

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Older children are learning the scope and limitations of their own bodies. They are curious about abilities and differences. As they grow, they take on more responsibility for caring for the health of their bodies, honing the skills of their bodies in activities they enjoy and displaying their gender and sexuality. Emphasizing the goodness of our God-created bodies and the faithful practice of Honoring the Body give older children additional tools to help make ethical decisions with their own bodies as well as to have empathy and respect for the bodies of others.

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 one another 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

Remember some of your own body's milestones from your childhood. Remember your first jump off a high dive, the thrill of a dance recital, or the taste of the first recipe you followed on your own. Think back on the time when you started chasing your siblings out of your room when changing your clothes, or when you nervously wore the latest trend to school. The bodies of older children are a source of pride and anxiety; learning about this practice can bring out both.

Prayer: Incarnate God, you remember what it means to be a child, stuck in a half-grown space, full of joy in spite of your limits. Give me time to put my grown worries aside to remember the urgency of childhood's questions. Help me create a welcome space where these learners can explore the practice of honoring 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Bodies Say Hello (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Even in this simple opening activity, remember that some participants may be uneasy about touching one another or being touched by you. When offering hugs to children, open your arms and then let them come to you. Give them room to refuse if they are not comfortable. Handshakes and high fives are also good way to offer friendly touch.

Supplies: None

Invite the group to demonstrate ways of saying hello with their bodies. They may be familiar with waving, shaking hands, bowing, kissing cheeks, or hugging. As you show off your greetings, observe how the same action can be done differently. Some have official one-handed handshakes, and others grasp with two hands. Some say hello by slightly bowing the head, and others put their hands together and bow deeply at the waist. Do some movements come from different communities your participants are a part of or from different countries they have learned about? Would they hug a grandparent differently than they would hug a friend? How do you say hello to God and to one another in church?

2 Bread and Water Prayer

Leader preparation: Members of your group may notice the similarity between this prayer and participating in communion. This could be a good opening to talking about why Jesus would choose such common elements to be reminders of his life.

Supplies:

- Bible
- loaf of bread
- pitcher of water
- small cups

As 1 Kings 19:4–8 is read aloud, act the passage out together. Invite learners to play the roles of Elijah, the angel, and the narrator. Before this passage, Elijah is running for his life, and this passage finds him tired after running all day.

Invite your group into a time of quiet prayer over the basic foods of bread and water. Elijah needed to be reminded to eat and drink, and the angel provided him with cake and water to give him strength. Show the group a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water. Serve the person next to you a piece of bread and say, "May you never hunger." Then pour that person a small cup of water and say, "May you never thirst." Ask each group member to do the same to her or his neighbor as the bread and water travel around the circle. Ask those who are waiting or who have already been served to quietly offer prayers of thanks for all the times that they eat or drink during a day.

Once the bread and water have traveled around the circle, conclude with this or a similar prayer: *Nurturing God, every bite we take is a gift from you. Every sip we take is a gift from you. Thank you for these gifts that nourish our bodies and give us strength for the jobs you have for us. Amen.*

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.



3 Public Fountain

Leader preparation: Display the artwork “The Public Fountain.” Set a bowl of water in the middle of your group. Ralph Milton’s retelling in *The Family Story Bible* puts a nice emphasis on the importance of water in this story, but the story could also be read from scripture or from another children’s story Bible.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) “The Woman at the Well” from *The Family Story Bible* by Ralph Milton (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p.182
- artwork: “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1401636333?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- bowl of water
- towels for cleanup

Invite your group to look at the artwork and to touch the water with their hands. While observing the art and the water, consider the following questions:

- How is the child in this picture honoring his body?
- What does this child feel while getting a drink?
- What might he smell, touch, see and hear as he drinks?
- How do you experience getting a drink of water?
- What do you sense (taste, touch, smell, hear, see) that is the same as the boy at the fountain?
- What do you sense that is different?

Read John 4:1–42 with your group (or read a paraphrased story of the Samaritan woman at the well from a children’s Bible). As you read, stop periodically to ask what Jesus and the woman sense around them. *What did they taste, touch, smell, hear and see at different points in the story?*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Sensory Travels (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity introduces the joy of experiencing God’s world through our senses. You may want to have your own place in mind to describe to the group.

Supplies: None

Ask your group to think quietly of a place special to them. This could be a beach with warm air and cool water, a familiar kitchen with smells of cooking food, or a small cozy corner of a library—any place where the participant’s body feels at home. Don’t share the place with the group, yet.

Invite each participant to take a turn talking the group through a tour of his or her special place. (With large groups, you may choose to pair up instead.) The listeners should get comfortable and close their eyes. Ask the speaker to tell the group what his or her body experiences in this place. As a leader, you can encourage the speaker by asking questions about what that person can hear, smell, touch, taste and see. When the speaker is finished, the group can try to guess the place.



Conclude by reminding the group that our bodies are wonderfully made and able to experience and enjoy a wide range of places. Part of the practice of honoring the body is recognizing and giving thanks for all that gives comfort and joy to our bodies.

5 Body Tracings

Leader preparation: If you have time and space for a bit of mess, using bright poster paints and large brushes in this activity can be a way to fill large spaces quickly and end up with bold artwork. If you have less time, try tracing only one participant's body, allowing the whole group to work together to fill a single body with caring pictures.

Supplies:

- roll of newsprint
- pencils
- markers
- washable poster paints
- paint brushes
- paint shirts
- scissors

Working in pairs, have each group member lie down on a large piece of newsprint while his or her partner traces around the learner with a pencil.

Use poster paints or markers to fill each body part with the ways that honor and care for that part of the body. Perhaps your group will draw pictures of healthy foods in the stomach, sports equipment on the arms and legs, books on the head, or symbols of church on the heart. Encourage your group to draw inside of their body outlines, creating silhouettes that can be cut out. For example, if someone wants to draw a soccer ball, have the learner draw it inside the outline of the leg, not balanced on the foot outside of the body.

When the bodies are dry, your group can cut out the silhouettes and display them together or take them home.



6 Real Bodies

Leader preparation: For this exercise, you will want to find pictures of models who show idealized bodies but who are not so scantily dressed as to be inappropriate viewing for children. Two or three carefully chosen, new magazines may be more useful than a pile of donated old magazines that don't have the right kind of pictures. Or you might ask your group to bring in old copies of some of the magazines they like to read. Cut out the drawing suggestion cards from the attachment before your group arrives. You can create your own suggestions on the blank cards.

Supplies:

- Bible
- "Drawing Suggestion Cards," Attachment" Activity 6
- magazines
- poster board
- black permanent markers
- scissors
- glue



Honoring the body means loving the beautiful bodies that God has created. But sometimes our ideas of beauty aren't informed by God. Instead, they are informed by idealized bodies we see in the media.

Flip through the magazines and cut out pictures of the models and pop stars. Try to find pictures of men and women of a variety of ages. Talk with your group about the models' bodies. *Are they beautiful? Are they realistic?* Glue your cutouts onto one big piece of construction paper or poster board.

Set out the drawing suggestion cards, face down. Invite the group to pick a card, one at a time, and then use a black marker to add the drawing described on the card to one of the models on your poster. For example, suppose a learner picks the card that says "Brrrr, it's cold. Draw a scarf, mittens, and earmuffs on this person." That learner would use the marker to draw the scarf, mittens and earmuffs on top of one of the people cut from a magazine. If you run out of cards, continue thinking of real-life situations that would change these models' appearance. Or reshuffle the cards and use them again.

This is a fun and silly exercise, and your poster probably looks pretty ridiculous when you are done. But these situations are all pretty normal. *How would these models look if these things really happened to them?*

Point out that the drawings added some reality to these bodies, but there are still many other sizes, shapes, ages, and colors of people who are not represented. *Who else could we draw into this picture? What magazines or other media show these people?*

Read John 4:1–42, the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, emphasizing verses 16–26. Explain that when we see pictures in the media, we only see an instant of a person's body. When Jesus spoke with the woman at the well, he told her about her whole life, even her mistakes. And yet, even though he knew her mistakes, Jesus let her in on his Good News, telling her that he was the Messiah. *What might Jesus see when he looks at people in magazines? What does Jesus see when he looks at us?*

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Honoring Bodies: User's Manual (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The simple ways we care for our bodies give us the strength to do God's work. This activity gives your group a chance to name the ways they honor their bodies everyday and to explore how taking care of their bodies is a part of this faith practice.

Supplies:

- Bible
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard
- white paper
- pencils
- markers
- stapler

Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. In this passage, Elijah is running away. The king and queen have accused him of being a troublemaker for speaking up for God and have



threatened to kill him. While he is feeling hopeless, the angel comes to him. Instead of a big speech, however, the angel gives him food and drink and reminds him to eat.

Together, brainstorm a list of ways that group members honor their bodies. Encourage specific examples of things your participants do, such as “playing soccer” instead of the more generic “exercising.” Write your ideas where everyone can see them, either on newsprint or a whiteboard.

Look through your list and point out ideas that have to do with nutrition. Continue to group the brainstorming together into categories, such as “exercise,” “fun,” “respecting others,” “kindness to others,” and “spiritual practices.” In this final category, there might be some obvious entries, such as Sabbath rest, time for prayer, and praying for health. *How are the more physical actions—such as playing soccer or brushing teeth—also a part of our faith practice of honoring the body?*

Invite each participant to write a page in a “how-to manual” about honoring the body. Use the categories listed above as page titles. Writers may use words, pictures, or both and may each create one or more pages. When everyone is finished, staple the book together.



8 Free Water

Leader preparation: Talk with your church leadership beforehand to coordinate a good time and space for this activity. This can be a fun way to honor the many bodies of your congregation. Sharing a simple drink, even in a situation where people are probably not very thirsty, is a reminder of our dependence on water and of Jesus’ ability to connect his message to the most basic needs of human life.

Supplies:

- Bible John 4:1–42
- “Water Facts,” Attachment: Activity 8
- cups
- ice
- pitchers of water
- paper
- markers

Set up a water stand somewhere around your church where you can pass out small, free cups of ice water. Unlike a lemonade stand, where the signs might advertise the prices, post signs around your stand that say “Free Water.” Try to catch folks on their way in to or out of worship or around the fellowship area. With permission, you might even be able to work out a way to hand out cups during a worship service. Make sure to use tap water, not bottled water.

Make a large banner for your water stand, printed with the words from John 4:13–14:

Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. (John 4:13–14)

You may also use the statements from the handout “Water Facts” sheet to decorate your cups or to post around your water stand.

As you prepare, take a few minutes to help your participants think about John 4:13–14. Why would Jesus compare his message to water?



9 Boundless Playgrounds

Leader preparation: This activity takes some planning beforehand either to plan the field trip with appropriate transportation and supervision, or to test out and print up the computer resources. The “Boundless Playground” website also contains information about becoming an advocate for creating accessible play spaces, if your group is so inspired.

Supplies:

- website: “Boundless Playground,” <http://www.boundlessplaygrounds.org>

Many children honor their bodies by enjoying nature and exercising at playgrounds. Some playground equipment, however, cannot be enjoyed by children whose mobility is restricted. Many communities have addressed this through installing accessible equipment or building entire parks that are designed for children with physical disabilities. Boundless Playgrounds is one organization that advocates for playgrounds that are accessible to all children. Choose the option that best fits your situation:

Option 1: Take a field trip to a Boundless Playground. To see if there is such a playground near you, check out the website, or call your local parks department. You may find a park that is fully accessible, but not part of the boundless program, or one that has some accessible elements.

Option 2: If you do not have a Boundless Playground nearby, take a field trip to the nearest playground. Walk through it imagining how you would play in this space if your body had different abilities. Are there areas that would be fun, areas where you would need help, or areas that you could not reach at all? If there are members of your group with differing physical abilities, listen closely as they talk about their experience at a playground.

Option 3: Instead of leaving your building, take a virtual tour of a Boundless Playground. Use your computer to look around at http://www.boundlessplaygrounds.org/playgrounds/tour/flash_tour.php. You could also print out some of the B-PAK printable activities to do with your group at http://www.boundlessplaygrounds.org/involved/bp_classroom.php. The map activity on pages 3–5, the testimonies on pages 10–15, and the descriptions of boundless playground equipment on pages 28–29 would be especially good for starting conversation.

Reflect

Think back on the variety of bodies in your group. Steady or fidgety, bold or timid, growing and strong or still childish. As you worked together, what insight have you gained into how these children move through the world? Give thanks to God for the blessings of this group of bodies right now, just as they are.



Attachment: Activity 6

Drawing Suggestion Cards

This person wore braces for five years to get that smile. Draw back in the braces.

This person would like to play in the sun all day. Draw on a big hat to protect his/her skin.

This person likes to play with his/her pet dogs. Draw muddy footprints on his/her clothes.

This person's hair is held in place by a whole bottle of hairspray. Draw some shampoo bubbles to help wash it out.

This person laughs with a wide open mouth. Tell a joke, and then draw a laughing mouth.

Oops, this person just spilled some food on his/her shirt and wants to borrow a clean shirt from you. Draw on your favorite T-shirt.

This person tripped and fell while playing Frisbee. Draw on a scar.

This person's feet hurt in those shoes. Draw him/her some bunny slippers.

The wind is blowing. Draw some wind-blown hair on this person.

Brrr, it's cold. Draw a scarf, mittens, and earmuffs on this person.



Attachment: Activity 8

Water Facts

- 75% of the world's surface is water.
- Two-thirds of your body is water.
- Bones are 25% water.
- There are over 1 million miles of water pipes in North America.
- One flush of a toilet uses as much water as a person needs for a whole day of cooking, washing, and drinking.
- 12 million people die each year from lack of safe drinking water.
- Only 1% of the water on earth is usable, fresh water.
- Water is the only substance found naturally on earth as a solid, liquid, and gas.
- A person can live about one week without water.
- A five minute shower uses 25–50 gallons of water.
- In the United States, each person uses an average of 100 gallons of water each day.
- There is more fresh water in the atmosphere than in all the rivers on earth combined.
- A year's supply of drinking water costs just 50 cents.

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

The Bible affirms that each person's body is a part of God's creation and that together all are a part of the body of Christ. For older children, these big theological ideas mean that our bodies are good on their own and better together. In this Exploration older children will have the opportunity to celebrate their own bodies as God's good creation and explore how their bodies contribute to their community and their church.

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. Although scripture cannot be used as an inerrant blueprint for modern living, it presents the opportunity to continually evaluate and re-imagine 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Think of the ways you have imagined God’s image over the years. Did you grow up hearing that you were made in God’s image, or were you older when you considered that your body might hold clues to the wonders of God’s being? Older children still have a concrete view of the world, and they are often intrigued, if slightly confused, by the idea that God’s image is seen in the diversity of people in the world.

Prayer: Diverse God, help me see your image in the gray bearded man, in the strong mother’s arms, the child’s wide eyes. You came into a body once, as Jesus Christ, to teach us, and your face continues to reflect back on us, everyday, in all the people around us. Thank you for giving me the dual gift of being your image and seeing your image around me every day. 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,

1 Members of One Another (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Offer a prayer of thanks for the gifts your group members bring to your church. This activity is an opportunity for them to name and celebrate their gifts.

Supplies:

- Bible
- construction paper in several colors
- markers
- (optional) poster board
- (optional) glue

Distribute one piece of construction paper, each a different color, to each participant. Invite your group to think about the gifts and talents of their bodies. Do they enjoy making music? Are they athletic? Is someone in the group a good listener? Ask the group to draw pictures or symbols of their own talents on the sheets of construction paper. Say that they are welcome to draw as many as they can! Invite all to share the reasons for one or two of their pictures.

Together, read Romans 12:1–8. Invite the group to repeat verse 5 several times: “So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.”

Explain that each of our individual bodies is a gift and, together, our bodies form the church. Ask your group to tear their papers into small 1”–2” pieces. Mix the papers together and look at the colors. *What are some jobs the church or people can accomplish as a group?* On the floor or on a large table, move the pieces of paper into the shapes of things churches accomplish together. Maybe the group will form a can of food to represent the food bank your church supports, a music note to show how you worship together, or a heart to show how members of your church care for one another. Think back on the individual drawings made earlier, and invite your group to share how their individual bodies are a part of your community projects and accomplishments.

If you have a large piece of poster board or paper, you could end by picking one of the pictures and gluing the pieces into that shape.

2 Tasting with Jesus

Leader preparation: Jesus’ incarnation means that he knew the trials of having a body, and he experienced the pleasures as well. While considering why God would take on human form, snack on some simple foods Jesus might have enjoyed.

Supplies:

- fruits such as grapes, apples, raisins, or figs
- vegetables such as carrots, cucumbers, or onions
- pita or other flat bread

Introduce the word “incarnation,” which means that God took on a human form. Explain that God didn’t just appear to look like a human—in Jesus, God was human. Jesus experienced all the same things in life that we do. He grew from a baby to a child to an adult; he felt emotional and physical pain; he slept

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.

sometimes and stayed awake with worry sometimes; and he ate and drank and tasted foods—just like us.

Point out that Jesus liked to eat! Many of the Bible’s stories about Jesus take place at dinners and parties. He asked his followers to remember him whenever they ate bread and wine. And the disciples finally believed that Jesus had come back from death when he ate bread and fish with them.

Share a snack of foods Jesus might have eaten with your group. As you snack, pose the following wonder statements, and invite the learners to respond and add their own wonder statements.

- I wonder why would God choose to become incarnate, a human.
- I wonder what God could experience as a human that was different from being God.
- I wonder if Jesus liked being human.
- I wonder why the Bible gives us so many stories of Jesus doing ordinary human things.

3 My Bible for My Body

Leader preparation: Before the session, print a copy of the USDA’s “My Plate” graphic. Your group has seen this, or similar dietary guides, in school health classes. They’re less likely to have talked about how their faith practices also are ways of caring for the body.

Supplies:

- Bible
- website: “My Plate” graphic, from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/print-materials-ordering/graphic-resources.html>
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Set out a copy of the USDA “My Plate” graphic and a Bible in front of your group. Invite them to explain how the “My Plate” graphic helps them honor their bodies. They probably have a lot of information to share about what foods are healthy, how much to eat, and how to get proper exercise.

Now look to the Bible. Invite the group to explain how the Bible helps them honor their bodies. If they are unsure, you might start by looking at the creation story in Genesis 2. The About this Exploration paragraph at the beginning of this Exploration also has some ideas.

On a whiteboard or newsprint, sketch out a copy of the USDA graphic, except name it the “My Bible” graphic. Help your participants think of ways to use graphic that illustrate some of we can use our Bibles to honor our bodies.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Helpers (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Acting out a scene first as it appears in the Bible and, then, a second time using a similar structure but with more familiar situations is a way of drawing connections between the Bible and daily life. In this story, it is also a way of showing how this story affirms God’s creation of all sorts of partnerships.



Supplies:

- Bible

Read aloud the creation account found in Genesis 2:18–25. Make up and perform a skit that dramatizes this story. The skit can cover God noticing that the man is lonely, God making animals, and the man naming them, God recognizing that none of these animals could be the man’s partner, God creating the woman, and the man’s reaction to meeting the woman.

After acting out the skit, consider:

- Who are your helpers and partners right now? What did God create in them that makes them good helpers for you?
- Who might be your helpers and partners in the future? This could include a business partner, a romantic partner, or a partner in raising children. What characteristics would you want in these different partners?
- The pair of helpers God creates in this story are described as a husband and wife. This is one pairing of partners. What other pairings of partners can you think of that include people of different relationships, genders, ages, or abilities?
- I wonder how God continues to create the people we need as helpers and partners in new situations.

Act out your skit again, this time showing God creating helpers that different people need at different points in their lives. Instead of God creating a wife for a man, for example, tell the story with God creating a friend for a child, a teacher for a student, or a grandchild for a grandparent.



5 Wheelchair and Tightrope

Leader preparation: Display the artwork “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope.” Push two tables near each other, about 18 inches apart. Tape a piece of string between the two tables.

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>
- Bible
- toy car
- two tables
- string
- tape
- popsicle sticks
- low-temperature glue gun
- cup of water

Invite participants to take a look at “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope.” *What is going on here? Do you think the man can make it across? What sort of help would the man in the wheelchair need to get across this tightrope?* Invite your group to think about their own experiences. *What obstacles would be impossible for your body alone? What help would you need to get past them?*

Read Romans 12: 4–8 together. Explain that God created us all, and, as this passage reminds us, we have been given different gifts. *Why would God create*



us with different gifts? What obstacles are easy for you, and what obstacles are difficult for you?

Show your group the tightrope (string) you taped across the table, and give them the toy car. (A toy wheelchair could work, as well, if you have one the right size. But a four-wheeled car will do.) Begin by asking: *How might we use the popsicle sticks and glue gun to help the car get across?* Remind the group to use caution with the glue gun, and keep a cup of water nearby to dip in fingers if they get burned. Because there is only one glue gun, the group will need to make decisions together and take turns gluing.

Celebrate together when you get the car across. Consider the different abilities in your own group. What skills did each member lend to accomplishing this goal?



6 Made of Dirt

Leader preparation: The idea that we are all made of dirt is both humbling and awe inspiring. It is a reminder that God wants us to be connected to the world around us.

Supplies:

- “Genesis 2:1–25 (NRSV),” Attachment: Activity 6
- markers
- cups
- dirt
- water
- paint brushes
- large newsprint
- paint shirts
- towels for cleanup

Pass out copies of the attachment “Genesis 2:1–25 (NRSV).” As you read the verses together, invite the learners to highlight any words in the text that refer to dirt, water, or mud (ground, rivers, and so forth). This account of creation emphasizes that we are made of the same stuff as the earth around us. We know that the nutrients from the dirt grow into the plants that feed us, and when we die our bodies decompose back into the dirt.

Collect a few cups of dirt from the yard. Add a bit of water to make mud the consistency of paint. Use paint brushes to paint the mud onto paper. Work together as a group to draw a large mural of creation. You might read through the Bible story again to remember things to draw. As you work, ponder some of the following wonder statements.

- When God was creating, I wonder how God thought of all the shapes for all the plants and animals.
- I wonder why God used the same elements to create our bodies as to create all the other things on the earth.
- I wonder why this story tells of God building with dirt and bones and breath—instead of just speaking and “poof” it happens.



Sending & Serving Activities

7 Living Sacrifice (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The Bible often refers to sacrifices of animals or plants. Today we read these verses and we may be bothered by the idea of killing an animal for God, but at the time the idea was commonplace. Offerings were of plants or animals that the worshiper had probably raised themselves. They spent time feeding the animal and nursing it when it was sick. They worked hard tilling the soil and keeping the plants watered. When they gave offerings, they were not only giving the animal or the plant but also giving hours and hours of their own work to God.

Supplies:

- Bible

Take turns reading Romans 12:1–8. Point out that this passage asks us to be “living sacrifices.” What might this mean?

- What work do you enjoy doing with your body? How could you give that work to God? (Some examples might include performing a piece of music in church, teaching sports to other children, or cooking food for a shelter.)
- What work do you not enjoy doing? How could you give that work to God?
- If you already use your bodies to give “sacrifice” to God, share your experience.
- Does it feel like you lose something when you give your sacrifice?

Set up a small altar in your meeting space, or do this activity in front of your worship space’s altar. Invite each participant to pick one “sacrifice” and act it out in front of the altar. Then the learner may sit down at the base of the altar, giving his or her action as a gift to God. Once the whole group has presented their sacrifices, close with a short prayer.

8 Imago Dei

Leader preparation: Before the session learn the song “Imago Dei,” or invite a singer to help teach it. Familiarize yourself with the camera and computer you will be using. If you have a large group, you may want to divide into smaller groups to work on the different tasks. Make sure to arrange appropriate supervision for children for the separate groups.

Supplies:

- song: “Imago Dei,” by Jill Kirsten Warner, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2duLAakNyuw>
- digital camera
- computer with Internet access

What does God look like? The Bible gives us a clue about God—it tells us that we are made in God’s image. But we all look so different! Spend time wondering with your group about what God must look like if we are all made in God’s image.

The words *imago dei* are Latin for “image of God.” The song “Imago Dei” celebrates that we are made in God’s image. Explain that your group will collect photographs of many people to show as you sing this song.



Send your participants around your church to take pictures of the images of God in your church's space. They can take pictures of the people in your community, and they might also take pictures of people in the church's artwork or photographs of past members.

If you would like more images, do an Internet search to find pictures of more people. This expands our idea of what God looks like even further. *Can you find people from other countries? Of different abilities? Of different ages?*

Put the pictures together in a slide show to play while the group sings "Imago Dei." Focus on learning the chorus and first verse. If you or some of your participants are tech savvy, you might even edit the whole thing together into a video.

After singing together, consider the two questions asked in the first verse:

- How shall we live as images of God?
- How best reflect the wonder of our Maker?

9 Not Ashamed Posters

Leader preparation: Your participants may find drawing big pictures uncomfortable and may want to use pencils, smaller brushes, or lighter colors. Try to limit them to the supplies listed—and remind them that this is an exercise in being bold!

Supplies:

- Bible
- poster board in bright colors
- black poster paint
- large brushes (at least ½" wide)

Read Genesis 2:21–25 together. Explain that when God first created Adam and Eve, the Bible tells us, they were naked and not ashamed. Even with clothing, we are sometimes ashamed of our bodies. *Maybe you feel silly dancing or singing in public. Maybe you don't think you're very good at playing sports. Maybe you do enjoy some of these things, but you don't want other people to think you are showing off.*

Ask the learners to make a list of things they enjoy doing with their bodies. Then have them make another list of things they've felt ashamed or embarrassed of doing with their bodies.

- Are some activities in both lists?
- Are there things that you enjoy that others find difficult?
- Are there activities that you enjoy in some situations, but that you find embarrassing in others?

Reflect

Each member of your group is created in the image of God. Consider elements of God's image that came out in your time together. What does each child teach you about the nature of God?

Look at the list and ask each participant to pick one body action to illustrate. Give each learner a piece of bright poster board, a large brush, and some black paint. Encourage your group to make their pictures big and to not be ashamed of their artistic limitations.

Use these posters to decorate your space. They will be a big and bold reminder of the joy we feel when we use our bodies as God created them.



Attachment: Activity 6

Genesis 2:1-25 (NRSV)

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Attachment: Activity 6 *(Continued)*

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken."

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Older children love to make a contribution and are most inspired by the concrete ways they can use their bodies to share compassion and care. In this Exploration, older children will name their willingness to use their bodies for God's work as a way of honoring the body. They will be challenged to spread their discipleship work into new areas.

About this Exploration

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

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Psalm 71
Mark 5:21-43

Leader Preparation

Notice the way you touch—or don't touch—people throughout your day. A touch can be a powerful way to be with someone in times of joy or hurting. Are there simple ways, such as handshakes or pats on the back, that you could add touch to your day? When you meet with your group, try to touch each participant at least once during your session. Remember the power of touch is not always positive, so reach out to your learners in ways that they have the power to accept or reject. A high five can be a great way to share touch without overwhelming learners.

Prayer: God, I reach out to you wanting to feel your healing touch. I want to feel your presence, not just as a whisper, but down through my bones. Help me to notice as I brush past other searchers during my day. Guide me as I invite this group to notice your touch, as well. 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 Through the Ages (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The way we see the world is shaped by our bodies and will change through our lifetimes. Think of how you would have answered the following questions at the ages you have already passed in life and how you hope to answer as you grow older. Before the session begins, write each of these numbers (ages) on a separate slip of paper.

5 15 25 35 45 55 65 75 85 95

Supplies:

- Bible
- numbered slips of paper
- paper
- pencil

Read Psalm 71:1–9 together. Look for the references to ages or stages of life in these verses. The psalmist praises God as a strong refuge throughout life.

Ask each participant to pick a paper (or two or three, if your group is small), to look at their numbers, and consider what a person of that age could say about God's goodness. What would someone have to be thankful for at 5, 35, or 85?

Invite each learner to take turns stepping forward and playing the role of someone of the age on the paper. Ask questions such as:

- How do you use your body as a disciple at this age?
- What examples can you give of God's goodness at this time in your life?
- What does God help you with or provide shelter from at this age?
- How do you like to show God thanks?

Conclude each age's response by repeating together Psalm 71:15: “My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all day long, though their number is past my knowledge.”

2 Margot Embracing Her Mother

Leader preparation: Mary Cassatt, the painter of “Margot Embracing Her Mother,” was known for her paintings of mothers and children in everyday life. The way we use our bodies every day to care for one another is an act of discipleship.

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

To remind the group that we use our bodies every day to care for one another, ask for examples of how they use their bodies to help others. Display “Margot Embracing Her Mother,” and give the group silent time to observe it. Then help learners ponder the painting by thinking about the following questions.

- 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.
- I wonder what is happening in this scene. Where are they sitting? What happened before Margot came to give her mother a hug?
- Who do you hug? When do you get big hugs like this? When do you get quick, half hugs? What is good about different kinds of hugs?
- How can you use your body to show care for someone? What other caring touches do you choose to use other than hugging? How can you choose to use your body to show care without touching at all?
- I wonder how God is like the mother. If you were the little girl in the painting, what would it be like to give God a big hug?
- I wonder how God is like Margot. If you were the mother in the painting, what would it be like to get a big hug from God?

3 Don't Touch

Leader preparation: Gather several of the supplies listed below. Although these supplies are meant to start conversations about the ways we stay away from touching, remind the group that these supplies can also be useful in keeping us safe in the right situations.

Supplies:

- Bible
- hot pad
- latex gloves
- tongs
- antibacterial hand sanitizer
- surgical mask

While standing or sitting in a circle, read Mark 5:21–43. Whenever the group hears the word “touch” or other phrases that mean to touch (“laying on hands,” “pressed,” “took by the hand”), invite them to hold hands and give a quick squeeze. There is a lot of touching in this story. Jesus is touched by a sick woman who is bleeding. Then Jesus touches a girl who is dead. *Are either of these people persons you would want to touch? Would either be safe to touch?*

Spread the supply items on a table, and invite your group to explore them.

- What do they have in common?
- When are these items useful in keeping us safe?
- Which of these might Jesus have wanted to use in this story?

Explain that we have a responsibility to honor our own bodies by using things like hot pads and gloves so that we do not touch things that could harm us. At the same time, Jesus calls us to reach out and touch people who might make us uncomfortable. Invite the group to think of situations where they followed Jesus’ example and brought comfort to someone through touch. This could include touches such as giving a pat or hug to a friend or holding a younger sibling’s hand in a crowd. It could include situations in which someone decided to “reach out” without physically touching—like inviting someone new to their lunch table. If some give examples of times when they decided not to touch someone, affirm these decisions as well. Consider how the learner could have reached out in a way that was safe for themselves and welcoming to the other person involved.



Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Take My Hands (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The words to this hymn can be found in many hymnals. Once your song is written, think of ways you could share it. Perhaps you could work with your worship leader to hand out your new verses to sing in worship.

Supplies:

- hymn: “Take My Life and Let it Be,” by Frances R. Havergal (tune: Hendon), <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/t/m/tmlalib.htm>; music video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXy2MmMLjGQ&feature=related>
- paper
- pencils

Discipleship is how we live out our faith every day. The hymn “Take My Life and Let it Be” talks about ways that we use parts of our bodies in God’s work. We can honor our bodies by letting them do the work God made them to do.

Help learners name the body parts listed in this song. Then ask: *How are these parts used to honor God?* Have learners think of other body parts that are not listed. Then have them write some new verses for these parts of the body.



5 No Hands but Your Hands

Leader preparation: Print Attachment: Activity 5 to read to your group. Or, if you like, you could adapt the story to fit a situation closer to home. Do you have stories of helpful hard work you have done, either as part of a work group or on your own?

Supplies:

- “No Hands But Yours,” Attachment: Activity 5

Read the story “No Hands But Yours” with your group and consider the following wonder statements and questions.

- I wonder how the worshipers felt entering their clean sanctuary that morning.
- When they wrote the note, I wonder if the youth were thinking of themselves as Christ’s hands, or if they were thinking of the worshipers in the church.
- Jesus had a human body. What did he do with his hands when he was here?
- I wonder how we can know Jesus is still with us.
- I wonder how I can use my hands as Jesus would.

The words on the note in the story come from Teresa of Avila, a Spanish nun who lived about 500 years ago. They come from the following prayer, which you may use to conclude the discussion:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks



Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

6 Press Here

Leader preparation: Technology gives truly amazing power to our touch. Just think of the information available in a phone or computer. Still, our devices will never be able to share the healing touch of a caring hug or a helpful hand.

Supplies:

- Bible
- book: *Press Here* by Herve Tullet (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011), http://books.google.com/books?id=IkTDcQAACAAJ&dq=press+here&hl=en&ei=XGAgTrLrA9TOiALftvTRAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCkQ6AEwAA

Read the book *Press Here* with the group. The book takes you through a set of instructions, much like you would find on a computer game or phone app. Invite volunteers to follow the book's directions so that everyone gets a chance to touch the book at some point. *How does the book make you feel like there is power in your touch?* Have learners think of other ways you might have power in your touch throughout the day (such as typing on a computer, turning on a light switch, or pressing buttons on a microwave).

Read Mark 5:21–43 together. *Who has power in their touch?* Point out that Jesus' touch heals the little girl. Note also that the woman does not wait for Jesus to touch her; she reaches out and touches him. *Think of ways your everyday touches might help someone feel better.*

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Thank You for Honoring My Body (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Try jotting down a list of the people who take care of your body. Even if you are the primary caregiver in your family, you'll quickly rack up a long list. As an adult, do you feel gratitude for this help or do you sometimes feel frustrated by high costs or slow service?

Supplies:

- paper
- pencils
- markers

Point out that our families cook our food and provide our shelter. Professionals, like doctors and dentists, keep us healthy. *What about the lunch room workers at schools, your sports coaches, or the farmers who raise your food?*

Have participants write thank you notes to the people who help take care of their bodies. Participants can choose to take their cards home and give them to the people they wrote to. For those whose addresses they don't know, you could display the cards together on a bulletin board and remember to send prayers of thanks for the helpers whenever you see them.



8 Hot/Cold Pack

Leader preparation: A simple hot/cold pack is one way that the older children in your group can share a healing touch when someone is hurting. What are some other ways older children can provide comfort when someone's body is hurting? You might invite in a healthcare worker to talk with the group about the help they provide.

Supplies:

- old, clean socks, one for each participant
- funnel
- rubber bands
- rice, about one cup per participant
- (optional) lavender or other herb

Explain that our bodies can cause us trouble when they are hurt or uncomfortable. Offering the touch of a warm or cold pack can be a way of honoring your own or another person's body when they are hurting.

To make the warm/cold packs, distribute a sock to each participant. Have the children take turns using the funnel to fill the toe of the sock with rice. You may add a bit of lavender or other sweet smelling herb, as well. Secure the open end of the sock with a rubber band.

Explain that this little sock can be used warm or cold. Just leave it in the freezer until it is cold, or heat it in the microwave for 15 seconds at a time. Hot packs are good for sore muscles, ear aches, and keeping your hands warm when it is cold outside. Cold packs are good for recent injuries that still hurt, reducing swelling and bruising, or for holding onto when it is hot outside. Use care with a warmed sock so that it is not hot enough to burn, especially when giving to a young child.

9 Pop Tabs for Ronald McDonald House

Leader preparation: Print out the list of "100 Small Gestures" so each learner can see a list. If your group doesn't have computer access, check the Ronald MacDonald House website beforehand to make sure that there is a pop tab collection going on in your area. If you would like to expand your collection to include your congregation/community, talk to parents and your pastor, missions committee members, or worship leaders about how to publicize your project around the church.

Supplies:

- Bible Mark 5:35–43
- information on Pop Tab collections, <http://rmhc.org/how-you-can-help/pop-tab-collections/>
- "100 Small Gestures, <http://rmhc.org/what-we-do/ronald-mcdonald-house/stories-1/100-small-gestures/>

The girl Jesus heals in Mark 5:35–43 was surrounded by her parents and many others. We would hope that any time children are sick that their family and community can be with them to pray, support, and help them heal.

Pass out lists of "100 Small Gestures" to help families with sick children. This is a list of ways of helping that families have appreciated when they were caring for a sick child. Read through them together. Have participants draw a star next to each one that involves using the body or caring for the family's bodies in some way. Are there things on this list that your group members could do to help out



Reflect

In your discussions about touch, notice how the members of your group use their bodies as disciples. Offer a prayer thanking God for the power in each child's touch, and offering your encouragement in their attempts to use their bodies to do God's work in the world.

their own friends or families during minor illnesses? Are there things on this list that your group members could do to help someone in the congregation going through a more serious illness?

Another way to help sick children and their families can be by raising money for Ronald McDonald Houses or similar programs that provide support to families. Explain that when a child needs to spend time in or near a hospital far from home, Ronald McDonald Houses provide no or low-cost housing so their family can stay nearby. This service honors the body by helping a family seek medical treatment for the sick child's body. It also brings honor by keeping family close so that the whole family can comfort, hug, tickle and literally stay in touch while going through a rough time.

Check with the Ronald McDonald website to see if there are pop tab collection sites near you. If not, you can always collect the tops and take them to a recycling center on your own and send the money your local children's hospital. Put up signs around your church or make an announcement in worship to let the congregation know about your project.

Attachment: Activity 5

No Hands But Yours

Versions of this story abound—placing the statue in Germany, France, England or Italy after the bombings of World War II, in South Africa after a police raid, or damaged by simple vandalism in California. The words on the note are attributed to Teresa of Avila. I choose to tell it the way I first heard it, because the story involved a group of youth and an area close to me, and I hope that you will modify the story as you like in the telling to your group.

After the flooding had gone down and the emergency supplies had been passed out, life started to get back to normal in the small town along the Missouri River. Some folks were still living in trailers or with relatives, and most of the shops on Main Street were still closed. And while the framework of the church was sturdy, the insides were a mess of rubble and mud.

A youth group, from a church south of town, traveled up one weekend to work on the mess. They spent their Friday and Saturday shoveling and scrubbing. They found pieces of the church's life scattered around the building—a chalice here, a candle stick there. And they started finding stone chunks of a statue. At first the pieces were left in a pile, but soon someone started fiddling with them and started to see how the pieces fit together. Throughout the weekend everyone took a turn, and they could see the pieces were a part of a statue of Jesus, arms outstretched.

The youth group worked late into the night, with the energy that comes to teenagers with friends in the wee hours of the morning. And still they kept finding pieces to the statue. So they added them to the puzzle. As the group grew tired, they realized the statue's hands were still missing. They gave one more search through the building, but could not find them. And so one teen wrote a note explaining the situation, and left it at the base of the statue. The group retreated back into their vans, and headed home.

The next morning, the small town's worshipers gathered together. For the first time since the flood they met inside their sanctuary, and they were thankful for the hard work of their visitors. They saw cleaned carpet and scrubbed pews. And at the front of the sanctuary they saw a familiar statue, now dripping with seams of glue, with its arms outstretched, and with its hands missing. At the base of the statue the worshipers saw a simple note: "I have no hands but yours."

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Older Children need to hear from trusted adults that Christianity has a rich tradition of enjoying and celebrating bodies. God created their bodies as good and beautiful. Jesus healed through touch and accepted the loving touch of his followers. These traditions are made concrete as older children learn to view their own bodies with pride and as they recognize their whole body's role in participating in the worship and service of their congregation.

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

Think back on a moment when you knew that your body was created just as God wanted it. Was this a message that you heard from your church, your family, or from inside yourself? This message can be hard to hear, even as an adult. We help one another hear that we are God's by telling the stories of our Christian tradition that celebrate how wonderfully we are made.

Prayer: Creator of infinite details, your image is stamped in the dusty creases of my toes and the jiggle under my arms. Let me hear your call to the church to see the holy beauty in our whole bodies. Help me share the traditions that honor bodies and delight the senses. 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

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Passing of the Peace (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: In some churches, the passing of the peace is a specific time in the worship service when participants greet one another. Sometimes worshipers use formal words such as "May the peace of Christ be with you." Sometimes they just say "Peace" or "Hello!" Usually they touch one another by shaking hands. In other churches, worshipers greet each other informally before or after the service.

Supplies: None

Act out the way folks pass the peace at your church. This action is sometimes a part of the worship liturgy as a reminder that worship is not just a time to watch a performance. Passing the peace might be the only time in the service where worshipers touch one another, so it is a powerful reminder that we come together to care for one another.

Think up a fun handshake your group can use to pass Christ's peace to one another. Add a fist bump or a thumb wiggle or choreograph several actions into your handshake. No need to keep this handshake secret—teach it to other members of your community and share your handshake during your church's passing of the peace!

2 Golden Rule

Leader preparation: Remember a time when you found yourself imagining what life was like for someone in a very different situation than your own. How did your imagination lead to greater compassion?

Supplies:

- artwork: "Golden Rule" by Norman Rockwell, <http://www.art.com/products/p12549842-sa-i1917233/norman-rockwell-golden-rule.htm?sorig=cat&sorigid=0&dimvals=0&ui=c5dd66dac7d541809fb8256c7daa3064&searchstring=golden+rule+norman+rockwell>

Invite each person in your group to imagine silently that he or she is one of the people in the artwork. Ask imagination questions such as: *Where do you come from? What kind of work do you do? What sort of weather do you like? What food do you eat?* Give the group a few moments of quiet to imagine their characters. They should not share the person they have chosen.

Take turns asking everyone—in character but without revealing which one—what his or her body senses. As the character, what does the person see, hear, touch, taste or smell? Other participants should try to guess from the answers which person in the artwork each participant is.

Jesus taught that the way we should treat others was to live the words that are written on this artwork: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). A more modern translation of that phrase is "In everything do to others as you would have them to do to you. . . ." (NRSV). *I wonder how imagining the lives of different people can help us imagine how they would like to be treated. I wonder how imagining another's life can help us show love.* Invite the children to add their wondering statements.



activity from each category.

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

3 There Is No Flaw in You

Leader preparation: The Song of Solomon is a book in which adults describe each other's beauty. It is good for children to know that their tradition contains descriptions of adults in love. Because the children will point at their own bodies during the reading, decide how you will deal with the adult portions of this passage before the activity. It may be best to omit some lines from your reading. If you choose to read these more adult verses, you may warn the group before certain lines (such as the mention of breasts in 4:5) by saying something like, "Here is a verse where the adults are clearly talking about adult love. We don't need to act out this section." Do read through the passage before your group meets and plan out how you will handle this reading.

Supplies:

- Bible
- camera
- photo-editing software, or black-and-white film

Invite the group to stand as you read Song of Solomon 4:1–7 and 5:10–16. Each time you say a part of the body, invite the group to point to that part of themselves. Ask the group to shout out a few things they like about that body part. They might laugh at the idea that their hair is "like a flock of goats," for example, but someone in the group probably likes the way her or his hair curls, a headband she or he is wearing that day, or simply that her or his hair is short and easy to comb. Point out that these verses were written by people who are in love, and they describe adult bodies. We enjoy different things about our bodies at different times. As children, they will have different ways of describing what they like about their bodies.

Inevitably, some children will make negative comments about their bodies. Acknowledge these feelings and then point the group to the end of verse 4:7, which says, "There is no flaw in you." Help the children to connect this line to the words in Genesis that say we are made "in the image of God." *What does this tell us about the negative comments we make about our own bodies?*

Explain that these passages are a reminder that each person's entire body—every single part—was made good and flawless by God. Use a camera to capture photographs of your group's bodies as they are right now. The participants can take turns as photographers and models, taking quick pictures of one or more of their favorite body parts. Allow the subject to decide which parts of him- or herself may be photographed—some will be more comfortable getting shots of clothed areas like the arms or feet, while some might be bold enough to pose for a picture of the eyes or nose. Black-and-white images are particularly striking for these sorts of closeups. A single roll of black and white film would get plenty of shots for a group, if you have that type of camera. Or you could take advantage of simple photo-editing software to print out digital pictures in black and white.

After the session, print out the pictures from the computer or develop the film. Post them on a bulletin board with the title "There Is No Flaw in You." Later, give the models the photographs of themselves wrapped in a card inscribed with the same words.



Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Bodies at Worship (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: As you move faster and faster, this activity can become quite silly, but it is still an exercise in teamwork and in remembering the elements of worship.

Supplies:

- worship bulletins
- a watch with a second hand

Explain that sometimes we think of worship as a time to listen to sermons with our minds or to quietly pray with our hearts. Our whole bodies are also part of the worship experience. Have participants look through worship bulletins and notice the places where the body moves.

- When do you stand up or sit down?
- When might you sway or clap along to music?
- When might the children walk forward or leave the service?
- When do other worship helpers walk to different places in the sanctuary at different times?

Silently act out your worship service. First, act out the parts your group—as children participating in your service—usually plays. Then add in other participants, such as your pastor, music leaders, ushers, and others who might move around.

When you have the choreography worked out for the whole service, speed up things a bit. If your first run through took a few minutes, try to do the whole service in less than one minute. Can you get your time down to 30 seconds?

5 Body Poems

Leader preparation: The following verses from Song of Solomon are some of the most beautiful and graphic affirmations of human bodies in the Bible. It is good for children to know that their tradition celebrates sexual love between adults. These poems are written about the love between two adults and describe bodies in ways that might make your group giggly. That's okay. Think about how some of this poetry might be different if it was describing younger bodies or bodies that were working or playing a sport or doing something other than being in love. If some of the descriptions are distracting, however, you may choose to edit these chapters. If you would rather read this passage from a children's Bible, Ralph Milton's summary of the Song of Songs in *The Family Story Bible* retains the nature imagery and the descriptions of adult love in language simplified for children. Use your best judgment based on your comfort and what you know about your group.

Supplies:

- Bible
- book: *All the Colors of the Earth* by Sheila Hamanaka (New York: Harper-Collins, 2009), http://books.google.com/books?id=nbAyPwAACAAJ&dq=all+the+colors+of+the+earth&hl=en&ei=QY49TuGvOobn0QGj35zWAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA
- paper



- pencils
- (optional) *The Family Story Bible* by Ralph Milton (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997)
- marker and newsprint or whiteboard

Read Song of Solomon 4:1–7 and 5:10–16 together. These passages come from a love song written between two lovers. In chapter 4 the man describes the woman’s body, and in chapter 5 the woman describes the man’s. Some of their descriptions sound strange to us today. We wouldn’t usually tell someone their teeth look like a “flock of shorn ewes.” But some of the poetry is still striking. Telling someone their hair is “wavy, black as a raven” still makes the person sound attractive. Point out some places where the poets compare bodies to things found in nature.

Read Sheila Hamanaka’s book *All the Colors of the Earth* to the group. This is another example of poetry that compares human bodies to things in nature. Which descriptions in this book also describe the bodies in your group?

Think up some other ways your group would compare their bodies to nature. Write them on newsprint or a whiteboard and arrange them into your own poem. Display this poem in your meeting space, or find another way to share it with your congregation.

6 Laying on of Hands

Leader preparation: Your group can trace their own hands on colorful construction paper and cut them out for this exercise. To save time, you can purchase pre-cut hands at craft or teacher-supply stores.

Supplies:

- construction paper
- pencils
- markers
- scissors
- (optional) pre-cut, store-bought paper hands

Explain that many churches use the tradition of laying on hands when praying. This practice is often used when someone is being ordained or commissioned into a ministry. Sometimes it is done when praying for someone who is ill. The person’s teachers, mentors, fellow ministers, and, in some cases, family members and friends come forward to put their hands on the person’s head and shoulders. Sometimes there are so many people that they cannot all touch the person, so they just touch the person closest to them. The practice symbolizes the Spirit moving through the community into the person being prayed for.

The Spirit is moving through your community as well!

Who teaches you about your faith through their words or actions? Trace your own hand on paper and write your name on it. Cut it out, and then make several more hands and write on them the names you thought of. Arrange the hands on a large piece of paper or a bulletin board so that the folks who shared God’s Spirit with you are touching your hand.

Where did these people hear about God? You might know stories about some of them or you might have to guess.



Have the children make more hands, showing the teachers, friends and mentors of those already on the poster. Is there room for any more hands? Almost like making a family tree, keep adding hands until the area is filled. As the group works, share the stories of the people who have touched you with their faith.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Collected Traditions Cook Book (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Our churches traditionally care for bodies through social times as much as in formal programming. The smell of certain foods can bring back memories of feeling nourished and cared for in our churches and in our homes.

In advance, invite each participant to bring a recipe for a favorite food in their families. The goal is to capture their memories of traditions and end up with a usable cookbook.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- markers
- stapler
- (optional) photocopier

Tell the story of Luke 7:36–50, or read it from a children’s Bible. In this story there is a dinner party with some unlikely guests. The Pharisee who throws the party provides food for the guests. Then an unnamed woman comes in and shows more love than the host by washing Jesus’ feet with oils.

Our church suppers and family celebrations today are unlikely to include foot washing or oils, but we do know what it is like to care for one another’s bodies by sharing meals. Many churches have, at one time or another, collected the favorite recipes of their members into a cookbook.

- What recipes does your family often bring to church potlucks? (Yes, picking up a bucket of chicken on the way to church counts as a recipe!)
- What recipes do you use to celebrate religious occasions like Christmas or Easter?
- What recipes are made for every day celebrations like birthdays?
- Can you trace any of your favorite foods back through relatives or friends who taught you the recipes?

Invite each participant to contribute a recipe for a favorite food in their families. Have participants write and illustrate the favorite of each family represented in your group. As you work together to develop your illustrated cookbook, consider these questions and wonder statements with your participants.

- I wonder what sort of foods Jesus ate growing up.
- I wonder what sort of foods Jesus ate at the Pharisee’s home.
- What tastes or smells make you feel loved?
- I wonder if the people cooking these foods know how they make you feel.
- Can you trace any of your favorite foods back to the people who taught you the recipe?
- What do you remember about those people when you eat their foods?



Make a cover and staple together the pages of your cookbook. If you have access to a copy machine, you could make copies so each participant could take a book home. Don't forget to share your cookbooks with the families.

8 Share Your Great Love

Leader preparation: Meals on Wheels is a program that delivers nutritious meals to seniors who have difficulty leaving their home or cooking for themselves. They provide basic food and their volunteers are also known for visiting with clients, talking with them, and sharing some love beyond providing for basic needs. Before your session, contact your local Meals on Wheels chapter to see if they use decorated bags. They may provide bags or they may ask you to purchase your own lunch bags. Please follow the guidelines of your local chapter as you decorate.

Supplies:

- Bible
- lunch bags
- markers or crayons
- additional instructions from your local Meals on Wheels chapter

Read Luke 7:36–50 together, or share an abbreviated version from a children's Bible. In this passage the host provides Jesus with food, but Jesus praises a woman for showing him "great love." Have your group look for examples in the story of what the woman does to show her great love. The host provided the basic meal for Jesus' body, but the extra care and kindness the woman showed through her tears and oils were evidence of her love.

A way to add some extra love to a Meals on Wheels meal is to decorate the delivery bags. Like the biblical woman's fragrant oils, a decorated bag is an extra touch that shows recipients that someone cares about them. You do not know who will get the meals, so most groups discourage religious symbols and messages. Bulky paint, stickers, or glitter can make the bags difficult to work with, so stick to markers and crayons. Return the bags to your local Meals on Wheels chapter so they can use them when distributing meals.

9 Foot Washing

Leader preparation: Prayerfully consider your group before this activity. The goal is to push participants into a type of touch that is caring and unusual, but not to make group members feel uneasy or uncomfortable. Groups who know one another well and are comfortable with touch can wash one another's feet. If your group does not seem ready for this, try washing hands instead. As with any activity involving touch, allow an "out" for those who do not want to participate. They could help refill water pitchers or pass out towels.

Supplies:

- Bible
- bucket of water
- water pitcher
- several towels
- several washcloths
- soap



Reflect

Think back on your session and consider what messages your group members are hearing about their bodies from the church. How is your congregation encouraging children to view their bodies positively? Just as in our larger culture, messages about body image are sometimes muddled in our churches. Make note of a few positive messages your group seems to be hearing and share this observation with your pastor or another church member.

Take turns reading the verses of Luke 7:36–50. Have participants imagine for a minute this scene: Jesus eating with respectable people and a strange woman who comes and starts crying at his feet. This story is one of several accounts of foot washing in the Bible. Explain that the practice of washing feet is still regularly practiced in some Christian groups as a symbol of humility and of caring for one another.

Invite participants who want to, to remove their shoes and socks. As leader, you can model the washing process on one participant's feet. Help the participant to put his or her feet in the bucket. Use the soap and washcloth to wash the feet. Hold each foot above the bucket and use the pitcher to rinse with clean water. Dry their feet with a towel. Then invite them to become the washer, and repeat the process on the next participant.

Work your way around the circle so that the feet of each participant are washed and each has a chance to wash another's feet. Allow for some expressions of discomfort, but if the talk gets too distracting remind participants that they are not required to participate. They can fill up the water pitcher for someone else or pay silent attention.

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

For older children, justice is not abstract. Rather, it is shown only through the concrete actions of bodies. This is the time to name this comfort with concrete results as faithful and encourage them towards imaginative empathy with the bodies of others. In this exploration, older children will explore ministering to themselves by fully loving and caring for the body they are in and ministering to others by watching out for the well-being of the bodies around 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 other's bodies, we live out the healthy wholeness that God created us for. Considering the various and diverse contexts in which all live, we learn to choose well between caring for or abusing the body, even as we consider Christian responses to healthy and wholesome as well as violent and abusive living.

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

Leader Preparation

Consider the patterns of work and rest in your life. Think of some points in your life when these patterns have been disrupted, perhaps when adding a new baby to your family, working through a change in employment, or caring for yourself in a time of illness. Who stepped in to help you find work and rest during these times? We are never alone in the practice of honoring the body. Part of the joy of being embodied is that we must rely on and share help with the bodies around us.

Prayer: God of the Sabbath, you desire that all your people may work with pride and have time to enjoy your creation. Open the hearts in this group to notice when these rhythms are broken in our community. Give us empathy to imagine the challenges other bodies face, and compassion to meet these challenges together. 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 Taking a Leap (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity asks learners to communicate with their words and their bodies. If you have no rope, just jump over a seam in the tile or carpet.

Supplies:

- rope, string, or piece of yarn
- two chairs

Lay a rope across the floor. Invite two participants to hold hands and take a two-footed hop over the rope. It sounds simple enough, but coordinating two bodies can be a bit more difficult than you’d expect.

Once all pairs have made it across, add challenges. Can a group of children jump back and forth five times without stopping? Try tying the rope to two chairs, a few inches off the ground. Add a second rope and try to jump across both. Invite an older or younger member of your church to join you in jumping. Reflect on the activity with questions such as these.

- What happens if the whole group holds hands and jumps across the rope at once?
- Would it be simpler to jump alone?
- What do you enjoy about trying to jump with a friend?
- How are you aware of other bodies around you during the day?
- Where are there other places where it’s simpler to act alone?
- When are times when you can encourage someone else by working together?
- When are times when you like having someone help?

2 Heartbeats

Leader preparation: Practice finding your own heartbeat. Enjoy the quiet stillness of listening to your own body at work. The Exodus passage reminds us that patterns of work and rest are for all bodies. Enslaved workers and immigrants were included. Even animals benefited from the land left fallow. We live out patterns of rest and work in the way we use our own bodies. How can we assure that the bodies of others also get time to work and rest?

Supplies:

- Bible
- a watch or clock that indicates seconds

Exodus 23:10–12 reminds the Hebrews of the pattern of creation and Sabbath—six days of work and one day of rest. Even the land should get a rest every seventh year.

Demonstrate how to find your own heartbeat using two fingers on your neck or wrist. Once everyone can feel their heart beating, let them count the beats as you time for 10 seconds. What numbers did they get?

church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

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

Invite the group to join you in six exercises to get their hearts beating faster. Let volunteers come up with and lead each exercise. This could include jumping jacks, jogging in place, pushups, or dancing around. After a few repetitions of each of the six exercises, check your pulses again. They should be faster!

Consider how both work and rest are ways of honoring the body. What do the members of your group do during the week that uses the energy of their body? What do they do to rest?

Conclude this activity by taking your pulses one more time and thanking God for bodies that can enjoy both rest and work.

3 Home

Leader preparation: The well-being of our bodies is connected with the well-being of the earth and people around us. *Home* by Jeannie Baker follows the growth of one child's body and the transformation of her home.

Supplies:

- Bible
- book: *Home* by Jeannie Baker (New York: Greenwillow Books, 2004), <http://books.google.com/books/about/Home.html?id=yPWVvk9y25GAC>

Look through the wordless picture book *Home* by Jeannie Baker with your group. The book's illustrations look out of a child's the window; her name is Tracy. We see her yard and neighborhood. As she grows up, her family tends their yard and garden, and the neighbors work to clean up their neighborhood. After reading, work together to point out some places where Tracy and her neighbors are working. Point out some places where they are resting. Then, ask:

- What improvements do Tracy and her family make on their own?
- Which improvements take work from groups of people?
- We know bodies need shelter. I wonder what else bodies need from their home.
- Which of our needs can we get from our house alone?
- Which of our needs are shared by the neighborhood or community?
- In 2 Corinthians 5:1 Paul tells that God will prepare a house for us when we are done with our "earthly tent." What might God's house and neighborhood look like?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 House Not Made with Hands (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Our imaginations are the most powerful tool we have in creating heaven on earth. This activity lets your group imagine what sort of a place God would prepare for us and encourages them to consider how they can use what they have here and now to care for bodies in their communities.

Supplies:

- Bible
- large piece of paper (or several small sheets taped together)
- markers



Read 2 Corinthians 4:13--5:1 together. Repeat verse 5:1 because it talks about a “house not made with hands” that we will live in when “our earthly tent” is gone.

Sitting around the large sheet of paper, have the group start drawing a city that God might make. Have the children begin by drawing some houses for people to live in. Then have them think of the things those people will need to take care of their bodies. Grocery stores? Hospitals? Parks? Add their ideas to the city.

Perhaps your group has drawn some parts of the city that cannot be built by hands and could only be made by God.

What parts of your city could be done by people? Which parts would be impossible in this world, but could be made by God? How is your drawing like the city you live in? How is it different? I wonder how your city takes care of people’s bodies. Is everyone’s body honored in your city, or are some left out?

5 Oh Yuck

Leader preparation: Often in our religious talk we separate the spiritual from the physical, but the Bible continually reminds us that joining Christ in resurrection does not mean giving up on our bodies. In Christ, our whole selves—both body and spirit—receive salvation. This activity can be done at computers with Internet access or with books.

Supplies:

- Bible
- website: <http://yucky.discovery.com/flash/body/pg000029.html>
- book: *Grossology and You* by Sylvia Branzei (New York: Price Stern Sloan: 2002), http://books.google.com/books?id=dBZvPwAACAAJ&dq=grossology+and+you&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=f6o6TvOOGKXm0QG7uNjGAW&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA

Give your group time to look through the book or website. If you have multiple computers or multiple copies of the book, try assigning small groups to each look up a few facts about one of their favorite gross body processes. Share and be prepared for giggles.

Explain that some people in Jesus’ time (and some still today) thought that bodies were just trouble. Bodies are often icky, and sometimes they are sick or hurting. These people hoped that after they died the spirit would live on but the body would disappear. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:1 together with the group. Which of the bodily functions they’ve been reading about might cause a “momentary affliction” or be a less polite way of talking about “wasting away”? Although this Bible passage talks about resurrection, it is clear to say that God wants us to continue to have bodies in eternity.

The stories of Jesus after the resurrection make it clear that he had a body and was not just a ghost. The Bible tells us that he eats and drinks and touches the disciples.

- I wonder why the Bible authors made sure to record the things Jesus did with his body.
- How do you feel about your body when it does something gross?
- What other times do you feel frustrated with your body?
- What improvements could God make on your body?



- What parts of your body would you want to stay the same all through eternity?
- I wonder how we can show honor to even the gross parts of our bodies.
- How can we react in an honorable way when other people's bodies do something gross?



6 Out of Work

Leader preparation: Vine charcoal (available cheaply at art supply stores) and newsprint allow learners to draw in a fun, quick, sketchy style that brings to mind the colors and lines of Kollwitz's drawing. Both the acts of modeling emotions and of drawing emotions provide an illustration of how we communicate with our bodies.

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
- newsprint
- vine charcoal
- watch with a second hand
- access to a sink for cleanup

Distribute paper and sticks of charcoal to each participant. Explain that they will be using a new sheet of paper for each drawing and that they will be working big and fast.

Invite one participant forward to act as a model. Ask the model to stand up straight, facing forward. Tell the group they will have 30 seconds to draw the model's body. Just focus on the body, not on details like the face, hair, or clothing. A stick figure could work, or they could draw quick circles and ovals to represent the model's head, body and limbs. The charcoal does not erase—that's why we're using it! If they make a mistake, though, they can just draw over it quickly. The supplies and the quick time will give these drawings a rough, sketchy feel.

Next, switch models and ask the new model to sit on a chair. Move on to the next piece of paper and give the group 30 seconds to sketch. The drawings will be messy and that's okay. By now the group should be getting the hang of working quickly and not fretting over mistakes.

We convey a lot of emotion with our bodies. Ask the group to make their bodies look happy, surprised, bored, or excited. Invite volunteers to come forward to model one of these or another emotion. As before, draw these poses in 30 second bursts.

When everyone who wants to model has had a turn, lay out the drawings on the floor so you can see them all at once. There will be some duds—that's the nature of such quick drawings. But overall, look for the emotion you see in the drawings. Invite participants to point and call out the emotions.

Then, display "Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz, and ask these questions.

- What emotion are these bodies showing?
- What similarities do you see to your drawings?
- What makes them feel that way?



- Tell the group the title of the print and ask if that changes or confirms what they thought about these bodies.
- How can we tell what other people are feeling by noticing their bodies?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Give Me a Break (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This variation on a meditative bodily prayer allows your group to craft the meditation themselves and share it with someone they love.

Supplies:

- Bible
- paper
- pencils

Read Exodus 23:10–12. Point out that the passage reminds us to work and rest. It also ensures that these times of work and rest are for everyone—even the people who do things for us when we are resting (in the passage, they are called “home born slave and resident alien”). Explain to the group that they will create a “guided rest” to share with a family member or someone else who takes care of them.

Start with the toes. Invite the group to shout out ideas of how to relax each part of their body. Prompt the group as you go along. *How could you move your toes to relax? What does a relaxed ankle feel like?* Record their words as you go.

Read the guided rest out loud to your group and give them a chance to experience the resting. When you are done, make any final changes the group decides. Send each participant home with a written or photocopied copy of the guided rest. Ask them to share this rest with a family member or friend who works hard to take care of them. *What else could you do to give a gift of rest?* Perhaps they could bring a pillow or candle to help the recipient get comfortable, or they could even let their caretaker lie still for a while after the reading while they do a helpful chore.

8 Grow Some Sprouts

Leader preparation: Mung bean sprouts can be found in health food stores and many places online. Clean, leftover spaghetti sauce or peanut butter jars would work well for this project.

Supplies:

- Bible
- clean jar for each participant
- one tablespoon of mung bean seeds for each participant
- cloth
- rubber bands
- access to a sink

Exodus 23:10–12 was originally written to farmers. It starts out by telling the Hebrew farmers what they already knew: their land needed a rest every seven years. Then the passage tells the farmers that they also need a rest every seven days, and so do all of the people they work with and their animals.



Talk with your group about the cycles of work and rest involved in growing food. A farmer must plant the seeds (work), and then wait for them to sprout (rest); water and weed the garden (work), and wait for sunshine (rest). It may take several weeks or months for a plant to move from seed to food. Some foods, such as fruit trees, take several years before they are mature enough to produce fruit. Perhaps some in your group have gardens at home and have grown some of their own food. Not everyone has space to grow a garden, but everyone has space to grow a few bean sprouts in a jar. Give these instructions to participants, and help the children carry them through.

To start your bean sprout garden, wash your jars well. Put one tablespoon of seeds into each participant's jar. Cut the cloth into squares large enough to cover the jar openings. Use a rubber band to fasten the cloth over the jar.

At a sink, run water through the cloth and into the jar. Then dump out the water, the cloth will keep the seeds inside. Do this two or three times to rinse the seeds well.

Take the jars home and leave them someplace safely away from bright sunlight or extreme temperatures. Three times a day, rinse the seeds the way you did during class. As you do this step, remember the cycles of rest and work that are needed to grow food. In a day or two, the seeds will begin to sprout. When the sprouts are about 3 inches long, they are ready to eat. Try eating one alone or sprinkle them on a sandwich or salad.



9 Bingo

Leader preparation: If your group is large enough to divide into small groups, line up adequate supervision for each group beforehand. Make copies of the attached Bingo card.

Supplies:

- "Bingo Card," Attachment: Activity 9
- pencils

Pass out copies of the Bingo cards. You can use the card with suggestions to get you started, and the group can fill in the blank squares as they find other examples of each category around your space.

Reflect

When your learners walked in the door, what could you tell about their day from their bodies? Were they tired, excited, or sullen? During this session, where did your group display empathy for other bodies? Offer prayers for the needs raised in your time together.

How does your church honor the body? This game of Bingo gives your group a chance to search for evidence of this practice around your congregation's space. Travel around the building together or in smaller groups searching for evidence that your congregation honors the body in ways that fit the following categories: Caring for Bodies in Our Community, Worshiping with Our Bodies, Accessible to All, and Caring for Our Own Bodies. In the "other" column, you can fill in anything else you find that Honors the Body.

After someone gets Bingo, look back over your lists. What categories were easy to find? Does that reflect ways your church works to honor the body? Are there other ways your church honors the body that you did not record in your search?



Attachment: Activity 9

Bingo Card

Caring for Bodies in Our Community	Accessible to All	Other	Caring for Our Own Bodies	Worshipping with Our Bodies
Food Bank Collection Spot			Water Fountain	
	Inclusion of GLBT Families			Communion Chalice
	Ramps or Elevator	FREE SPACE		
Prayer List of Sick Friends			Healthy Snacks	Kneelers
	Diverse Pictures of Jesus			Musical Instruments

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

The bodies of older children are changing quickly. They can see their skills developing and, by the end of this period, most have entered into puberty. Sometimes they are told that they are growing into the leaders of tomorrow, but less often are they told that they will learn to appreciate their bodies as one stage among many stages, and they will consider how the choices they make show God's spirit at work within them.

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 37:1–14
Matthew 22:34–40

Leader Preparation

Take a moment to notice your breath as you prepare for this session. Breathe in deeply, hold it a moment, and blow out slowly. This rhythm of breath is in the background of our days, and it makes all our other work possible. Our breath is one action that people of all times, places and ages share, and it is a gift from God that enables us to live creatively together.

Prayer: *Giver of breath, I breathe in with thanks; I breathe out with readiness. I breathe in hope; I breathe out opportunity. I breathe in Your Spirit; I breathe out ready to live for you. Amen.*

Session Development

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

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities 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.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Breathe (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Paying attention to the quiet movement of our breath brings the wonder of our bodies to our attention and prepares the group for exploring what their bodies are right now and what they are becoming.

Supplies: None

Sitting with your group, ask them to pay attention to the breath.

Stretch out and lie down on your backs on the floor. Breathe in silence for a few minutes. Notice your stomach moving. Ask them to lay their hands on their stomach and feel the air go in and out.

Now turn over onto your stomachs. Breathe in and out. Where do you feel movement now?

Continue trying to notice the movement of breath in different positions—curled up, stretched out on one side, standing up, touching toes, balancing on one foot, stretching hands up high. With these different positions, the children can observe breath changing the movement and shape of their bodies.

Invite the group to share what they know about how breathing affects the inside of their bodies. *How is this process the same for everyone? How is it sometimes different?*

2 Backbone

Leader preparation: This activity uses the backbones in the artwork as a story starter. Our bodies are also the beginning of a story, but we don’t know how the story goes until we our bodies are given life by God and given purpose through our actions.

Supplies:

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

Hang the artwork in a place so that all may observe it together, but wait to share the title. Invite the group to talk about what they see. After they talk about it for a while, share its title. Does this change what they see?

Invite the group to sit up straight and feel their own backbones. *Can you feel the bumps of your backbone through your skin and clothes? Stretch tall, sway from side to side, and slump over. Can you feel your backbone moving around?*

Invite three volunteers forward to position themselves like the backbones in the picture. How do they stand? What are the rest of their bodies doing? Are they standing close or touching? Once the three are in place, make up a story about why these three are together.



Try again with another group of three learners. How does the scene change if the actors are sitting? Lying down? Holding their arms up high?

Read Ezekiel 37:1–14 together. The vision begins with bones, but they don't act until they have flesh and breath. Explain that God has given us the framework of a body, but we choose how we use it in the world. *How do we act as God's children today? What new actions can we use to respond to God?*

③ Fast Forward

Leader preparation: Find the videos listed below and set up a way to view them before you meet. An Internet search for “face aging” or “face morphing” should bring up many other examples if these videos aren't sufficient.

Supplies:

- video: “4 to 64 in 30 Seconds,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVRQ0v15lrc&feature=related>
- video: “Girl Takes Picture of Herself Every Day for Three Years,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55YYaJIrmzo>
- computer with Internet connection

Watch the two video clips with your group. The first uses morphing software to move through pictures of a woman at many different ages. You can see how she grows and changes over time. The second is a compilation of three years' worth of photos. Over three years, this woman doesn't age much, but you see her daily changes. Her hair grows, her clothes change, and her glasses come on and off.

Bodies are always changing.

- What changes happen in your body every day?
- What would you see in a collection of once-a-day photos of you?
- How do you expect your body will change over time?
- What might a photo of you look like in 10 years? 20 years? 50 years?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



④ Dry Bones (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Older children may be more familiar with Bible stories than recent events. Discuss how Ezekiel is remembering a vision he had where God called him to prophesy. The vision has a dreamlike quality, but the message God sends through the vision is real.

Supplies:

- Bible

Together read Ezekiel 37:1–14. As you read, have your group act out the movements of the story. One learner can be Ezekiel and the rest can lie down on the ground and act as the bones slowly pulling themselves together.

As you read and they act, invite the learners to consider how the bones feel and move.



- Are there times when you feel hopeless? How does your body move, then?
- What might it feel like when God's breath enters the bodies?
- How can you show this with your bodies?

Repeat Ezekiel 37:14: "I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act," says the Lord."

- Once these bones have been given life, how will they act?
- What will they do with their bodies if they know that they are God's?

Have learners act out some of their ideas with their bodies.

Point out that after this vision Ezekiel prophesies to the people, trying to tell them words that will inspire their bodies to act when they know that they are God's. *What words can you use to encourage each other to live out some of the actions you've dramatized today?*

5 Thumbprints

Leader preparation: A thumbprint reminds us of our individuality. As we grow and change throughout life, our thumbprint patterns remain the same; they remain completely and uniquely ours. The book *Ed Emberley's Fingerprint Drawing Book* offers some inspiration for drawing people and emotions into thumbprints. The book is optional.

Supplies:

- cash-register tape
- washable stamp pads
- markers
- paper towels
- (optional) book: *Ed Emberley's Fingerprint Drawing Book* by Ed Emberley (London: LB Kids: 2005), <http://books.google.com/books?id=L6OHa6HbE5cC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

In this activity, your group will be using their thumbprints to illustrate their own bodies in action. Demonstrate making a thumbprint with the stamp pad, and use markers to add a face, arms and legs. *Ed Emberley's Fingerprint Drawing Book* gives inspiration on how to transform fingerprints into people engaged in all sorts of tasks. Make sure to let the group know where they can find paper towels or a sink for cleanup.

Hand out long strips of cash-register tape and invite the group to draw a time line with thumbprint people doing the things their bodies can do.

Start when you were young—maybe you could show a baby learning to crawl or yourself as a preschooler playing a favorite game. Then draw several pictures of your thumb-person doing the things you do with your body today. Keep going and draw your thumb-person doing the things you think you will do as you grow up. Some actions may be day-to-day things that you expect to learn or do as you get older—like learning to drive or hugging your own children. Some actions might be specific to your talents and gifts—maybe you want to improve your skill at a sport or work at a certain job. Some actions may be very active, and some might involve you sitting still and listening or watching.



The finished time lines will contain many different drawings, but all will be made with your unchanging fingerprint. In all we do with our bodies, throughout our lives, our thumbprints remain the same. In all we do with our bodies, throughout our lives, we are always God’s good creation.



6 Neighbors Near and Far

Leader preparation: Cutting out bodies and collage paper for the clothes ahead of time gives your group time to focus on creating. Cut out the body template from the attachment in several skin colors, or you can purchase colorful body shapes from a teacher-supply store. Cut or tear colorful construction paper into mosaic pieces that are about 1-inch square.

Supplies:

- Bible
- book: *Children Just Like Me: Celebrations!* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley (New York: DK Children, 1997) (may be found in your local library), http://books.google.com/books?id=yvIHPwAACAAJ&dq=children+like+me&hl=en&ei=EEcgTqm8I-XliALAh5SwAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CEUO6AEwAQ
- “Body Template,” Attachment: Activity 6
- cutouts of bodies in several skin tones
- colorful construction paper cut or ripped into small pieces
- glue sticks

Read Matthew 22:34–40 together. Explain that when we hear the word “neighbor,” we might first think of people who live near us. But throughout the Bible, we are reminded and encouraged to extend our love beyond those closest to us.

Look through the book *Children Just Like Me: Celebrations!* Use questions like these to encourage discussion and sharing.

- Who are some of your nearby neighbors?
- Which children live furthest away?
- Can you find children whose bodies have similar talents as the learners in your group?
- How do children use their bodies to play or learn in similar ways around the world?
- Find a child whose clothing you’d like to borrow. Would you wear these clothes for every day or just for a special occasion?

Create a neighborhood of people for your meeting space to remind you of neighbors near and far. Start with body cutouts in several different skin colors and a few handfuls of small pieces of construction paper. Learners can build clothing from these pieces by gluing the small papers directly onto the paper bodies. This method can be less frustrating for older children than asking them to draw and cut out clothing for the paper dolls. The slightly abstract results take away the pressure to recreate outfits exactly. You may use the book for reference, or the participants can bring use their own knowledge and imaginations to come up with outfits.

Take time for each participant to make 2–4 people. Ask: *What does it mean to love these neighbors? How can we show love over long distances?* Conclude with a prayer to send love to the children in the book and the many neighborhoods they represent.



Sending & Serving Activities



7 Whole Body Celebration Prayer (Easy preparation)

Leader preparation: If you have access to a radio or music player, turn on some celebratory music to accompany the activity. The words don't need to fit the theme, but a little music can help your group loosen up and move.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) celebratory music and music player

Read Matthew 22:34–40 together, repeating verse 37 several times: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Ask: *What does it mean to show love with your entire body?* Invite the group to join you in a prayer of celebration, but instead of using words, have everyone use body movements.

- How do toes celebrate? Wiggle them, tap them, point and flex them.
- How do feet celebrate? Maybe by jumping or kicking around.
- Work your way up through the legs, knees, thighs, waist, torso, arms, fingers, neck, and head.

As you finish celebrating at the top of your bodies, consider how your heart, soul, and mind celebrate. Although these ideas are more abstract, come up with motions that show joy from your heart, soul, and mind.

The sign language for “Amen” is to clap a closed fist into the other open palm. This would be a fitting way to close your whole body’s prayer of celebration.



8 Labyrinth

Leader preparation: Walking a labyrinth is an ancient tradition that brings the whole body into prayer and allows it to live out the metaphor of taking a pilgrimage journey. Practice drawing a few labyrinths on paper first to get the hang of it. Before your group arrives, tape down your center and make sure there will be enough space for the labyrinth.

Supplies:

- “Labyrinth,” Attachment: Activity 8
- paper
- pencils
- 3 rolls of masking tape
- large open space

Start by practicing a few labyrinth drawings on paper with your group. Go through the steps on the handout together. As your group is drawing, talk about the tradition of a labyrinth. A labyrinth looks like a maze, but there are no tricks, choices, or dead ends. Explain that walking or tracing a labyrinth while praying is a way to involve your whole body in prayer.

The labyrinth does not have to be perfect to be useful. A labyrinth can be created by a group of children without measuring, and the tape can go down very quickly.



When the labyrinth is complete, give the group a moment to collect themselves and quiet down. Then walk through it together. Help the group focus on their journey by asking them to imagine themselves on a trip to God's house. On the way, they can prepare to visit God. In the center, they can sit for a few minutes in prayer with God. On the way out, they can consider how to take their talk with God back out into the world.

9 "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry"

Leader preparation: If you're not up to leading a sing along, the optional video contains illustrative images that connect the lyrics with pictures of bodies at many ages. There are many recorded versions of this song available, as well, or you could invite in a singer from your congregation to help out.

Reflect

Spend time imagining this group in the future. How do their bodies grow and change? Do you know of challenges in your group right now that are making that growth difficult? Offer prayers of strength and hope for your learners as they meet these challenges. How do you imagine your group members will live out the commandment to love God with their heart, soul, and mind? Pray for guidance in continuing to nurture these traits today.

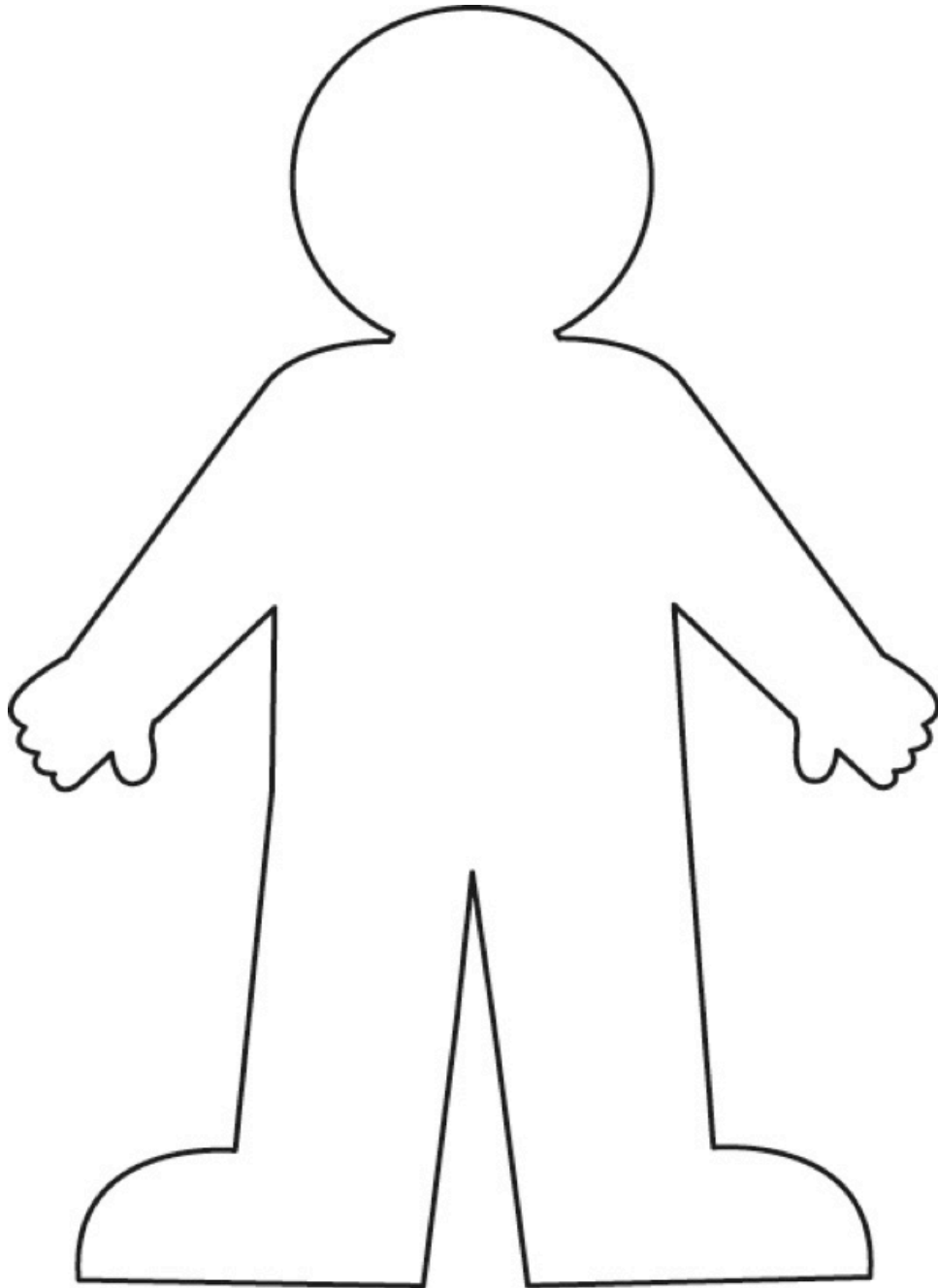
Supplies:

- song: "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry" by John Ylvisaker (tune: Waterlife), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYnmtQI50ic&feature=related>
- (optional) video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUIyM2RpDEY&feature=related>

Sing the song "I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry," or listen to the optional YouTube video. The song tells about God's presence in our lives at all ages. Listen again to the words. Who in your congregation fits the different descriptions? Where do the learners in your group fit into this song? Invite your group to share stories of how the lines about childhood and adolescence reflect how they see God in their lives. There is a jump in the lyrics from young childhood to young adulthood, so your group can work together to write a new stanza or two that describes their point of view.

Conclude by singing the song with your new verse.

Body Template

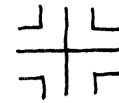


Attachment: Activity 8

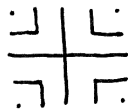
Labyrinth



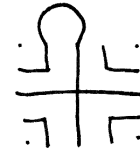
1. Start by making a large plus sign (+) in the center of your space.



2. Add an L shape in each corner of the plus sign.



3. Add a dot in each corner.



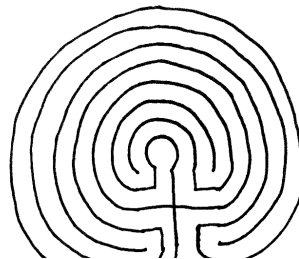
4. Connect the top left L with the top center line of the plus sign. This loop will be the center of your labyrinth.



5. Connect the next two out points, making a path.



6. Continue making connections, as shown in the illustration.



7. When you've made all the connections, you have completed your labyrinth.