

# Honoring the Body



## Exploration: Discovery

### About this Age Group

Most young children move gracefully and confidently through their world, unaware of the bodies until their body somehow lets them down: they trip and skin a knee; they develop cancer; they struggle with simple tasks in school. Young children are only beginning to understand the magic and power contained in their bodies. As young children develop an awareness of the abilities their bodies truly hold, they need to develop a parallel awareness of ways to care for and protect their bodies. Because young children are very literal, we also need to be intentionally expanding their concept of *body* to include the spiritual and the mental as well as the physical. Children need to be given freedom with guidance to explore the myriad rooms in the house they live in.

### 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

Think of the tremendous gift your body is. Our bodies allow us to interact with the world and with other people. Our bodies educate us about how our world tastes, how it sounds, and how it feels. Our bodies also serve as protection against some of the dangers that face us in the world. Think about the physical abilities of each member of your group. If any of your learners are differently abled, consider ways to include them in the activity, perhaps by asking them to show what special things their bodies can do.

*Prayer: Creator God, you've created a masterpiece of mechanical magic in each of us. Help me to share with the learners the wonders of the bodies you have given each of us, and the myriad marvelous things we can do with them. 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 Caring for Our Bodies (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Think for several minutes about things you care for: your family and friends; pets; plants; your house; your car; your church. Make a list of the ways you care for those items. For instance, you make sure plants have sunshine, water, and plant food. You change the oil and the tires on your car. Before the learners arrive, change from their normal place the position of several items in the room. For example, place the chairs facing the cupboards, put toys on the shelf where the craft supplies belong, and the craft supplies where the snack is prepared. Be creative, but be sure they are changes the learners will notice.

**Supplies:** None

As the learners arrive, tell them that someone moved things around in the room, and you can't find the things you need. Explain that after everyone arrives, they may all help you put things back in their proper spot. Once everyone is present, ask the learners to sit in the chairs. When the learners say they can't get into the chairs, tell them they can move the chairs back to the table and sit on them there. Have various learners tell you one thing that is out of place, and then move it to the proper place. Be sure that each learner has a chance to move something. Explain to the learners that someone did not take very good care of their room when they moved the items around. We take care of different things for different reasons. We take care of classrooms and houses and cars so they are easier and safer for us to use. Ask learners who have pets how they care for their pets. Accept all reasonable answers. Ask if any learners help care for a sibling or a parent who is ill. Ask: *What do you do to care for other people? Why do we care for people and pets? Is it always fun to take care of things? Why, or why not?* Tell the learners that one of the most important things we each need to take care of is our bodies. God created our bodies in a very special way to do a whole lot of special things, but if we don't take care of our bodies, then we may not be able to do those neat things.

### ② Our Bodies Grow

**Leader preparation:** This activity is about families. Think about your learners and their families, noting any special circumstances that may be significantly different for a particular learner. Be prepared to handle those situations gently and with prayer. Gather the supplies needed. This is a great opportunity to use up scraps of construction paper that may be left from other activities. If you do not have scraps, tear full sheets of a variety of colors roughly into fourths.

**Supplies:**

- 12" x 18" white construction paper
- scraps of construction paper in a variety of colors
- crayons or markers
- glue sticks

With the learners sitting at the table, distribute pieces of white construction paper and make available crayons or markers as well as scraps of colored construction paper and glue sticks. Tell the learners you want them to make a picture of all the people they live with. The learners may use the crayons or markers to draw the outlines of the people, then tear the construction paper and glue it on to make the clothes. Sit with the learners and make a picture of the people you live with, leading the learners in discussion as they work. Use questions such as these:

- 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.
- Who is the oldest person in your family?
  - Who is the youngest?
  - What do you think is the difference between your parents and grandparents?
  - Have any of you ever been to a birthday party? How old do you have to be to have a birthday party?
  - Has anyone ever been to a wedding? How old do you have to be to get married?
  - Do any of you have a job? How old do you have to be to get a job?
  - Have any of you been baptized? How old do you have to be to be baptized?
  - Does anyone have a driver’s license? How old do you need to be to drive a car?

Remind the learners that God created our bodies so each of us would grow older. Our bodies grow bigger until we’re about eighteen, but our bodies keep growing older even when we stop growing bigger. When you are young, growing up sounds like lots of fun because you get to do more things. Growing older means learning new things and having more responsibilities. God knew that there were some things that would be easier and better to do when people were younger, such as playing sports, learning to dance, or having pretend tea parties. God also knew that some things would be easier and better to do when people were older, such as driving a car, getting married, or becoming parents. Allow the learners the opportunity to name some things they think are easier to do because they are young. Remind the learners that God was pretty smart when God created our bodies and minds to keep growing. When everyone has finished, ask each to tell a little about the people in the picture, beginning with yourself.

### ③ “I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry”

**Leader preparation:** Read the song and reword it with images the learners might understand more easily. For example, explain that finding “someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one” means getting married.

#### **Supplies:**

- (optional) computer
- song: “I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry,” by John Ylvisaker (tune: Waterlife), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYnmtQI50ic&feature=related>; lyrics, [http://www.hymnlyrics.org/requests/i\\_was\\_there\\_to\\_hear\\_your\\_borning\\_cry.php](http://www.hymnlyrics.org/requests/i_was_there_to_hear_your_borning_cry.php)

Explain to the learners that because God created our bodies, God knows all the things we can do with our bodies. God loves us no matter what we do. God loves us when we stretch our bodies to try new things, and God loves us when we give our bodies a chance to rest. God loves us when we behave and do what we are supposed to do, and God loves us when we are naughty and don’t behave. God loves us, but does not like that kind of behavior. God loves us through all the special times we have as we grow up. Tell the learners that you found a song that lists some of the times God loves us—no song could be long enough to tell ALL the times God loves us. If possible, set up your computer so the learners can see the screen and play the video. If a computer is not available, read or sing the words to the learners. After going through the song one time, talk through the verses, using the explanations you prepared earlier. Ask the learners if they can think of times when God might love them. As an example, say that God loves you

when you cook dinner and when you're driving your car. Encourage all learners to participate, but do not force those children who are reticent. When everyone who wants to has shared, play the video or sing the song one more time.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 What My Body Can Do (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Think of all the ways your body can move, and then try moving different parts of your body in ways you have not moved them before. Prepare a short list of activities based on the movement of different parts of the body, perhaps including some of the ways you experimented with. Examples include running in place, pretending to throw and catch a ball, smiling and frowning, clapping hands, pointing fingers, closing and opening eyes. Be sure you include activities that can be done by any learners who may be differently abled. You may want to have a piece of paper and pen handy to write down the children's answers to the questions in the lessons, so you can refer to it later.

#### Supplies:

- (optional) rubber bands or elastic hair ties, two per learner
- (optional) a crayon and small piece of paper for each learner

Invite the learners to stand in front of you with enough space between them to stretch out their arms without touching one another. Lead the learners through a series of exercises, such as touching their toes, bending to each side, making arm circles, and moving their heads in a circle. After warming up, ask the learners to follow your directions, using the list prepared earlier. When finished, have the learners sit on the floor and ask what they had to do with their bodies to allow them to sit. (They had to bend their knees, use their arms for support.)

Explain to the learners that God created our bodies to be very special. Each of the many parts of our bodies has a special purpose. Ask what are some things we can do with our eyes. Accept all reasonable answers. Ask the same question about arms, legs, wrists, noses, hair, and thumbs.

If you have rubber bands, help the learners put a rubber band around each hand, tucking their thumb under the band. Place a crayon on the floor in front of each learner. Explain that our thumbs look kind of silly sticking out of the side of our hand, but God was very smart to put them there. *Try to pick up the crayon with your thumbs tucked into your hand. Can you do it?* If some children are able to pick up the crayon, ask if it was easier or harder than when they used their thumb. Ask the learners to imagine eating a bowl of soup, brushing their teeth, or buttoning their clothes without using their thumbs. It is much harder to do many things without our thumbs. God knew that we would need thumbs, so God created our hands with a thumb. If time allows, encourage learners to think about what they would miss if we didn't have noses to smell, ears to hear, eyes to see, legs and feet to help us walk, arms and hands to help us carry and hug and touch. Pay attention to any special physical challenges faced by any of the learners. After discussing just how important each body part is, remind the children that God created us very carefully, that God thought about what we would need to do and then created our bodies to do those things. Lead the learners in a short prayer thanking God for creating our bodies to do such wonderful things every day.

## 5 We're All the Same, and We're All Different

**Leader preparation:** As you prepare for this activity, be mindful of any learners who may face challenges with their bodies or their mental abilities. Find pictures of faces in magazines and cut each into four pieces—the forehead and hair; the eyes; the nose; the mouth and chin. Put each part into its own pile and mix them up. Cut enough to allow each learner to create at least one entire face.

### **Supplies:**

- pictures of faces from magazines
- glue sticks
- construction paper

Ask the learners to stand around you to find out how their bodies are alike and how their bodies are different. Ask the learners to line up from shortest to tallest. Height is one way our bodies are different. Ask all the girls to stand on your right side and all the boys to stand on your left side. Another way we are different is some are boys and some are girls. Next ask everyone who has eyes to stand on your right side, and then ask the learners to separate themselves by the color of their eyes: brown eyes on your right, blue eyes in front of you, green eyes on your left. We are the same because we have eyes, but we are different because our eyes are different colors. Repeat the process with different parts of the body. Pay attention to any special physical challenges faced by any of the learners.

Have the children sit at a table and give each child a piece of construction paper. Place containers of white glue within reach of each child. Tell the learners they are going to make a face using magazine pictures. Hold up one of the items from the group of eye pictures and explain that since faces have eyes each learner will choose a pair of eyes from the group. Have the learners pass the group of eye pictures around the table, with each learner taking one picture from the group. Repeat the process with the nose, mouth, and forehead groups. After all learners have all four pieces of a face, instruct them to glue their pictures together to make a face. As the learners work, discuss how much fun God must have had creating bodies that could be different in so many ways. Ask the learners to name other ways that people's bodies are different, such as freckles, physical disability, size of hands or feet, skinned or bruised knees, warts or birthmarks. Remind the learners that God loves all bodies, and caring for our bodies is one way we can show God we appreciate how wonderfully we are created.

## 6 Fingerprints Are Individual, Too

**Leader preparation:** For this activity you will need an ink pad with nontoxic ink in a dark color, small pieces of paper, and wipes to clean the learners' fingers. Practice making your own fingerprints so you will be familiar with how much pressure is needed. If possible, collect fingerprints from two or three other people so the learners can see how fingerprints are different. Cut 8 ½" x 11" sheets of paper in half. On one, use your fingerprints to create a centipede, drawing legs and antenna, and coloring in some grass, trees, and other bugs. With a marker, write the name of each learner on a blank 3" x 5" note card.

### **Supplies:**

- blank 3" x 5" note cards, one for each child
- marker
- ink pad with dark, nontoxic ink, two or three pads if possible
- 8 ½" x 11" paper cut in half
- crayons or markers
- cleaning wipes
- (optional) magnifying glass

Remind the learners of a few of the ways they differ from one another, such as height and hair color. Explain that there are other ways that we differ from one another that are not so easily seen. Have one of the learners recite a nursery rhyme such as “Jack and Jill” or “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”; and then have a second learner recite the same nursery rhyme. Point out to the learners that the voices of the learners were different. Explain that another way we are different is that each of us has our very own fingerprints. No one else in the entire world has the same fingerprints as we do. Mention how amazing it is that God could make that many different designs for fingerprints. Show the learners your fingerprints and the fingerprints you collected. Explain that the differences can be very difficult to see, but they are different. (If you have a magnifying glass, allow learners to look closely at your prints and the other prints.)

Tell the learners that you will help each of them make a card with his or her fingerprints on it. Use the fingers of one hand to create a fingerprint card for each learner, wiping each hand clean when the card is complete. After all learners have their fingerprint cards, give each learner a sheet of 8½” x 4½” paper. Explain to the learners that they can now use the ink pads to take their own fingerprints, and then use their fingerprints to make a centipede. Show the picture you made so the learners understand the activity. As the learners work, talk about how amazing God was to give each one of us a body that is different from every other body, and all bodies are just as special as every other body. Send the fingerprint cards home with the learners for their parents to keep for identification, if necessary.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 God Knows What We Need (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Familiarize yourself with the story told in 1 Kings 19:1–8 and mark the passage. Think of any times in your life when God has provided you with what you needed—food, water, or rest—so you could go forward.

#### Supplies:

- Bible

Explain to the learners that you want them to imagine they are in danger. They are in a desert where there are no houses, very few trees, and no rivers. Someone is angry with them and is chasing them. They need to get as far away from that person as quickly as they can. Allow them to run around the room, pretending to flee from the person. Call the learners to you and tell them that they have been running all day. They have escaped and are now safe; however, they are very tired and have had nothing to eat or drink all day. They finally find one tree in the desert, so they lay down and sleep under the tree. Allow the learners to pretend to sleep under a tree. Wake the learners, and ask them what they are going to do for food and water. There are no stores, no plants, and no lakes or ponds. Point out that there is nothing available for them. Ask how they would feel if they knew someone was angry enough with them to chase them, if they’d slept but were still tired; if it was hot and they have nothing to eat or drink. Tell the learners that a man named Elijah was in that very situation.

Open your Bible as you retell the story. Simply explain that the king was angry with Elijah, so Elijah ran away into the desert. Read the rest of the story, beginning at verse 5 and stopping after verse 8. Ask: *How did God take care of Elijah? How many times did the angel come? How did the food help Elijah?* Explain that God knew

that Elijah needed to sleep, to eat, and to drink to be able to travel. Because God made our bodies, God knows exactly what our bodies need to be able to play and laugh and work and love. Share any examples of God providing for the needs of your body, such as a neighbor bringing you food when you were sick or had just moved in, or a friend asking you to go out for lunch. Ask the learners if they have ever been surprised by food when they were very hungry or been offered the chance to take a nap when they were very tired. God used an angel to give food and water to Elijah, but God uses people to provide food and water for us. Because God created our bodies, God knows exactly what they need to work well.



### 8 “The Public Fountain”

**Leader preparation:** Obtain a copy of the print “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Display it at the eye level of the learners when they are seated on the floor.

#### **Supplies:**

- artwork: “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1033816467?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=37962&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1033816467?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401)

With the learners seated on the floor around you, direct their attention to the print “The Public Fountain.” Tell the learners that the picture shows a boy at a fountain. Ask if the fountain in the picture look like a drinking fountain they would use at school or at the park. Use questions to encourage the learners to create a story about the boy. Accept all reasonable answers to the following questions:

- Do you think the boy is hot or cold? Why?
- Why do you think the boy is drinking from the fountain?
- Is the fountain by a new building or an old building? Why?
- Do you think the water is warm or cold? Why?
- Do you think the boy has a family? Where do you think his mother is? His father?
- Do you think the boy has friends?
- What kind of games do you think the boy plays?
- Have you ever become hot when you were playing with your friends? Did you want a drink of water? How did it feel to drink some water when you were thirsty?

Just like God created our bodies to use food to give us energy, God created our bodies to need water to work well, too.

### 9 The Power of Water

**Leader preparation:** Cut a sweet potato in half around its middle. You will need the pointed end for this activity. Fill a clear glass jar, such as a pint canning jar, two-thirds full with water, and gather a few toothpicks. Have a container of water handy to fill up the jar after putting the potato in it. If possible, gather cut flowers. Put half in water and leave half out of water.

#### **Supplies:**

- the pointed end of a sweet potato
- a clear glass jar
- cut flowers (one healthy bunch and one wilted)
- three or four toothpicks
- a container with extra water

Ask the learners what plants need to grow. Ask the learners what pets need to be healthy. Then ask the learners what they need to be healthy. God created all living things to use water to be healthy. Explain that water is very important for people. About two-thirds of our bodies are made up of water. Put the jar of water on the table and explain that if the whole glass was our body, that's how much of our bodies is made up of water! Show the learners both bunches of flowers and tell them that the only difference in the way the flowers were cared for was water. Explain that water is so important to plants that some plants, such as sweet potatoes, will start to grow roots with just water. Show the learners the sweet potato you cut in half. Evenly space three or four toothpicks in the sweet potato so a third of it will be above the water when the jar is full. Balance the potato by the toothpicks on the rim of the jar and fill the jar up with water. Ask: *Do we grow roots if we sit in water too long? Does water get into our bodies when we sit in the bathtub? How do we get water?* Ask any learners who are willing to share about a time when they were very thirsty. Explain that being thirsty is a way our bodies tell us they need more water. Our bodies use water in so many ways. We should drink lots of water even when we are not thirsty. Drinking enough water is another way we can care for the special bodies God gave us.

### Reflect

Did the learners grasp the idea that our bodies are pretty wonderful things created by God and loved by God? That God created bodies in different sizes and colors and with different gifts and abilities? That our bodies require care, and it is up to us to care for them? That our bodies need varied but specific things to function the way God intended them to perform?

# Honoring the Body



## Exploration: Scripture

### About this Age Group

As adults, our familiarity with the creation story may make us jaded toward the miracle of creation, but for young children the wonder is still present. Young children realize we are different from the animals but may not be able to name that difference as the Spirit of God. The variety of creatures in our God-created universe is mirrored by the variety of humans God created. One way people differ is in their gifts and talents. The image of the body as a group of disparate pieces forming a well-functioning whole is an analogy young children should be able to understand.

### 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 cohabits 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**

The activities in this Exploration are designed to help learners understand that God took great care in crafting our bodies. Our bodies are thoughtfully made and must be thoughtfully cared for. The diversity of creation challenges us to respect differences and celebrate our sameness. By filling us with God’s breath, God created a special relationship between us mere creatures made of stuff and God’s spiritual being. Because God has so blessed and affirmed our “stuff-ness,” we need to take great care of our bodies so that we can use them to serve the God who cares so deeply for us.

*Prayer: Creator God, thank you for these children, who are such a special creation of yours. Help us to understand the thought and care you took in the formation of our bodies. Let us realize the gift you gave when filling us with your Spirit and give us your grace to make the sacrifices needed to keep our bodies as useful and beautiful as you intended them to be. 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

**Exploring & Engaging Activities**



**1 I Have a Pet (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Review the creation story in Genesis 2:1–25. If you own or ever owned a pet, think of an anecdote or two to share with the learners to help them relate to pets.

**Supplies:**

- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Ask the learners to move around the room like a bird. Next, have them move like a dog, a cat, and a fish. Gather the learners and ask if any of them have for a pet one of the animals they just imitated. Allow time for sharing. If any children do not own pets, encourage them to describe a pet they would like to own. Tell the learners that when God created the world, God also created the animals. Some animals we have as pets, some animals provide food and clothing for us, and some animals are wild. Relate the anecdotes you remember from a pet you own/owned. Ask the learners to help you make a list of things that pets need from the people who love them. The list should include such activities as feeding, bathing, exercising, playing, spending quiet time with the pet, taking the pet to the vet, letting the pet get rest. Write each activity on the newsprint or whiteboard. Explain that pets take a lot of work, but pets give us much in return. Pets play with us and often make us laugh. Laughing and having fun are important for us and help our bodies work better. Pets often like to be quiet with us, and it’s important for our bodies to have quiet time so they can get strength enough to work and play when it is time. When we have a pet, God uses the pet to help care for the bodies God gave us.

**2 My Pet Rock**

**Leader preparation:** Review the creation story in Genesis 2:1–25, marking verse 7 for easy reference. Gather smooth, flat stones about 3 inches in diameter, one for each child. Cut different colors of yarn into 2-inch pieces, several per learner. Put all the supplies, except the stones, on a table. Make a sample Pet Rock by gluing eyes and yarn hair on one of the stones. Draw a mouth on your stone and give your new “pet” a name and a personality quirk or two, such as it only likes to eat marshmallows, or it can jump over a big table. Keep your pet rock out of sight of the children.

**Supplies:**

- smooth stones
- wiggle eyes
- markers
- short pieces of yarn
- white glue
- Bible

Hold up one of the blank stones. Ask the learners if a stone would be a good pet. Next, hold up the stone on which you created a face. Introduce your pet rock to the learners. Tell its name and explain its personality. Put your pet on the table, and ask the learners if your “pet” is a real pet. Ask them to explain why or why not. Possible answers include, “It doesn’t eat” or “It can’t run or play.” Invite the learners to make a pet of their own. Point out the supplies on the table and explain that they need to glue eyes on their stone and draw a mouth with a marker.

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.

The learners may choose to add yarn hair or draw the hair with a marker. As the learners work, go through the list of ways to care for a pet you created earlier (see Activity 1) and ask questions such as whether they would have to feed a stone or give it bath. Ask the learners what is different between their pet rock and a real pet. Point out that God created people very carefully. God put all the parts of people together, just like they are doing with their pet rocks. One thing God could give people, however, that they cannot give their pet rocks, was life: the ability to breathe and think and laugh and love. Open your Bible and read Genesis 2:7. Explain that God breathed into people God’s Spirit, which means that our bodies are extra special because part of God lives in us.

### ③ Choose the Wise One

**Leader preparation:** This activity involves making wise choices. Collect a variety of items that the learners can choose between, such as scissors versus crayons, knife versus spoon, swimsuit versus winter coat, and pillow versus flashlight. Feel free to change these items or add your own. The supplies listed are simply to give you the flavor of the activity.

**Supplies** (examples):

- crayons
- scissors
- flashlight
- knife
- spoon
- pillow
- swimsuit
- coat

Invite the learners to sit on the floor around you; have the materials you collected in a bag beside you. Explain that one way a person is different from a pet is that people can make choices. Some choices are easy, but some choices can be very hard. Hold up the scissors and the crayon. Ask: *If you wanted to cut out a picture, which tool would you use? If you wanted to color a picture, which tool would you use?* Hold up the flashlight and the pillow. Ask: *If you wanted to take a nap, which tool would you use? If you want to see where you are going in the dark, which tool would you use?* Continue with the other pairs. Tell the learners that God gave us our minds to help us make choices.

Explain that the choices they just made were pretty easy, but some choices are much harder. Say: *For example, you don’t feel very well, but all your friends are going outside to play. Do you go play and maybe feel even sicker, or do you stay inside and let your body get better? Do you ride your bicycle the safe way, or do you show off and do tricks that might cause hurt? Do you eat three candy bars and nothing else for dinner?* Discuss how our minds are a part of the bodies God gave us, and making good choices is one of the ways God gave us to keep our bodies safe and healthy.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

 4 Many Parts, One Working Body (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Are there any members of your group who have a physical disability or who have a family member with a disability? If so, consider whether the learner would be willing and able to share about living with (or as) a person with disabilities. Are your learners familiar with any members of your congregation who have disabilities? You may want to mention that person during the discussion.

**Supplies:** None

Have the learners stand in a circle and hold hands with the learners on either side. Have them swing their arms back and forth, then drop hands and stretch toward the ceiling. Ask them what part of the body was being used when stretching. Have the learners imagine that their entire body was arms. What if, in place of leg, they had arms? Sometimes it’s fun to try and walk on your hands, but what if they had arms instead of ears? How would you hear? What if they had arms instead of a mouth? How would they eat or talk? God created each part of our bodies to play an important part in the things we like to do and need to do.

Sometimes parts of our bodies don’t work the way God intended. In those cases, people have figured out how to use other parts of their bodies or implements to help them do what they want to do. Ask the learners to think of anyone they know or may have seen on TV who was physically disabled and unable to walk. How did that person move around the house or a store? Have the learners think about anyone they know or have seen on TV or in a movie that is blind. How did that person move around the house or a store? How did she or he read? Ask the learners if they know how deaf people communicate. God made our bodies to work together in a certain way, but God also gave our brains the ability to figure out how to adjust when some parts don’t work as well as they should.

5 Our Bodies Work As the Body of Christ

**Leader preparation:** Consider your church family in light of Romans 12:1–8. Some of the roles necessary to a functioning church family will be apparent to the learners, while others are invisible to the learners. Make a list of some of the behind-the-scenes jobs and the people who fill them. Mark Romans 12:4–6a in a Bible, and gather the materials for the team craft.

**Supplies:**

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- green, brown, and white 9” x 12” construction paper
- crayons or markers
- scissors
- glue sticks
- (optional) church picture directory

Invite the learners to line up in two rows, as if they were a choir, and have them sing one verse of “Jesus Loves Me.” After the learners have joined you in a circle around you on the floor, explain that they just sang like a choir. Have the learners think about the choir or worship team in your church. Ask: *Is there just one person in the choir (or worship team)?* Explain that the person who leads the choir is called the choir director. Ask the learners what other people they see in the front of the

church during worship. Provide the vocabulary if the learners do not know the specific title of the persons. List each position on the newsprint or whiteboard. Tell the learners that you and the other leaders are also people who help in the church. Ask the learners if they know any other people who help at the church. Assist them if needed by listing the custodian, secretary, elders, deacons, acolytes, ushers, and any other positions in the church. If you have a church picture directory, point out the picture of each person you name.

Read Romans 12:4–6a. Explain that just as our eyes and ears work together to help us learn, the different people in the church work together to help us worship. If the custodians didn't do their job, the church would not be clean and welcoming for people. If the secretary didn't do his or her job, the bulletin would not be ready each Sunday morning. If the worship leader didn't do her or his job, there would be no message during worship. The custodian might not be able to do the secretary's job, and the secretary might not be able to do the worship leader's job. Each part of our body has a job to do, and together they let us play and pray. In the church each person has a job to do, and together the people help us worship and learn about God.

Divide the learners into groups of three and have each group decide which learner will do the cutting, which learner will do the drawing and coloring, and which learner will do the gluing. Allow the groups to move to a table and distribute the construction paper. Explain that the cutter will cut grass to go across the bottom of the picture, and cut out a tree. Once the cutter has finished, the gluer will glue the grass to the piece of white construction paper. The drawer/colorer will then draw and color a picture of your church. When the church is complete, the gluer may glue the trees around the church. (If your group is too small to divide into groups, divide the tasks further by separating drawing and coloring, and adding writing in the name of the church.)

Ask the learners if they had fun working together. Ask: *Could you have made the picture by yourself? Do you think the picture looks better because everyone had a part? Do you think the church works better because so many people have a part?* Tell the learners that God created our bodies so that they can do many special things better because all the different parts work together.

## 6 Keeping Our Bodies Safely Warm

**Leader preparation:** Think about the climate where you live. Are there temperature extremes that require different clothing? Gather a variety of adult-sized clothing, such as warm coats or sweaters, T-shirts, shorts, sweat pants or other long pants, sandals, snow or rain boots, and a raincoat.

### **Supplies:**

- adult-sized clothing for various seasons
- a box to contain the clothes

Arrange chairs in a row and invite the learners to sit down. Place your chair so you are facing the learners, and put the box of clothes on the floor beside you. Ask the learners where on their bodies they wear jeans. Ask: *Could you wear jeans on your arms and still use your arms as well? If you wore socks on your hands, could you color as well as when you do not have socks on our hands?* Explain that because our bodies have different parts, we wear different kinds of clothes. Ask the learners why they chose the clothes they are wearing. If no one mentions the weather, point out that people often choose what to wear by the weather outside. Ask: *If there is snow on the ground, would you wear shorts to school? If it is very hot, do you put on a coat to go to the store?* Explain that wearing the right kind of clothes for the

weather is one way we keep our bodies warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.

Pull one item of clothing out of the box and ask the learners to tell you what the weather would be when they wore that item. Repeat the process using an item from a different season. Empty the box of clothes on the floor in front of the learners and explain that you are going to describe a kind of weather and one learner will have the chance to put on the type of clothes she or he would wear to go outside in that weather. Make sure each learner has the opportunity to model the appropriate clothing at least one time. We wear clothes to keep our bodies comfortable, as well as to protect us from the cold or from too much sun. Clothes help us care for the bodies that God so carefully created for us.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Decorations Make It Beautiful (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity focuses on how we add decorations to objects to make them more beautiful. Consider wearing large jewelry, a fancy tie or scarf, or vibrantly colored clothes for the activity.

**Supplies:**

- ornamental clothing accessories

Have the learners sit around you on the floor. Explain that when we want to give someone a gift, we wrap it in special paper to make it look prettier. One reason we wear clothes is to make our bodies look prettier. Ask the children: *Do you have clothes that you only wear when you are going someplace important? How many of your moms put on make-up? Women sometimes wear make-up to help them look prettier. How many of you wear jewelry? Why do you wear it? What else do you do to decorate your body?* Explain that clothes, jewelry, and the other ways mentioned are ways we decorate our bodies to make them look prettier.

Tell the learners that in some places around the world, people decorate their bodies in special ways for special reasons. For Native Americans, painting on the body might tell you how old the person is, if the person is married, or how good a warrior the person is. In Nigeria, on the continent of Africa, body painting would tell you what group the person belongs to. In India, mothers would trace their babies' eyes with black makeup and draw black designs on their faces to keep them safe. Also in India, many people who follow the Hindu religion wear a colored dot on their forehead. It represents the area where a person can see things that are true about God.



### 8 "The Golden Rule"

**Leader preparation:** If possible, think of people in the church with whom your learners are familiar and who are of noticeably different heights and different races. Display a print of "The Golden Rule" by Norman Rockwell where the learners can closely examine it. Think of the diversity of nationalities and races in your group and compare them with the variety of nationalities represented in the print.

## Supplies:

- artwork: “The 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>

Ask the learners who own a dog what color their dog is. Do the same for cats. Ask: *Are dogs and cats all the same color? Are they all the same size? Is a big black dog more of a dog than a small spotted dog? Is a striped cat as much of a cat as a long-haired black cat?*

Explain that God had lots of fun creating animals and making them different sizes and colors. God created people in different sizes and colors as well. If you were able to think of two people with whom the learners are familiar who are of different height, mention them now and mention that God created them both to be people, but people who are different sizes. If there are children of different races in your group, point out that God created them to be people, but people who are different colors. They are different outside, but the same inside.

Direct the learners’ attention to the artwork and allow them time to enjoy the picture. Point to the individuals with different nationalities, such as Indian/Pakistani, Chinese/Japanese/Korean, African. Mention that different religious beliefs are also represented: the boy in red on the left side of the picture holding what might be a Torah scroll; the gentleman with the white beard and black hat in the middle of the picture that might be a Coptic Christian; and the woman behind him who might be Hindu. Ask the learners to look at the boy and girl in the front of the pictures who have their hands clasped and ask: *What do you think they are doing?* Point out the way some of the people decorated their bodies, particularly the woman with the blue shawl at the top of the print. Also point out the variety of wealth represented in the picture, with the children holding bowls and the worker holding the top of a broom or shovel contrasted with the geisha and the man with a tie.

Tell the learners that the words written on the picture are called “The Golden Rule,” and read them aloud. Explain that God gave people the Golden Rule to remind us that God created everyone, and everyone is special. No one is better than anyone else. Because no one is better than anyone else, God wants us to treat one another carefully, that is, the way we want to be treated.

## 9 An Acceptable Gift for God

**Leader preparation:** Think of the many ways to care for the body that children can do and make a mental list. Place a 12-inch x 18-inch piece of white construction paper at each seat at the table and put crayons or markers within reach of each place.

## Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- 12” x 18” piece of white construction paper
- crayons or markers

Gather the learners around you as you stand on the carpet. Explain that when you give someone a gift, you want it to be the very best gift you can find. Although God gave us our bodies, one gift we can give to God is to take good care of those bodies. Ask the learners what type of care they can give their bodies. Write their answers on the newsprint or whiteboard. Invite the learners to pretend to get themselves ready to be a gift for God. Ask them to lie down on the floor and pre-

tend to sleep. After a brief sleep, have them “wake up” and go through the rest of the list they created, pantomiming each activity. You may choose to organize the activities as if it were a regular day. Once the learners have completed all the activities on the list, send them to the table. Ask them to draw a picture of themselves all dressed up as a present for God. Remind them that all the ways we care for our bodies, including the clothes we wear, are a very special gift we can give to God.

### Reflect

In what ways were the learners able to articulate that there are differences between people and animals; that those differences are because God created us to be special; that people look and act differently from one another, but God loves us all very much; and that exercise is important for keeping our bodies as a “living sacrifice” for God?

# Honoring the Body



## Exploration: Discipleship

### About this Age Group

Most young children have had the experience of being sick and enjoying the attentions of others. Most also are generous of spirit and willing to share their attention and care with others who are sick. Young children are learning about their world and learning to expand the ways they learn. Although a few children are aware what is involved in being a disciple, most children honestly care about others and want to help them whenever possible. Labeling caring actions performed for others may help young children grasp the concept of discipleship.

### 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, moving, 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**

God's gift of the senses makes our lives so much more fun and interesting than they would otherwise be. This gift also shows that God wants good things for us. But life is unfair. As adults we recognize this, although we fight against injustices. Young children do not understand why life should be unfair, yet their incredible compassion often comes to the fore in situations of injustice.

*Prayer: God of blue sky and sour lemons, help me to share with the learners your playful goodness. Give me your wisdom to answer their questions as to why everything isn't blue sky. 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, using one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



**1 Caring for the Sick (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Think of a time when you were sick and be willing to share with the learners, just in case none of them is willing to share. Review the nursery song "There Were Five in the Bed." Bookmark Mark 5:21–43 in your Bible, and be prepared to tell the stories in the passage in your own words

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- (optional) song: "There Were Five in the Bed," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Cjd9bXxxFo>
- (optional) finger puppets

Gather the learners around you on the carpet. Ask if any of the learners has ever been sick; allow time for sharing. Ask: When you were sick, who took care of you? What kind of things did they do to help you? Explain to the learners that you are going to give some of them a chance to pretend to be sick and others to pretend to be the caregiver. When all learners who are willing to role-play being sick and being a caregiver have had a chance to participate, ask: *Where do you spend most of the time when you are sick?* Lead the learners in the song "There Were Five in the Bed." If you do not know the tune, use the lyrics as a finger play. Use finger puppets, if available.

There were five in the bed, and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over."  
So they all rolled over, and one fell out. Ah, boom!  
There were four in the bed, and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over."  
So they all rolled over, and one fell out. Ah, boom!  
There were three in the bed, and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over."  
So they all rolled over, and one fell out. Ah, boom!  
There were two in the bed, and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over."  
So they all rolled over, and one fell out. Ah, boom!  
There was one in the bed, and the little one said, "Good night!"

Tell the learners that when Jesus lived on earth, he often made sick people well without medicine and without a doctor. Open your Bible to Mark 5:21–43, and tell the learners the stories. Explain that Jesus performed a miracle when he made people feel better, but God created our bodies to help themselves get well. Explain that when we are sick, our bodies are busy fighting the germs that made us sick in the first place. A fever is one way the body kills germs. Coughing and sneezing are ways your body forces the germs out of your body. Throwing up and swelling and being tired are all different ways your body works to get rid of the germs and make your body well again. Even though our bodies can't make themselves well all the time, God was very good to make our bodies fight so hard against germs. God was also very good to give us people to care for us while our bodies get better.

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



### 2 Helping Others Feel Better

**Leader preparation:** Wrap yarn fifty times around a 10-inch piece of cardboard. Tie a small piece of yarn around one end of the yarn and cut the yarn across the other end. Make one of these yarn bundles for each learner. The diagram on “Sleep Buddies,” Attachment: Activity 2 may help you. Also cut six pieces of yarn 5 inches long for each learner. Locate an agency in your area that works with homeless families, and arrange to drop off the sleep buddies when they are finished.

#### Supplies:

- “Sleep Buddy,” Attachment: Activity 2
- bundles of yarn tied at the top
- 5” pieces of yarn

With the learners seated at the table, ask if anyone has a special Sleep Buddy, a favorite toy or blanket that he or she snuggles with every night when going to sleep. Allow time for those learners who wish to talk about their Buddy to do so. Explain that there are some children who do not have a Sleep Buddy. For all kinds of reasons, some children do not have a home to sleep in or many toys to play with. Invite the learners to make a small doll. When the dolls are finished, you will take them to a place that will make sure they get to children who don’t have Sleep Buddies. Give each learner a bundle of yarn you prepared and six individual pieces of yarn. Have the learners tie one of the individual pieces of yarn about an inch down from the tie at the top to form the head. Separate a few pieces of yarn out to be the arms, and have them tie one on each side. Trim the yarn so the arms are shorter than the body. Tie another piece of yarn around the middle of the bundle to form the waist. Divide the yarn below the waist in half and tie at the bottom to make legs if desired. As the learners work, remind them that resting is one way we can take care of the neat bodies God gave us. We need to rest, and to sleep, so our bodies can store up energy for the next day. Sometimes it’s hard to get to sleep without a special Sleep Buddy. By making these Buddies for a child without one, the learners are helping them care for their bodies. Be sure that they understand that they are being disciples who show God’s love to the children who will receive the gifts.

### 3 First Aid

**Leader preparation:** Gather a few simple first aid items to show the learners, such as antibiotic ointment, anti-itch cream, soap, ice pack, and hydrogen peroxide. Also provide one adhesive bandage for each learner. A dish towel makes a great pretend sling. If you do not have access to crutches or a cane, a picture will work.

#### Supplies:

- first aid supplies
- adhesive bandages
- cotton balls

With the learners sitting around you on the carpet, ask if any of them has ever fallen down and scraped a knee. Allow time for all learners to share their experiences. When all have shared, ask: *Who took care of you when you fell? What did that person do to help you?* Explain that taking care of scrapes is an important way to keep us from getting sick. Germs can sneak inside our bodies through scrapes, so we need to be very careful.

Hold up the soap and/or the hydrogen peroxide and explain that they are used to clean all the dirt out of the scrape. Ask the learners to pretend they just fell and scraped their knee. Give each a cotton ball and pretend to pour the peroxide on to

it, then have them rub the scrape on their knee to get all the dirt out. Next, explain that the antibiotic cream will help get rid of any germs that sneaked in and will also keep any other germs from getting in. Pretend to squeeze a little ointment onto a finger of each learner and have him or her daub it on the scrape. Lastly, explain that we cover scrapes with adhesive bandages to protect them from getting hurt while they heal. Give each learner a bandage and help him or her place it over the scrape.

After all have their bandages on, ask: *After you take care of your scrape, what happens to it?* Point out to the learners that much of the time, our bodies can fix themselves. We usually don't have to do much except keep the scrape clean for it to get better by itself. God was very wise to create our bodies to heal themselves. We need to do our part to keep our bodies safe and healthy, but God made our bodies so they can help us heal, too.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Our Senses (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Prepare a list of items that depend on different senses to be identified, such as: a bird's song, a lemon, a blanket, perfume, a red balloon. Have several items for each of the senses.

#### Supplies:

- 8½" x 11" copier paper (scrap paper would be best for this activity)
- (optional) red paper and a lemon

Have the learners sit around you on the floor and close their eyes. Ask if they can tell what you are doing with their eyes closed. With the learners' eyes still closed, crumple up a piece of paper. Ask: *What did I just do? How could you tell what I did if your eyes were closed?* Allow the learners to open their eyes. Tell them that God created many special ways for us to use our bodies to learn about the world and what is happening in the world. Some of the ways we learn are called our senses. One of those senses is seeing. Ask if anyone can name another sense (hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling). We use all of our senses to learn about the world. Sometimes we use only one sense, and sometimes several senses can teach us about the same thing. Have the learners think about a piece of red paper. Ask: *Can you hear that the paper is red? Can you taste that the paper is red? Does red paper feel any different than blue paper? Does red paper smell any different than orange paper?* Next, have the learners think about a lemon. Ask: *Does a lemon taste different than an apple? Feel different? Smell different? Taste different? Look different?* Sum up this part of the discussion by pointing out that we needed to use sight to know what color the paper was, but we could use all our senses to tell what the lemon was.

Remind the children that God made our senses to help us learn about the world, and tell them we can use the senses to help others learn. Ask the children how they would use the sense of sight to help others learn about Jesus. Ask how they would help someone learn about Jesus by using touch, and how they could use taste to tell people that Jesus loves them. Express that it is pretty special that God loved us and gave us senses to learn about the world in very different ways, and we can turn around and teach others about God's love using those very same senses.

## 5 Sharing Blessings

**Leader preparation:** Read Psalm 71, highlighting verse 17. Take a few minutes to give thanks to God for all the blessings in your life. Think of a time you used your body in a special way (climbed a mountain, ran a race, helped move a big object, drew a great picture, knit a sweater, shook your head to dry your hair) to share with the learners. Make a microphone by wrapping aluminum foil around an empty paper towel roll and squeezing the bottom of the roll to make the handle. Review the members of your group and choose a snack to share that is safe for all learners.

### **Supplies:**

- microphone made from an empty paper towel roll
- aluminum foil
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Tell the learners that you have decided to give them a special treat today, and distribute the snack you chose. As the learners eat, explain that just as you gave them a treat, God gives us all treats every day. Those treats are called blessings, and some blessings are in ways we use our bodies. Share the blessing of a special way to use your body that you chose. Ask the learners to think of a time when they used their body in a special way. If necessary, guide their thinking, drawing on any information you may have about them.

After all the learners have thought of a time they used their body, read Psalm 71:17. Say to the learners that one way to tell others about the wonderful things God has done for them is to talk about it on the radio. The learners are going to be radio announcers and interview one another about their experiences. Explain that when you interview someone, you want to know who was involved. Write *Who* on the whiteboard or newsprint. In an interview, people also want to know what happened, where it happened, and when it happened. Add *What*, *Where*, and *When* to your list. Divide the learners into groups of two or three and quietly help each group work out their interview using the question words on the board. (Group size can vary depending on the number of learners you have and the willingness of the learners to participate in the interview process.) Once each group has gone through their interview privately, have them perform their radio interview for the group.

After the last interview, remind the learners that God blesses us by letting our bodies do special things, and telling others about those blessings is something we need to do.

## 6 Treasure in Earthen Vessels

**Leader preparation:** Collect shoe boxes or other boxes of similar size, one for each learner. Gather materials to decorate the boxes.

### **Supplies:**

- boxes
- items to decorate the boxes, such as sequins, ribbon, glue-on gems, scraps of fabric, chenille stems, pompoms, glitter, yarn
- drawing paper cut into fourths
- crayons or markers
- white glue

Tell the learners that a refrigerator has a very important job to do. It keeps your food cold so it is safe to eat. A garage has an important job, too. It keeps a car safe. Ask the learners to share what job a house or a grocery store does. Remind the

learners that their bodies have a very important job to do also. God created their bodies to hold everything that makes them special and different from everyone else. Share one or two things that you consider your special gifts, then ask each learner to name the things he or she does well or really enjoys doing. Explain that what we do well or really like to do are our special gifts.

Distribute the paper and crayons or markers and explain that you want the children to draw a picture of themselves doing the things they feel are their special gifts. Encourage each to draw at least two pictures. Provide a box for each child and put the items to be used for decorating them in the middle of the table. Invite them to each make a treasure chest to hold the pictures they drew. Allow time for them to decorate their boxes. While that is going on, engage them in thinking about how God gave us bodies to keep our true gifts safe. They are making treasure chests to keep the pictures of their gifts safe.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Who Am I, and Where Am I? (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Place enough chairs in a circle for each learner to have a place to sit.

**Supplies:** None

Ask the learners to move around the space and touch something hard, then something smooth, then something soft. Review the five senses God gave us to help us learn—seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling. We learn much through hearing, especially when a person tells us something. Tell the learners that they can also tell who is talking by hearing. Ask the learners to close their eyes. You will walk around the circle and touch someone on the shoulder. That learner should say, “God gave us ears to hear.” The rest of the learners should be able to name the child who spoke just from hearing the voice. Give each learner the opportunity to participate. Next, tell the learners that people can also tell where someone is by listening. Ask them to keep their eyes closed as you move around the room. Stop in different places in the room and make a noise such as clapping your hands, stomping your feet, dropping a pencil, or clearing your throat and have the learners point to where you are.

Another approach is to play the “Gossip” game. Whisper to one learner, “Jesus wants us to be nice to our friends.” Have that learner whisper the same sentence to his or her neighbor. Have the last learner say out loud the sentence she or he heard. Explain that it is very important to listen carefully and to speak carefully when we are learning about Jesus or telling someone else about Jesus. God gave us ears to hear, but we need to use them carefully. Be sure to enjoy the difference at the end—or celebrate if the statement comes through loud and clear.



### 8 “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope”

**Leader preparation:** Think of the people in your congregation and take note of any who may have a disability. Consider asking one who would be comfortable with questions of young children to visit your meeting area. Place a 6-foot length of masking tape on the floor of your room to imitate a tightrope. Place a copy of the print “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope” where the learners can see it.

**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>
- masking tape

Move the chairs to form a circle in front of the print of “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope.” Move any other furniture in the room against the wall to create an open space in the center of the room. Have the learners close their eyes and try to find their way to the chairs and sit down. Once all the learners are seated, ask if they know anyone who has a disability. Perhaps the person cannot walk and needs to be in a wheelchair. Maybe they know a person who is blind and needs a dog or cane to move around. Perhaps the person is deaf and needs to communicate with American Sign Language. Maybe the person is missing an arm or a leg. If any learner has a personal experience with a person with a disability, allow time for them to share how they met the person and what the disability might be. Explain that, most of the time, a disability makes it harder for people to do the things we do every day without thinking. (If you have a learner who is differently abled, do not put them on the spot; ask in advance if they would like to talk about their particular situation.

Have the learners imagine that their legs are tied together, and then have them try to stand up. Ask them to imagine how they could move to the table if they couldn’t use their legs. Would it be easier or harder? Would it be easier or harder to go up the steps if they couldn’t use their legs? Even if they couldn’t use their legs, their bodies would still be special and still need care.

Draw the learners’ attention to the print “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope.” Ask: *Where is the man in the wheelchair sitting? Is the rope wide enough for his wheelchair to go across? How do you think the man feels?* Explain that when people walk across a tightrope, they use a long pole to help them keep their balance. Ask: *Do you think the pole in the man’s hands will help him keep his balance? What do you think would happen if the man tried to go across the tightrope in his wheelchair? If you were the man in the picture, what would you do?* Point out the line of masking tape you placed on the floor. Put a chair at one end of the tape and have the learners imagine that the tape is the tightrope and the chair is the wheelchair. Ask for volunteers to sit in the chair and see just how small the tightrope is compared to how big the chair is. Explain that people with disabilities often want to do things that their disability will not let them do. Their bodies are differently abled and deserve to be treated with care and respect just like our bodies do.

**9 Make a Sachet**

**Leader preparation:** Cut pieces of felt into 5-inch squares, enough for each learner to have two. You may choose to purchase ready-made potpourri, or make a potpourri of your own. Arrange with a local nursing home or assisted living facility to drop off the sachets the learners will make in this activity.

### Supplies:

- 5" squares of felt, two per learner
- fabric glue
- prepared or purchased potpourri
- permanent markers

As the learners are seated at the workspace, ask them to think about how a lemon smells, then a strawberry, then fresh cut grass. Ask each learner to name a favorite smell. Explain that often people place different items around their houses that will make their houses smell nice. Some people burn candles; some people have pots on the stove that have special ingredients that smell good when they are hot; some people make little pillows of special ingredients that smell good to put in their drawers with their clothes to make their clothes smell good. Explain that those little pillows are called sachets. Invite them to make sachets for people who cannot live by themselves but live in buildings where nurses can care for them.

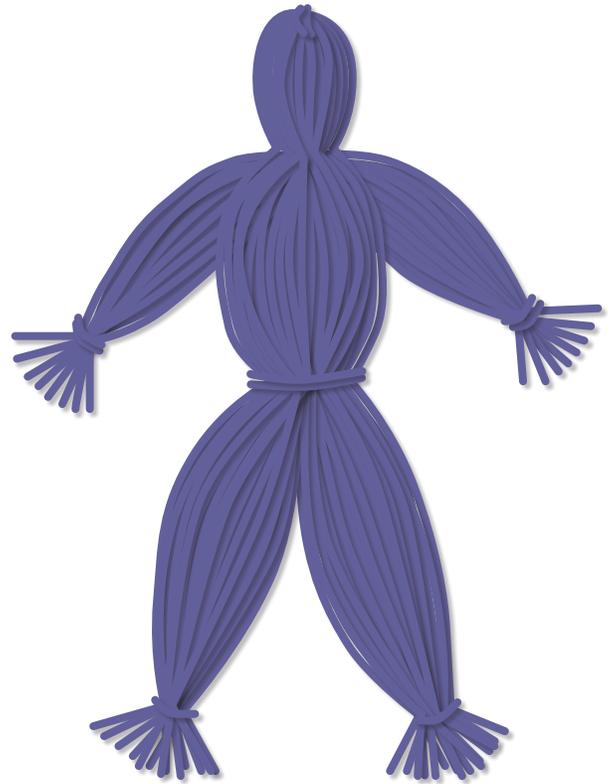
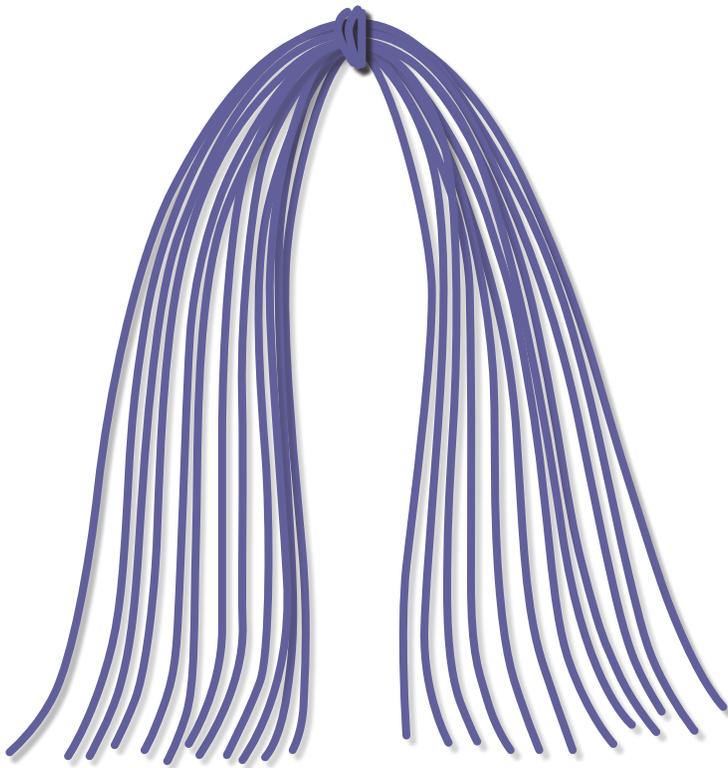
Distribute the pieces of felt and demonstrate how to glue three sides together. As the glue is drying, let the learners decorate their sachet with markers. Once their decoration is done and the glue is dry, fill the pillows with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the potpourri and then glue the last side together. Remind the learners that bodies are still special even when they don't work as well as they once did. It is even more important to care for bodies as they get older or if, for any reason, they do not work as well. We can honor the bodies of people who are older or disabled by helping them do things and giving them small gifts that they will enjoy. Showing our care for older or disabled people is another way to be disciples of Jesus.

### Reflect

Did the learners grasp the concept that the bodies of people who are sick or differently abled deserve the same care and respect as those bodies that are healthy and normal? Did the learners experience learning through their senses? Were the learners able to understand the idea of making gifts to give to those less fortunate as a way to make life a little nicer for them?

Attachment: Activity 2

Sleep Buddy



# Honoring the Body



## Exploration: Christian Tradition

### About this Age Group

Young children often experience their bodies as objects that prevent them from doing what they really would like to do. Even if young children do not have a negative body image, their physical bodies keep them from flying or doing other magical things. Previously the job of their parents, caring for their bodies is becoming increasingly their responsibility. Imagination is a valuable tool for young children and may make it easier for them to grasp the idea of invisible parts of the body and invisible germs.

### 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

God created our bodies to be beautiful and to work harmoniously. Sadly, many young children have already learned that they are not attractive or that their bodies don't work in the same way as other bodies do. While food should be a pleasant experience, hunger is too often a reality for young children, especially those affected by a negative economic situation. Emphasizing the positive about bodies and stressing that everyone can use her or his body to serve God may help alleviate part of the negativity caused by reality.

*Prayer: God of bones and muscles, of joy and sadness, let me feel your presence as I try to lead these young minds into a positive perception of their 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.

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Describing Our Bodies with Words (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read the passages from Song of Solomon and think of the word pictures that are created. Choose several verses from each passage that you are comfortable reading to your group of learners in which the lovers describe each other's bodies. Think about how you would describe your body or someone else's body and make a list of some of the words you would use. Have something available to write a list of the learners' suggestions.

**Supplies:**

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- Bible

Have the learners look carefully at their bodies. Ask each to think about what words he or she would use to describe his or her body. Tell the learners you are going to read them some verses from the Bible. First, a man is talking about the woman he loves. Read the verses you selected from Song of Solomon 4:1–7. Next, the woman describes the man she loves. Read from Song of Solomon 5:10–16. Ask: *Did you ever think about someone's hair being like a flock of goats, or their cheeks being like a garden? What are some words you would use to describe someone's hair?* Accept all reasonable answers and record them on the newsprint or whiteboard. What are some words learners would use to describe someone's eyes? Face? Hands? Legs? Toes? Explain that each of those body parts is different from the others, and different words can be used to describe them—but they're all beautiful to God. God thinks they're pretty neat just because God made them as part of our body to do something special. Sometimes it's hard to think of our feet as being as pretty as our faces, but our feet need just as much care. Our whole body is important to God.

Encourage the learners to work together to put the words they have chosen to describe their bodies into a poem. The poem may be a simple series of statements, such as: Our toes are [fill in the words from the list the learners created]. God made our toes. Our hands are [fill in with words from the learners]. God created our hands



### 2 "Take My Life and Let It Be"

**Leader preparation:** Review the words to the song "Take My Life and Let it Be." If possible, provide a way to show a video of the song. Make a mental list of ways the learners can fulfill the intent of the words, such as moving their hands at the impulse of God's love. Be prepared to explain the words that may not be familiar to young learners. (Be thoughtful of those learners who cannot do the "drill" you will put them through; think of alternatives.)

**Supplies:**

- "Take My Life and Let It Be," Attachment: Activity 2
- song: "Take My Life and Let it Be," by Frances R. Havergal (tune: Hendon), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXy2MmMLjGQ&feature=related>; lyrics, <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/t/m/tmlalib.htm>
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

- 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.

Have the learners touch their noses with their thumbs, put their elbows on their knees, turn around, and sit down. Explain that God has created our bodies to be absolutely wonderful. We can work and play and sleep and think and love and eat and sing and dance and touch soft bunnies and hear special music. Our bodies are just plain neat. Our bodies need special care to keep working. Ask about ways we care for our bodies. (Eat good food, wash our hands, dress warmly, drink lots of water, care for our teeth, rest, make good choices.) Taking care of our bodies is one way we can say thank you to God for creating our bodies.

Another way we can say thank you to God for our bodies is to use them to do things God wants us to do. Explain that you have a song that tells some of the ways we can use different body parts. The name of the song is “Take My Life and Let It Be.” That means we give our bodies back to God so God can use them as God wishes. Play the video of the song, or read the words to the learners. After letting them hear the song once, explain the words they may not understand. Read through the song again, and pause after each body part listed to have the learners suggest ways they could fulfill the intent of the song (for example, for “Take my feet,” run errands for people, walk to church, walk to raise money for a charity). When you have finished all the parts, play the video one last time and ask the learners to think about the ways they can do what the song suggests.

### ③ Helping Others to Help Jesus

**Leader preparation:** Review the story of the woman anointing Jesus’ feet with oil in Luke 7:36–50, and mark the passage. Prepare the room by putting a basin filled with water on newspapers spread on the floor. Pour the tempera paint into the pie tins. You may want to ask another adult to assist with this activity.

#### **Supplies:**

- aluminum pie tins
- brown tempera paint
- 9” x 12” white construction paper
- a basin of water and soap
- towels
- newspapers

Invite the learners to remove the shoe and sock from one foot and look at their foot. Have them make circles with their feet by moving their ankles. Explain that feet are a very important part of our bodies. Ask: *What can you do with your feet? How do you protect your feet and keep them clean? Do your feet ever get hot and sweaty? What happens to your feet when you go barefoot or wear sandals?* Tell the learners that Jesus lived in a very dry and dusty country, and people wore sandals most of the time. Ask what they think happened to people’s feet after they walked on dusty roads. When someone came to visit in your house in those days, it was polite to wash the feet of that guest. Ask if they would like to wash someone else’s dirty, smelly feet.

Open your Bible to the Luke passage and tell the learners that one time Jesus went to the house of an important man. The man did not have anyone wash Jesus’ feet when he arrived, but a woman who did not live in the house came in to see Jesus. She was crying, and her tears fell on Jesus’ feet. The woman used her long hair to dry Jesus’ feet and then rubbed his feet with very expensive perfumes. Ask the children who loved Jesus more—the man who invited Jesus to dinner but didn’t wash his feet, or the woman who washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.

Tell the learners that when we love Jesus, we need to show him that we love him in some way. We can't actually wash Jesus' feet, but by helping other people, we show that we love Jesus. One at a time, paint the bottom of the foot of each learner and make a footprint on a sheet of white construction paper. Encourage the learners to participate in washing the paint off the foot of the other learners by using the basin of water and the towel. Once everyone has made a footprint, remind the learners that, by helping other people, they are helping Jesus. Send the footprints home as a reminder of one way we can help Jesus.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities

### 4 What Makes Us Different on the Outside? (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Most young children are familiar with a variety of animals, so this activity can be used as an exercise in memory as well as imagination.

**Supplies:**

- (optional) pictures of animals

With the learners seated around you, invite them to think about all the different kinds of animals. Ask: *Do all animals look the same? How are they different?* (Some live in the water, some can fly, some have four legs, some are covered with fur, and so forth.) Ask why they think God made everything so different.

If you have pictures of animals, display them as you lead the learners to think creatively with the following questions:

- Imagine you had four legs, like a tiger. Would it be easier or harder to walk and run? Why do you think God gave some animals four legs?
- Imagine you are covered with fur, like a bear. How will you keep clean? How will you brush the hair on your back? Why do you think God gave some animals so much hair?
- Imagine you are a baby kangaroo. Do you like riding in your mom's pouch? How do you get in and out of the pouch? Why do you think God gave mama kangaroos a pouch?
- Imagine you are a fish. Do you like swimming? Is it funny to breathe through your gills? Why do you think God made fish to only live in the water?
- Imagine you are a bird. Do you like to fly? Is your nest soft? Do you eat worms or seeds? Why do you think God made animals that fly?

When you have finished discussing a variety of animals, close the activity by asking: *Why did God give you two ears? Why do you think God put your eyes in the front of your head? Why did God give you a tongue? Why do you think God gave you two legs and two arms, instead of four legs? Do you think God did a pretty good job creating people? Of all the parts of your body that God created, which is your favorite?*

## 5 Heart, Lungs, and Brain

**Leader preparation:** Practice finding your pulse in your wrist and in your neck so you can more easily assist the learners with finding theirs. Also practice using a turkey baster to pull in and squeeze out water so the process flows smoothly.

**Supplies:**

- turkey baster
- a small pan of water
- a towel to protect the carpet
- a balloon or one for each
- easy, age-appropriate floor puzzle

Have the learners gather around you on the floor of your meeting space. Place the pan of water on the towel in front of you. Tell the learners that many of the most important parts of their bodies are inside their bodies, carefully protected by bones. One of those very important parts is their heart. Have the learners make a fist with one hand and explain that the heart is just about that big. The heart is a pump that pushes the blood to every part of the body so the entire body gets the nutrients and oxygen it needs. Use a turkey baster to pull in and squeeze out water from a small pan to show how the heart pumps blood. Also show the learners where they can find their pulse, either in the neck or in the wrist. If the learners cannot feel their own pulse, place their fingers gently on your neck or wrist to feel yours.

Tell the learners that another important part of their bodies are their lungs. Have everyone put their hands on their rib cage, take a deep breath, and blow it out. Breathing is the work the lungs do. We have two lungs that are protected by the rib cage. Blow up a balloon and let it deflate several times, explaining that the balloon shows how their lungs look when they are working. Another important part of the body is the brain, which is the body's computer. Our brain tells us how to move, helps us think, and controls if we feel happy or sad. Place the pieces of the puzzle on the floor and have the learners work together to complete it. As they work, explain that their brains are helping them figure out how to put the puzzle together. God made the most important parts of our body to work very well, and God protected them with bones to keep them safe. Eating good foods and getting enough rest are ways we can take care of our hearts, and lungs, and brains.



## 6 "Out of Work"

**Leader preparation:** Place a copy of the print "Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz where the learners can easily view it.

**Supplies:**

- artwork: "Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz, [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1502057828?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=15626&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1502057828?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401)

Gather the learners around the print "Out of Work." Ask how many people they see in this picture. Explain that this is a picture of a family. Ask: *Who is lying in the bed? Who do you think is lying in bed with her? Where is the father? How do you think the father feels? Why do you think so? Is the mother happy or sad?* Tell the learners that the name of this picture is "Out of Work."

Explain that when people do not have a job to go to, they often feel sad. They sometimes feel that they are not a good person any longer. It is hard on the rest of the people living with them, too, because without a job there is not as much money to buy food and clothes. Ask if any of the learners know of someone who

has lost a job and allow time for sharing. Explain that when we feel sad, for whatever reason, it almost feels like we are sick. We are very tired and don't have any energy to run and play. Our bodies seem to know that they need to rest to feel better.

Ask the learners to name some ways we might help someone who is very sad. Explain that it is not bad when we are sad. It happens to everyone at some time and, even though it doesn't feel good, it isn't wrong or bad. When we are sad, our minds and our bodies both need special care. When other people are sad, they need us to care for their minds and bodies as well.

## Sending & Serving Activities

### 7 Germs Make Us Sick (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** The concept of something so small no one can see it, but powerful enough to make us sick, may be difficult for some young children to understand. Also, be sensitive to any children who themselves are suffering from a chronic disease or may have a family member with a chronic disease.

**Supplies:** None

Ask the learners to pantomime what happens when they have a cold. After the pantomime, explain that there are many different diseases. Some, like a cold, the flu, or chicken pox, usually don't last very long. Other diseases, such as cancer or diabetes, make people very sick for a very long time. Diseases are caused by tiny living things that are so small we cannot see them without a microscope. (If necessary, explain that a microscope is a special tool that helps people view things that are so tiny we cannot see just using our eyes.) The germs sneak into our bodies without being noticed and live inside us. They eat the nutrients we need to get from foods, and they can make poisons inside us, which make us sick. Some germs, called bacteria, are good and help us digest our food. Other germs, however, make us sick with sore throats and ear infections. Germs also cause cavities in our teeth. A different type of germ, called a virus, cause diseases like chicken pox and the flu. Ask: *Have you ever been sick? Did you enjoy being sick?* Explain that the germs in your body get into the air whenever you sneeze or cough. They float through the air until they can get into someone else's body. The same thing happens to the germs in other people's bodies. When they sneeze or cough, their germs get into the air and can then get into your body. Germs can also get into your body when you touch something that has germs on it.

Ask learners to name some things they could do to keep from spreading germs to others. Where do the germs go when someone covers his or her mouth with a hand? If the person then touches something, such as a doorknob, with that hand, the germs jump off his or her hand onto the doorknob. When another person touches the doorknob, the germs move to that person's hand. If that person then touches his or her mouth, the germs move right into their new home. Ask if anyone knows about sneezing into the bend of the elbow, and allow them to demonstrate. If not, demonstrate it and have the learners practice it. Another way to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands. If you have touched something with germs on it, washing your hands will wash the germs away. Demonstrate good hand washing techniques and have the learners practice that skill.

## 8 Seeing Germs

**Leader preparation:** For this activity you will need a small amount of cornstarch and some cleaning wipes. Place a few items, such as crayons, colored construction paper, toys, or books on the table.

### Supplies:

- corn starch or flour
- antiseptic wipes
- books and various art tools

With the learners seated around you in your meeting place, briefly explain that germs make us sick. Germs are very small and get inside our bodies when we don't keep our hands clean. Hide a small amount of corn starch in your hand, then pretend to sneeze, covering your mouth with that hand. Point out to the learners the corn starch that escaped from your hand and floated to nearby objects. Pick up several of the items you placed on the table, and have the learners see if they can find the corn starch on those items. Wash your hands, then let any learners who wish to put a very small amount of corn starch in their hands and "sneeze." When the learners have completed their experiment and washed their hands, put a small amount of corn starch in your hand. Pretend to sneeze again, but this time, sneeze into the bend of your arm. Ask the learners if they can see any "germs" this time. Point out that keeping others safe from germs is just as important as protecting ourselves from germs. God wants us to care about others, and God wants us to care for our own bodies. Staying away from germs is important for both.

## 9 Soap Is a Wonderful Thing

**Leader preparation:** This activity is meant to show that soap is an effective way to keep germs away from our bodies. Cover the center of a table with a towel to absorb any water that may spill during the activity. Fill a bowl with a large opening about half full of water and place it on the towel.

### Supplies:

- a shallow bowl with a wide surface area, such as a pie plate
- water
- black pepper
- liquid dish washing detergent

Ask learners: *After you eat dinner, does someone in your family wash the dishes? What do they use to wash them?* Explain that people wash dishes with soap because soap keeps the germs off the dishes. Even when the dishes go into a dishwasher, someone puts soap into the dishwasher, too. Briefly review with the learners the concept that germs can make them sick. Washing their hands with soap keeps germs out of their bodies. Ask them what other parts of their bodies they wash with soap. Talk about how taking a bath is another way we keep germs out of our bodies and keep our bodies healthy.

Point out the bowl of water on the table. Explain that you are going to put some pepper in the water. Lightly sprinkle the pepper around the bowl. The little grains of pepper represent the germs that get on your hands. We don't want the germs to get into our bodies, so we wash our hands with soap. Gently add a few drops of the liquid dish washing soap to the bowl and let the learners watch as the pepper moves away from the soap. Ask what happened to the germs. Explain that washing with soap keeps our bodies healthy, and keeping our bodies healthy is one way to care for our bodies. While washing our hands will not always keep

us healthy, it will help us stay away from some sicknesses. It will give us more time to jump and read and play games. We should always do all we can to keep our bodies healthy.

### Reflect

Were the learners able to verbally express an appreciation of their bodies? Did they expand their concept of the body to include those parts we cannot see? Did they show an understanding of germs and how to keep themselves safer from disease?

Attachment: Activity 2

**Take My Life and Let It Be**

Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love, at the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet, and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee;  
Take my voice and let me sing  
Always, only for my King, always, only for my King.

Take my lips, and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee;  
Take my silver and my gold,  
Not a mite would I withhold, not a mite would I withhold.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure-store;  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee, ever, only, all for Thee.

Words by Frances R. Havergal (tune: HENDON)

# Honoring the Body



## Exploration: Context and Mission

### About this Age Group

Young children are beginning to understand that the physical body has many parts and needs care to function well. They may not realize that the spiritual person is also a part of the body and needs the care the same way the physical person does. For young children only beginning to develop a self-concept and self-confidence, care for the spiritual body often seems to be in the hands of others, in the way others treat them and the things others say to them.

### 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 that God created us for. Considering the various and diverse contexts in which all live, we learn to choose well between caring for or abusing the body, even as we consider Christian responses to healthy and wholesome as well as violent and abusive living..

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

## Leader Preparation

Among the many ways we care for our bodies is making sure we get enough rest. Rest helps everyone deal better with the emotional and spiritual difficulties faced every day. The care we take with the spiritual parts of our bodies should be at least equal to the care we take with our physical bodies.

*Prayer: God of all people, we ask that you bless our learning together. Teach us what we need to do to care well for our own bodies and how to use our bodies to meet the needs of those around us. Give us activities to fill our days and peaceful rest to restore our souls. 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, using one activity from each category.

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Sabbath Rest (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read Exodus 23:10–12, where the concept of Sabbath is explained. The learners may have mixed feelings about resting. Resting can be an annoyance in the middle of play or a wonderful respite when they are worn out. This activity presents the reasons for rest.

**Supplies:**

- watch or clock with a second hand, or a timer

Invite learners to join you in your meeting space. Ask them to think about their day so far. What are some activities they do during the day? Accept all reasonable answers. If no one mentions sleep, ask what they do at the end of the day. Ask how many of them like going to bed. Why, or why not? Tell the learners that sleep is very important. Every animal needs sleep. How many of them have ever seen their dog or cat sleep? Sometimes we don’t need to sleep, but we do need to rest—to stop what we’re doing and just do nothing for a few minutes. Even God rested after creating the world! Tell the learners that you are going to have them rest—be still and silent—for one full minute.

After that minute, ask: *Did that seem like a long time? Why, or why not?* Next, have the learners rest for five minutes. Then ask the same questions. Explain that even though sometimes it is hard to rest, we need to rest and sleep so our bodies can get back the energy that it has been using. We also need to rest and sleep so our brains can go through everything we learned during the day and sort it out. Resting also keeps us from acting crabby with our friends. God created our bodies to help themselves get more energy, but we need to rest and sleep for our bodies to work their best.

### 2 Sabbath Rest for Others

**Leader preparation:** One reason we care for our bodies is so we can help care for others. In this activity, the learners will prepare a snack so their family members can enjoy a treat without having to prepare it themselves. Trail mix can be made with a variety of ingredients, limited only by your imagination. Check with parents or caregivers of your learners for information about food allergies.

**Supplies:**

- ingredients for trail mix, such as, raisins, chopped dates, almonds, walnuts, small cheese crackers, toasted oat cereal, candy-coated chocolate candies, bite-sized pretzels, jelly beans, chocolate chips, chopped dried fruits, sunflower seeds, dried cranberries
- large mixing bowl
- spoon
- sandwich-sized zippered plastic bags
- blank 3” x 5” note cards
- crayons or markers
- transparent tape

Gather the learners around you in the working space, with a large mixing bowl in the middle. Explain that sometimes people need to rest from jobs they do all the time. The job may not be hard, but it still has to be done. Ask them what they had to eat for breakfast this morning and who fixed it for them. Ask how often

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

their mom or dad fixes food for them to eat. *Do you think that person ever gets tired of cooking? Do you think they would like to have time off from fixing food? Have you ever fixed anything for your parents to eat?* Invite the learners to fix some food so their parents can rest from cooking for just a little while. Pull the ingredients out of the bag one at a time, asking the learners to identify each one. If you wish, you may let the learners try a bite of an ingredient if it is unfamiliar to them. Allow each learner to pour one ingredient into the large bowl and stir the mix after that addition. When all the ingredients have been added, give each learner a bag and assist him/her with filling the bag.

Distribute the note cards and crayons or markers and have each learner decorate a card. If the learners are able, they may write a message to their parents. Have them tape the card to the bag of trail mix. Remind the learners that they are giving this gift to their parents so their parents can get some rest instead of fixing a snack for the family. Ask them to encourage their parents to sit down and relax, read a book or the newspaper, watch TV, or listen to the radio as they enjoy their snack.



### 3 “Margot Embracing Her Mother”

**Leader preparation:** Post a copy of the print “Margot Embracing Her Mother” at eye level for the learners when they are seated on the floor. Choose a restful piece of music and provide a way to play it for the learners. Gather the supplies listed.

#### **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](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1502057828?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37961&store_id=1401)
- two or three blankets or throws
- pillows
- CD of restful music (perhaps “Clair de Lune” by Debussy, “Canon” by Pachelbel, “Eine Klleine Nachtmusik” by Mozart, or “Fantasia on Greensleeves” by Vaughan Williams)
- CD player

Gather the learners around the print of Margot and her mother. Tell the learners the name of the picture, explaining that Margot is the name of the girl. Ask: *How do you think Margot feels? How do you think her mother feels? How can you tell? Why do you think Margot is giving her mother such a big hug? Have you ever given your mother a hug this big? When?*

Explain that when we stop an activity to give someone a big hug, we are resting in a way. God created our bodies to need rest, such as when we lie down or sleep, but a hug is a way to rest our feelings, to calm down and just relax because we’re being held by someone we love. Margot and her mother are each resting by giving each other a hug. A hug is often a way mothers and fathers and grandparents and caregivers say good night to their children. Spread a blanket or two on the floor and make pillows available. Tell the learners that right now is a good time to rest for a little while. Allow them a few moments to find a place to stretch out so they are not touching one another, and then turn out the lights in the room and turn on the music you selected. After the learners have rested for a few minutes, remind them that rest is a very important way we care for the wonderful bodies God gave us.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities

### 4 What I Do Well (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Think about the learners in your group and prayerfully consider two things that each does well. Some learners will be gifted in physical skills or artistic skills. Others will be gifted in less obvious ways. As an example, think of a less obvious gift that you possess, such as a nice smile or the ability to cook. Consider your learners as a group and decide if they are able to mention gifts their friends may possess.

**Supplies:** None

With the learners seated around you, tell them that God gave everyone some special gifts—not gifts like a new toy—but gifts of being able to do special things. Mention one of your obvious gifts (such as teaching) and a less obvious gift (such as prayer). Explain that God gave each of them gifts, too. Provide a few minutes for the learners to think about their gifts. Provide guidance with questions, such as: *What do you love to do? What do your parents tell you they think is special about you? What do you see other people do that you would like to do?* After a few moments, ask the learners to share their gifts. If a learner chooses not to share or cannot think of anything, tell about what you think is the gift God gave him or her. Emphasize the fact that God gives everyone very special gifts. God created our bodies to hold those gifts for us. We need to care for our bodies so we can use the gifts God gave us.

### 5 Renewing Your Spirit

**Leader preparation:** Read 2 Corinthians 4:13–5:1. Think of an experience that had a negative impact on you, such as getting a ticket or having a friend forget to meet you for dinner. Then think about the many ways your life is blessed—by a hug from a loved one, by a special meal fixed just for you, by a smile from a stranger, by exercising, by sharing. Think of a way to describe how something positive can overcome the negative experience, by renewing your spirit. Cut two-inch circles out of yellow felt, two per learner.

**Supplies:**

- circles cut from yellow felt
- black markers

Have the learners stand very still, close their eyes, and think of the last time someone did something that made them feel special and loved. Ask the learners to open their eyes. Ask any who are willing to share what it was that made them feel special and loved. Ask if they have ever had a really horrible, awful day, when nothing went right. Allow any learners who wish to share those experiences. Ask: *When you had that very bad day, would it have felt good to have someone tell you that it was okay, that things would get better, and that she or he loved you no matter what?* Ask the learners if there ever a time when they did something they didn't want to do, and someone gave them a treat afterward. Perhaps they got a sticker after going to the dentist. Explain to the learners that when something happens that makes us feel special or loved, it is called renewing your spirit. Our spirit is our emotions and thoughts and how we feel and think. Sometimes when we have a very bad day, we feel sad or angry, and we may think we're not very good. When someone says something nice to us or does something nice for us, it renews our spirits; it makes us feel better.

Tell the learners that our spirits are a part of our body, and God cares very much about our spirits. God knows that we have crazy days and end up feeling badly about ourselves, so God sends someone to renew our spirits. Sometimes when someone else is feeling bad, God can use us to help renew that person's spirits. Ask the learners how they could help renew the spirit of a friend, such as tell that friend a joke, play with him or her, share a piece of candy, or give him or her a hug.

Distribute the circles you cut out, and have the learners use the markers to draw a simple smiling face on each one. As the learners work, explain when someone does something special for them, to help renew their spirit, the learners may share the smile with that person. Remind the learner that God needs people to help one another by making them feel better. Reinforce the thought that God cares about our spirits just as much as God cares about our physical bodies.

### 6 Mirror Images

**Leader preparation:** If possible, provide a computer or other method for the learners to hear the song "Imago Dei." Read the words, and prepare to explain any statements that may be unclear to the learners. If you bear a physical resemblance to someone in your family and can provide pictures of the two of you, bring them to the activity.

#### **Supplies:**

- Bible
- computer with Internet connection
- song: "Imago Dei," by Jill Kirsten Warner, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2duLAakNyuw>
- crayons or markers

With the learners seated around you, ask if any of them has had people say, "You look just like your mother or father!" Tell the learners that family members often look alike. Twins are special brothers and sisters who were born at almost the same time. Twins often look very much alike, and sometimes you can't tell one from the other. Sometimes children will look like their parents or grandparents. If you were able to find pictures of yourself and your counterpart, show them to the learners now. Further explain that sometimes people act like other people. They may laugh the same way their father does, shake their head the way their brother does, or hold their knife the way their grandmother did. So people can look and act like other people. Read Genesis 1:26–27. Explain that, after creating all the animals, God created people to be like God. That doesn't mean God has two arms and two legs, like people do, but that people can think and love and care for other people and make decisions in the same way God does.

Explain to the learners that the words *imago dei* mean "image of God." People were made in the image of God, not to look like God, but to act like God. If you were able to obtain a way to show the music video, play it now for the learners. Read the words to the song, explaining as necessary that God always gives us what we need to help others. Invite the learners to have the opportunity to act like another person. When you play the song, one partner will move his or her hands in different ways and the other partner must be a mirror and do those same motions. You will play the song twice, so each partner has the chance to be the leader. Pair up the learners and play the video through twice. Explain again that God made us in God's image, but not so our bodies look like God. Our bodies were created to act like God and show God to the world.

Sending & Serving Activities

 **7 Our Teeth (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Usually losing a tooth is a proud moment, and children are eager to share this proof of growing up. Think about any learners in your room who may have lost a tooth recently and determine whether any would be willing to share a smile to show the gap.

**Supplies:** None

Have the learners sit around you. Ask: *When you are eating a piece of fruit, what is the first thing you do? What do you use to bite it? What do you use to chew the fruit, so you can swallow it?* Ask the learners to say “frog feet, flippers, swim fins” slowly and pay attention to the way their upper teeth press on their lower lip to form the “F” sound. Next, have them all repeat this tongue twister: The thirty-three thieves thought that they thrilled the throne throughout Thursday. Ask them to pay attention to how their tongues touch their teeth. Next, have the learners smile at a partner. Point out that when people smile, you can usually see their teeth.

So teeth have three very important roles to play in our bodies: to chew, to help us talk, and to make our smiles pretty. Ask if any learners have lost a tooth. When our baby teeth fall out, new permanent teeth grow in. The part of a tooth that we can see is called the crown. The crown is covered with enamel, which is the hardest part of our body, even harder than our bones. The part of the tooth that is attached to our jaw is the root, just like a tree root. God built our bodies so our teeth would get all the good things they need to stay healthy from the roots, and God painted our teeth with enamel to protect them from germs. We have to help out, though, by brushing and flossing our teeth—and by eating the right kinds of foods. We can show God how much we like our bodies by taking care of our teeth.

**8 Clean White Teeth**

**Leader preparation:** Make the paint for this activity by mixing white tempera, a small amount of toothpaste, and white glitter. Cut teeth out of gray or tan construction paper, using half a sheet for each tooth. If you do not have enough old toothbrushes, regular paint brushes will work.

**Supplies:**

- white tempera paint, toothpaste, and white glitter.
- old toothbrushes or paint brushes
- teeth cut from gray or tan construction paper
- pencils

With the learners seated in the workspace, explain that our teeth are very important in keeping our bodies healthy. Ask: *What do you do with your teeth? How do you keep your teeth clean?* Explain that it’s important to brush our teeth to get little pieces of food off of them. The food can mix with the germs in your mouth to make cavities. Ask if anyone has ever had a cavity. If so, what happened? Explain that while we can’t prevent all cavities, if we eat the right kind of food and take good care of our teeth, we will get fewer cavities. Distribute the pictures of the teeth you prepared. Ask the learners to use the pencils to put several X’s on their tooth to represent food particles that remain on their teeth after eating. Make available the paint you mixed prior to the session and the old (tooth)brushes. Have the learners dip their toothbrushes into the paint and paint their tooth. The

paint removes the food particles and makes the tooth shiny. Remind the learners as they work that keeping our teeth healthy is another way we care for the bodies God has given us

### 9 Toothbrush and Toothpaste Work Together

**Leader preparation:** Cut white construction paper into one-inch squares, and gather the supplies listed, including a small container of water.

**Supplies:**

- craft sticks
- 1" squares of white construction paper
- scissors
- glue
- baking soda
- salt
- a small container of water
- vanilla, almond, or other flavoring
- measuring spoons
- zippered sandwich-size plastic bags

While sitting at the worktable, review with the learners the fact that our teeth are very important. They help us talk so people can understand us, and they help us chew our food so our bodies get the nutrition they need. Because food keeps going in our mouths, and we don't always get all the little pieces of food out of our mouth, germs can grow and make us sick. Brushing our teeth is one good way to keep our mouth healthy. We need a good toothbrush and toothpaste to help gently scrub our teeth clean. If our toothbrush is too hard, we can scratch the enamel off our teeth. If it is too soft, the toothbrush won't remove the food. Distribute the craft sticks and squares of construction paper. Have the learners glue the construction paper to one end of the stick. Make scissors available and have the learners make snips in the construction paper to make the bristles of the toothbrush.

Set the toothbrushes aside and give each learner a zippered plastic bag. Explain that in addition to a good toothbrush, our toothpaste needs to be the right texture so it doesn't scratch our teeth. Help each learner measure four teaspoons of baking soda, one teaspoon salt, and one teaspoon water into the bag, then add a drop of the flavoring you provided. Once the ingredients are all in the bag, encourage the learners to squish the bag to mix the ingredients. Tell the learners they can actually use the toothpaste they just made to brush their teeth. Keeping their teeth clean will help keep them healthy and give them a beautiful smile to show they are caring for their bodies.

## Reflect

Were the learners able to understand that each of them is special and has special gifts? How well did they internalize the concept of renewing the spirit? Did they understand that sleeping and rest are as important to health as taking care of our teeth?

# Honoring the Body



## Exploration: Future and Vision

### About this Age Group

Obesity is an epidemic in our country. Although young children have little control over the food provided for them by families or in school and daycare settings, they can limit the amount of food they consume. They can also add movement and exercise to their lives, thus possibly preventing inappropriate weight gain. Helping young children learn good nutrition and the value of exercise can help them treasure the bodies they occupy and keep those bodies as healthy as possible into the future. Aging may be an issue that is more present in the lives of some of the learners than others. The effects of aging on some people can be scary for young children, even though it is a natural part of life. Carrying on in the face of aging is an important concept for young children to adopt.

### 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 their 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 *imago dei*.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

**Ezekiel 31:1-14**  
**Matthew 22:34-40**

## Leader Preparation

Think of the children who greet you each time you gather. Are you aware of any chronic illnesses faced by the children or by family members? Do any have close contact with elderly friends or relatives? Discussion of illness and aging can be difficult with children of this age, especially if they have personal experience with the negative aspects. Focus on the positive aspects of disease prevention and the miracle of how our bodies are so creatively constructed.

*Prayer: God who knit us together in our mother's womb, be with me as I lead these learners into the areas of sickness and aging. Let the wonder of your creation be the back story behind each activity we do. 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 Food Charades (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Review the USDA food plate, which replaces the food pyramid, and think of foods in each group. Plan ways to act out a variety of food preparation activities, such as peeling a banana, popping corn, scooping ice cream, pouring a beverage, stirring a pot, flipping a pancake, cracking an egg, measuring a liquid, or buttering bread.

**Supplies:**

- (optional) USDA food plate, <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>

Go around the circle of learners, asking each one what she or he ate for breakfast that morning. Ask: *What is your favorite food? What food do you NOT like?* Explain that our bodies use food the way a car uses gasoline. It gives us the energy to do all the fun things that we like to do. God created our bodies to need food; then God created taste buds so we could like what we eat. We need to eat lots of different types of foods. There are five different groups of food:

- Dairy foods are all the foods we eat made from milk. Ask the learners to name foods that are made from milk; be prepared to fill in any key ones that they forget.
- Vegetables are another group of foods. Vegetables are foods from plants that grow in the ground. Carrots, broccoli, and zucchini are a few vegetables. Ask the learners to name more vegetables.
- Fruits are plants that grow on trees and bushes. Ask the learners to name some of their favorite fruits.
- Grains include foods made from wheat, rice, cornmeal, barley, oats, or other grains. Mention that most breakfast cereals are grains, as are pasta, tortillas, grits, oatmeal, and bread.
- Proteins include meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, beans, and peas. Ask the learners to name different meats and beans.

Explain that we need to eat food from all those groups every day to keep our bodies working their best. If we eat too many of the wrong kinds of foods, our bodies don't work as well as they should. Tell the children that no food is off limits, unless they have an allergy to that food, but every food should be eaten in the right amounts. Eating too much of any food, even proteins or dairy, is not healthful. Part of the fun of food is the different ways we fix different foods. Tell the learners that you are going to act out some ways to fix foods, and you want them to guess what you are doing. Use the pantomimes you thought of earlier, giving learners hints if necessary. Remind the learners that our bodies must have a variety of food for us to be able to run and play and sleep. God gave us taste buds to taste the foods God provided. God wants us to be careful with what we eat, starting now, so our bodies will work their best, even when we are older. Be sure to celebrate what a creative God we have!

- 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.

### 2 How Much Should We Eat?

**Leader preparation:** Make copies of the USDA Choose My Plate (supply list) and find pictures of a number of foods from each of the five groups.

**Supplies:**

- pictures of foods from each food group
- USDA “My Plate” color sheet, <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/downloads/MyPlate/ColoringSheet.pdf>
- crayons or markers

Ask the learners to move around the space as fast as they can. After a few minutes, ask them to move around the room as slowly as they can. Have the learners sit on the floor and ask them: *Why do we need food? Is all food the same?* Tell the learners you brought in some pictures of foods for them to see. Explain that you want the learners to tell you what the food is and then see if they can tell what food group it belongs to. Begin with the easiest pictures, such as milk, bananas, broccoli, eggs, and bread. Use all the pictures you brought, creating a pile of pictures for each food group.

Have the learners move to a table; distribute copies of the USDA My Plate color sheet. Show the learners where each food group is located on the plate. Ask which food group is the biggest, and explain that the biggest group is the one we should eat the most from. Then ask which is the second biggest group, and then which are the two smallest groups. Beginning with the vegetable group, hold up the pictures of foods identified as being in the vegetable group and have the learners draw two of them in the vegetable portion of the coloring sheet. Continue with the other groups, going from largest to smallest. As the learners draw, remind them that our bodies need food to work their very best. But if we eat too much food, our bodies don’t work as well as they should, either. The right amount of food helps our bodies move fast and well. Too much food or too little food makes our bodies move slowly. We need to eat a variety of foods, and we need to eat the right quantity of food to keep our bodies working their best. Eating the right amount of the right kinds of foods will keep our bodies in top shape to enjoy doing all types of things as we grow up.

### 3 An Obstacle Course

**Leader preparation:** Prepare the room physically for an obstacle course. Place four chairs so the learners will have to weave through them. Provide a ball for them to bounce five times, then drop into a container such as a clean wastebasket. On the table, place a plate with saltine crackers, paper, crayons or markers, and a sample drawing of a house beside a tree. Finally, put a number of adult T-shirts in a pile. Designate a Starting Line and a Finish Line, perhaps with masking tape lines, and plan the order of the activities. Consider the abilities of each learner, and add or adapt activities so each learner may participate fully.

**Supplies:**

- a ball
- a container big enough to hold the ball, such as a waste basket
- saltine crackers
- construction paper
- crayons or markers
- a simple drawing of a house beside a tree
- three or four adult T-shirts
- (optional) masking tape

Explain to the learners that they are going to have the opportunity to go through an obstacle course that will let them use in a variety of different ways the bodies God created. They will each have to complete several different activities to complete the course. Emphasize that this is a fun activity—no winners or losers. If there is an activity that they do not feel comfortable doing, they do not have to do it. Walk through the obstacle course, explaining each station. The learners need to run in between the chairs; bounce the ball five times and then put it in the container; eat a cracker and then sing “Mary Had a Little Lamb”; draw a picture of a house and a tree, just like the one on the table; and then put on and take off a T-shirt. Point out the starting line and the finish line, but make sure the learners know this is not a race. It is a chance to use their bodies in several different ways. Answer any questions the learners may have before encouraging each learner to take a turn.

After the activity ask the learners: *What do you spend more time doing, watching TV and playing on the computer or playing outside?* Explain that while it is okay to watch some TV and play for a little while on the computer, our bodies need to move around to be really healthy. Our muscles help us move and keep our balance. They help us lift and carry things. Exercise gives our muscles the work they need to be strong and flexible, but exercise doesn’t have to be work. Ask how many of the learners like to skip or jump rope. How many like to go to the swimming pool? How many are on a sports team or take dance lessons? How many like to help their parents work in the yard or clean the house? All those activities are exercise because they give our muscles a chance to work. Exercise is something we need to do in order to keep our bodies working well as we grow older, and exercise can be fun. Encourage the learners to get some type of exercise every day during the week and tell you about it at the next session.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Thoughts Are Part of Me, Too (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Think of some scenarios where the learners would have to make a choice between an action that would honor God and honor their bodies and a choice that would be less optimal. Suggested scenarios include healthy and unhealthy food, brushing or not brushing teeth, washing or not washing hands, sharing or not sharing toys, telling lies or the truth, waiting or pushing into a line.

**Supplies:** None

Have the learners sit around you. Ask: *When someone gives you a very special gift, what do you do? Would you throw it away or break it on purpose?* Remind the learners that God gave us our bodies, which are a very special gift. Our minds are part of our bodies, too. The things we think about and the decisions we make are also ways we care for our bodies. Ask: *Does God want us to be nice or mean? Would God want us to help other people, or just do what we want to do?* Tell the learners that you want them to use their imaginations for a few minutes. Have them imagine they are eating a snack and have to choose between a piece of cake and a piece of fruit. Which choice do they think would be better for them? Which choice would show God they care about their bodies? Ask the learners to imagine they want to play with a car that someone else is playing with. They can go take the car away from that child, or they can ask the child to share. What do they think God would want them to do? Ask the learners if they would like others to take a toy away or ask to share that toy. Tell the learners that life is nicer and more fun when everyone

makes good choices. Continue the activity with the other scenarios you have chosen. When you have used all your scenarios, remind the learners that our minds are part of our bodies, and making good choices is a way to show God we love God and want to take care of our bodies.

### 5 The Breath of God

**Leader preparation:** Read Ezekiel 37:1–14, which forms the basis for this activity. The passage describes a vision in which God’s power reconnects dry bones into complete bodies, yet the bodies remain lifeless until the breath of God revives them. The breath of God described here is the same breath of God that first gave Adam life in Genesis 2. This activity may help the learners realize that people are more than just flesh and blood. God has given us a spirit. Think of a dream you remember that made no sense and be ready to share it with the learners.

*Prayer: God who breathes in me the breath of life, calm me with your presence. Give me the wisdom to understand the message of this story and the ability to share it so the children can understand how special your breath has made us. Amen.*

#### **Supplies:**

- song: “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8FwBSITW-4>
- round-head clothespins, one per learner
- pipe cleaners or chenille stems, one per learner
- colored felt-tip markers

Have the learners stand with space between them and lead them in singing “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes.” Ask if any of them has ever had a dream that seemed silly or confusing. Allow time for sharing. You may choose to share the dream you recalled. Tell the learners that the Bible tells a story about a man named Ezekiel who had a dream that seemed very strange to him. In his dream, Ezekiel saw a big field that was covered with bones—leg bones and arm bones and ankle bones and elbow bones—and the bones were all mixed up. In his dream, God put all the bones back together to make bodies. But there was something missing from the bodies in the field. They were like dolls that have all the right parts of the body, but they can’t move or think. So in Ezekiel’s dream, God’s Spirit went into the bodies. God’s Spirit made the bodies alive, so they could think and move and eat and drink and talk and listen. God’s Spirit gave the bodies all the things they needed to be people and not just dolls.

Have the learners move to a table workspace. Distribute the clothespins and pipe cleaners, and place the markers in the middle of the table. Demonstrate for the learners how to wrap the pipe cleaner around the “neck” of the clothespin to make arms. After the learners put the arms on their dolls, encourage them to use the markers to draw faces and hair and add clothes to their dolls. Explain that these dolls are like the bodies in the field. Ask the children to remember what God gave the bodies in the field to make them talk and move and think. Can the dolls they made think and move and talk? Can THEY think and move and talk? Explain and celebrate that it is God’s Spirit that makes you special. God wants you to run and laugh and hug and cry and sleep, so God gave you God’s Spirit.



### 6 “Dem Bones”

**Leader preparation:** If possible, provide a way for the learners to hear the song “Dem Bones,” perhaps using the YouTube video link below. The words to the song are provided on Attachment: Activity 6, if you cannot access an audio version. Gather a variety of sticks for the learners to use in an activity.

*Prayer: Great God, thank you for giving us so many things, for bodies created so carefully, with voices that can tell of your majesty through speaking or singing, for the ability to laugh and have fun and enjoy the gifts you have given. Amen.*

**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&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=c5dd66dac7d541809fb8256c7daa3064&searchstring=back+bone+cragg>
- sticks of varying length and texture, such as yardsticks, unsharpened pencils, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, straws
- “Dem Bones,” Attachment: Activity 6
- song: “Dem Bones,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnhJ3IkLO7s&feature=related>

Have the learners stand around you and briefly retell the story of the Vision of the Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37:1–14. Tell the learners that someone wrote a song based on that story. Read the words of the song or play the video. If you have an audio version, encourage the children to move to the music.

Display the artwork “Back Bone, c. 1997,” by Tony Cragg, and ask the children to describe what they see.

Return to the song. Explain to the learners that you will read the words slowly, and you want them to point to each body part as they hear its name. Have the learners stand in a circle and place the longest stick in the middle. Place the rest of the sticks on a table and have each child choose at least one. Caution the learners to handle the sticks carefully so no one gets poked. Explain that the stick on the floor will be the backbone. As you read the song again, each learner will have a turn to place his or her stick on the backbone in the spot to represent the body part mentioned in the song. Go around the circle and have each child place his or her stick in the correct place. Point out that even though the sticks are in the shape of a body, they cannot move, or think, or laugh, or give a hug. Ask: *If these were really bones, what would they need to make them real people?*

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Growing Older (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Think of a wind-up toy or music box you may have owned or seen and prepare a description of how it works. If you have something that needs to be wound up to work, consider sharing it with the learners.

**Supplies:**

- (optional) wind-up toy or music box

Gather the learners around you and ask if they are the same now as when they

were babies. Explore how they are different: they are bigger, can do more things, and can talk, for instance. Explain that as children get older, their bodies will continue to change. Next, ask the learners to think about their parents or caregivers. Ask how those people are different from them. Ask if they have ever seen someone really old, and explore how they knew the person was old. Explain that all those changes happen because our bodies grow older.

Have the learners think of a favorite toy, one they've had for a long time and that they play with frequently. Have them think back to when the toy was new. Ask if the toy looks the same now as it did when it was new. *Does it look better or worse? Does it work as well as it did? Do you still love it?* Explain that even though the toy is old and doesn't work as well, it is still very special. Ask the learners if they have any toys that need to be wound up to work. If none do, describe a wind-up toy that you may have seen. This analogy also works with a music box. When it is first wound up, a wind-up toy runs very well and very fast. It begins to slow down as the key unwinds and eventually stops. Explain that our bodies are kind of like a wind-up toy. When we are young, we have lots of energy and move easily. As our bodies get older, they slow down, just like the toy does. Have the learners think of a fun way to move, then pretend to wind up each one so they can begin to move in the way they thought of. Have the learners gradually slow down their movements until they stop by sitting back on the carpet. Remind the learners that growing older happens to all people. As our bodies grow from baby to child to adult, we are able to do more and more things. Once, usually no later than about twenty-one years, our bodies stop growing and eventually begin to slow down. When bodies slow down, they need even more care than before. We can help older people care for their bodies, and we can care for our own bodies when we get older.



### 8 A Place Mat

**Leader preparation:** Make copies of "Table Graces" and cut them apart. Cut out ovals roughly 6 inches long and 3 inches wide to be the body of a hand print butterfly. Contact a local assisted-living facility and see if they would like a gift of place mats. Make arrangements to deliver them when completed.

#### Supplies:

- "Table Graces," Attachment: Activity 8
- sheets of 12" x 18" construction paper
- tempera paint
- containers for paint
- white glue or glue sticks

As the learners sit at the workspace, explain that many people say a prayer before they eat. Ask if anyone in your group does this practice. That prayer, called a grace, is a chance for all to slow down and thank God for the food God has provided. Have any learners who are willing share the grace that their family says at mealtime. Tell the learners that people who live in different places or worship God in different ways use different graces. Read one or more of the graces from Attachment: Activity 8.

Invite them to make a place mat, a special picture used to keep food from spilling on the table. Inform the learners that you will take their place mats to a place that provides food for people who do not have houses to live in. Distribute the ovals you cut, and allow each learner to choose the grace she or he wants to glue on the body of the butterfly. After the learners glue their grace on the body, distribute the 12-by-8-inch pieces of construction paper and instruct the learners to glue the butterfly body in the middle of the large paper. You may need to assist if any

begin gluing several inches off center. Once the butterfly bodies are glued, spread paint on one hand at a time of each learner so he or she can make a hand print on each side of the body of the butterfly to make the wings. Each learner should make two hand prints on each side of the butterfly body.

As the learners work, remind them that eating is something we do to care for the wonderful bodies God has given us. Explain that it is very difficult to care for our bodies when we have no houses to live in. The place mats will be a special treat for those people who have no homes. It is a special way to show people who are less fortunate than we are that God loves them, and that we care about them, too.

### 9 A Time Capsule

**Leader preparation:** If you have access to a camera that can make instant photographs, bring it for this activity. Collect enough small containers, such as cookie tins, potato chip cans, or shoe boxes, for each learner to have one. Cut sheets of 9-inch x 12-inch white construction paper into fourths.

#### Supplies:

- small containers
- stickers, magazines, scraps of construction paper
- white construction paper cut into fourths
- scissors
- crayons or markers
- white glue
- camera that provides instant pictures

Have the learners sit at the table as you briefly review some of the ways they can care for the bodies God gave them—eating good food, drinking enough water, keeping away from germs, caring for their teeth, helping those less fortunate, making good decisions. Explain that even though the ways we care for our bodies do not change, many other things do change as we grow older.

Give each learner five pieces of paper and make crayons or markers available. On one paper, have the learners trace around their hand. On another piece of paper, have them draw a picture of themselves right now. On the third piece of paper, have the learners draw a picture of their family. On the fourth piece of paper, have them draw what they want to be when they grow up. And on the last piece of paper have them draw a picture of how they can use their body to serve God. Allow time for the learners to complete each picture before giving further instructions. After the all the pictures are drawn, give each learner a container and have them put their pictures in the container. Put the stickers and magazines in the middle of the table and tell the learners they may decorate their boxes with pictures of food they like to eat, movies they have seen, sports and music activities they enjoy, or anything that is special to them. If you were able to find a camera, take a picture of each learner to put in his or her box. Remind the learners that as we grow and change, we need to care for our bodies so we can use our bodies to serve God.

### Reflect

Did the learners seem to comprehend the importance of proper nutrition and exercise, and how it relates to their health in the future? Did they understand the concept of God's spirit as animator of our bodies? Did they seem to appreciate the fact that growing old is a natural part of life and not to be feared?

Attachment: Activity 6

**Dem Bones!**

Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!

The toe bone connected to the heel bone,  
The heel bone connected to the foot bone,  
The foot bone connected to the leg bone,  
The leg bone connected to the knee bone,  
The knee bone connected to the thigh bone,  
The thigh bone connected to the back bone,  
The back bone connected to the neck bone,  
The neck bone connected to the head bone,  
Oh, hear the word of the Lord!

Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!  
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones!

Attachment: Activity 8

**Table Graces**

Come Lord Jesus, our guest to be  
And bless these gifts bestowed by Thee.  
Amen.

For the golden corn & the apples on the trees,  
For the golden butter & the honey from the bees,  
For fruits & nuts & berries that grow beside the way  
We praise your love and kindness  
And thank you every day. Hooray!

Sun, Earth, and Air  
Have wrought by God's care  
That the plants may live and bear.  
Praising God for this food  
In Truth live we would,  
Bearing Beauty and Good.  
Amen.

God, some people have food  
And no friends.  
Some people have friends and no food.  
We thank you that on this night  
We have both.  
Amen.

Thank you for the food before us,  
The friends around us,  
The love between us,  
And your presence among us.  
Amen.