when you need help?
- How does Jesus help you?

If you have an older group, you may want to discuss why they think some people are healed, like this woman, and others continue to deal with their physical challenge. There is no simple answer to this question. You may share the story about a woman who had cancer. She was much loved in her church. She asked the elders to pray for her healing and anoint her. The elders did this with great faith that her cancer would be removed. When it was not and the woman grew weaker, the elders were very upset. She called them back to her home. She said, “You don't understand. I was healed. Before you prayed for me, I was afraid to die. Now I am not. It was my spirit that needed to be healed. Thank you for helping me.” What does this story mean to your learners about healing and how it happens in unique ways?

As we follow Jesus, what are some ways we can help ourselves and others deal with physical challenges?



⑥ Training the Body for Discipleship

Leader preparation: How ready and fit for discipleship are the minds, hearts, and bodies of your group? Not unlike an athlete who must train to win a race, or a performer or artist who must develop his or her skills and talents, there are things that a disciple must do to be ready and able to serve Jesus. If you have nonreaders or early readers, you may want to pair them with a youth or adult to help them enjoy this activity. If you have a small younger group, you may choose to do Attachment: Activity 6 together.

Supplies:

- “Training Routines for Disciples of Jesus,” Attachment: Activity 6

Talk with the children about what and how much an athlete or performer does to train and prepare before a big game, event, or performance. Identify some of the things they currently practice to do. Include dance, theater, singing, art, sports, and so forth.

Just as people need to prepare to do sports or perform, there are a variety of things that are important for a disciple of Jesus to do to be ready and able to fol-

low Jesus. Our body, minds, and hearts must be ready to follow Jesus. Ask the group to list some of the things they think are important for us to do to build up our mind, body, and heart. Give each learner a copy of Attachment: Activity 6 so that each can unscramble the words about things we need to do to train our body, hearts, and minds to follow Jesus. *How many things that you already do are listed on the sheet? Did you think of ones that are not included on the sheet?* Close this activity by encouraging the learners to pick one thing they can do this week that will help them be stronger disciples. (Answers might include love, Bible reading, giving, fasting, exercise, prayer, serving, worship, telling others, learning, and forgiving.)

7 Whom Do We Disciple? (Easy Preparation)

Sending & Serving Activities

 **Leader preparation:** Read Matthew 28:19–20. Think about the people you have helped to become disciples and the ones you are currently helping. In your own experience, has this been easy or difficult? In what ways? How have you learned how to identify and help others to become disciples?

Supplies:

- Bible

Explain that before Jesus left the twelve disciples and the others who followed him, he said the words reported in Matthew 28:19–20. This is really a command more than a request. In Jesus' time, if you were truly someone's disciples, you helped others to become a disciple, too. Read Matthew 28:19–20, and invite discussion with questions like these:

- What is Jesus commanding them to do?
- Who has helped you to become a disciple of Jesus?
- How did they do this? Where have they taken you to help? What have they said to you?
- What have they taught you?

Ask the learners if they have helped others to get to know Jesus. You may have learners who have brought others to your sessions. Perhaps they have younger siblings they sometimes read or tell stories about Jesus to. Maybe they have helped adults in the church or in their neighborhood to know more about Jesus. To help someone become a disciple, you don't have to be older than him or her. If you can think of some ways the participants have taught you more about Jesus, tell them about some of these moments.

Ask each person to think of at least one person he or she can help disciple or bring to know Jesus better this week. As a group, think of some ways they might do this, such as invite someone to a church event, tell someone something about Jesus that is important to them, and/or write an e-mail or send a text with an encouraging word that Jesus might want shared with someone, and so forth.

Close with a prayer: *Dear God, Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for letting us be his disciples. Help us to help someone else to follow him this week. We quietly say the name to you of a person we hope to help disciple this week. (Be silent for a few seconds.) In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

8 Take My Life

Leader preparation: Bring hymnals or the words to this song to the group. Find a version, such as the one listed below, to play for the group. You could also recruit someone to sing the song for and with the group. If someone in your group is a musician, invite him or her to accompany the group as you sing.

Supplies:

- hymn: “Take My Life and Let it Be,” by Frances R. Havergal (tune: Hendon), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXy2MmMLjGO&feature=related>; lyrics, <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/html/t/m/tmlalib.htm>
- paper and markers

Bring hymnals or the printed lyrics for the learners to see. If you use a hymnal, remember that the younger children may not be familiar with how to read the lines of a hymn. With the help of those who can, read the words to the first verse of “Take My Life and Let It Be” together. When you have read it, ask if there are any words the learners find unusual or unfamiliar. List these and talk about them. Repeat this with each verse.

Play the YouTube version of the song, or have someone sing it for and with the group. Invite the group to do one of two activities, or to make a choice individually. They can either draw a picture that illustrates a part of this song, or take the meaning of the words of the song and create a song or rap of their own in words they would use with their friends. Take time for those who would like to do so to share their creations with the group.

Close with a prayer. You may want to invite someone from the group to pray or read the first verse of the hymn as a prayer together.

9 Follow the Leader

Leader preparation: Arrange for a space where your group can run and jump and make noise without disturbing others for the last part of this activity. If the weather permits, this could be a great outside activity. If you have participants who are in wheelchairs or on crutches, be certain to pick an area that allows them to participate as much as possible.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- open play area

Jesus was called “Rabbi,” which means teacher, and he picked people to teach to follow him. He wanted them to learn to do the things he did and to tell people the same stories he did. A disciple means “one who follows or learns.” There is an old blessing among ancient Jews, “May you walk in the dust of your rabbi.” What they meant by that is that they wanted you to be so close to your rabbi or teacher and what he taught that if you were walking, you would be covered by the dust kicked up by his heels. A disciple was and is someone who follows another person and seeks to think and act as he or she would. Christians are called to be disciples of Jesus.

Jesus taught many people. One man was Jairus. We read about him in Mark 5. Turn to this chapter together. Read verses 21–24 and 35–43. What were some things Jesus taught Jairus? When you have discussed this, invite the group to play “Follow the Leader” in an open space, if it is available. What are some things

Jesus and his disciples did with their bodies? Did they run, jump, laugh, and skip? Encourage a wide variety of motions and rotate who is the leader. (If you don't have the space for this activity, stay where you are and do Follow the Leader with hand gestures and facial expressions.)

Close with a prayer: *Jesus, teach us to be your disciples with every part of our bodies—our arms, our legs, our minds, our toes, our hearts, and everything. Help us to follow you. Amen.*

Reflect

In what ways have you and the group used your bodies to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in your activities? Are there some of the senses you could use more in the future? Give thanks to God for some of the “aha!” moments you shared today.

Training Routines for Disciples of Jesus

These help to make a strong body, mind, and heart to follow him.

Unscramble the following words to find ideas for training.

EOVL

BLEBIINGRADE

VEGI

TSAF

CSEXREIE

YRPA

VESRE

PRWIOHS

LETLTHORES

LNREA

EVFROIG

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Depending on the ages in your group, some may be feeling the first twinges of affection for another person. Others may still be at the age of snuggling with caregivers and wrestling with friends. Some learners may have had very positive experiences with touch and feel good about their bodies, while others may have had a negative or painful experience of touch. Others may feel unlovely or not handsome by cultural standards. Be sensitive to responses and needs as you talk about honoring the body as it is connected to Christian tradition.

About this Exploration

Tradition presents a mixed perspective on the body. Part of tradition upholds the body as created by God and proclaimed as “good.” Hebrew law contains regulations to keep the body safe and healthy, and Hebrew praise includes joyous movement. Jesus shared God’s presence in bodily form—touching, laughing, walking, eating, speaking, and exploring. Through Jesus we see the body as “the temple” of God’s spirit. The body is cherished during Sabbath time and engaged fully during worship through song, dance, touch, and more. The same tradition also sees the body as “evil” and opposed to the Spirit, leading individuals and groups to abuse it and attempt to limit its impact on the Spirit. Because this part of tradition does not agree with the teachings of Jesus, it is important to go beyond its influence and seek to honor, feed, celebrate, and engage the body on our spiritual journeys.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Song of Solomon

4:1–7, 5:10–16

Luke 7:36–50

Leader Preparation

The body was created with great beauty and many wonderful senses. To feel a breeze kiss one's cheek, to see the beauty or radiance in another, to feel the touch of another person, and more are all gifts the senses of our bodies allow us to experience. What kind of physical experiences and touch do you enjoy? How might your group experience the wonder and the beauty of the body, as well as the gift of touch, in ways that are both safe and honoring of the different needs and comfort levels of each participant? Be sensitive to learners who may be very uncomfortable with the body, particularly with touch, because of their personal experience and history. Invite additional adult leadership to be present and help to guide the group, particularly if your group is large or very diverse in age and ability. A 1-to-5 ratio of leaders and learners is ideal.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for my body and for the body of each participant. I ask that you help us to enjoy and be grateful for the gift of the body you have given to us. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from "Exploring and Engaging," at least one from "Discerning and Deciding," and at least one from "Sending and Serving." The first activity in each category is designed for "easy preparation" (able

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 What Is a Tradition? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about some traditions you had in your home church growing up and those in your church now. What Christian traditions are important to you? Gather needed supplies. You might also think of some family traditions as a way of helping participants understand how important they can be.

Supplies:

- Bible
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- paper and markers

Tell the group about some habits and beliefs you had growing up. It may help to focus specifically on traditions connected to celebrating birthdays. Ask the learners to talk about how they celebrate birthdays. These behaviors and celebrations that have been handed down to us over time are called traditions. The word comes from a Latin word *tradere*, which means "to transmit, to hand over, to give for safekeeping."

New traditions are sometimes created when old traditions are not helpful anymore. For example, we are learning about Christian tradition. There is a part of Christian tradition that taught people that their bodies were not good. They were taught to hide them under lots of clothes and to enjoy them as little as possible. Another part of Christian tradition teaches us that the body is a good thing. We are given it as a gift from God, and God wants us to enjoy it and use it in ways that help us and others.

What other ideas do the learners remember about the body that they have learned from scripture stories or from pictures in the church? Read Luke 7:36–50, and ask the group: *What traditions or ways of using the body do Jesus and the woman share?*

Invite the group to each draw a picture of him- or herself using the body to do something that person enjoys. As the learners draw, talk about the things they like to do and share some of the things you enjoy doing that are physical. This is a good opportunity to learn a little bit more about your learners and their lives outside of the church

2 Dance to the Lord

Leader preparation: Read 2 Samuel 6:12–15. As he danced, David used his whole body to honor God. Over the years of Christianity's development, there have been movements and periods when dancing was considered bad or sinful. In other periods, dancing has been used in worship to honor God. What or who do you think changed? What has been your experience with dancing and your faith? Find an area where the group can feel free to dance and enjoy honoring God together. Instrumental music or songs sung at camp or vacation Bible school, as well as from different cultures, are also great. This would be another good time to use musicians from your church or from within your group.

Honoring the Body

to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Supplies:

- Bible
- song: “Imago Dei” by Jill Kirsten Warner, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2duLAakNyuw>
- song: “I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry,” by John Ylvisaker (tune: Waterlife), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYnmtOI50ic>
- video: “Praise Dance—Kids ” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pS0Yyb1BEyo>

Read 2 Samuel 6:12–15, or, if you have a younger group, verse 14 only. How do the learners think it honored God for David to dance for God? Have they ever known someone who danced for God? Have they ever done so? If it is not discussed, bring up that in the Christian tradition, or the “growing up” of Christianity, there have been times that people thought dancing was awesome and other times that people thought it was wrong or a sin. Sometimes Christian believers have not agreed about what was good and bad. Can the learners guess why some people thought dancing was sinful? Why is dancing a good thing to do? As you talk about this together, be certain to bring up the ways our bodies respond to music and rhythms. Ask in what ways dancing is physically good for us and how might it please God for us to dance for God today.

Show the YouTube video “Praise Dance—Kids” as a demonstration of liturgical dance. In a space large enough to enjoy dancing together safely, play a variety of music. Dance with the learners in whatever way seems to celebrate God’s presence. You might even place a chair in front of the group to help them imagine God being with you and seeing the dance. Enjoy this time together. Invite the learners to help select a favorite piece of music from your collection or to sing a song, if there is time to do so.

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3 Many Kinds of Love

Leader preparation: Learners, even those who are age five, will have seen multiple kinds of love. Be thinking about some of the cartoons and movies that are popular right now for the various age groups. Consider showing short clips from some of these if this would help jump-start your conversation. A conversation starter could be “Kids Talk about True Love,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goq740IF1vg>, or use clips from popular movies such as *Princess Bride*, *Shrek*, or *Beauty and the Beast*. Be sensitive to young teens who are not heterosexual and who may already be feeling anxiety or discomfort caused by societal pressures. Christian tradition has often left these young people feeling unloved by God. Although the younger children are too young to enter into a debate on the various types of sexual expression, they are never too young to understand that all are loved equally by God and created by God.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: “Margot Embracing Her Mother” by Mary Cassatt, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1502057828?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37961&store_id=1401

Talk with the children about the many different kinds of love and touch that people can share. Show them the artwork “Margot Embracing Her Mother” by Mary

Cassatt and/or an appropriate video clip of your choosing. Ask them to describe what kind of touch and love they see in the picture or video. Explain that our bodies are created beautifully. Each one is a unique creation. From the time we were first born we enjoyed being lovingly touched and held. When people love each other and touch each other in ways that both people like, it can be a wonderful thing. What are some things the learners have been taught about touching and being touched? Listen carefully as the learners talk about what they understand and know. This is a good time to affirm with them that no matter how young they are, they have the right to choose how and where they are touched.

Introduce the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon) by saying that there is a whole book in the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures called Song of Songs. This book talks about a lovely woman and a handsome man. Read Song of Songs 4:1–3. *What are the body parts of the woman that are described?* Now read Song of Songs 5:10–14. *What are the body parts of the man that are described?* Affirm with the group that God created us with wonderful bodies. Then draw attention back to Margot and her mother and ask about the different kinds of love in the Song of Songs and in the painting, clearly indicating that both are powerful and beautiful.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Use the Body to Encourage Self and Others (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Luke 7:36–50 and know it well enough to tell as a story.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Jesus talked to women and other people who, according to the tradition of his time, he should not have spoken to at all. Women were not allowed to touch a Jewish male who was not related to them. Even speaking publicly to a Jewish male would have been considered a bad thing to do. What kinds of touch are okay in the tradition of the church you are a part of? Do people hug? How do they speak to one another? Do men and women sit together? Explain that in different traditions and times, Christians have handled touch and encouragement in various ways.

Read Luke 7:36:50 together. Ask the children to notice how Jesus and the woman use their bodies to encourage and comfort each other. How are words used to encourage? How about touch? In some ways, Jesus is starting a new tradition by allowing the woman to anoint him. Invite the group to list different ways they can use their words and actions to encourage and comfort others. What are some things they are doing now? What could they add?

Depending on their age and comfort level, invite each member of the group who would like to, to stand in the middle of a tight circle your group forms. Each person is invited to lay a hand on the person in the middle. This could be touching a shoulder, arm, back, or leg. Be careful about having more than one person lay a hand on the person's head in order to protect the neck. Pray words such as: *God, bless [his or her name]. Help [her/his] body to grow strong. Help [name] to feel you as [he/she] walks, talks and lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*



5 Back Bone Connection

Leader preparation: Study the artwork “Back Bone, c. 1997” by Tony Cragg from several angles. How is this like traditional art, and how is it not? Can you identify one or two new traditions your church has created? Perhaps you sing a specific song or have specific artwork seasonally or do other activities that are unique to your church’s tradition. What traditions do you have that may date back even to biblical times, such as baptism, communion, singing of songs, and so forth?

Supplies:

- artwork: “Back Bone, c. 1997,” by Tony Cragg, <http://www.art.com/products/p12210191-sa-i1581812/tony-cragg-back-bone-c1997.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=c5dd66dac7d541809fb8256c7daa3064&searchstring=back+bone+cragg>
- paper and markers

Show the participants “Back Bone, c. 1997” by Tony Cragg. Do not tell them the name of the artwork until later. Invite them to look at it from a variety of angles. Help them to identify which part of the body the art represents. Ask them if this is like other art they have seen. How is it the same, and how is it different? What do they believe Mr. Cragg wanted the viewer to know about?

Explain that there was a time when Mr. Cragg would not have been considered to be an artist. His work is not like traditional art that looks like whatever is being painted or drawn. Emphasize that he and others are helping to create new traditions.

Invite the learners to draw a spine or other bone structure the way they see it. Now explain that this painting is titled “Back Bone, c. 1997.” Ask how learners’ drawings and this one are the same and different. Talk about the different ideas learners are sharing with their drawing. What makes each of their drawings unique?

In the Christian tradition that has been developing for more than two thousand years, many different traditions have been created. Some churches do not allow dancing. Others believe that drinking alcohol is wrong. Still others have women wear only dresses and sometimes head coverings. These beliefs are all traditions. With the learners, try to help them to name traditions your church has that are connected to using the body. Do people hug or shake hands? When do they do this? How do people dress? How do you celebrate the Lord’s Supper together? How do you sing? Do you clap or have instruments? Try to think of as many things as you can that your church teaches about how to touch others and use the body. Some of what your church does together are a part of the Jewish or Christian traditions. Some are unique and new.

6 Study Anointing in the Bible

Leader preparation: If you are not familiar with the Christian practice of anointing, you may want to talk with your pastor about its use in your specific tradition. In general, anointing is used to empower and mark the starting of a new journey. As you read the passages you find on anointing, notice the various ways it is used—a time of spiritual awakening, becoming king, entering into healing, preparing for burial, ordination into ministry, and so on.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- concordance or a connection to use an Internet concordance such as www.biblegateway.com
- markers and newsprint
- (option) visit by your pastor to talk about the use of anointing

Invite the group to explore some scriptures where anointing is used. Explain that anointing was and is done with water or oil. It helps to mark a special spiritual time in a person's life. Use either an online or a book concordance to get a list of possible scriptures. (Here is a list of some possible scriptures: Exodus 40:13–15, Leviticus 8:12, 1 Samuel 16:13, Psalm 18:50, Psalm 20:6, Psalm 89:20–23, Isaiah 61:1–3, Luke 4:18, 21, Luke 7:36–50, Hebrews 1:9, James 5:14, 1 John 2:20, 27.) Depending on your group's size and age, you may want to pick a few.

Put four headings on newsprint: The Scripture: The Use of Anointing; Who Anoints?; Who Receives Anointing?; and Why Anoint? Ask the group to read each passage and identify in it what should be written in each column on the newsprint. Write (or allow them to write) their answers on the newsprint. When you have finished finding, reading, and identifying the use in some of the passages, review the list you made together. Are there some common patterns? What do the learners notice? Is there a time they can think of when they or someone they know was or would like to have been anointed? Is there a time coming up in their life?

Option: This may be a good opportunity for your pastor or other church leader to talk with the children about the use of anointing as well. Perhaps the leader could share about times when he or she was anointed.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Anoint One Another (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Get a small glass or container with water.

Supplies:

- Bible
- small glass or container of water

Anointing is a gift that helps to prepare someone for a new commitment or time of life. In Luke 7:36–50 a woman anointed Jesus for his ministry and work. The woman understood Jesus needed to be loved and encouraged. Read the passage together. How do the learners imagine Jesus felt about being anointed? How do the learners imagine the woman felt about being given the opportunity to anoint Jesus? Ask if anyone in the group has been anointed or seen someone anointed. If so, when and what was the experience like?

Ask the group to stand in a circle. Invite participants to anoint and be anointed by one another. Explain that each person may be anointed or anoint someone else or may choose to simply be in prayer for others who choose to do so. Be open to some learners choosing not to participate. Begin by anointing someone in the group first and asking him or her to anoint you. If you have other adult leaders present, you may have one of them be your partner. This will encourage the

learners to join in on the anointing as they see adults modeling the experience for them. Show the group how to use the water to make the sign of the cross on the back of a person's hand or on her/his forehead. Encourage them to say something like, "I anoint you to follow Jesus," as they draw the sign of the cross. Allow time for the whole group to reflect on the experience—both as a sensory and as a spiritual experience.

8 Washing Hands

Leader preparation: In Luke 7:36–50 the woman washes Jesus' feet and anoints him for future ministry. In Jesus' time, washing feet was a common practice to help one's guests be comforted after walking in sandals on dusty roads. Today people wash their hands frequently to help stop the spreading of germs. Our hands are most often visible to others. You may use hand sanitizer as a substitute for water and towels, however, it may be better to give the group the opportunity to feel water and touch one another's hands with it.

Supplies:

- Bible
- bowls of water (roughly one for every eight group members)
- towel for each person

In Jesus' time when a guest arrived in one's home, it was good hospitality to wash the guest's feet. Since people wore sandals, their feet were often covered with dust and even the waste of animals from the road. It was a kind thing to do and also very practical. This way people didn't bring the dirt from the road into the houses.

In our time what do people wash a lot? You may need to give additional clues to get the group to think about hands. Use some or all of the following prompts:

- Who most often washes another's hands?
- Has anyone ever washed your hands? How did that feel?

In Luke 7:36–50 a woman washes Jesus' feet and anoints him with perfume. Read the scripture together. Ask learners what they think Jesus was feeling about having his feet washed and having perfume poured onto him.

Sometimes we can serve one another by washing one another's feet or hands. It can be a reminder that we are all cherished and loved by God. It can remind us that in God's eyes we are forgiven for things we have done that hurt others or ourselves. It can remind us that each moment is a new moment and we can get a fresh start. Invite the group to pick a partner and wash each other's hands at the bowl of water. You may want to have only one hand-washing station or several depending on the size of your group. Ask each person to focus for a few moments on washing the partner's hands. As the person dries the other's hands, ask them to say something like, "You are a gift. Go and serve!" Encourage those who are watching to pray silently for the person whose hands are washed.

Close this time by saying the Prayer of Jesus (the Lord's Prayer). If your group knows it, say it together. If not, say a short phrase of the prayer and invite the group to repeat it.

9 Cherishing the Body

Leader preparation: Collect enough hand-held mirrors for each learner to have one. Another option would be to get very large mirrors that hang on the wall, and then have the participants stand together in front of the mirrors. If possible, take time to do this activity for yourself before the session. This will help you to be available to the participants as they explore their bodies. If you have a child who is visually challenged, invite her or him to explore these parts with the hands.

Supplies:

- hand-held mirrors for each learner
- Bible

Explain to the group that in the Bible there are many passages that talk about our bodies. The church is even referred to as Christ's body. Some passages talk about covering or limiting the body. Others focus on the body's beauty. In the Song of Songs, the body is celebrated. Listen to a few verses together as you read Song of Songs 4:1–3 and 5:10–14.

Invite the group to take a good look at their bodies. Ask each person to use the mirror to study her or his eyes for ten to fifteen seconds. You will need to be aware of your group's interest level and pace. Some groups may need a shorter time. Others may be comfortable with longer periods. Now ask the participants to look in the mirror at their mouths, then ears, chins, and noses. (If you used large mirrors, you may want them to continue looking into the mirror image for the following body parts, or have them study them by looking directly at their body.) Invite all to look at their arms, hands, legs, and feet. Once you have gone through all the parts, ask the group to pick one of their body parts that they particularly like. Name these out loud in the group. Now ask each person to think of a way he or she could use this body part to serve someone else and help that person to feel God's love and presence. For example, if the eyes are picked, the person could read to a child or adult or help to guide someone. If the arms are picked, the person could help to carry bags or rock a smaller child, and so forth.

End with a prayer, such as this: *Thank you, God, for the gift of our bodies. Help us to enjoy our bodies. Help us to use them to bring others closer to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Reflect

What have the participants learned about the variety of understandings of honoring the body that the scriptures contain? In what ways has the group honored their own bodies and the bodies of others in the group as you have engaged in activities together?

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Children ages five to fourteen have a wide variance in the ways they are able to serve others. Often times, younger children are eager to be of real help to others and can be frustrated when not given the opportunity. Young teens may be helping create mission projects within the church or their schools with some encouragement and guidance. Helping each age group recognize their context—the gifts, resources, and opportunities that are uniquely theirs—can help them to discern possibilities for mission.

About this Exploration

Since our bodies are temples of God's Holy Spirit, our bodies are extensions of God's grace and love as we interact with others in our families, communities, and the world. Through our bodies we are invited to serve, responding to human need in all persons. We are invited to help others see the God in them through the presence of God in us. When we love, serve, nurture, and care for one another by respecting and honoring our body and other's bodies, we live out the healthy wholeness that God created us for. Considering the various and diverse contexts in which all live, we learn to choose well between caring for or abusing the body, even as we consider Christian responses to healthy and wholesome as well as violent and abusive living.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Exodus 23:10–12
2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Consider for a moment the context of your group. Who lives in the neighborhood where you meet? What needs and resources do they have? What other areas of the world are of particular interest to your group? What needs do people in these areas have? What talents do you and your group have? What resources? As you explore what it means to honor the body and be engaged in mission, how do you see the context of who you are and where you are leading you to specific missions together?

Prayer: God, help me to see you in our midst. Help me to encourage the group to want to know how to serve you as we serve others. Use me to guide all who come to this session to recognize the gifts you have given them in their bodies and how to use and multiply those gifts for the good of the world. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation

1 Be Aware of the Body (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: You may want to go through this exercise yourself before doing the activity with the group. Be attentive to your own body and help the learners to do the same during this activity.

Supplies:

- Bible

Exodus 23:10–12 is in the second book of the Bible. Like many books in the Hebrew Scriptures, things written down were first shared orally for hundreds of years around fires and in tents. These stories helped people to know who they were, who God was, and how God wanted them to live. One thing that God knows about our bodies is that rest is essential. If our bodies remain at high alert or stressed for too long, they can actually hurt us. Read Exodus 23:10–12 and ask participants these questions:

- What are the two things this passage talks about?
- Do we do this today?
- How do we rest?

Taking time out is really important. When we get stressed, most of us have one or two places in our bodies that tighten up. We can actually hurt ourselves by not relaxing them. Invite the group to start by thinking about their foreheads. Have they ever noticed someone who is tightening up her or his forehead and scowling? Ask the group to close their eyes and tighten their foreheads. How does that feel? With the group, make your foreheads tighter and tighter for a count of three. Then relax the forehead. What does it feel like to relax the forehead? Now try tightening the jaw for the count of three. Relax. Invite the group to notice how it feels for their necks to be relaxed. Then, relax the neck the shoulders, the arms and hands, the stomach, the legs, and the feet.

When you have gone through the body, notice with your group how it feels to be tight or stressed and how it feels to be relaxed. Which is more familiar to them? Do they notice that one or two parts of their bodies get tight more often?

Invite the learners to choose to relax at least once a day and at least part of a day each week. Is there someone they know that they would like to tell about this activity? Talk about possible people they might talk to this week.

2 Talk with Guests

Leader preparation: Invite two or three people from your church or community to visit your group. These should be persons who understand that their personal mission is to care for the bodies and well-being of others. These people could include physical therapists, dentists, EMTs, hygienists, personal care givers, nurses, LPNs, nurse practitioners, doctors, hospice care workers, hair stylists, massage therapists, and so forth. In anticipation of the meeting, ask them to think about how they discerned what to do as their life work. How has their faith played a part in their decision? What talents did they have that led them to do what they do? Do some volunteer to use their skills for others, perhaps in disaster areas or other countries on mission trips? Be certain to select guests who see what they do either as volunteers or for a living as a part of their faith journey.

Honoring the Body

with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Supplies:

- two or three guests as described in leader preparation
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- construction paper and markers, or a card for each visitor

Before your guests arrive, explain to the group that you will be meeting some people who have felt called or led by their faith to help others care for their bodies. (If you can, it would be good to plan some of this with the group in an earlier meeting.) Talk with the group about some good questions to ask these people to guess what they do. Then they can ask questions about how the people decided to pursue their kind of ministry to others and what it is like to serve in the way they do. Write some possible questions on newsprint or a whiteboard and encourage each learner to ask your guests at least one of these questions, or one they create.

Questions to guess what your guests do:

- What part of the body do you help?
- Where do you serve others?
- What do you like about what you do?
- What is hard about what you do?

Once the group members guess the person's work, ask them to raise a hand if they have ever been served by someone who does what each guest does.

Questions to ask once each guest's form of service is named:

- How did you know you wanted to do this?
- What special talents do you have that help you do it?
- How old were you when you decided to do what you are doing?
- How do you think God works through you?

If you have a younger group, you may need to ask more of the questions. Try to encourage even the "unique" questions that come from some of your group. Do your best to honor each question.

Close this activity by inviting the group to consider the talents they have. Do some of them have talents that would help them to help care for the bodies of others? Pray with your guests and give thanks for all they do to help others.

After your guests leave, either make a card for each guest or have cards available to say thank you for their time. Have each participant sign his or her name to each card.

③ Making Bodies

Leader preparation: Either purchase Play Dough or make a batch using a recipe (see http://www.bestkidstowels.com/Playdough_recipes.html). You may want to cover the table surfaces with plastic sheets or tablecloths for easy clean-up. Be particularly aware of, and sensitive to, learners who may have recently lost a loved one.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- Play Dough enough for each person to have at least one 3-inch by 3-inch ball
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite each person to make a human body using the play dough. Enjoy working on these together. Talk about the different ways each person works to make a body. Ask some of the following questions:

- Are any of these bodies perfect?
- Can any of them walk or breathe?
- Can they keep their form if they are pushed or pulled?

All of the Play Dough bodies can be squished pretty easily. The bodies God has given us are much sturdier. Ask learners what some of the abilities are that God has given to each of them through their bodies. Are any of them a fast runner, a quick thinker, a great “hugger,” and so forth? Help each learner to think of at least one talent he or she has. List these on newsprint or a whiteboard.

Look at the many talents within your group. Think together about ways you might serve individually or as a group that connect with your talents. For example, if you have several artists, you could make pictures for those who are sick or lonely to encourage them, put together an art display and invite others to share their art, or make a mural together to share in worship. If you have many singers or musicians, perhaps your group could sing in a retirement or children’s home or for another group meeting in your church. It is important that we use the gifts God has given to us while we are able to do so.

All of our bodies get hurt sometimes. Sometimes we are not able to do things we used to do. Can the group name someone they know who cannot do something he or she used to do? One day all of our bodies will stop working and die. We do not need to be worried about that though. Read 2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1. We are more than just our bodies. Although our bodies are temporary, we are not. God has promised we will always be with God. We can trust God to care for us and for others.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Check Out Your Learning Space (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Whether you are meeting in a home or rented building or have your own facility, there are many people who have made it their mission and purpose to create a space for you and other groups. An awareness of the gifts others have given can produce gratitude and a stronger sense of mission. Decide whether your group will focus on the area in which you meet or another space in your facility, such as the sanctuary or library.

Supplies:

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite the group to look around the space you have selected, then ask these questions:

- What things in the area are helpful to the body?
- What makes you all comfortable?
- What tools do you have for learning?

This could include things such as chairs that are the right size, air conditioning, good lighting, windows for fresh air, and so forth. Encourage the group to go beyond the obvious to things such as pencils, paper, art supplies, Bibles, and so forth that are helpful for learning. As the group names them, list these on newsprint or a whiteboard.

When finished, read the list together. Pick one item and ask: *Whose mission or work was it so that we have this in our space?* For example, if you pick air conditioning, this would include the person who invented refrigeration, the person who created metal, the person who helped to weld the metal, the people who installed the air conditioning, the people in the church who now pay for the utilities so the air conditioning can be used, and so forth. Pick several items from the list and see how many people you can name who have used their bodies and abilities so that your bodies could be comfortable and learn.

Ask the group to consider what they do right now that helps another body to be comfortable and healthy. Do they help with dishes, rock a younger sibling, read to someone? What do they do in the church that is helpful to others? As they talk about their answers, encourage the participants to consider adding one or more things to what they are currently doing to help others in the church or at home.

5 Who and What Is in Our Community?

Leader preparation: If the weather permits you to walk in your neighborhood, recruit some additional adult helpers to be certain your group is safe. If the weather is questionable, either take digital photos of your neighborhood or go to www.google.com (or any Internet search engine), click on “Images” in the top line and type in the name of your community to pull up a variety of photos. Put these in a PowerPoint presentation to show your group.

Supplies:

- pictures of your town or community
- additional adult supervision if you plan to walk the neighborhood together
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

If possible, take your group on a walk in the neighborhood where you meet. Explain to the group that while you walk you want them to notice what people are doing, what animals are present, what kinds of buildings they see—anything else they notice. Encourage them to use several of their senses: sight, hearing, touch, and smell. If there is a unique food product made or served in your area, you might want to stop and add the sense of taste as you share a snack or drink. Be sure your learners do not have allergies that could be a problem. When you come back (you may want to sit at a park together to talk), you will make a list together of everything that you saw.

Ask: *If Jesus could do anything in this neighborhood, (point to the list you have made), what do you think he might do? Where did we already see Jesus at work in some places? What would you like to do in this neighborhood?* If possible, share these ideas with the whole church and create a time for mission together.

God invites us to use our bodies to help others right where we are and, sometimes, in faraway places. Having an eye out for what is around us can help us to notice opportunities to serve.

If the weather or your location does not permit a walk outside, put together a PowerPoint presentation of photos from your area in advance. If this is not an option, take the group to windows, preferably on a second story, and look out together to see what you can see.

6 Our Bodies Are Earthen Vessels

Leader preparation: Think about how you care for your body. Be prepared to share with the learners some things you are doing and want to do that will help to care for your body.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Each of us has been given a body as a gift from God. It's important that we take care of our bodies. What things can your group list that they do now to take care of their bodies? What other things would be helpful to do? These could include eating vegetables and fruits, limiting sweets, running or walking for exercise, sleeping eight or more hours, bathing, reading, brushing and flossing teeth, hugging someone four or more times a day, and so forth.

We know that sometimes as we grow older or have accidents and that sometimes our bodies do not work in the same way as when we were younger. At some point, all of our bodies will wear out, even when we take care of them, but we don't need to worry. Although our bodies are earthly and temporary and don't last forever, who we are is always with God and a part of God. Read 2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1. The people in the city of Corinth had people who were actually hurting them—even killing them—because of their faith in Jesus. In a sense, their physical bodies held their spirits like a clay jar holds food. The food is still food whether or not it is in the jar. People are still people, whether or not they are in their bodies.

Encourage the participants to take good care of their bodies. Each of us gets only one and it is a treasure. Invite each participant to name one thing to do to help care for his or her body. This may be something new or something they have done but not consistently. For example, maybe they only brush their teeth at night and want to add brushing them in the morning. Explain to them that if we do something every day for thirty days, it often becomes a habit, that is, something we do without thinking about it. Plan to revisit this in the future as a way of reminding and of accountability checking.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Time for Consecration (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Gather a small plate for each person or pre-cut circles, at least 4 inches in diameter, on which to draw a clock face. If you would like to make this into more of a craft project, make the circles out of a heavier material so they last longer, and then decorate or paint the clocks.

Supplies:

- small paper plates or construction paper in the shape of a circle
- markers

- (optional) paints
- song: “Take My Life and Let it Be,” by Frances R. Havergal (tune: Hendon), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXy2MmMLjGO&feature=related>; lyrics, <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/t/m/tmlalib.htm>
- dictionary

Show the group the words to the first verse of “Take My Life and Let It Be.” When you come to the word “consecrated,” ask if anyone knows what this word means. Look up the word in a dictionary. When something is “consecrated,” it is dedicated for a sacred purpose. Invite your group to name some things in your church that are consecrated. This could be a communion set, the place of baptism, banners or other art, stained glass windows, and so forth. Ask some of the following questions:

- What does it mean for a person to be consecrated?
- Does being consecrated mean you never make a mistake?
- How old do you need to be in order to be consecrated?

Listen carefully to how the participants respond, and follow up their answers with other questions as you are led.

Consider asking the group to choose to consecrate, dedicate, or give their lives to God. This means that what they say, do, and share seeks to be a part of what God is doing. It may help to think of it as asking the question: What does Jesus want me to do right now in this situation?

Ask each person to make a clock face. Use a plate or circle of construction paper. If your learners are more used to digital clocks, invite them to use a piece of construction paper and create four boxes side by side to write in a time as they would see it on a digital clock. Ask each person to think of a time each day when he or she could stop and ask the question, “What is God or Jesus doing right now? Am I being a part of it? Am I giving my life to God?” As they ask these questions each day, it gives an opportunity to decide if they are really giving their life to God or not. Encourage them to know that no one does this perfectly. God is more than happy to forgive us and give us a fresh start.

Close with a prayer. Ask the learners to repeat at the end of each phrase: *Take my life. Let it be a gift to you. Amen.*

8 Ear Massaging

Leader preparation: Honoring the body includes understanding how miraculously made we really are. This activity teaches the learners how the ear contains many little pressure points that can be massaged or rubbed to help renew the body.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- article: “Ways to Give Yourself a Massage,” <http://voices.yahoo.com/ways-give-yourself-massage-1050481.html?cat=5>
- (optional) “Teach Yourself 8 of the Best Ear Massages,” <http://thehealthylivinglounge.com/2010/03/29/teach-yourself-8-of-the-best-ear-massages/>

Our bodies are wonderfully made. They need rest and renewal to stay healthy. Many passages in the Bible talk about giving the body rest. One of these is Exo-

Matthew 23:10–12. Read this passage together. Sabbath time was and is a time when family and friends share in music, conversation, games, food, and other activities together. It is a time when people slow down to enjoy God's presence and the presence of loved ones.

Our bodies were created in such a way that when we rest, eat well, and care for them, they can renew themselves. In the ear, hands, and feet there are spots that can be rubbed that connect to other parts of the body. Introduce the idea of giving yourself a massage. See the article listed in Supplies.

Invite the learners to begin rubbing at the bottom of their ears. It is best to rub both ears at the same time and in similar places to create balance. Work your way up the outer curve of the ear rubbing back and forth. When you come to the top of the ear, unroll the skin that curves over the ear. This is something you can encourage the learners to do prior to taking a test, as in many cases this can help with memory. Work your ways in spiral circles into the ear. Finish by rubbing from under the ear straight down the neck.

Ask the participants to talk about what they felt when they did this. Invite each person to think about who they know who might really enjoy having an ear rub. From the youngest to the oldest child in your group, this is a gift of renewal that they can give.



⑨ Encourage Someone in Need

Leader preparation: Think about the participants who will most likely attend your session. They may also bring visitors with unique life experiences. Pray for sensitivity and awareness of those whose lives have been touched by illness, death, or unemployment in the family. Talk with your pastor or a lay leader to get a list of people who are struggling with health or other issues and who would be encouraged by a card from one of your group's members.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: "Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1801449515?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401
- writing paper and pens
- origami paper or 6-inch x 6-inch squares of paper.
- directions for origami stars, <http://www.origami-resource-center.com/stars.html>
- list of those struggling with health or unemployment who would enjoy a note from someone in your group.

Show the group the artwork "Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz. Ask: *What do you imagine the people in the picture need? How do you think they are feeling right now? Where is God in this picture?*

Sometimes in life our bodies do not work well, and things can be difficult. The people in a city called Corinth were having many physical problems. There were people who wanted to hurt them because they were Christians. They had illnesses and people died just like we do today. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:1.

When we struggle with pain or illness or loss, it helps to have other Christians who support and encourage us through prayer and acts of help and kindness. Sometimes a note or gift can be the very thing to help someone make it to the next step in life.

Explain that you have a list of people who would really be blessed by a card and an origami gift. Give each learner paper and work with them to fold an origami star. Directions may be found on the website listed in Supplies. You may choose other designs, if you prefer. After each learner has made an origami gift, invite him or her to write a short card or make a picture. Ask your pastor and lay people who visit to hand deliver these gifts. If time permits, you may want to encourage the participants to make additional origami stars to give to people they know in their neighborhoods who could use encouragement right now.

Close with this or a similar prayer: *Thank you, God, for the gift of our hands. Help us to use them to help those who are struggling or hurting right now. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Reflect

In what ways have the learners experienced honoring their bodies in your activities? What mission ideas would you like to take to other groups in the church or perhaps follow up on in your multigenerational event, if you plan to share one?

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

There is a large amount of information available about hunger, world climate change, human trafficking, orphaned children, and many other critical issues via the Internet and news media—even to the youngest of the five-to-fourteen-year age spread. This may create disillusionment and make envisioning God’s desires for the future and creating change seem impossible or futile. However, it is essential to faith and building the future that all ages be encouraged to imagine together what life could be like if we pursued God’s ways. Encourage the group not to worry about whether we can make change happen. With God’s help all things are possible. As you imagine with these young people God’s way for the future, you can help them and yourself gain the courage to envision a new future and build the desire to help God make it a reality.

About this Exploration

The strength gained through honoring the body empowers those who follow Jesus to lead and serve. The fullness of the body of Christ is contingent upon the ability of humans to appreciate, respect, and celebrate our God-created diversity. Rather than discovering distinction and condemning brokenness, Christians are called to remember our common creation—*imago dei*. In that creation, we celebrate the unique abilities of every person, discovering opportunities to grow, feel, love, and express the fullness of each person’s individual humanity. By claiming our physical bodies as spiritual gifts, we grow as persons and as the children of God, finding wholeness as we grow in our ability to more fully reflect the image of God.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Ezekiel 37:1–14
Matthew 22:34–40

Leader Preparation

How do you see the future of the world? Is your focus on the problems, the successes, or the struggles? God's desire for us has always, and will always, include a world where everyone is welcome, cherished, and nurtured and where each is given the opportunity to thrive and create. How does this match up with the world as you know it? In order for change to happen, we must dare to dream God's dreams and work to make them real. How can you inspire yourself and your learners to keep dreaming and working to help make God's reign come "on earth as it is in heaven"?

Prayer: God, help me to see beyond what is now real. Help me to be aware of what you are calling into being. Just as you created the world out of chaos, you are still creating new life, wonder, and beauty with us. Help me to guide the group to imagine the future you desire and to be inspired to help create that future with you. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from "Exploring and Engaging," at least one from "Discerning and Deciding," and

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Be the Bones (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Ezekiel 37:1–14. This is a vision given to Ezekiel to encourage the people of Israel who were in exile and afraid. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt like dry bones? How did God breathe new life into you? Also, be sure that you have a flooring surface that is safe for the group members to lie on and wiggle.

Supplies:

- Bible

Ask the group if they have ever felt really lonely or scared. What was that like? A long time ago the people of Israel were in exile. They had been taken away from their homes and separated from their families. They did not think they would ever get back home or have a good life. God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, who helped to show people God's ways. God gave Ezekiel a vision, which is like having a dream when you are awake. The vision was one way God tried to encourage the people and give them hope that they had a good future.

Read Ezekiel 37:1–14 to the group—or, better yet, know it well enough to tell it. Then ask the learners to lie on the floor, close their eyes, and pretend that they are the dry bones. Ask what it feels like to be a dried-up bone that is not connected to anything—without muscle, skin, other bones; it just lies there on its own.

Then say, "God asked Ezekiel, 'Can these bones come back to life?' And Ezekiel said, 'Lord, only you can answer that!' Then God told Ezekiel to say to the bones, 'Dry bones, listen to what God is saying to you. The Lord will put breath into you and you will live. You will be wrapped with muscles and skin. Then you will know the Lord is your God.'" (Ask the learners to begin to move and make rattling sounds like they are coming alive.)

"Then the Lord told Ezekiel to say, 'The Lord God commands the wind to blow in every direction and breathe life into these bodies so they can live again!'" (Ask the learners to make sounds like the blowing wind.)

"Ezekiel watched as bodies sprung up and came to life. There were so many that the Lord had a large team of people." (Ask the learners to spring up and dance or march.)

"Then God promised that God's Spirit would come to them and help them to live."

When you have finished acting out the story, invite the group to talk about how they imagine Ezekiel felt when he told others about his vision. Do they think others believed him? Would believing him have been hard or easy to do? How does God help us today when we feel like dry bones?

2 Make a Collage

Leader preparation: Decide whether you will have your group make one large collage or several—large group, small groups, or individual. As an alternative, you could have the group use the Internet to find pictures of people from various

Honoring the Body

at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

countries; they could use these to make a PowerPoint presentation that could be shown to the group and possibly used in worship.

Supplies:

- Bible
- magazines with multicultural photos
- (optional) photos of members of your group
- poster board or individual large sheets of construction paper
- (optional) computer and PowerPoint program
- (optional) music

Jesus was asked by some very smart people what the most important law was. Ask the learners to tell what Jesus said. Accept their ideas, and then read together Matthew 22:34–40 to find out or confirm their answers. Loving our neighbor, or others, as ourselves means we love people who are like us and people who are not. Ask learners what makes it easy for them to love someone. What makes it difficult? There are billions of people in this world. We will never know all of them. If we are to follow Jesus, it is important that we try to get to know people who are not like us and that we care about their joys and their hurts and their needs.

Invite the group to make a collage of “others” we are to love. You may make one large collage together, individual collages, or create a PowerPoint presentation using the Internet. Be sure to include pictures of members of your group and/or people from similar cultures as well as people very different from you. All of us are loved by God and God wants us to love one another, too. You may want to play music that inspires your group to think about God and love as you work together.

3 Move Those Bones

Leader preparation: Locate a picture of a skeleton on the Internet or in a book that can be seen easily by the learners. Find the song “Dry Bones,” either in the link provided or another method of your choosing.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- (optional) picture of a human skeleton, <http://www.innerbody.com/image/skelfov.html>
- song: “Dry Bones,” <http://www.kiddles.com/lyrics/d009.html>

Ask the group if they have ever seen a bone. If so, what kind was it? When animals or people die, after awhile all that is left are bones. Show the group a picture of a human skeleton. Identify the different parts with them.

Explain that you will read a passage about bones found in Ezekiel. Ezekiel is found in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. Open Bibles together and look in the Table of Contents to help each person find the book of Ezekiel. If you have nonreaders, pair them with good readers. This passage was written at a time when the people of Israel had lost their country and were exiled in foreign lands. They felt like they had no hope and no future. In a vision God showed the prophet Ezekiel that the people did have a future with God. Read Ezekiel 37:1–14.

Ask participants to close their eyes and imagine a valley full of dried-up bones. Invite everyone to blow and imagine God raising up the bones and giving them new life. Do they think a picture like that would encourage, frighten, or challenge the people who heard it?

Enjoy learning and singing the song “Dry Bones.” Use the link provided or other source. Act out the song with the group and enjoy speeding the song up as it becomes more familiar. Give thanks that you can move your bones that are very much alive as you sing and dance together.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Play Charades (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Seeking and getting a glimpse of God’s future for the world is a part of our faith journey. Using our bodies to help live into that future is another part. Create slips of paper of ideas for the future that are in line with God’s desires. Have some blank slips available. If you have time and there is interest, encourage the groups to come up with additional ideas for a future that would cause God to smile. Take turns playing charades: one person acts out God’s desires for the future and the group tries to guess. If you have a large group, you may want to split into two groups.

Ideas for the slips of paper could include: people are fed, people have homes, people stop fighting, people create new things, people play together, people have a chance to learn, people have medical care, people exercise and care for their bodies, all children are loved, people value one another, people share resources with one another.

Supplies:

- list of ideas for charades written on slips of paper
- blank pieces of paper and pens

Ask the group if they have ever watched a show or a movie that shows the future. Talk about some of these. Part of our faith is thinking about and working toward what God desires for the future for all the people of the world. Invite the children to play charades with some ideas of how God would want the future of the world to be. Be sure everyone knows how to play charades. They may act out what is on their slip of paper, but they cannot talk. They can use props or even people in the room to help them. Be prepared to help nonreaders. When you have finished using the slips of paper you prepared in advance, ask the group to think of other ideas about how God’s future might look. What are some things that could happen in the future that would make God smile?

5 Life Rises Up

Leader preparation: Purchase enough growing animal sponges for each learner. These can generally be found at a discount store or ordered on the Internet. Provide a small bowl for each learner and a source for water.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- enough growing animal sponges for each learner to have at least one
- small bowls and small glasses of water

Give each learner a growing animal sponge. What does it look like? Does it interest them? Could anything be inside of it? Invite each person to put the sponge in

a bowl and add a little water and watch what happens next. *What happens to the sponge? Was the animal inside of the dried-up sponge all along? What did it take to bring the animal into view?*

In the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament book of Ezekiel, the people of Israel were feeling like a dried-up useless sponge. They had been taken away from their homes to lands far away and felt that they had no hope for a future. They were even feeling far away from God. God gave Ezekiel a vision, which is kind of like a dream when you are awake. The vision was to encourage him and the people to believe in what they could not yet see. Ask the group to listen to what God does to bring dried-up bones to life in the vision. Read or tell Ezekiel 37:1–14. How does the Spirit come to strengthen and encourage us now when we are feeling weary or afraid? Just like the water brings the animals out of the dried up sponge, the Spirit helps us to be full of life and connected to God’s ways for us.

6 Whom Do We Love?

Leader preparation: Take time to look closely and carefully at the artwork “Golden Rule” by Norman Rockwell. Whom do you see in this picture that may be hard for you to love? How does your own faith challenge you to go beyond what is easy for you when it comes to loving others? The participants in your group will all have prejudices and biases learned in their homes and from their peers. Some will be aware of these and others will assume they are fact. Getting the group to talk about their assumptions about others is a good place to start as you seek to connect them with the commonalities we all have as God’s children.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- artwork: “Golden Rule” by Norman Rockwell, <http://www.art.com/products/p9388041612-sa-i5446642/norman-rockwell-golden-rule-do-unto-others-april-1-1961.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=5000032&ui=6c6a730242504593a62db31e60ee1963&ssk=norman+rockwell>

Show the group the artwork “Golden Rule” by Norman Rockwell. Ask each person to pick one person in the picture he or she would like to get to know. Invite each participant to tell why he or she chose that particular person in the art. Then ask them to identify anyone in the picture that they might not want to know. Talk about each person selected—if they selected anyone. Why did they choose that picture? As you can, talk about their answers and ask how they know the person is scary or mean or not nice, or why that person pictured makes them uncomfortable.

Norman Rockwell created this picture to show people what it might look like if we all did what Jesus taught us to do in Matthew 22:34–40. Read this passage together. Ask: *In what ways does Mr. Rockwell show that we should love God and love others? Why do you think it was so important that Mr. Rockwell include so many different kinds of people? As we all try to create a better world, how important is it that we get to know all kinds of people?*

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Celebrate Our Diversity (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Matthew 22:34–40. Think about how comfortable or uncomfortable you are with people who are not like you. How easy or hard is it for you to love others? As you talk with the group, be fully present in the conversation and, if you think it is appropriate, share where some of your growing edges are in loving others.

Supplies:

- Bible

Jesus told the leaders of the synagogues that the most important thing for them to do was to love everyone. The leaders were most likely all people who had dark eyes and brown colored skin. The ones Jesus was speaking to were also most likely all men. There were probably no children present. They were all Jewish people. This was what he told them: read Matthew 22:34–40.

Now look at your group. How are you alike? How are you different? As you look around the room, can you name some categories of people who are not in your group? Perhaps they are a different race or faith or have physical challenges. Together, name as many different kinds of people as you can think of. Now think about your schools and neighborhoods. Are all people the same, or are they different there? Jesus calls us to love all kinds of people.

Invite the group to sit quietly for a moment, and invite everyone to ask God to help each one think of someone God has put near him or her, in some part of their lives, who is different from them. (Give the members a few moments to think.) Invite the learners to silently thank God for this person. Then ask each person to think about whether or not they have made friends with this person. If so, how could they make the friendship stronger? If not, pray silently about one thing they might do to start a friendship. Close your prayer with: *God, help us to love others whether they are like us or not like us. Thank you for teaching us to love. Amen.*

8 Make a Golden Ruler

Leader preparation: Depending on the ages of the participants in your group, you may want to pre-cut some of the items for this project. Each learner will either need to cut, or have available, two pieces of golden or yellow construction paper cut into the size of a 12-inch ruler. Each person will have the opportunity to place the markings for a ruler on the sheets and write the Golden Rule on the page. If time permits, each person may make two and share one with someone outside of your group. You may want to recruit additional help to safely laminate each.

Supplies:

- Bible
- self-sealing lamination sheets or pouches
- golden or yellow construction paper
- scissors
- pens and markers
- (optional) preprinted copies of the Golden Rule, two for each learner
- 12-inch rulers, one for each learner

Ask: *If someone asked you what is the most important rule to follow in life, what would you say? Why do you think so?* When Jesus was asked that question by religious leaders in his time, he had an answer that we find in the Christian Scriptures, or the New Testament, in Matthew 22:34–40.” Find and read this passage together.

Ask learners what they think the world would be like if we all loved God with our hearts, souls, and minds and our neighbors as ourselves. If you need to stimulate conversation, you might ask some of the following questions:

- How would people treat those who are hungry or out of work?
- Would there be war?
- What would be the same or different when people have recess or gym at your school?

Give each person two pieces of golden or yellow construction paper and a 12-inch ruler. Either pre-cut these into the size of a 12-inch ruler, or have the learners do so. Encourage them to put small measurement markings on it, similar to what is on the ruler you provided. Then have them write: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love others as much as you love yourself.” If you have several younger children who are not yet writing well, you may want to preprint these words and ask them to glue the words onto the Golden Ruler. When finished, laminate each of the rulers. Ask the learners to think of someone who would be blessed by the gift of a golden ruler. Encourage each learner to keep a golden ruler to remind him or her of living it out and to give one away.

Pray together: *God, help us to love you and to love others. Thank you for loving us. Amen.*

9 Paint (or Chalk) the Future

Leader preparation: Decide whether you will paint or use sidewalk chalk and get necessary supplies. If you are painting, be sure to have old shirts or plastic to serve as smocks.

Supplies:

- paint or sidewalk chalk
- long roll of newsprint or a long sidewalk
- smocks

Invite the learners to silently think about what their future will look like in five, ten, and twenty years. Ask everyone to identify out loud their age in twenty years.

- Whom will they live with?
- What will they be doing?
- What church will they attend and what will it be like?
- What will they do for fun?
- Where will they live?
- What will they be doing for God?
- What will they look like and how will they wear their hair?
- What kind of place will they live in?

Have fun talking about these and other questions they bring up.

When ready, ask each person to paint on a mural (or use chalk on the sidewalk) to

show some part of his or her future. Outline an area for each person to create his or her work. When finished discuss these together. Invite each “artist” to explain what he or she drew.

Close with a prayer such as this: *God, thank you for helping us to envision the future. Help us to create a future that honors you. We love you. Amen.*

Reflect

As you envisioned the future together, what were some of the strongest concerns expressed by the group? In terms of using their bodies, did any of your activities help them to feel empowered to help create a better future for everyone?