

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Older youth see themselves as capable and very much grown up, while still assuming there is a safety net of innocence to catch them. They are busy and have lots of competing voices for their time and attention. Much of their discovery is done by trial and error as they experiment their way into adulthood. They will try on ideas and new roles and are not afraid to ask big questions. The human body is a common exploration for older youth. On a daily basis they and their peers are exploring with all their senses. Finding healthy ways to explore their bodies, the human body in general, and some safe space in the middle of the journey is a challenge for older youth. Taking this journey as a person of faith can be even more difficult. This Exploration invites youth to take on issues that are common and pressing and look at them through the lens of their faith.

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 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.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 19:4-8

John 4:1-42

Leader Preparation

Look through each of the activities and reflect on your own answers. Spend time thinking about your own coming-of-age years. Remember that today's youth are asked to grow up more quickly and are exposed to more mature content than previous generations. Do not work too hard to convince the youth to open up to you, but prepare yourself to open your own heart to them and everything will work out fine.

Prayer: God, be with both leaders and participants as they explore the creation within themselves. Help each person to feel safe and affirmed and to know that you have proclaimed us as good. 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 with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes with supplies nor-

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Let the Body Worship (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the ways that you personally move in worship and how the worship habits of others are similar or different. Provide enough bulletins or other worship guides from your community's regular worship service. If your congregation does not have a printed order of worship, you may write one out for the group.

Supplies:

- worship bulletins

We often worship as a "body" or community without thinking about how each "body" is moving. In some traditions people stand up or kneel. In some they dance and wave their arms. Every tradition uses the body in some ways. This activity explores how bodies are used in community worship.

Invite the group to explore the movement of worship by acting it out. Ask them to sit in a position similar to that of a typical worship setting. Read the order of worship, one activity at a time. Invite them to move, stand, kneel, bow, or whatever else they would normally do in that portion of the service. Use questions like the following to motivate reflection.

- How do you use your body to worship?
- What does the use or position of your body in different parts of worship say about what we believe?
- How does your body position match or contradict the activities of worship?
- How do other worshipping communities use their bodies to worship God?
- What other special services allow the body to be more involved in worship?

2 Fragile

Leader preparation: You will need to get the artwork "Back Bone c. 1997," by Tony Cragg and the song "Fragile" by Sting. Display the artwork where it can be easily seen by all participants.

Supplies:

- Bible
- artwork: "Back Bone, c. 1997," by Tony Cragg, http://www.art.com/products/p12210191-sa-i1581812/tony-cragg-back-bone-c1997.htm?sorig=cat&so_rigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=c5dd66dac7d541809fb8256c7daa3064&searchstring=back+bone+cragg
- paper and pens
- music player or computer with speakers
- song: "Fragile" by Sting <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKq2Mz6HMA>

Distribute paper and pens and ask the participants to write down ways that people are strong and ways that people are weak. Give them a minute to start their list. Ask them to pause and look at "Back Bone." They can continue their lists,

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mally 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.

letting the art give them new ideas. Use the following questions for conversation.

- What does it mean to be strong?
- What does it mean to be weak?
- How can people be both weak and strong at the same time?
- I wonder if these two words have different meanings to God.
- How does “Backbone” speak to you of strength or weakness?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–12, and ask: *How does this passage speak to you of strength or weakness?*

Play “Fragile” by Sting, and ask: *How does this song speak to you of strength or weakness?*

Give the participants time to look back over their lists and add things inspired by the art, scripture, or song. Invite them to share their lists as a group.

3 Hidden Beauty

Leader preparation: You will need a copy of *The Orthodox Heretic* by Peter Rollins. Read chapter 9, “The Invisible Prophet.” This short parable tells how God sent a great prophet to earth, but the devil concealed her in beauty so that no one would listen to her words, only marvel at her aesthetically. Spend time thinking about your own expectations for what a “messenger from God” looks like.

Supplies:

- book: “The Invisible Prophet,” chapter 9 of *The Orthodox Heretic* by Peter Rollins, http://www.amazon.com/Orthodox-Heretic-Other-Impossible-Tales/dp/1557256349/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1316443932&sr=1-1

Start by reading “The Invisible Prophet” from *The Orthodox Heretic* (chapter 9). “The Invisible Prophet” is about a prophet whose message was rendered void by the Adversary, for it chose to make her beautiful beyond measure. She inspired the painters to paint, the poets to muse, and the crowds to assemble, but they heard nothing of her message, for she was so marvelous to behold. She died a popular star, but not one person had listened to her call of repentance. Discuss the reading, using the following questions:

- How does a person’s appearance change how we listen to them?
- When have you misjudged a person, positively or negatively, based on his or her appearance?
- If someone wanted to make a message “invisible” to you, whom would he or she send?
- By whom would you have a hard time hearing God’s voice spoken?
- Who would have a hard time hearing God’s voice spoken by you? Why?
- How is this parable similar to the reception Jesus received in the world?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Rest and Refuel (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Reflect on your own experiences of exhaustion and hunger.

Supplies:

- Bible

Ask the group to share stories of when they have been extremely exhausted or very hungry. As sharing winds down, use the following questions to further discussion.

- How important is sleep, and how much do you personally need?
- How important is food, and what are your daily eating times?
- How does a lack of food or sleep affect you? Physically? Emotionally?

Read 1 Kings 19: 4–8 and use the following questions as discussion prompts.

- How does Elijah’s experience of hunger and exhaustion compare to the ones we have shared?
- How does Elijah’s experience of hunger and exhaustion compare to ones we hear about in the news?
- Where is God in this story?
- How is God present in your daily patterns of rest and eating?
- How can we be more appreciative of how God meets our basic needs?
- How can we be more intentional about making sure our body’s basic needs are met?
- How do you think Elijah responded to the care he received?
- How does Elijah’s story challenge or affirm our experience of God and basic needs?

5 Beauty for Sale

Leader preparation: Read this activity, and come up with your own answers before leading so that you can help the group brainstorm if they get stuck. Draw an outline of a gender-neutral person on a large sheet of paper in advance of the group gathering.

Supplies:

- large sheet of paper or whiteboard and markers
- magazines, newspapers, advertisements
- (optional) Internet access
- scissors and glue or tape

Ask the group to identify different things people do to make themselves more attractive or appealing. This can include fashion, hygiene, or other types of adornment. On the image of a person you have drawn on newsprint or large paper, write what the participants name on whichever body part the various products or processes are intended to enhance or decorate. When the brainstorming is complete, give the group magazines and advertisements to look through, and ask them to identify the ways the items on their list are marketed. In other words,

ask how are the things written on our “person” sold to us. Invite them to cut out advertisements and attach their clippings to the “person.” Use the following questions to follow up the activity.

- Who decides what is beautiful?
- How are attraction and those things that make us more attractive sold to us?
- How do you feel about the time and money people spend on being more attractive?
- What challenges the cultural ideals of beauty? What voices challenge those ideals?
- How do you personally wrestle with the expectations of culture and beauty?
- In what ways can our faith affect our understanding of personal beauty?
- What products are available to make you a nicer, more loving, more faithful person?
- How are such products marketed?

6 Take a Healthy Pill

Leader preparation: Read the scenario and reflect on your own answer.

Supplies: None

This activity is a “what if” conversation. Share the following scenario and use the questions for discussion.

Imagine if a pill were invented that took care of all your self-care and hygiene needs. The pill would cover any needed medications; take care of daily cleaning, such as brushing teeth and bathing; and simulate an appropriate amount of exercise. Eyebrows and ear hairs and any foul odors would be covered as would any other grooming. The best part is that there would be no physical side effects.

- How would you feel about taking this pill?
- What emotional or spiritual side effects might such a pill create for users?
- Who would you trust to develop such a pill? How would that person’s idea of beauty affect the development of the pill?
- How might the lack of need to care for oneself alter one’s self-image?
- How can basic grooming, hygiene, and exercise be a spiritual exercise?
- What would you give up by taking this pill?
- How would this pill’s impact be different depending on your gender?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Compliment Tag (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Make sure you have room for the group to move around. You don’t need a large space, but lots of breakables may be a concern. A smaller space keeps the group from running and sweating, if that is a concern your setting.

Supplies: None

Choose a member to be “It on a Stick” (an old expression for something good) and explain that that person will try to tag someone else, who will then become “It on a Stick.” When a person is tagged, that person must compliment the person who tagged him or her. After a few minutes of play, reverse the rule. Anyone tagged by “It on a Stick” must also receive a compliment. All compliments should be about the person’s body or what he or she can do with that body. You can’t say, “You are a nice person.” Use the following questions to debrief.

- How did it feel to receive compliments about your physical self?
- How did it feel to give compliments about another person’s physical self?
- When does a compliment change from affirming to something disrespectful?
- In celebrating appearance, do we disrespect things we can’t see? (For example, the mind, gifts, compassion)
- How do we compliment people without disrespecting them?
- How important is it to compliment the physical self of others?
- How important is it to you to have your physical self affirmed?
- What issues make it difficult to compliment a person’s physical self?
- As church, how can we celebrate the human body in general?
- As church, how can we celebrate the physical selves of individual members?



8 I Am . . .

Leader preparation: This activity invites youth to be very honest about themselves, so you must start by doing the same. Create an “I am” statement for yourself. This will help you lead the youth through filling out their own. Make copies of the “I Am” handout, Attachment: Activity 8, so that everyone will have his or her own sheet to work with.

Supplies:

- Bible
- “I Am,” Attachment: Activity 8
- CD or MP3 player and “I Am Beautiful,” by Christina Aguilera, or computer and clip from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAfyFTzZDMM&feature=youtu.be>

Hand out “I Am,” Attachment: Activity 8. Give everyone time to complete her or his own sheet, reminding them that no one else will see their work. No one will be forced to share his or her work. Once everyone is done, read John 4:1–42. Ask the following questions:

- How did Jesus know so much about the woman?
- I wonder how it felt to be known so fully by another person.
- How honest are people about their own faults?
- How honest are people about their own blessedness and their own gifts?

Invite the group to edit their “I am” statements based on the honesty shared between Jesus and the woman at the well. Challenge the group to answer as honestly as possible, as if they were about to take their place next to Jesus at the well. While they are thinking and editing, play the song “I Am Beautiful.” Invite all to keep their “I am” statements, or they may leave them with you to be discarded in a safe way.

Remind the group that God knows us. God knows how we use our bodies, how we feel about ourselves, and how we feel about others. We can be honest and claim it. Then we can find beauty in every body and everybody.



9 Human Family Picture

Leader preparation: Purchase a copy of Norman Rockwell's "Golden Rule." Spend time looking at the picture, thinking about the different cultures, ages, ethnicities, genders, and other differentiations pictured. Spend time looking for similarities among those pictured.

Supplies:

- 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>

Place the "Golden Rule" artwork in the middle or in front of the group. Ask them to take time to look at each person in the picture and then identify the person that each is most curious about; have each share which person and why. This curiosity can be due to appearance, dress, adornment, or facial expression. Give everyone a chance to share.

Ask the group to look again, this time searching for someone with an emotional expression that most closely matches their own at this moment in time. Give them a chance to look and time to share. Encourage each to share why he or she chose that person.

Ask the group to look again, this time searching for the person who would be most underappreciated or excluded in their school or community. Again, give time for all to look and time for them to share. Encourage an explanation as to how they made their choices.

Ask the group to look one more time at the picture and see which character is "growing on them" or one they missed earlier. Use the following questions to further the conversation.

- What stands out about this person now?
- Why do you think you missed this person earlier?
- Do you think there are people in your community that you or others overlook?
- Why does our perception of people change over time?
- How can we overcome these challenges to recognize and affirm all people in our community?

Reflect

What have you discovered about yourself as you engage in these practices? What have you learned about those older youth who have joined you on the journey.

Attachment: Activity 8

I Am

I am _____ (first name),

who has (three adjectives to describe your hair)

_____ hair;

who is (two adjectives to describe your body shape)

_____;

who has grown (five words or less about your body)

_____;

who might one day (who words or less about your body)

_____ (last name)

I Am . . .

A short verse about how God made me:

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Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Relationships are very important to older youth, and the story of God's people can invite readers to become part of an ancient family. Rather than memorizing and analyzing, youth need to become part of the story and to discover the similarities and differences of God's people then and now. By interacting with scripture, youth can test their own thoughts and beliefs. While some will need permission to argue or challenge the text, others will need to be reminded that these words have inspired, led, and invited relationship with God for thousands of years, and the text deserves their attention.

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 healthiness—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.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 2:1–25
Romans 12:1–8

Leader Preparation

Make sure you read the scriptures before leading an activity. Some of these texts are familiar, and others are rarely preached or covered in modern devotions. Some of these texts are core to the identity of God’s people, and others are often questioned as to how they made it into the Bible. Either way, both are there. Be ready and be open.

Prayer: We are not the first ones to wrestle with how to honor our body, God. Help us to learn from those who went before us, and allow your presence and voice in their story to echo in our lives today. 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 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,

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Picture of Perfect (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Have four sheets of paper (the bigger the better) and something to draw with. Look over the activity instructions, and think about how you would respond to each question.

Supplies:

- paper
- markers, colored pencils, or other tool for drawing
- Bible

Separate the participants by gender, and give each group two sheets of paper and something to draw with. Ask them to draw what they think is the “ideal” person for each gender. Both gender groups should draw ideals of both genders. Once both groups have finished, invite them to share their drawings with everyone. Use the following questions to debrief.

- How do you feel about the other group’s drawings?
- Having seen the other group’s drawings, how do you feel about your own?

Read Genesis 1:26–31 and use the following questions to further the discussion.

- What do you think it means to reflect the image of God?
- Having read this scripture, how do you feel about our drawings?
- Where on our drawings have we reflected the image of God?
- If God made us “good,” then why do so many feel the pressure to be “perfect” or “ideal”?
- Where do our ideas of what is and is not attractive come from?
- How can we help others claim their goodness and stop trying to be perfect?

2 Hormonal Homily

Leader preparation: Read these texts two or three times and reflect on your own comfort with the passionate language. Being aware of your own comfort or discomfort with the topics of this text will help you facilitate this activity.

Supplies:

- Bible
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Write the word “sex” in the middle of a large sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard. Invite the participants to list words or expressions that people use rather than saying the word “sex.” Add their words around the word “sex.” Words you deem inappropriate may be abbreviated, or just write the first letter. Use the following questions to continue the conversation.

- How comfortable are you with the different words and expressions we have listed?
- Why are people uncomfortable with some of these words or expressions?

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- 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.

- Why do sex and sexuality create such strong responses from people?
- How does your body respond to conversations about human sexuality?

Ask three different participants to each read one of these selections from Song of Solomon.

- Song of Solomon 1:1–4
- Song of Solomon 2:1–7
- Song of Solomon 3:3–4

Use the following questions to further the conversation.

- How comfortable does the writer seem expressing human sexuality?
- How can our sexuality be a gift from God?
- How can our sexuality feel like a curse?
- What factors affect whether we experience sexuality positively or negatively?
- What advice can we take from the scripture readings?
- If sexuality is celebrated in the Bible, how could we celebrate it more in our faith?

3 Every Part Has Its Place

Leader preparation: This activity could be a little edgy, depending on your group. Although Paul talks about feet and ears, conversation about “less honorable” parts of the body will often take youth other places. Be prepared to be open to where they go.

Supplies:

- Bible
- Body Scan Meditation (see below)

Invite the participants to sit somewhere comfortable where they will not move or fidget. Use the following script to guide them through a short meditation exercise. Make sure you read slowly, giving time for the group to reflect as they go, but don’t go so slow that you put them to sleep. Warn them that some parts may tempt them to giggle. Encourage them to hold it until the activity is over.

You are about to scan your body. We will start at the top and move down. Close your eyes and think about the very top spot of your head. How do the hairs attach? What is the shape of your top end? Slowly move down your head. What is the next body part you come to? How do you feel about it? What other body parts are nearby? How do they relate to each other? Continue your scan, moving down. How does your head attach to your shoulders? How strong do your arms feel? How do you feel about your armpits today? Scan down to your hips, thinking about each part of our torso. Think about each shape and part attached. What is the purpose of each part? Scan down past your bottom. How do you feel about these parts of your body? How do you talk about those parts of your body? What words do you use? Scan on down your legs. How do you feel about them? Finally, take a look at your feet. How are they different from the top of your body? How do you feel about your feet? How do you think they smell right now? Now, as you are ready, open your eyes, and sit up to join the group.

As the group gathers, invite them to share their thoughts and reflections. (Yes, now is the time for giggling and laughter.)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–26 and use the following questions to prompt discussion.

- Which body parts are less “honorable”?
- How do we talk about our bodies with other people?
- How does the age or gender of others change the way we talk about our bodies?
- How do we use words to create shame regarding parts of our bodies?
- What silly names do we make up for body parts?
- How do you think this scripture reading speaks to these issues?
- Can a “less honorable part” be beautiful?
- How are “less honorable parts” lifted up?
- How could less honorable parts be of service to God?

Read Deuteronomy 23:9–14 and discuss, using the following questions:

- Why do you think this is in the Bible?
- How does it connect with our conversation on “less honorable” parts?
- Can even “bathroom habits” be spiritual?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Bling Bling (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: First, look at what you are wearing. This activity will be a reflection on adornment. If you are wearing lots of jewelry, it will impact the activity. This is not necessarily good or bad, but it should be taken into consideration. Think about how you adorn your body and how you feel about jewelry and piercings.

Supplies:

- Bible in several translations (including the NIV)

Invite participants to share a gift each has given to let another person know of his or her romantic interest. If participants can’t give a personal example, each can name one he or she has seen someone else offer.

Read Genesis 24:12–26 as a group from a translation other than the NIV. You may ask participants to take turns reading or just have one reader. Ask them to share their feelings about this ancient process for finding a bride. Use the following questions to further the conversation:

- How do you feel about a servant going to find a bride for the master’s son?
- Why do you think he showed her such fancy jewelry?
- What was at stake for Rebecca if she chose to go or if she chose to stay at home?

Read Genesis 24:22 from the NIV: “When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels.” Use the following prompts to further discussion.

- How does it feel to hear the Bible talk about a nose ring?
- How would piercings or other jewelry change the way you imagine dif-

ferent Bible characters? For example: Moses with an earring, Bathsheba with a navel-ring, or John the Baptist wearing a big gold chain.

- I wonder how our understanding of jewelry and adornments has changed over time.
- What is the line between decoration and vanity?
- How can adorning the body honor God?

5 Deep Breath

Leader preparation: Have all supplies out and ready to use. If you use real clay, be sure to have resources for cleaning up.

Supplies:

- clay or Play Dough
- wax paper
- Bible

Read Genesis 2:1–25. Explain that this is a story of God creating the first people. After this, God makes many others. Give each person clay or Play Dough with wax paper to set it on, and invite them to create a clay model of a favorite Bible character. Give everyone time to make a person and to share with the group who it is and why she or he created that person. Ask everyone what it is about the character that makes that character “come to life” or what makes his or her life stand out among all the other characters. Use the following questions to further the conversation:

- What does it mean to have the breath of God in us?
- When have you felt like the breath of God was filling you?
- How is the breath of God like the Holy Spirit?
- How does your physical body interact with or contain the breath of God or Holy Spirit?
- If you could breathe into your model and bring that person to life, what do you think the person would tell you?
- I wonder if the breath of God is anywhere else other than humans!

6 Cover-Ups

Leader preparation: Since this is not a commonly known story, make sure you read it to familiarize yourself.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Read Genesis 9:20–27 and invite the group to make a list of questions they have about the text. Go through the questions one at a time, and invite them to share their thoughts. Use the following questions to further the conversation. What role does alcohol play in this scripture?

- How do you think Christians should approach the use of alcohol?
- What role does shame play in this scripture?
- How do you deal with shame in your own life?
- What other habits often leave people with shame?
- In our story, how did dishonoring of the body lead to dishonoring of people?

- What ways have you seen people dishonored due to someone's shame about dishonoring their body?

Invite the group to do some role-play, acting out better scenarios of how Noah and sons could have responded to the events and to one another. After role-playing a few different "improved" endings to the text, revisit the original questions the group created. Share the new endings to the story with other groups or as an offering for worship.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Old Knowledge (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Look through the scriptures used to make sure you are familiar with them and can find them quickly. The cards to post around the church should be temporary postings. If you decide to do something more permanent, be sure to get approval.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- large paper or whiteboard and markers and tape
- note cards and pens

Make sure everyone has a Bible or can share with a friend. Invite participants to read aloud the following scriptures and make a list of hygiene tips that can be taken from the text. If the participants struggle to see a connection, ask: *What health concern could this address?*

- Deuteronomy 23:12–13; Leviticus 11:24–28 and 11:40
- Leviticus 13:1–14 and 13:47–58
- Leviticus 15:1–13, 18:22, and 20:10–16
- Numbers 5:2–4 and 19:11, 19, 22
- Numbers 19:14–16

Use the following questions for further conversation.

- Why do you think such rules and safety guidelines made it into the Bible?
- Why do you think the writers of the scriptures cared about care of the human body?
- How is caring for the human body a spiritual matter?
- How has technology altered the importance of such rules?
- What rules would be good to add to the list for modern living?
- How would you write the rules in modern language?

Give each participant a note card and pen and have them all write their own rules for healthy modern living along with the scripture reference from which they adapted each rule. Encourage them to post their cards in their bedroom or bathroom (that is, some space where they get ready each day). If some of the rules the group wrote would be useful around the church, make cards with the rules and scripture reference on them and post them in appropriate places. Be careful not to use anything that will harm paint or walls.



8 Write This on Your What?

Leader preparation: Think about your own feelings about body art. This conversation may evoke strong and differing opinions. Print out the “Shoulder Shema” photograph in advance or have a way to share it with the group. Make sure you pronounce “Shema” correctly.

Supplies:

- “Shoulder Shema,” Attachment: Activity 8
- Bible

Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9, and then use the following questions for discussion.

- What do you think the writer means by “write this on your forehead”?
- In what ways are people physically marked by their faith?

Show the group the “Shoulder Shema,” Attachment: Activity 8. Explain that the writing on her back is in Hebrew, and the text is Deuteronomy 6:4. Explain that the Jewish community refers to this text as “the Shema” [shee-MAH], and it is used in daily prayers. Use the following questions for discussion:

- How does this tattoo relate to Deuteronomy 6?
- Why do you think this person chose Deuteronomy 6 as a tattoo?
- How do you feel about tattoos and other body art?
- What do tattoos and body art tell us about a person?
- What are the reasons people get tattoos?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 and use the following questions for discussion.

- I wonder if self-expression can become self-promotion.
- Where is the line between expressing yourself and being vain?
- I wonder if a tattoo can be both an act of rebellion and an expression of one’s self.
- Where is the line between honoring the body and covering it out of shame?
- If you were to get a tattoo, what would it be? Where would you put it?

9 Every Body Has a Part

Leader preparation: Think about your own personal gifts and the gifts of those youth who regularly participate in your group. Decorate a small box with gift wrap and a bow. Cut a small hole in the top. Cut up some small pieces of paper.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- box
- scissors
- gift wrap and bow
- paper and pens

Have lots of small pieces of paper available and distribute them as participants enter. Invite them to write the physical gifts they see in other members of the group. Use a different piece of paper for each gift. They may include their own gifts. No names should be included on any piece of paper. There may be a dozen pieces that say “can run fast.” As they write on each slip of paper, ask them to

drop it in the box. Once everyone is done, open the box, and read the gifts. Ask that no names be shouted out. Simply listen to the listing of gifts.

Read Romans 12 and use the following questions for conversation.

- How can the gifts we listed from our group be used to fulfill this scripture?
- What does our scripture reading say about celebrating some gifts above others?
- How can we use our gifts to serve God?
- How can we celebrate our gifts and still be humble?
- I wonder which is easier for you: being humble or claiming your gifts.
- I wonder which is harder for you: naming your own gifts or naming the gifts of someone else.

Reflect

How has scripture surprised you in these activities? How has scripture comforted you? Where have you seen yourself in either the scriptures or the faith stories of the participants?

Attachment: Activity 8

Shoulder Shema

The Shema is the central prayer in the Jewish prayerbook. It is the first scripture taught to children. Many Jews pray the Shema twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. Parts of the Shema are written on a small piece of paper that is rolled up and placed in a *mezuzah* (a small metal scroll box) that is hung on the doorpost of the house. The *mezuzah* is touched when one leaves or enters the house.

The Shema

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind this as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NRSV)



Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Decisions are often experimental for youth and forged out of conversation. Through relationships with peers and mentors, through interaction with media and academia, through long internal conversations youth test their thoughts until those ideas become beliefs. After this process, they test them again. Discipleship is a process of growth and becoming rather than completion of a course of study. Youth must be able to grow in their own time or they will reject the process on principle. As we pass through different seasons of our lives, both our bodies and our relationship with God will change. Exploring those changes now allows youth to imagine who they want to be in the future and, more importantly, who God calls them to be now.

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

Decisions matter and have consequences, so it is important that they are made for the right reasons. Remember that youth need to be in dialogue with ideas, peers, mentors, and, often, themselves. Through this process they will grow in their faith and understanding. As you lead this session, be attentive to your own agendas and need to correct or advise; make sure you leave room for the journey of the youth.

Prayer: Creator God, as our bodies grow and age, may our understanding of how to use them to your glory grow as well. Help us to use our bodies to serve others and to care for our bodies in a way that honors both us and you. 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 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,

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Listen to Your Body Talk (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Spend time thinking about your own body’s communication system. Look through the questions and reflect on your own responses.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Use the following questions to help participants reflect on how our bodies communicate with us:

- How do you know when you are hungry?
- How do you know when you are sleepy?
- How do you know when you are hurt?
- How do you know when you need exercise?
- How do you know when you are sick?
- What other things does your body communicate to you?

While it is clear that our bodies communicate to us, it is equally clear that we don’t always know how to respond. Use the following questions to further conversation:

- How do you respond to your body when your need doesn’t match your setting?
- What do you do when you need to exercise, but need to be sitting still?
- What do you do when you need to cry, but everyone else is happy?
- What do you do when you are sick, but others have expectations of you that require effort?
- How do you know when you have spiritual needs?
- How do spiritual concerns show up physically?

2 Age Old Issue

Leader preparation: Youth often avoid thinking about old age. Sometimes it is not avoidance so much as it is just not part of their world yet. If they think about it at all, it is a concept they struggle to wrap their minds around. Make sure you spend time reflecting on your own thoughts about aging before leading this activity. Make sure your technology is working and ready to go.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projection capability
- song: “Grow Old With You,” from *The Wedding Singer*, performed by Adam Sandler, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CYI5bKZMes>
- paper and pencils
- Bibles

Read Psalm 71, and then ask the group to spend a private moment drawing a picture of themselves when they are “old.” Once everyone has finished, invite all to share their drawings; then ask the following questions:

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- 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.

- What does it mean to grow old?
- What are your greatest fears of growing old?
- When does a person stop being excited about getting older and start dreading it?

Play the song “Grow Old with You,” and then use the following questions to lead discussion:

- How will your needs change as you get older?
- Which changes are you most concerned about?
- How would being older change the way you view friendships and relationships?
- How do you think your relationship with God will change over time?

③ Bound

Leader preparation: Consider your own experiences of physical limitation. Think about your own limitations and afflictions as well as those you know of in your community. Look through the activity and make sure the three tasks are appropriate for your location. Make up a new task if one of the three is not appropriate for your setting.

Supplies:

- a bandana for each participant

Use bandanas to create artificial afflictions for each person in the group. Assign afflictions so that no participant is given more of a challenge than he or she can handle. The following list provides good options but you are welcome to come up with their own.

- Blindness: tie bandana like a blindfold.
- Lost arm: tie one arm behind the back.
- Injured leg: tie legs loosely together, making stride shorter.

Once everyone has an affliction, give all the following tasks to perform (or others appropriate to your location and group):

- Go get a drink of water and come back.
- Walk up a set of stairs backward and come back.
- Find five items of differing sizes and bring them back in one trip.

Use the following questions to debrief the experience:

- What challenges did you face in this exercise?
- What was easy for you in this exercise?
- How did it feel to complete a task that was easy for you and difficult for another?
- How did it feel to know others completed a task easily while you struggled?
- How did you compensate for your affliction?
- How well could you live with the afflictions represented here?
- What affliction, beyond the ones we have represented, would cause you the greatest anxiety?
- How do differences in physical ability define a person?
- How can we respond to those who have physical limitations without

degrading them?

- How do we speak of people's limitations or differences in physical ability without being derogatory? What language do we use?
- How do our response and our language reflect our faith?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Last Rites (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Many youth will have to say good-bye to a family member or lose even a member of their class because of illness or death. Thinking about how we honor bodies at death can help us think about how we live.

Supplies: None

Ask those in the group who have attended funerals to share their experiences. Use the following questions to further the conversation:

- How do you feel about attending funerals or visitations?
- What parts of the service do you remember?
- What is the purpose behind different aspects of a funeral service?
- What do we do with people's bodies after they die?
- When people are placed in a casket, how are they dressed and prepared?
- How does the way we treat bodies compare to or differ from the way we treat our bodies when we are alive?
- What do you think happens to us after we die?
- How much is our body part of who we are?



5 Embracing Affection

Leader preparation: Post the artwork "Margot Embracing Her Mother" on the wall where everyone can see it. Have other pictures of public displays of affection printed out and ready to show the group, but not yet visible. Make sure you spend time thinking about your own biases regarding public displays of affection so that you can set them aside for the conversation.

Supplies:

- 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
- pictures of various forms of public "displays of affection" (available through an Internet search engine, like Google)
- computer with Internet access and access to a printer

Print some photographs depicting public displays of affection (PDA). As the participants gather, point out "Margot Embracing Her Mother" and invite them to spend time looking at it. Use the following questions to begin the conversation:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What do you think the two subjects feel for each other?
- How does looking at the picture make you feel?
- How would you feel if the adult were kissing the child?

- What level of affection are you comfortable with from your parents?
- How does the affection shown between children and parents change over time?

Show the group other pictures of “PDA.” Use the following questions to continue the conversation:

- What is going on in these pictures?
- What do you think the subjects feel for each other?
- How does looking at these pictures make you feel?
- What is the line between sharing affection and being disrespectful of others?
- Where are your personal boundaries in sharing affection in public?
- How does the setting (movies, school, park, home, time of day) change the affection you show?
- What is appropriate affection for youth and parents in public?
- What do you do when you experience inappropriate affection from others?
- What do you do when you experience inappropriate affection from someone of authority?
- What is the appropriate amount of affection for Christians to share with each other?



6 Paging Dr. Jesus

Leader preparation: Read the Hippocratic Oath and look up any words you do not know. Make sure you are comfortable explaining all the language used.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- “Hippocratic Oath,” Attachment: Activity 6, for each participant

Give out copies of the Hippocratic Oath and explain that this is a common oath taken by doctors when they graduate from medical school and begin their medical practice. Allow participants to take turns reading stanzas from the oath, stopping after each one to allow for comments or questions. At the end, read Mark 5:21–43 and use the following questions for discussion:

- If the Hippocratic Oath sets the standard for being a good doctor, how did Jesus do measure up to that standard?
- How was Jesus’ healing different from what our doctors do today?
- How was Jesus’ healing similar to what our doctors do today?
- Do you think people today have healing powers like Jesus?
- What parts of the Hippocratic Oath would be good guidelines for a church?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 No Naive Nativity (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Be ready for the participant who may remind the group that the scripture story of the nativity is different from the sets we put out at Christmas. This is accurate, but the nativity set helps us tell the story, and today it will help us reflect on the different characters in the story.

Supplies:

- nativity set (crèche)
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- paper and pen

Set up the nativity in the middle of the group and ask the participants to look at each human figure and think about how it felt physically to be in their shoes that night. List each character on newsprint or a whiteboard. Next to each name, write the group's responses. For example, the shepherds could have been tired and anxious, or eager and excited. Mary probably had swollen feet and was experiencing contractions, then went through the pain of childbirth. Save Jesus for last. Use the following questions to further the discussion:

- Who do you think was the most uncomfortable person in the nativity scene?
- As you look at the list of physical experiences, when in Jesus' life did he feel or experience things that others felt at the time of his birth?
- When have you felt the things on the list?
- How does it make you feel to know Jesus felt many of the same physical struggles and joys that we feel?
- How does this change the way we pray or what we pray about?

As a group retell the Christmas story in a way that focuses on the physical experience of the night. Write it down, share it with other groups, and offer it as a reading for Advent worship.

8 Seasons of Life

Leader preparation: Make sure your technology works, and reflect on your own responses to the questions. Listen to the song "I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry."

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and speakers
- song: "I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry," by John Ylvisaker (tune: Waterlife), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYnmtOI50ic>
- construction paper and markers
- envelopes and stamps
- church directory and local phone book
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Listen to "I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry" twice so participants understand what is going on. Talk about the song, asking for initial responses. Then play it a third time and ask the group to identify different ages or stages of life referred to in the song. As they call out what they hear, make a list of the stages

on newsprint or a whiteboard. Ask the group to identify changes in the body that occur at those stages of life (for example, growing pains, voices changing, women getting pregnant, bones weakening, and so forth). Give out construction paper and markers. Using the church directory or phone book, write notes or create cards for people who are going through such life transitions. Make plans to send the cards. These cards should be expressions of gratitude and caring, but not condescending or belittling—"I want to thank you for the way your life shows me how to live." "I am praying for you."

9 A Life That Matters

Leader preparation: Go online and print out the obituaries needed and make sure your technology works. Perhaps there are significant leaders from your community or church who have remarkable obituaries that you could research and make available.

Supplies:

- computer with printer, Internet access, and speakers
- obituaries: Mother Teresa, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-mother-teresa-of-calcutta-1237661.html>; Martin Luther King, Jr., http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/k/martin_luther_jr_king/index.html; and Millard Fuller, <http://www.legacy.com/NS/Obituary.aspx?pid=123696931>
- 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>
- paper and pens

Listen to "Take My Life." Give out the obituaries of Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., and Millard Fuller. Invite different participants to read them out loud. Ask: *How did these people live out the lyrics of the song?* Allow time for discussion, then hand out paper and pens. Have the group write a short personal obituary, reflecting a life that lived out the lyrics to the song.

Reflect

How is God continuing to shape and mold you? What lessons from your youth have you relearned in your time with these young men and women?

Attachment: Activity 6

Hippocratic Oath *Modern Version*

I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant:

I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.

I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures (that) are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism.

I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.

I will not be ashamed to say "I know not," nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery.

I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me that the world may know. Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks. But it may also be within my power to take a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God.

I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being, whose illness may affect the person's family and economic stability. My responsibility includes these related problems, if I am to care adequately for the sick.

I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.

I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.

If I do not violate this oath, may I enjoy life and art, respected while I live and remembered with affection thereafter. May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling, and may I long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help.

SOURCE: WRITTEN IN 1964 BY LOUIS LASAGNA, ACADEMIC DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY

Note: The original Hippocratic Oath was written around the fifth century. It has been updated and revised many times.

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Tradition is often confused with entitlement. Older youth struggle with this because our culture tends to cater to personal desires. The line between personal desires and tradition—"It's always been done this way" and "This is how our family is family"—is often difficult to articulate. Also, within Christian tradition there can be contradictory points. This conflict can help youth drive deeper into the complexities and mysteries of faith or cause them to dismiss it as hypocrisy and walk away. This Exploration emphasizes this challenge because no traditions may be more contradictory than those related to the human body.

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

Tradition is a great teaching tool. Remember to let tradition speak for itself. You don't have to defend it. The topics raised may be controversial and allow for good conversation. Just make sure you have thought through your own position and understanding of how tradition speaks about honoring the body so that you can make room for the thoughts and ideas of the participants.

Prayer: Help us, O God, to discern those traditions that honor you from those borne of our own fears and pride. Help us to pass on those traditions that honor you and the bodies you gave 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 to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Time for Change (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: If possible, look at "Time Line during Life of Jesus," <http://www.jesuscentral.com/ji/historical-jesus/jesus-lifetime.php>, or glance through the Bible to make your own time line. Avoid using John to make an outline because John's chronology does not match the other gospels. A Gospel parallel can be helpful for this task and is often available in church libraries or clergy offices.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- (optional) "Time Line during Life of Jesus," <http://www.jesuscentral.com/ji/historical-jesus/jesus-lifetime.php>

On newsprint or a whiteboard, write "Birth" at the left side and "30" at the right end. Draw a line between the two that will serve as a timeline. Ask participants to list typical or expected physical changes that occur in the body and about what age they happen. As directed by participants, write these ideas on your time line at the appropriate place. Ask for reflection on how those changes may impact a person's life. Go back through the timeline and ask everyone to reflect on how those physical changes in a person impact the life of family and friends.

With a different color draw a second line below the time line and ask the participants to work together to place Jesus' life on the time line as best they can. Once they have completed the task, ask them which events on the upper time line would have also been experienced by Jesus. Add any that they feel apply. Use the following questions to further the conversation:

- How do you think Jesus' experience of early childhood was similar to yours?
- How do you think Jesus responded to the changes that all human beings go through?
- How do you think those around Jesus responded to these changes in his body and life?
- How could Jesus' responses to changes in his body and life impact your understanding of Jesus?
- How could Jesus' responses to changes in his body and life impact your understanding of Jesus' divinity or place in the Trinity?

2 Making Sense of Faith

Leader preparation: Make sure your space is appropriate for burning incense and sharing food, and also make sure that no one has a sensitivity to incense or to the foods. It is best to have a lighted candle in a votive holder so that you do not have an open flame.

Supplies:

- incense, holder, and lighter
- bell, chime, or other ringing device
- different strong-flavored foods, plates and napkins
- candle

Honoring the Body

- 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.

Light a candle and invite everyone to gather around it. Ask: *How does the light make you feel? In what ways does the light remind you of God? Where else do you see God?*

Next, light some incense and place it in the middle of the group. (Be thoughtful of allergies.) Allow time for the scent to fill the space. Ask: *How does the aroma make you feel? How does the smell remind you of God? What other smells make you think of God?*

Gently ring a chime or bell and place it in the middle of the group. Give a moment for the sound to resonate. Ask: *How does the sound make you feel? How does the sound remind you of God? What other sounds remind you of God?*

Place some different foods in the middle of the group. Invite everyone to taste each item. Ask: *How does this taste make you feel? How does the taste remind you of God? What other tastes remind you of God?*

Walk around the circle and gently place your hand on the arm of each person and gently squeeze or rub their arm. Come back to your place in the circle and ask the group how it felt to receive a gentle touch. Ask them how that touch reminds them of God. Ask them what other experiences of touch remind them of God.

③ Head to Head

Leader preparation: Print pictures of women with head coverings, including a nun's habit, a burqa, and a hijab. Try to include some historic presentations of women from European cultures and the American frontier.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and printer
- head covering pictures

Place a series of pictures depicting women in head coverings around the room and invite the participants to walk around the room and explore the different pictures. After a while, collect the pictures, pull everyone back together, and place the pictures in the middle of the group so that everyone can see them. Use the following questions for discussion:

- How do the head coverings in these pictures compare to one another?
- Why do you think times in history and different cultures have asked women to wear a head covering?
- In a time when women are so often victims of violence and exploitation, could head coverings actually be for their protection?
- With so many cultures trying to lift men over women, could head coverings be a symbol of oppression?
- Where is the line between modesty and oppression?
- How do you think God feels about head coverings?
- In what serious circumstances would you wear a head covering?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Pour on the Love (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Have ready a paper divided into two columns and spend time thinking about services that you would place in the two categories involved in this activity.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- Bible

Divide the newsprint or whiteboard into two columns. In the left column, write what participants suggest as a list of things people pay for to pamper themselves physically. Make sure common things such as massages, manicures, pedicures, and so forth are on the list. Once the list is complete (you may come back and add more later), ask the participants to list services people pay for to make their body more attractive, such as plastic surgery. Write these in the right column. Use the following questions to further the conversation:

- When is pampering appropriate, and when is it not?
- How much pampering is too much?
- What is the difference between hygiene and pampering?
- What is the difference between services used for pampering and those aimed at beautification?
- How could something intended to pamper the body end up dishonoring the body?
- How could something intended to beautify the body end up dishonoring the body?

Read Luke 7:36–50 and use the following questions to continue the conversation:

- How do you feel about the treatment Jesus receives?
- How do you think Jesus felt about having his feet covered with perfume and rubbed?
- How do you think the disciples or others watching perceived the event?
- How does this story speak to our habits of pampering and beautifying?

5 Passion Poems

Leader preparation: Read the scriptures listed in the activity description and think about your romantic side. In advance, write out the compliments from Attachment: Activity 5 on separate note cards, putting one compliment on each card. Make sure to separate the verses from chapters 4 and 5 in different stacks. Do not tell the group that these come from scripture.

Supplies:

- paper and pencils
- “Compliments,” Attachment: Activity 5
- note cards
- Bible

Give out the Chapter 4 note cards to the boys and Chapter 5 note cards to the girls. Invite them to pick someone in the room to share the compliment with.

If there are not enough note cards for each person to have one, then require all compliments to be directed at people who have no card. This will engage more people in the activity. Explain that those receiving the compliment can only respond, “Well, thank you.” Challenge them to refrain from giggling or gasping if they are the recipient. Once all compliment cards have been read, lead discussion using the following questions:

- How do you feel about the compliments shared today?
- What made some compliments hard to take seriously?
- What made some compliments awkward?
- Where do you think these came from?

Read Song of Solomon 4:1–7, 5:10–16 and use the following questions to further the conversation:

- Why do you think this is in the Bible?
- How do you feel about these verses being considered sacred?
- What does this text say about the human body?
- What does this text tell us about romantic relationships?

Give everyone paper and a pencil. Invite them to write a modern version that would be received as a true compliment and also be appropriate to share with someone as a love poem. If there is time, allow each participant to share his or her poem with the group. They do not need to direct it at a person. Simply invite them to share it as a scripture interpretation.

6 My Temple

Leader preparation: Look through the discussion questions and reflect on your own answers.

Supplies:

- Lego® blocks or other building blocks
- paper and markers

Provide building blocks for the participants. Ask them to imagine themselves as a building. *If you were a building, what would it look like? What rooms would it have? What would the outer structure look like? What kind of architecture?* Invite them to build their building with the Lego® blocks, but if participants struggle to engage the building process with blocks, offer them paper and markers to draw their buildings. Once all have completed their buildings, invite each to share with the group. Use the following questions to further the conversation:

- How is your building like you?
- In what way is your building what you wish you could be?
- What do we have to do to keep a building strong and usable?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16 and use the following questions to continue the conversation.

- If our bodies are a temple, how do we keep them strong and usable?
- How comfortable would God be living in the buildings we designed?
- How is God part of the construction of your building?
- What would it mean to have Christ as the cornerstone of our body, not just our beliefs?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Honor Your Body, and Your Body, and Your Body, and ... (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think about the best place to share in this practice. The location can make a difference in the experience. For example, handing these out after church, at a supermarket, or in a hospital would each create a completely different context. Help participants to be thoughtful about whom they hand certain cards to.

Supplies:

- note cards or construction paper
- markers or other art supplies

Give the participants time to make lots of cards with the following messages:

- God loves your body, and so should you.
- What was the last nice thing you did for your body?
- Bless your body, and it will bless you!
- How has your body been a blessing to you? To others?
- Honor your father and mother—and YOU! Care for yourself today.

Plan a time and place to hand out the cards. They may be given to strangers or to people you know. They could be distributed at church or somewhere in public. Be sure to set a time when participants will be able to share the responses they saw and heard and to reflect on what this experience says about how people feel about their bodies.

8 Dancing our Faith

Leader preparation: Make sure your technology works before you start the activity.

Supplies:

- projector and screen
- video: “Ren and the Town Council” from the movie *Footloose*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYaHlwSaI5c&feature=youtu.be>
- computer with Internet access

What is the tradition of dance in your church? Do you have a liturgical praise dance team? Is dance permitted as part of wedding receptions in the church? What is the current policy regarding dance in your church? In what ways has the policy or tradition changed over the years? Why did the policy change?

Watch the “Town Council” scene from the movie *Footloose*, and discuss the following questions:

- How comfortable are you with dancing?
- How can dance be used to worship God?

Create a dance that involves all participants (even if they are “props”) that can be shared in worship. The dance can tell a story or just be a celebratory movement. Share your dance with others.

9 Let's Make A Deal

Leader preparation: Have some options for service in mind before the participants gather. You may need to work out an opportunity in advance. This will protect you from having nowhere to “give Sabbath.”

Supplies:

- Bible

Read Exodus 20:8–11. Explain that Sabbath is an ancient concept of rest and renewal practiced by the Israelites and passed down to us through scripture and tradition. Sabbath honors the seventh day of creation, in the tradition of Genesis 1, when God rested. It is echoed in the Ten Commandments through God’s call to “keep the Sabbath holy.” It is a time of rest and care when work is not done. In our workaholic culture, Sabbath keeping can be looked down upon, and many don’t know how to rest knowing that others are working.

To show the importance of Sabbath and encourage others to practice it, find people who are working (as volunteers, staff, church leaders, and so forth.) and offer to fill in for them on one simple condition: they must rest. They can’t use the time to get something else done. Maybe offer to clean classrooms for the church custodians while they take an extended rest break. Maybe you can help wait tables at a local restaurant while the servers sit at a table and rest. (Make sure that participants understand the need to do the work well, so the person for whom they are providing a Sabbath break doesn’t have to work harder with a “do over.”)

At the end of your service, encourage the participants to practice Sabbath keeping in their own life and look for other places to step in and invite others to do the same.

Reflect

When have you stood against the traditions that were passed down to you? When have you been the one called to pass on a tradition? Which burden is heavier: passing on a tradition or standing against it?

Attachment: Activity 5

Compliments

<p>How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>Your eyes behind your veil are doves.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
<p>Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from the hills of Gilead.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
<p>Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
<p>Your neck is like the tower of David, built with courses of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>Your breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
<p>You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
<p>How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume more than any spice!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>
<p>You are a garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	

Attachment: Activity 5 (continued)

<p>You are beloved, radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	<p>Your head is purest gold.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
<p>Your hair is wavy and black as a raven.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	<p>Your eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
<p>Your cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	<p>Your lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
<p>Your arms are rods of gold set with topaz.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	<p>Your body is like polished ivory.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
<p>Your legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	<p>Your appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
<p>Your mouth is sweetness itself;</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	<p>You are altogether lovely.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>
<p>You are my beloved, you are my friend.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5</p>	

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Every generation has its unique markers and quirks. Older youth want to practice their beliefs. By engaging their mind and bodies in real issues, the complexities are illuminated and faith becomes real. Youth are mature thinkers and want an authentic faith. Without placing that faith in a context and giving it a purpose, many youth do not see any point in having it.

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 others' bodies, we live out the healthy wholeness for which God created us. 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

Leader Preparation

Mission can be far away or close to home. In the case of this Exploration, “close to home” can’t get any closer. We are talking about the human body, and our context is within us as well as around the globe. Remember to think personally and globally as you lead these activities. Through this Exploration you will invite youth to explore how we honor our bodies in such a time as this.

Prayer: God of community, help us to remember that we do not live in isolation. May we use our bodies to honor and care for one another. Help us also to recognize the impact of others on our own bodies and the way we understand and use our bodies. 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 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,

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Operation: Service (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is based on the old game “Operation.” You will need to get a large sheet or roll of paper. If you have the game, you may want to bring it along to help any who are not familiar with it.

Supplies:

- long roll of paper
- markers, construction paper, tape or glue
- (optional) game: “Operation”

This activity could be done by drawing a stick figure on the board rather than on paper, if paper is not readily available, or you could have each participant use a piece of paper to draw and label a stick figure. Optimally, the activity would be best as follows: Roll out a large piece of paper and trace one person’s full body. Invite the group to label the body parts by writing how that part of the body might be used to serve God. For example, instead of “arm,” the group might label them as “huggers.” Elbows might be “hammer drivers.” The mouth might be a “good news spreader.” Encourage creativity. If you have time, invite the group to make up small symbols to go on those body parts. For example, they might paste or tape a little hammer onto the elbow. Multiple labels are allowed for each part of the body.

Once the labeling is complete, ask the group to list things that different body parts are used for that dishonor the body. Invite them to make a loud “buzz” sound (if you have it, use the actual operation game board for sound effects). For example, “hands are used for hitting” followed by “buzz!” You might want to hang your “Operation Service” body poster in the room as a reminder to use our bodies to serve and honor God.

2 Service Stations

Leader preparation: Print the latest version of the Church World Service hygiene kit requirements and request donations from those you expect to participate or from the larger community. Make sure you have enough items to complete kits. Visit the Church World Service website for instructions on packing the kits when completed. (Many denominations have such services, so you can consult the website of your denomination.)

Supplies:

- hand towels measuring approximately 16” x 28” (no fingertip or bath towels)
- washcloths
- wide-tooth combs
- nail clippers
- bars of soap (bath size, in wrapper)
- toothbrushes (in original packaging)
- sets of six standard size adhesive bandages
- gallon size zip-sealing bags
- cost of shipping
- “Church World Service Hygiene Kits,” http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kits_hygiene

Honoring the Body

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.

As you pack the kits, explain to the group how Church World Service responds to natural disasters and prolonged humanitarian crises by sending life-saving and life-changing supplies. Go through the list of items included in the kit and ask the group to name how that item could be important for a family in crisis.

③ Shedding our S(k)in?

Leader preparation: Make sure you have a place to throw away fruit peels and some place to wash hands after. This activity might take place in the church kitchen or someone’s home kitchen.

Supplies:

- a large orange for each participant (may substitute bananas)
- markers
- napkins or wet-wipes

Give each person an orange and a marker. Instruct the participants to write things on the orange that cause our bodies to deteriorate or break down. They can be as creative with the writing as they want. Have each person share the writing on his or her orange as he or she is comfortable.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1 and discuss the following questions:

- How do we build up or break down what is “inside us?”
- What do you think was breaking down the bodies of those to whom Paul writes this letter?
- How do our poor decisions break us down, inside and out?

Invite all to peel their fruit and enjoy. As they eat, ask them to reflect on how God renews us as people of faith. Finally, ask why God gave us these bodies, and what do they think God hopes we will do with them.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ Thumb Language versus Body Language (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the statements that will be texted, and think of all the different ways they could be read or interpreted.

Supplies:

- paper and pens
- two phones that can send and receive text messages

Give one participant a phone and use another phone to send a text message. The other person may use his or her own phone if it is one that can receive texts at no cost. Explain that you will send the other person a text and he or she is to read it to the group. One at a time, send the statements listed below. When the text is received, the person receiving it is to read it aloud. After each statement pose the questions that follow and change who will receive the next text. When you ask the question about different ways the message could be understood, allow participants to demonstrate different body language, tones of voice, or articulation for each statement that could change the meaning.

- Did you mean to look like that?
- I'm fine.
- What were you thinking?
- Whatever!
- What's up with ____ [enter a name here]?
- What is up with you?
- What are you talking about?
- I don't understand you.

Questions for reflection (used after each statement):

- How did the voice and body language of the reader impact the statement?
- What other ways could the statement have been read to alter the meaning?
- What role does body language play in communicating this statement?

Use the following questions after all the statements have been shared and examined.

- When has your life been complicated by a misunderstanding through print media?
- How can we better communicate our intentions and be clear about our meaning through media, such as text, social media, and e-mail?
- How does body language affect our messages?

5 Down on the Farm

Leader preparation: Visit some websites that discuss fallow ground, crop rotation, and the changes in farming over the years. Familiarize yourself with these terms.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with Internet access and a projector
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Read Exodus 23:10–12 and ask the group to tell why they think this law (Sabbath rest for the land) was so important to the Hebrew people.

Look up the following words and define them, writing them on the newsprint or whiteboard. If your participants have personal access to the Internet via their phones, invite them to look up the words and write them on the board or paper.

- *fallow ground*: the stage of crop rotation in which the land is deliberately not used to raise a crop
- *crop rotation*: the practice of growing a series of dissimilar types of crops in the same area in sequential seasons
- *Sabbath*: a day (or time) of rest

Use the following questions for discussion:

- In what ways has technology changed the way we farm?
- How does our new technology change the importance of Exodus 23:10–12?

- How is Sabbath for land different from Sabbath for people?
- How is Sabbath for land similar to Sabbath for people?
- How has technology changed the way people approach Sabbath?
- Why is Sabbath important in our world today?
- If Sabbath land feeds the hungry, how does personal Sabbath help those in need?



6 A Body of Work

Leader preparation: Reflect on your understanding of work and jobs. Consider your own biases and work ethic.

Supplies:

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

Write the word “work” on the left side of a sheet of newsprint or a whiteboard. Ask the participants to define the word or share words that have the same meaning. If the word “job” is suggested, write it at the top of the page, forming a second column. If it is not suggested, add the column once responses have ended. Do the same thing with “job.” When the group exhausts its responses on both columns, compare the two. Use the following questions to begin the conversation:

- How does a person’s job define her or him?
- What is the virtue of work?

Show the group the artwork “Out of Work” by Käthe Kollwitz, and invite responses. Use the following questions to continue the conversation:

- How might the lack of a job define a person?
- If a person is physically unable to work, how might that affect his or her life?
- In what ways can a person honor God with the body if unable to work?
- In what ways can a person work too hard and dishonor God or his or her body?
- Where is the line between work and self-care?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Prayer Trainer (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Spend time thinking about your own exercise habits. Consider how prayer and exercise have or have not been connected in your life.

Supplies:

- note cards
- pens
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

On newsprint or a whiteboard, make a list of different statements often included in prayer. Help the group list things they might have overlooked. Make sure ba-

sic things like an opening (O Lord, Creator God, and so forth.), thanksgiving, requests, joys, listening, silence, and closing (Amen) are on the list.

Then make a list of exercises or stretches that people do when they work out. Make sure basic things such as warm-up stretches, using different muscle groups, cool down, and so forth are on the list. Invite the group to put the exercise options into an order that would make a good workout with a healthy beginning, middle, and ending. Do the same thing with the prayer list, creating an outline for a prayer using the different parts of prayer listed. Ask the group to edit their two lists so both outlines have the same number of times in them.

Give each participant a pen and one note card for each line of your outline. Have them write the name of the first workout activity at the top of the card. They can use the rest of the space to write a line of a prayer to match the first item in the prayer outline. For example, the first workout item might be running in place, which is written on the top of the card. The first prayer item might be a name for God, which is written in the middle or body of the card. Repeat this process for each line of the outlines, combining the lists and allowing each participant to write personal prayer content.

When they are done, they have a whole life workout that is healthy for body and soul. By repeating the line on each card while they do the exercise, they can meditate and pray as they strengthen their bodies. Encourage them to take their new prayer training plan home and try using it for a month. If they get bored, they can change the order of the middle cards.



8 Fount of Blessing

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with the Church World Service website on water issues in other countries. Be able to navigate it with the participants. Decide in advance if you will ask participants to bring money for an offering to help dig a well, or if you will ask them to bring it to a future gathering. If you plan to collect it at this gathering you will need to communicate with participants in advance.

Many denominations have such services, so consult the website of your denomination. If you cannot locate a helpful denominational website, this “secular” site is excellent and provides the same opportunities: http://thewaterproject.org/water_scarcity.asp?gclid=CIO6rjOr60CFUIDQAodu3GzsQ.

Supplies:

- paper and colored pencils or markers
- artwork: “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1401636333?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- computer with Internet access
- video projector
- website: “Water for All,” Church World Service, http://www.church-worldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=action_what_water_main

Give each person a piece of paper and materials to draw with. Ask them to draw a picture entitled “Public Fountain.” They may interpret the title any way they wish. When all have finished done, invite them to share their work with the group. Then show the participants “The Public Fountain” artwork, and discuss the following questions:

- How do your fountains compare to the fountain in Bravo’s artwork?
- How does a lack of water make caring for the body more difficult?
- What do you know about water resources in other countries?

Using a projector so that everyone can see, visit “Water for All” to look over the water use information. Ask the group to share their feelings about the information they have just read. Click on the “Donate” button on the website. Invite the group to make a donation together to help provide a well or “public fountain” for a community that has a difficult time getting water.

9 Food for Thought

Leader preparation: This activity is about food and diet. These are sensitive topics for many. Make sure to keep any participants who are sensitive about diet and weight in your prayers and pay attention to their feelings through this activity. Notice that the end of this activity is about inviting the church to a meal.

Supplies:

- website: “My Pyramid,” <http://www.foodpyramid.com/mypyramid/>
- paper and pens

Give everyone paper and a pen and invite the participants to make a list of what they eat in a week. This is not about how much they eat, but what they eat. Encourage them to think about all their meals and snacks. Once their list is done, show the group the “food pyramid”; this will be familiar to most so you can ask them to explain what it is and share what they know about it. Ask the participants to look at their lists and see what categories their items fit into. Also ask them to look at which categories of the pyramid make up the largest percentage of their diet. If anyone is willing to share his or her results, give that person time to do so, but do not pressure. Food and diet are sensitive subjects. Use the following questions to further the conversation:

- What does food have to do with God?
- What stories do you remember from the Bible that include food?
- How often do you pray over or about food?
- Why do we tend to pray at meal times, but not for snacks?
- What happens to extra food in your home?
- I wonder if it is better to finish the food on our plate, remembering some people are going hungry while we have plenty, or if it is better to throw away extras so that we don’t overeat. What might be a solution?
- I wonder what God thinks about our eating habits (daily diet).
- I wonder how eating healthier could help us express our faith.
- How might praying at all meal times change our eating habits?
- As a church, how could we do more to help promote healthy eating?

Reflect

How has the context of the issues explored in these practices changed in your lifetime? How has your understanding of the modern context in which we share our faith changed through your participation in these activities?

As a group, look back over the food pyramid and make a healthy menu for a church potluck meal. List the various items that people would need to bring to have this meal. Set a time and date, issue the invitation to the church, and invite those who attend to provide one of the items on your list. At the meal, use the questions from this practice for table conversation.

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Youth have a great gift in that their dreams are truly dreams—and still alive. They have not settled or compromised their potential. Many have yet to realize how common compromise and lost dreams are in the world—even in the church. Looking to the future encourages use of their gifts.

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 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

By looking at how we honor the body and how we could honor the body, youth are invited to imagine the reign of God made real. This can be a guide for the future and inspiration for today. Maybe through these practices, older youth will remind us all of the dreams that we once had, the potential within our bodies, and the ministries that the still-speaking, still-calling God calls us to engage with our bodies. Encourage participants to embody their discoveries and encourage others to do the same.

Prayer: God, may the future we imagine and the future we desire be one and the same. Help us take the steps from imagination to anticipation to fulfillment. We know we have a role to play. Guide us as we take action. 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 with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Prosthetic Visions (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Look through the questions in this activity and consider your own responses. Think about the participants who will be involved in this session. You will want to be sensitive to special needs of the participants.

Supplies:

- paper
- drawing supplies

Explain to participants that prostheses are an old technology, such as the pirate’s peg leg, that has amazing modern applications. Prosthetic limbs are incredibly valuable to amputees because prosthesis can help restore some of the capabilities lost with the amputated limb. Although prosthetic limbs have still not advanced to the point where they can rival the functionality provided by biological limbs, the capabilities they do provide can be significant. Even some organs are being replicated by mechanical means. Invite the participants to design a prosthetic device they would attach to their body to allow them to live out their faith more fully. This can replace a current part of their body or be an addition to the human body—something brand new. Let them work with partners or in small groups to come up with their ideas and designs. Once all have had a chance to draw and share their work with the group, use the following questions to explore further:

- How did you come up with your prosthesis?
- How can your prosthetic device help you live out your faith more fully?
- Do you think such a prosthesis would respect or disrespect the gifts God has already given you?
- What else could you do to live out your faith without any prostheses?

2 No Mirrors

Leader preparation: Make sure your technology works in advance of leading this activity. Look through the questions to be used and consider your own responses.

Supplies:

- speakers and audio player, or computer with Internet access
- video: “No Mirrors in My Nana’s House,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD57KULeIgg&feature=youtu.be>

Play the video “[No Mirrors in My Nana’s House](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD57KULeIgg&feature=youtu.be),” and invite the participants to listen and reflect. Use the following questions for discussion:

- When have you felt judged based on your appearance?
- How important is physical appearance in our culture?
- How does your relationship with another person change the way you physically see that person?
- How do we look past our own biases when we see other people?
- How do we teach people to see past the physical?
- How do we help people see their own beauty?
- I wonder if by affirming the beauty of everyone, regardless of circumstance, we suggest it is acceptable to not care for the body.

Honoring the Body

- 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.



3 Dream Big

Leader preparation: Make a list of your hopes and dreams and think about how your list has changed over time.

Supplies:

- 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>
- note cards and pens
- Bible

Give everyone note cards and invite them to list five hopes they have for themselves in life and five hopes they have for the world in their lifetime. Don’t rush this, as sometimes people need a while to come up with five ideas. Once everyone is done, invite them all to share their lists.

Show the group the artwork “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope,” and use the following questions for discussion:

- How does this picture make you feel?
- What do you think is about to happen in this picture?
- How does this picture make you feel about your list of hopes and dreams?

Read Joel 2:28 and use the following questions to prompt discussion:

- How do you think Joel wanted people to respond to his words?
- How do Joel’s words connect with “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope”?
- How do Joel’s words make you feel about your list of hopes and dreams?
- If you really dreamed big, how would your list change?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Renew and Reuse? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Look through the questions carefully so that you are prepared to help participants also work on them.

Supplies:

- Bible

Read Ezekiel 37:1–14 and use the following questions to prompt a discussion:

- What jumps out to you from this text?
- What questions does this text create for you?

Read Ezekiel 37:1–14 again, and use the following questions to focus the conversation:

- In what ways are people’s bodies renewed?
- Are some ways that bodies are renewed in our world unnatural?
- How do you think the breath of God impacts our bodies today?
- How do you think a person’s age might affect how she or he understands

this text?

- I wonder how those who have died think about the human body. What do you think?
- In what ways do you think your peers wish their bodies could be renewed? (addiction, tattoos, virginity, piercings, injuries from sports or abuse healed, and so forth.)

5 Healthcare, Now and Then

Leader preparation: You will need to communicate with the church community in advance to get donations of lotions. When you deliver the lotions, be careful to check with caregivers to make sure no residents you visit at the nursing home have limitations (allergies) regarding what lotions they can use. Write out the interview questions on a note card. If you are planning to separate your participants into smaller groups, make sure to have a note card for each group.

Supplies:

- lotion bottles (donated by church community)
- note cards with questions written on them

From the church community, request donations of lotions to be shared at a local nursing home or long-term rehabilitation center. As you deliver the items, use these questions to interview the residents:

- How have personal care items, like lotion, changed since you were younger?
- What other changes have you seen over time to help people care for their body?
- What do you think has changed the most in how we care for the human body since you were my age?

If the participants and those they visit are willing, use the lotions to give a hand massage.

After the visits, use the following questions to review and analyze the experience:

- How has our culture's treatment of the human body changed over time?
- How has technology changed the way we care for our bodies?
- I wonder what changes you will see in your lifetime.
- How do you think your grandchildren will perceive the healthcare we experience today?

6 H₂O Time

Leader preparation: Visit the U.S. Geological Survey website to familiarize yourself with the resources provided. Look at the latest reports on water use, and print out any maps or graphs that show water use.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- printer
- website: "Water Resources of the United States," <http://water.usgs.gov/>
- website: "Water Use in the United States," <http://water.usgs.gov/watuse/>
- pitcher of ice water
- drinking glasses

As participants enter, give everyone a glass (or bottle) of cold water to drink. Ask the participants to share their personal water use habits. How much do they drink? How much do they use for recreation? How much do they use at school or where they work? How much do they use at home? How much do they use for personal hygiene? What types of conversations are they having about limiting or conserving water?

Share the latest water-use report from the United States Geological Survey to show how much water the United States uses and for what purpose. Use the following questions to further the discussion:

- How important is water to public health?
- How important is water to our economy and food supply?
- How important is water to sustaining ecosystems in nature?
- How do we balance the needs of public health, the economy, and nature as we use water?
- How does our faith impact this conversation?
- How does the church use water?
- How does the church conserve water?
- What do we teach about water at church?
- What can we do as people of faith to support healthy habits of water use in our community and the world?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Commanding the Body (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the scripture and the quotation from St. Teresa of Avila. Consider how you use your body to fulfill the greatest commandment, as Jesus explains it. Consider what Teresa might have had in mind when she talks about Christ's compassion looking into our world.

Supplies:

- Bible

Read Matthew 22:34–40 and pose the following questions:

- Which is harder for you—loving a neighbor or loving yourself?
- Does how we answer the previous question alter the way we hear Jesus' words?
- How do you love God with your heart? Soul? Mind?
- How might you love God with your body?

Read Teresa of Avila's words about being the body of Christ (these words might also be posted on the wall) and use the questions that follow for discussion.

Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which Christ with compassion looks on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands by which he will bless all the world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.
—St. Teresa of Avila

- How is Christ active through your hands?

- How is Christ active through your feet?
- What do you think Teresa meant about our eyes and Jesus' compassion?
- If Jesus is looking through our eyes, what should we expect to see?
- If Jesus is looking through our eyes, how are we called to respond?

Read Matthew 22:34–40 again.

8 Mr. Apple Head

Leader preparation: Make sure you have enough apples for all the participants. It would be a good idea if you practiced making a Mr. Apple Head with the accessories in advance. If you can't find a Mr. Potato Head, tacks and pipe cleaners or other common items can be substituted.

Supplies:

- apples (one per participant)
- Mr. Potato Head accessories (eyes, mouth, arms, and so forth, or optional tacks, pipe cleaners, and so forth)

Hold an apple and ask the group how the apple can be useful. As comments are made, help the group divide the apple's uses into those things that are based on its appearance (decorative, symbolic, and so forth) and those that are based on its gifts (nutrition, seeds for new plant, and so forth). After this conversation, place the Mr. Potato Head accessories, including face pieces, on the apple. Ask the group if this adds any depth to the apple's usefulness.

Place the apple in the center of the group and ask: *If the apple were to come alive, what other traits beyond its appearance and usefulness would it have?* After participants have answered, use the following questions to further the conversation:

- What criteria do we use to evaluate a person's appearance?
- What criteria do we use to evaluate a person's usefulness or ability?
- What criteria do we use to evaluate the spirit or heart of a person?
- Which of these—appearance, usefulness, ability, spirit, heart—is the most important?

Explain to the group that apples have been a mixed symbol. Some see the apple as a symbol of temptation or the battle between the flesh and spirit (remember the Garden of Eden and temptation by fruit story). Others see it as a symbol of health and vitality (remember the "apple a day keeps the doctor away" saying). Give everyone an apple and invite each to use it as he or she wishes. They may eat their apples, use them to decorate something, plant the seeds, or share them. The apple, in this case, will be a symbol of how we use our bodies to express our heart.

9 Images of the Image of God

Leader preparation: Watch the YouTube video of the song "Imago Dei" and familiarize yourself with the lyrics. Make sure your technology is ready to go for this activity. Many youth will have digital cameras in their phones, making this item on the supply list easier to get and providing the opportunity for fuller participation. Since the presentation is on screen rather than in print, the picture quality should be fine. Just make sure they respect the group and do not allow phones to be a distraction with calls or texting.

Supplies:

- Bible
- computer with PowerPoint software and Internet connection
- song: “Imago Dei,” by Jill Kirsten Warner, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2duLAakNyuw>
- projector
- digital cameras

Read aloud Genesis 1:26–27. Explain to the group that the Latin translation of “image of God” is *imago dei*. Play the song “Imago Dei” and encourage them to listen to the lyrics. Explain that they will be going out to look for the *imago dei* in the neighborhood and photograph it. Give a set amount of time for pictures to be taken, and then gather everyone together to create a PowerPoint presentation. Use the song “Imago Dei” as the background music for your presentation. The final product may be shared in worship or shared in other settings.

Reflect

How have the older youth participating in these activities changed your hopes and dreams for Christ’s church? What dreams of your youth have been rekindled through this experience?