

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Younger youth are in the midst of self-discovery. Self-consciousness about body image in peer groups is prevalent. In this period between childhood and adulthood, youth often move back and forth between the two worlds. At times they can be silly and distracted and at other times focused, demanding more than simple comments or superficial treatment of material. If we give them time to put their thoughts into words and not “fill the silence,” they will give us some profound words of wisdom and challenge our thinking in a good way. The best formation is through conversation, mentoring, and personal experience.

About this Exploration

God not only creates our bodies, God also relates to us through the embodied form of Jesus Christ. We are moved to reclaim God’s presence in the joyful and messy details of everyday life, a task more complicated and richer than depicted in the idealized images of bodies in the media. Through the senses, we experience and explore creation. We enjoy the sight of a rainbow, the smell of roses, or the taste of garlic. We connect with each other through the sound of a voice, the touch of a handshake, or the intimacy of a kiss. We can choose to use our bodies in ways that affirm that we are made in the image of God, discover that God’s goodness is planted within our bodies, and express ourselves through our varied talents and limitations.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

1 Kings 19:4-8

John 4:1-42

Leader Preparation

In Discovery we want to consider the wonder of the human body. As we explore the complexity of God's gift, we will help the youth comprehend the beauty, intricacy, and capabilities of our bodies that we tend to take for granted and overlook in everyday life.

Prayer: Creator God, the work of your hand continually amazes. Out of your abundant love you have given us our bodies. Please hold your servant and participants in your care as we explore the wonders of your blessed creation. 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 What's a Body to Do? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Arrange the space for easy sharing; a circle works nicely. Depending on the group, you may stand or sit. Be ready for adolescent comments and simply acknowledge them and move on. If you have a particularly rowdy group, set rules for what is appropriate. Be ready to encourage deeper thinking, like how we communicate, show emotions, and so forth.

Supplies:

- Bible
- soft object to toss, such as a small ball, a ball of yarn, or a stuffed animal

Go around the circle/room and ask each person to say something that a body does. Allow some time for them to think about it. Encourage any response from "it can see" to "the body converts food into energy for use." The idea is to see how amazing the human body is. There are so many things we take for granted. A good way to get everyone involved is to toss a soft object to one person. That person names something that a body does, and then tosses the object to someone else. Keep track of who gets the object so that everyone gets a chance to participate. Give everyone more than one turn.

Read Genesis 1:27 and say a prayer of thanks to God for the gift of the body.



2 Many Bodies

Leader preparation: Spend time with the "Golden Rule" artwork. Note the different people represented and consider for yourself how the external appearances of people help us appreciate the body. Be open to the responses of the youth to the picture. Allow them ample time to look at the picture. If the group is large, it is beneficial to have the sharing time in smaller groups of three or four so that everyone has a chance to comment. Allow two minutes for each person to share, and then switch. This is especially helpful for shy persons. One of the first ways, and often the only way, we encounter others is by external appearance. The purpose of this activity is to get the youth thinking about how we see others.

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>

Honoring the body is a way of returning love to God, who first loved us. Invite the youth to look at the artwork. Tell them to let their minds go and just experience it. After a while, ask, "What do you see? When you look at the color, shapes, positions, what stands out for you?"

After everyone has a chance to comment, ask the group to look at it again. This time consider how it might speak to them about honoring the body. Invite them to think of people in their lives. Are those people represented here? Are there people missing from this picture? Tell them to spend time and let their minds go where God takes them. When they are ready, they may share their experiences with one another. There are no wrong answers or comments.

Possible closing prayer: *Thank you, God, for art and for the ways that colors and images help us think beyond ourselves. Please continue to work in us as we recall this experience in the days ahead. Amen.*

③ Strength for the Journey

Leader preparation: Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. In this activity you will talk about the basic need for nourishing the body and the importance of caring for the body. Invite the youth to think about both the ways we honor the body and the ways we may dishonor it. Acknowledge any comments about eating disorders, proper diet, exercise, and so forth. It would be helpful to prepare by reading some material on nutrition and eating disorders.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- poster board or newsprint and a way to display participants' work
- markers
- website: "Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010," <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/PolicyDoc.pdf>
- website: "Eating Disorders," <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/eating-disorders/DS00294>

On one poster write the words, "Honoring the Body"; on another write, "Dishonoring the Body." Read 1 Kings 19:4–8. (You may want to do this as a dramatic reading; if so, assign a narrator, person, and angel.) Ask everyone to listen carefully. Ask, "What did you hear about caring for the body? What other things do people eat and drink?" Add comments to the posters about how we honor the body in our eating and drinking. Add comments to the poster about how we can dishonor the body in our eating and drinking.

Reread 1 Kings 19:4–8. Ask learners to think about how they eat and drink. Where do their habits fit on these posters? This is a personal reflection and need not be shared. Ask how food and drink prepares them for the journey in the here and now. If the group is large, invite the youth to speak to one or maybe two others for this discussion.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ A Handy Drawing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity requires space in the room with sufficient area for the youth to spread out and have some privacy. Be prepared with clipboards or other firm surfaces to use if a table is not available. In the practice of honoring the body, it is helpful simply to take time to notice the beauty of our own bodies. In this exercise each youth is asked to look at one part of his or her body and take time to really see and experience wonder.

Supplies:

- paper and pencils
- Bible (more than one translation, if available)

Pass out paper and pencil to each person and invite all to find a comfortable place to sit away from others in the group. Ask everyone to carefully study the front

and back of one of their hands. Ask, “Do you think you would be able to find your hand in a group of hand photographs?” Invite the youth to try drawing either the front or back of their hand with attention to details.

After several minutes, ask the group to write a list of things they do with the hand they have chosen to consider. They can use the back of the paper or write alongside the drawing. Gather the group and invite them into a time of reflection on the experience of focusing on the wonder of their own hand. What did they notice? Were there many different experiences? Ask them if they have ever taken time to think about their body in this way. Read Psalm 139:14. It might be interesting to see different translations. Invite each youth to look at his or her hand and/or drawing and repeat the verse from the psalm as a prayer.



5 Living Water

Leader preparation: Read John 4:1–42, and focus on verses 7–10. Spend time viewing the artwork. The importance of water in our lives—especially in desert communities—is understandable. We will think about the value of water to the body and then discover the meaning of the living water. The human body is composed of 60–78 percent water. Every living thing needs water. If regular water is so important, you can imagine how wonderful the living water Jesus offers sounds to the woman in the story.

Supplies:

- water in a large bowl
- water in a pitcher
- Bibles
- artwork: “The Public Fountain” by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1033816467?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=37962&store_id=1401
- “Water Quiz,” Attachment: Activity 5

Display the artwork so that the youth will encounter it upon arrival. As you begin this activity, invite the youth to view the art. Distribute Attachment: Activity 5, and have them answer the questions. Then ask what they can conclude about the importance of water in our lives. Describe a time when you were especially aware of the importance of water. You may want to do this in small groups to give each person an opportunity to share. Invite the youth to share in the larger group if they heard something that stood out in their small group.

Invite someone to read John 4:7–10. What ideas about needing water do they hear? What do they think about this “living water”? Jesus mentions eternal life. Is the living water about the body? Do they think the woman understands? (See verse 10) Do they think this story is powerful? Why?

Ask someone to read John 4:7–10 again while the group gathers at the bowl to experience the water by touch, sound, and sight. Then invite the youth to pray. You may use this prayer or one offered by a member of the group: *Loving God, you have blessed us with water. We understand the importance of water in our lives and we are grateful. Jesus asked for water as a basic need but he also offered living water. May we experience that living water as we make our way through this world. Amen.*

6 Sense-ational bodies

Leader preparation: In this activity youth may discover the many ways our bodies investigate the world and, by doing so, encounter the Holy. Our senses help us to know who we are, to interact with others, and to experience God in our lives. We honor our bodies by not taking these things for granted. When gathering the supplies, keep in mind that some people have allergies or other health problems. Avoid items that are generally associated with allergens, like peanuts, highly fragrant perfumes, or flowers.

Supplies:

- three small containers with sugar, salt, and lemon juice (lemonade mix powder also works)
- a glass of water
- a package of toothpicks
- three small bags containing items with distinct fragrances, such as cinnamon sticks, dirt, sage (or dill), and orange
- three items with different texture, such as cotton, sandpaper, silk

Pass around the small bags with the distinct fragrances, and ask participants to smell each. Are they able to identify the scents? How would they describe them? The sense of smell has a strong connection to memory in humans. What scents bring memories to them?

Invite the youth to dip a toothpick into the water, and then one at a time to taste the dry items. Be sure that, when finished with one item, they discard that toothpick and get a fresh one. Ask about the taste of each. Were they surprised? What was their reaction to each? How might the different tastes help them to think about how God is present in their lives?

Pass around the different textures and invite the youth to spend time feeling these things. What sensations did they have? God gave us our senses so that we might know the world and, through the world, know the Creator. Take a few moments for the group to ponder this. Then thank God for such gifts of the body.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Look, See (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The body is capable of taking in a great deal of sensory information. It is our job to pay attention, to focus on or to block out something, to distinguish or discriminate what our senses perceive. In our experience of the world around us, we can easily miss something meaningful simply by not noticing. Gather about ten of the common items listed on Attachment: Activity 7, arrange them on the table, and cover them.

Supplies:

- “Suggested Items,” Attachment: Activity 7
- table
- paper or cloth to cover the items
- paper and pencils or pens

Have the group gather around the table where you placed the items. Uncover the items, and ask the youth to look at them. After a minute or two, cover the items

again. With backs turned to the table, have the participants list the items as best they can. After the first viewing, while they make their lists, remove one or two items. Ask some specific questions about the items—color or brand name—something they could easily see if they were looking for it.

How did they do? How many did they remember? Were they able to answer the few questions? Now have them look again. Do they notice anything different? Discuss the difference between looking and seeing. Ask if they think they would have done better if instructed to study the items with the specific purpose of remembering them. *Why might that be important in life? How might this exercise be experienced by a person with limited vision? How does it honor the body to be more aware of the things around us and to see them rather than just look at them?*

8 Maintenance

Leader preparation: We honor the body by recognizing its amazing resilience and ability to regulate itself. The body is capable of healing and maintaining balance. The websites listed under Supplies might be helpful. This isn't a science lesson, but rather a way to appreciate the intricacy of the body, so don't worry too much about details. You might encourage discussion by asking questions such as these: *How can we go from cold to hot places without changing our body temperature? What happens when you run?* You will need adequate space to work with a life-size human figure.

Supplies:

- roll of paper wide enough to accommodate a person
- pencil or marker
- (optional) websites: "Human Body Regulation," http://www.teachers-domain.org/resource/tdc02.sci.life.reg.lp_humanreg/; "Did You Know Water?" <http://totallytots.blogspot.com/2009/03/did-you-know-water.html>; and "How Water Works," <http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/earth/geophysics/h2o3.htm>

Ask one youth to volunteer to be the model for the human body. As she or he lies down on the paper, trace around the body. On the paper figure, ask the group to write the things a body does to regulate itself. They might put temperature, oxygen, heart rate, respiration, water, and so forth. The purpose is to take time to think about how marvelous the organism is. In a hot room or in a cold climate we maintain our internal temperature to within a few tenths of a degree. Whether the outside temperature is 70° or 102° or 30° Fahrenheit (21° or 38° or 0° Celsius), our body remains close to 98.6°F or 37°C. As we use our muscles, we require more or less oxygen; this is accomplished by rate of breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure. We don't have to think about it. The body does this.

Now turn your attention to healing. *Have you ever had a cut or scrape? Who has had a broken bone?* Ask someone to draw a wound on the hand or a cast on the foot. While we aid in the mending of tissues by cleaning the wound and aligning the skin or bone, the majority of the work is done by the body. The body can go back to what was and usually return to full function.

Have a conversation about how God provides the body with ways to maintain itself in high function without our ever having to think about it unless we get sick. This is cause for a shout of praise!



9 Body Talk

Leader preparation: The purpose of the exercise is to get others to understand you by using the body to communicate. Prepare the pieces of paper with phrases on each, such as “I am eating chocolate cake,” “You are my friend,” “There are three ways to dance,” “Come follow me,” and so forth. Prepare enough pieces so that everyone can take a turn. See Attachment: Activity 9 for some phrases that can be printed and cut into strips. You might prefer to create your own phrases. Recognizing the utility of the body in nonverbal activities is another way to marvel at God’s work and to honor the body.

Supplies:

- strips of paper, or 3” x 5” index cards.
- pen
- “Phrase Ideas,” Attachment: Activity 9

Greet everyone with a hand wave, smile, or handshake. Direct people with nonverbal cues. For example, you might place your hand on one person’s shoulder to guide him or her. For another, you might point to the place to sit; someone else is told to sit down. When everyone has gathered, say hello to each person by name. Ask the youth to discuss how many ways of communication they have experienced, either through this activity or in daily life.

Distribute the index cards or strips of paper with the phrases. Invite the youth to take turns helping others figure out what is on each other’s card. Suggest that they be creative in their methods. They can use words, but not the ones on the card. Encourage the use of nonverbal cues. After all the phrases have been correctly communicated, invite the youth into conversation about ease of communication, comfort level, how many different methods they used, and what they learned from the exercise. Encourage them to pay attention to the body language they see during the week ahead.

Reflect

Our bodies are nothing short of wonder and miracle. It is good to reflect on this gift and be in awe of what God can do. God blessed us with a body that does many things and provides us with life, a living, a way to help others, a way to experience the world and God, and so much more. As we take time to marvel at this great gift, let us continue to thank God by caring for our bodies and honoring them. By doing so, we practice our faithfulness to God and continue to receive many blessings.

Attachment: Activity 5

Water Quiz

True or False? (first four questions)

1. Seventy percent of the earth surface is composed of water.
2. Fifty-eight percent of that water is in the oceans, bays, and seas.
3. The human body is composed of between 60 and 80 percent water.
4. A person can survive about three days without water.
5. Which of these are early signs of dehydration? Circle the early signs.
 - thirst
 - loss of appetite
 - dry mouth
 - dry skin
 - dark colored urine
 - feeling tired
 - hallucinations
6. What are uses for water?

7. Name a country where drought (lack of water) is a concern.

Attachment: Activity 5 (continued)

Water Quiz (with answers)

True or False? (first four questions)

1. Seventy percent of the earth's surface is composed of water.
(True)
2. Fifty-eight percent of that water is in the oceans, bays, and seas.
(False: It is 96.5 percent.)
3. The human body is composed of between 60 and 80 percent water.
(True: The variation comes from time of life (babies have a higher percentage of water than adults), the makeup of the body, the amount of body fat, surrounding conditions like heat, and so forth.)
4. A person can survive about three days without water.
(True: It depends on a variety of conditions; for example, less time if there is no shelter from extreme heat. People can live longer, but not without irreversible damage to the body.)
5. Which of these are early signs of dehydration?
 - thirst
 - loss of appetite
 - dry mouth
 - dry skin
 - dark-colored urine
 - feeling tired
 - hallucinations(All except the last one, which is a later, more dangerous sign.)
6. What are uses for water?
(Drinking, cooling, cooking, cleaning, watering plants, traveling, religious rites such as baptism, fun, and more.)
7. Name a country where drought (lack of water) is a concern.
(There is drought in many countries of the world, which means there is limited drinking water, loss of food crops, loss of livestock, devastation to the land by dust, erosion, or wildfires, and more. Examples of countries where drought is a concern include Somalia, Darfur, Sudan, Chad, Kenya, and other countries in Africa; Australia; India; Brazil; and even parts of the United States (Arizona, for example.)

Attachment: Activity 7

Suggested Items

Bible
Candle
CD
Cell phone
Craft supplies
Cross
DVD
Glass
Hymnal
Paperclip
Pen
Pencil
Picture
Piece of candy or gum
Rubber band
Scissors
Stapler
Watch

Attachment: Activity 9

Phrase Ideas

I am eating chocolate cake.	The man was whistling.
You have to take a bus.	I'm angry.
The dog ran away.	You are my friend?
There are three ways to dance.	Find a book in the Bible.
Get away from me!	Come follow me.

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Young people are at a time of questioning everything. The stories that held their attention when they were younger are being scrutinized for meaning in the here and now. It is important to listen to them, reflect back what they are saying, and help them to discern meaning for themselves. Remember that they are paying attention to what adults do even more than what they say.

About this Exploration

Through careful study and prayer, we discern scripture's guidance for faithful living. From the creation of human beings in Genesis to the Gospel accounts of God Incarnate in Jesus Christ, scripture references and celebrates the human body. The body is a source of wonder in the Psalms, of delight in the Songs of Solomon, and of hope in the New Testament. We learn of God's tender embrace of humanity, made in God's very image. We discover bodies of all ages, abilities, and healthiness—multifaceted and diverse. While scripture cannot be used as an inerrant blueprint for modern living, it presents the opportunity to continually evaluate and reimagine the miraculous and amazing vessel that God not only gives but co-habits with us. Scripture is a living, breathing source continually growing and changing as it empowers persons in all ages and of all ages.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 2:1–25
Romans 12:1–8

Leader Preparation

This Exploration looks at the human body as viewed through the lens of Holy Scripture. This is not a Bible study, but rather a way of seeing what this witness to God's presence in our lives reveals about the sacredness of the human body as God's creation and gift to us. We will help the youth seek wisdom from God through the Bible.

Prayer: O dearest God, you are ever present, and we are grateful for the words of scripture and their meaning in our lives to this day. Help us to find ourselves in the experiences of others as we hear witness to your mighty presence in their lives. Amen.

Session Development

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

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 God Provides (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: In this activity youth may explore the concept of God's providence and its relationship to our basic needs.

Supplies:

- paper
- colored pencils, markers, crayons

If your youth are comfortable reading aloud, take turns reading Psalm 23; read it carefully, line by line. This is a popular psalm of trust in God's care. Note how all basic body needs are met: rest, water, food, shelter, comfort, restoration. Then read Psalm 8. Invite the youth to use paper and writing tools to draw a picture or write a poem depicting what they hear in the psalms about how God feels about their bodies. Be creative. If you have the ability, or one of the youth is able, as a group you may want to take a stab at writing a song.

2 Creation

Leader preparation: In this activity we will read the second creation story in Genesis and do some experiential learning. Assure everyone that one need not be a skilled artist to do this project. Read the text and reflect on the meaning of breathing one's own breath to give life to a living being. The purpose of this exercise is to help the youth understand how precious we are to God.

Supplies:

- Play Dough or other modeling clay
- sheets of paper
- writing instruments

Ask the youth to get into a comfortable listening position as you or someone reads the creation story from Genesis 2:1–25. Explain that everyone gets to take the role of God in the story. Invite the youth to take some modeling clay and fashion a little body. Give them time to create their creatures. In the text the Hebrew word for what God made means "mud creature," since it was made out of the earth. Once these are made, ask the creators to comment on their creations. Have the youth set the creations aside on a sheet of paper for a moment, and ask them to take a deep breath in and then breathe out. What can they say about breath? What does it represent? Reread Genesis: 2:7. Invite each to take his or her little person and pretend to breathe the creator's own life into it. What would their little lumps of clay mean to them now? Invite the youth to ponder how they think God feels about them. Invite them to talk to God about it, perhaps write their prayers on the papers next to their creations.

3 Beauty

Leader preparation: There is a song in the Rodgers and Hammerstein version of the Cinderella story in which the prince asks, "Do I love you because you're beautiful, or are you beautiful because I love you?" In this activity we will engage a portion of a love poem included in the wisdom literature. This will allow the youth to hear how scripture reveals God in all of human life, including the beauty of the human body.

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

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- Bibles (in more than one translation, if available)
- Scrabble® and/ or other lettered tiles
- poster board, game board, or other flat surface

Invite the youth to brainstorm the ways they hear people refer to the body. List these on the newsprint under the headings POSITIVE and NEGATIVE. Read Song of Solomon 4:1–7 and 5:10–16, a love poem about the female and male bodies. How do these words compare to the lists they have developed?

What words would the group add to the lists? Using the Scrabble® tiles, ask them to create some words and/or phrases that they think God might use to describe the beauty of God’s beloved. They should try to connect the words just as they would in a game of Scrabble® or in a crossword puzzle.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Temple of the Holy Spirit (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: The law given to Moses formed the basis for life in the community of Israel. One of the most important aspects of this was the holiness code, given in Leviticus, chapters 17–26; it was designed to keep the Jewish people closer to God by keeping them separated from profane worldliness. First Corinthians 6:19 says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple (or sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?” God breathed God’s own breath of life into the mud creature to create a living being (Genesis 2:7). In this activity, we will talk about keeping the body clean since it is a temple for God. Personal hygiene shows a respect for the body, so a literal understanding of the word clean may also be discussed.

Supplies:

- song: “Sanctuary” by Randy Scruggs and John Thompson, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxB9VH3cCN4&feature=related>; lyrics: <http://www.worshiparchive.com/song/sanctuary>

In the time of Moses and thereafter until Jesus, God gave the Israelites the law so that they might have guidelines to remain faithful and not fall away from the community into the ways of those who did not follow Yahweh. To become unclean meant that they could not participate in the ritual of the temple. Jesus was often found mingling with these unclean folk. Some of the things that made a person unclean were illnesses (like leprosy), touching a person who was unclean or a dead person, and/or not bathing properly. Jesus healed many persons, making it possible for them to become clean again so they could return to community life.

Our faith communities claim that all are welcome. Ask the group to consider who might be considered to be unclean persons in this day and age. What do they think it means to be unclean now? Who are the unwanted? How do we make ourselves unclean? What can we do to our body that makes it less a temple for God? Have them consider unhealthy habits, then reflect on those habits and how even today Jesus can make one clean through his love.

Sing “Sanctuary” and ponder how our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.



5 Self-examination

Leader preparation: Read Romans 12:1–2. Reflect on the idea of being a living sacrifice. How does one offer his or her body to God? This period of life for young people is at times very confusing. They are beginning to reject early ideas of what it means to know God and are finding their own ways to be faithful. In this activity we will address how a young person might honor his or her body by remembering that we have a choice to use our bodies in ways that are holy and acceptable to God.

Prepare enough copies of the circle graph so that each youth might have one. A sample graph is included in Attachment: Activity 5. Assure them that this is a personal activity so no one will see it unless she or he chooses to share it. Make sure this happens by providing adequate space to work. Remind them that this activity reflects a single measure of time like a snapshot and is to be used to evaluate how they are doing; it is not a measure of self-worth. Be attentive to any strong emotions or responses.

Supplies:

- “Pie Chart,” Attachment: Activity 5
- glue, scissors
- beads, stickers, sequins
- assorted pens, colored pencils, markers, crayons
- Bibles

Read aloud Romans 12:1–2 and take a few minutes to consider as a group what it means to be a living sacrifice. Explain that the focus will be on an individual’s ability to choose how to offer her or his body to God in a holy and acceptable way. Pass out paper, and invite the youth to create personal life pie charts. Show the sample pie chart (see Attachment: Activity 5). On the paper invite each youth to graph a day or a week in his or her life: *What portion was acceptable to God, and what portion probably wasn’t?* They may want to have categories of perfectly acceptable, good, not so good, and unacceptable. Allow them to use whatever supplies help to express their selves. Allow ten minutes to do this activity, and then invite the youth to discuss how self-examination on a regular basis can be a way to honor the body by helping them think about how God would view their actions. Encourage comments about how the activity made them feel and whether it was helpful.

6 Body Image

Leader preparation: In this activity we will explore through a worship activity the scriptural reference to being the image of God. Younger youth are very aware of their bodies and may be quite sensitive about how they look. Set up four stations. The first has the scripture text and a small candle. The second is the full-length mirror, preferably with some privacy, with a sign saying “This is an image of God.” The third is a table with two hand-held mirrors and a sign saying “Image of God.” The fourth space has two chairs facing each other. If the group is large, add a fifth station in which the group can sit and write their thoughts about the activity in a notebook. A visually impaired person could do the activity by touch.

Supplies:

- Bible
- song: “Imago Dei” by Jill Kirsten Warner, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2duLAakNyuw>
- full-length mirror
- two small hand-held mirrors
- spiral notebook (if needed)

Divide the group into pairs and invite them to rotate through the different stations with each pair starting at a different station. At one station they can read the text and pray. At another they are to be in front of the mirror and look at themselves. At a third they should use the mirrors to see parts of themselves that they usually don’t see. At the fourth a pair will face each other and each person will say how he or she sees the image of God before them. If needed, a fifth station is where everyone else is sitting quietly, reflecting on the activity and writing thoughts and comments in the book as they feel compelled to do so. When all are finished, gather and share comments about what they experienced. Sing “Imago Dei.”

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Nakedness (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: In this activity we will talk about changing bodies and how God loves us as we are. There are so many mixed messages about the body, even in the Bible, that we should spend some time unpacking this with the youth. Read the Genesis 3 account of the fall and Adam and Eve covering their nakedness. Familiarize yourself with Song of Solomon, Isaiah 40:7–8, and 1 Corinthians 6.19. Create a safe space for the youth to speak freely. Make sure everyone understands that what is said in the group stays in the group and will not be shared. You might want to separate the youth by gender or age to help facilitate conversation. Make note of any questions or uneasiness that might arise and be prepared to follow through with these. The human body is beautiful and is meant to be appreciated as gift.

Supplies: None

The Bible has many mixed stories about the body. There is the fall from grace in the garden where the people who were once comfortable with their nakedness now feel shame for the same. Share the thought from both testaments that says the body is temporary like grass that withers. Yet God cares for the body, as it houses a treasure.

Considering all these things, ask questions such as these:

- What would you say about nakedness?
- Why do we get embarrassed by it?
- What is the difference between being modest and being ashamed?
- How do you think God views our bodies?
- Does holding something sacred require some protection?

These are very hard questions, but as we undergo the many changes that take us from children to adults, we become very aware of our bodies. Invite discussion

about how we protect our bodies by keeping them covered. Consider the wild variation in belief about this subject, from nude beaches to wearing of the burqa. Ask what the youth think drives this difference in viewpoint. What do they think about this subject? What do they think God wishes for us? Let the discussion drive the questions.

8 Jesus and Touch

Leader preparation: In this activity, we will see how Jesus used touch in his ministry. Touch is a very important part of being human. Familiarize yourself with Jesus' healing touch in ministry. A few examples include Matthew 8:3, 8:15, 9:29, 20:34; Mark 7:33; Luke 6:19, 7:14. The website "The Benefits of Human Touch," <http://suite101.com/article/the-benefits-of-human-touch-a155979>, has a good treatment of the benefits of human touch. During the discussion, it might be helpful to break into smaller groups of two or three to facilitate sharing. Younger youth are often self-conscious in a larger group setting.

Supplies:

- Bible

Touch is one of the senses that is often underestimated. It has been shown that babies who are not touched in early development may suffer long-term mental and physical problems. Everyone needs touch each day. Touch develops in the womb. It is the first sense to develop in the fetus and persists into old age, even when the other senses fail. Touch can reassure, relax, and comfort. It can lift depression, alleviate stress or physical pain, and reduce anxiety. It has been shown to increase the number of immune cells in the body. It seems that Jesus was quite aware of this. He never shied away from touch in his ministering to others. (Share some of the biblical stories in the leader preparation.)

Ask the group to think about a time when they had a special hug from someone they love. How did that make them feel? Invite the youth to get into a large circle and have a group hug. Maintaining the hug, talk about the effects of this kind of exchange. When you are ready, sit down and continue the conversation. What makes a hug or other touch uncomfortable? Talk about good touch, like a hand on the shoulder, a handshake, or a side-to-side hug. Challenge the youth, as they go about their day, to consider giving someone a hug, a pat on the back, or a handshake and see how the other person responds. Note your own response as well.

9 Many Gifts

Leader preparation: In this activity we will think about how each of our bodies belongs to the larger body of Christ. Read Romans 12:1–8. This is a freestyle activity and will work best if the youth are given some creative license. Does the body of Christ have to look like a human body? Maybe a robot body would be okay. Creating a megabody can be chaotic, but suggest that they choose a facilitator who will help guide the process (the head/brain). This will require some space. A fellowship hall or gymnasium or outdoors might be best.

Supplies:

- Bible
- adequate space
- (optional) camera

Ask one or more youth to read aloud Romans 12:1–8. Explain that this activity requires using their own body to design a "megabody." Each whole person will be

part of the larger “megabody.” Be creative. Someone can be the heart because that person is nurturing, for example. Someone might be a hand or hands because he or she likes to fix things. The group may want to participate in helping decide which gift/body part each individual will represent. Acknowledge that we all have many gifts, but that it is in sharing those gifts that we form a functioning body of Christ. As they create the body, encourage comments about how others in the church family or community might fit into the whole. Once the body is formed, discuss the condition and use the opportunity to talk about inclusion, missing parts, and so forth. The final product doesn’t have to look perfect. As a matter of fact, it will be somewhat distorted. It is the process that is important. If possible, take a picture.

Reflect

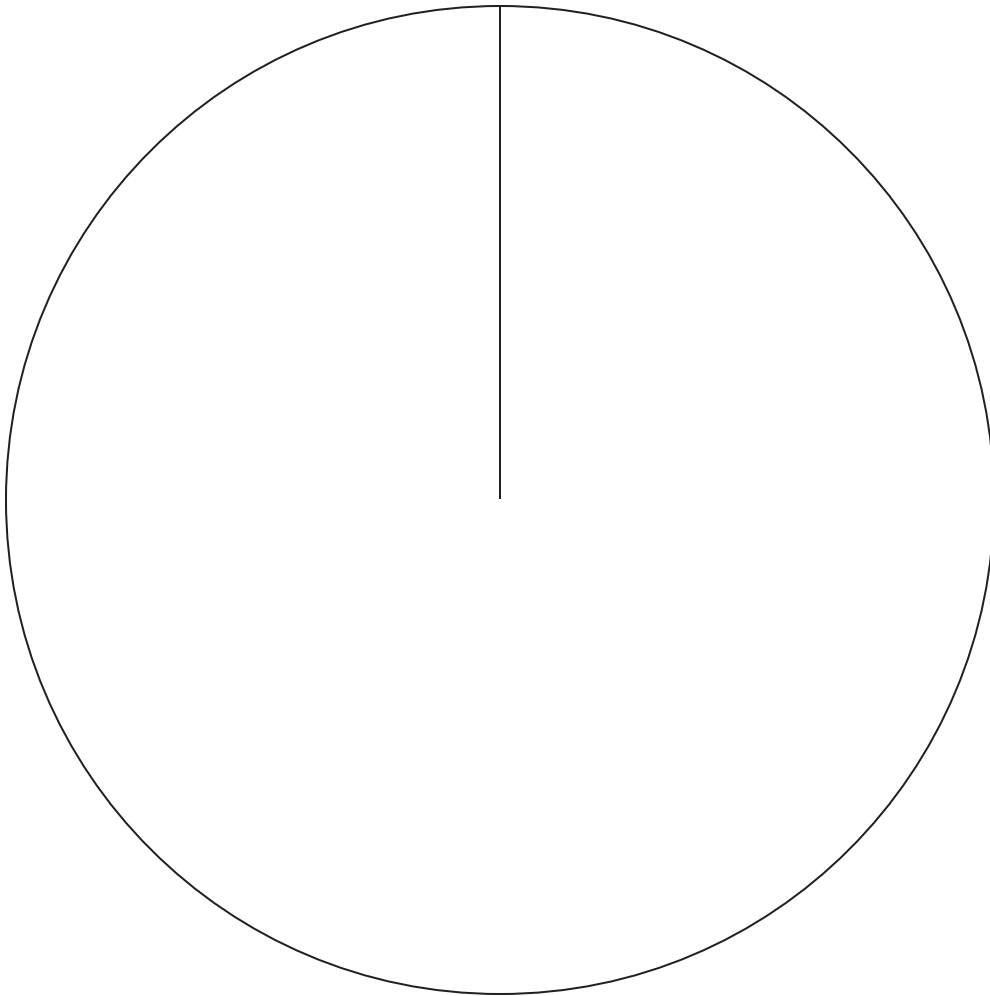
Scriptures provide a wide view of the wonder of the human body and God’s role in the creation, nurture, and care of our bodies. As we read the stories and poetry of the Bible, we find many ways that the body is honored. Even in instances when the opposite is true, we are made aware of the importance of the body in being whole in self and in community, for God’s sake.

Attachment: Activity 5

Pie Chart

What portion of your day (week) was spent in activity that would be:

1. Acceptable to God
2. Mostly acceptable to God
3. Probably not so acceptable to God
4. Unacceptable to God?



Honoring the Body



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Youth are eager to find meaning in their faith. This is evidenced by a strong sense of justice and their desire to do rather than talk. Discovering what it means to follow Jesus is important at a time when youth are discovering who they are and what they believe. We can help them by modeling how we follow Christ in our everyday lives and freely talking about it from personal experience.

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

In this Discipleship Exploration we will think about what it means to be a follower of Christ and the many ways we use our human bodies to follow the Way. It is our hope to help the youth understand the possibilities granted us as human beings and to consider what they might be able to do or be because of the intricacy and capabilities of their own bodies.

Prayer: Precious and loving God, in Christ we find the Way. Help us to be mindful always of the path and remember that we have a superb guide. Please hold us in your embrace as we explore what it means to be a true follower of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Session Development

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

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



① Human Knot (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This is a good game for youth because it involves movement and a challenge. It is a way to demonstrate several aspects of honoring the usefulness of our bodies. They will see how to solve a problem, how to get out of a mess, and how to interact with others while showing respect for them. Remember that this is a physical activity, so make sure that people are suitably dressed, physically able, and willing to take part. If someone wishes not to be in the circle, encourage him or her to help direct from the sidelines.

Supplies: None

Gather in a circle, facing inward toward one another. Invite the group to move toward the center so that they can all reach out with both hands and clasp hands with two other people across the circle. All hands will be joined in the center. Check that each hand is joined to only one other hand. (You may want them to do this with eyes closed to ensure that there is a healthy amount of intermingling.) When you’re satisfied they’re ready, ask the group to start gently untangling the knot without letting go of hands. They will have to cooperate as a group to solve the problem and keep people from falling down.

Eventually the group will untangle into a perfect circle, maybe with a breakaway smaller circle. Get them all to congratulate themselves for a job well done. Ask what they might learn about honoring the body from this exercise. Encourage comments about using the mind and body to solve a problem, how you respect others, the helpfulness of some guides, and so forth.

② The Actions of Jesus

Leader preparation: Spend time considering the ministry of Jesus. His humanity embodied his work. In this activity we will think about how Jesus honored his body and the bodies of others as he lived and worked. There are many images available online; use an online search engine for images for “Jesus’ ministry.” You can also find many artistic renderings in books.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- images of Jesus’ ministry, http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?adv_prop=image&fr=yfp-t-701&sz=all&va=jesus+ministry
- paper
- pens, pencils, markers
- craft materials, such as beads, strips of paper, feathers, glue, and so forth

There are many artistic renderings of how Jesus worked. Show the youth the images of Jesus you have found. Ask what they notice about the activities depicted. Possible observations: Jesus is often surrounded by others; he touches people; he feeds others and eats with them; he prays. Encourage other observations. Using Bibles or recalling favorite stories, invite the youth to describe what they believe about how Jesus embodied his faith. Using drawing materials and assorted craft materials, create an image or images of Jesus at work. Someone may prefer to write a poem, so encourage creativity. Invite persons to share if they wish.

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 Thought Bubbles

Leader preparation: In this activity we will think about what it means to utilize your body in following Christ. You will have to prepare several “thought bubbles,” which are the way dialogue is displayed in cartoons. (Check any newspaper with comics if you need examples of how this works.) With these tools, the youth will share with others their thoughts about how God calls us to use our bodies in our attempts to follow in the Way of Jesus. Spend time thinking about how you and others in the faith journey follow the Way before engaging the youth.

Supplies:

- “Thought Bubbles,” Attachment: Activity 3
- several letter-size sheets of paper
- digital camera
- (optional) markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Our bodies are capable of so much. Consider how we use our bodies when we try to follow Jesus. There are thousands of ways. Take time in silence to think about your own journey. In what ways do we embody (live out, give form to, put legs on) our faith? Encourage the youth to think outside the box. For example: Some people preach using their voices; others create beautiful art for others to enjoy; still others are good listeners. If we want to follow Jesus, we do it in all aspects of our lives. When they have come up with many good examples, acknowledge each one and ask for more. If you wish you can write them on newsprint or a whiteboard.

Invite the youth to consider all these things and choose those that really resonated with the whole group. Write these as thought bubbles. Take pictures of the youth holding their thought bubble and post them where others may see. The heading might be: Have you thought about how we follow Jesus?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Self-Control (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: At this stage of life youth are dealing with significant changes in their bodies. In this activity we will think of ways to gain control over the body and understand how this honors the body. Healthy respect for the developing body is a faith practice. Since it is often easier to talk about the body in same-gender groups, it might be a good idea to separate genders for this discussion. The conversation may focus on feelings, like anger or hurt, or it may move to desire and concerns about sex. Be prepared to listen to their concerns and address them directly.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

One fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) is self-control. Ask: *Have you found it difficult to control yourself? Describe a time when you were so angry you could burst—or did burst. Have you ever felt betrayed? Have you had an urge to do something you knew wasn’t right, but it sounded fun?*

Remind learners that we can honor God when we have better control over our emotions. Talk with the group about things that upset them or make them angry. List their ideas on newsprint or a whiteboard. Choose one of their ideas and ask what about this upsets them. As a group, think of at least three actions a person could take in this situation. Consider each action and ask what is likely to happen if this action was carried out. Then make a decision, choosing the action that the group thinks might work best in the situation.

Ask the group to consider how this process might be a model for them in some of the other situations listed on the newsprint or whiteboard. How does using God's gift of self-control bring them closer to God?

As a closing prayer read Psalm 71.

5 Foot Washing

Leader preparation: This activity introduces the participants to an attitude of service. This exercise involves touching, and you must be mindful of those who may be uncomfortable being touched or touching others. Remind persons to be respectful. If someone is particularly uneasy, you might suggest a hand washing. Jesus said you had to be a servant. You need a sufficiently clear space to accommodate a basin with water and a chair. A drop cloth might be helpful, as there could be spilling with active youth.

Supplies:

- one to three basins, depending on the size of the group, partially filled with water
- towel(s) and wash cloth(s)
- soap
- chair

Invite groups of three to participate. One person sits in the chair and removes a shoe or shoes; another kneels before the person and washes feet. One is an observer. Switch positions. Repeat with the third person. Invite the three persons to share their experiences. What was it like to have their feet washed? What were their feelings as they washed? What did they experience as the observer? If time permits, have trios share in the larger group.

6 Jars of Clay

Leader preparation: In this activity we will engage scripture and consider the fragile nature of our bodies that, nonetheless, house a great treasure. Our intrinsic value is not determined by the size, shape, condition, or wholeness of our bodies. Our wholeness comes from our relationship with God. Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-5:1. We will focus on verses 4:15 and following.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite youth to think about ways in which their bodies are fragile. If you have a youth in a cast, ask him or her to talk about the experience. Encourage all to talk about illness, aging, breaking bones, loss of limbs, injuries, blindness, and so forth. Ask if and how they think our society values these fragile people. What evidence do they have? Do they value fragility in persons? Does God? In what ways does the church demonstrate the value of each person? Think about accessibility; education, worship, and fellowship activities; and attitude of welcome.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:15–5:1. Invite discussion about whether our value is determined by the wholeness of the body. *What does that say about how we are called to care for one another? How do we honor the body by respecting it in whatever form it takes? How did Jesus model this behavior for us? Does physical wholeness necessarily mean true wholeness?*

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Reach Out and Touch (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: In this activity, we will explore what it means to reach out and touch. Read Mark 5:21–43. There is a lot of thought-provoking content in this text: faith, asking for help, being touched, and touching. In drama, deeper meaning can be revealed. Sharing in smaller groups provides more opportunity for each person to get a chance to participate more fully. You can encourage creativity by simply asking the youth to take the text and present the story in any way they think will get the important ideas across to the group.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the youth to act out the story in Mark 5. There are several characters. If the group is small, you may either pick only part of the story to dramatize while making the rest a narrated piece, or youth may play multiple roles. After the scene ask them what about this text struck them in particular. What did they notice about Jesus' healing in these instances? What do they think it took for the man to ask for help and for the woman to boldly touch Jesus? Invite them to share with one another a time when they have experienced healing touch. Remind them to consider being comforted or encouraged, for example. How is the act of touch a way to honor the body?

8 Hat Trick

Leader preparation: Read 1 Corinthians 2:14–16. The concept of putting on the mind of Christ helps us to think about using our own minds carefully and thus honoring another portion of our bodies. In this activity we will make a hat as a way to engage this text and consider how our minds and hearts are not to be separate. Instructions for the hat are provided in the handout. Make one yourself before learners arrive. You may want to use an Internet search engine to find a website with illustrations of how to make a hat from a sheet of newspaper.

Supplies:

- newspaper
- markers
- “How to Make a Hat,” Attachment: Activity 8
- (optional) paint, construction paper, or other art supplies

Read 1 Corinthians 2:16, either by reading around the room or by asking one or two to read it aloud. What do the youth think is meant by “the mind of Christ”? What if we could put on a hat and have the mind of Christ? Wouldn't that be easy? Remind them that we are not without guidance, though. We have been given a mind and we should use it.

Invite the youth to create paper hats and decorate them to illustrate the mind of Christ. As they create their hats, they should try to think of ways we can honor

our bodies by using our minds. Can we sway too far on the intellectual side and lose the heart portion? Spend time talking about the balance between mind and heart. *What does Christ have to do with this? What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?* Invite all to put on their hats and pray for God to give us grace to think and feel as true followers of Christ.



9 Feeding Others

Leader preparation: In this activity we ask the youth to share food together. This is a very intimate act and may be challenging for some of the learners. Provide food that is easily handled or served with a toothpick. Require everyone to wash hands. Be mindful of food allergies, and avoid anything with nuts.

Supplies:

- table and chairs
- finger foods (preferably healthy foods such as fruit pices, vegetables, or cheese)
- cups of water or some kind of juice
- “Heaven and Hell,” Attachment: Activity 9

Jesus’ ministry was often held in homes where people would gather for a meal. Ask why learners think Jesus ate with others so often. What is special about meal time?

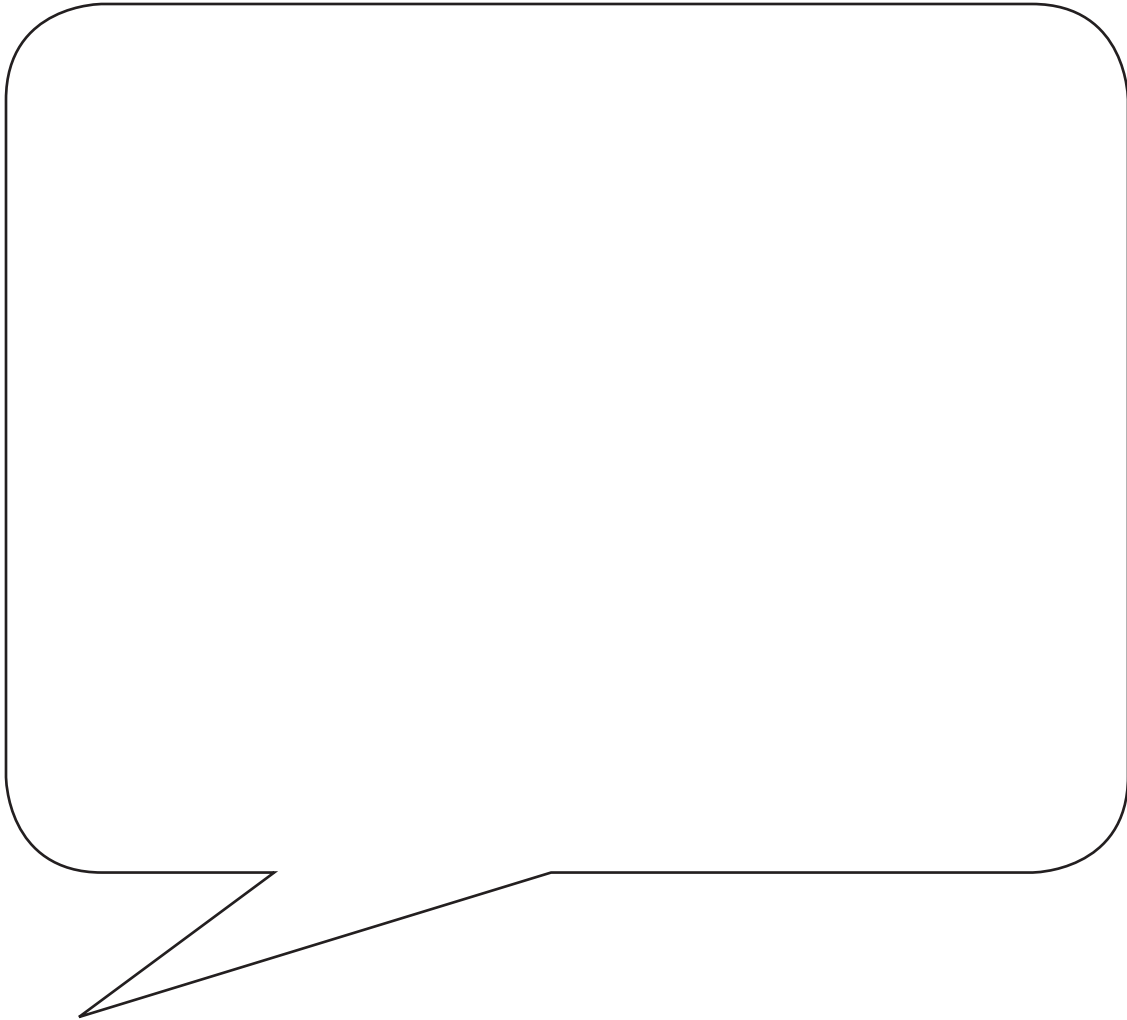
Tell the story “Heaven and Hell,” Attachment: Activity 9, and share the finger foods. As you share this small meal together, feed one another. No one is to take food for her- or himself. Follow up by asking how it felt to feed someone else. How did it feel to be fed? In order to serve someone, that person must receive. Ask: *Are you a good receiver?*

Reflect

Following Christ is hard. It is much easier to just go on your merry way and take care of yourself. But we are called to care for one another, to love one another, and to be caretakers of one another’s bodies by seeing that they are sheltered, fed, nurtured, and hugged. It is also important to receive the same from others.

Attachment: Activity 3

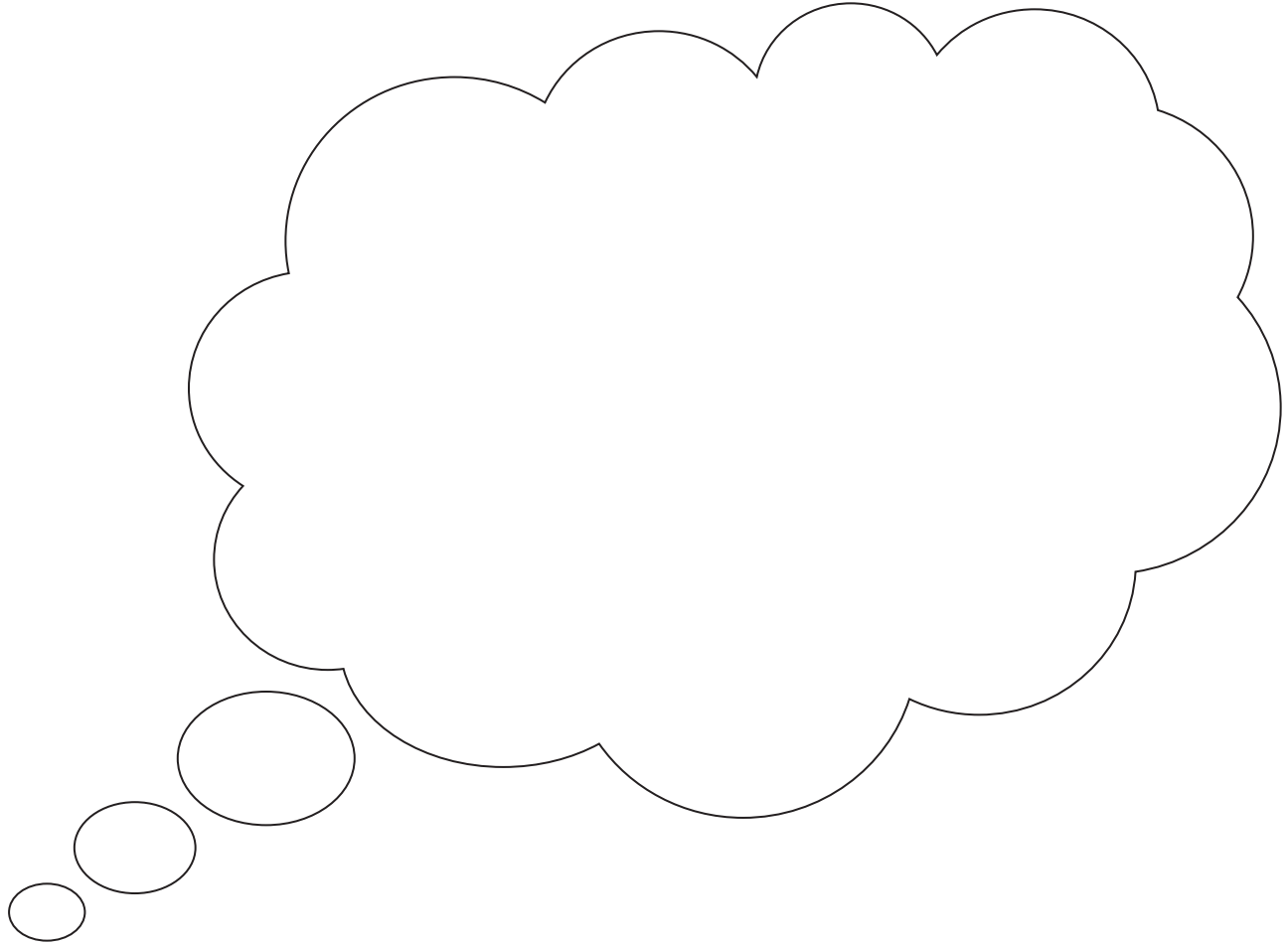
Thought Bubbles



Attachment: Activity 3 (continued)



Attachment: Activity 3 (continued)



Attachment: Activity 8

Water Quiz

Supplies:

- a full sheet of newspaper for each hat
- (optional) tape
- (optional) markers, paint, construction paper, or other art supplies.

How to Work:

1. Take one large newspaper sheet, open all the way. Do not use the ads or the half pages. You can use any other section, such as the comics, editorials, want ads, and so forth.
2. Fold the sheet in half lengthwise. This is the way the sheet comes in the newspaper.
3. Fold the sheet in half again by bringing the top of the paper to the bottom. The folded page is now in landscape position.
4. Fold the top corners to the middle so they meet in the center, creasing the fold lines. This forms a triangle with the point at the top and the longest edge on the bottom (the folded-down corners will not reach this longest edge).
5. Fold the top piece of the bottom of the paper (the side facing you) up to the bottom of the pointed fold.
6. Fold the bottom again until it overlaps a little of the pointed part.
7. Turn the hat over.
8. Fold sides in about 2 inches. This fold determines the hat size, so you may need to adjust that fold either to 1½ inch or to 2½ inches to fit the wearer.
9. Fold the bottom up twice, as you did for the other side in steps 5 and 6.
10. Pull apart the opening at the bottom to make a hat shape.
11. Decorate the hat with markers, paint, construction paper, or other art supplies.

Attachment: Activity 9

Heaven and Hell

A rabbi was talking with God about heaven and hell.

“Come,” said God. “Walk with me, and I will show you hell.”

Together they walked into a room of cold, rough stone. In the center of the room, atop a low fire, sat a huge pot of quietly simmering stew. The stew smelled delicious, and it made the rabbi’s mouth water. A group of people sat in a circle around the pot, and each of them held a curiously long-handled spoon. The spoons were long enough to reach the pot. But the handles were so long that every time someone dipped the bowl of their spoon into the pot and tried to get the spoon to their mouth, the stew would spill.

The rabbi could hear the grumblings of their bellies. They were cold, hungry, and miserable.

“And now,” God said, “I will show you heaven.”

Together they walked into another room, almost identical to the first. A pot of stew simmered in the center; another ring of people sat around it; each person held one of the frustratingly long spoons. But this time, the people sat with the spoons across their laps or laid on the stone beside them. They talked quietly and cheerfully with one another. They were warm, well-fed, and happy.

“God, I don’t understand,” said the rabbi. “How was the first room hell; and this, heaven?”

God smiled. “It’s simple,” he said. “You see, here they learned to feed one another.”

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

For youth, church tradition is a mixed bag. They want to break out of what has always been even as they still find comfort in knowing they are part of a larger community that cherishes certain traditions. When they share their ideas, it is often with the desire to shake up things and awaken the community to be more authentic Christians. They would keep the traditions, but update them, if you will.

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

This Exploration looks at the tradition of the church and how the human body plays a role. Throughout the ages we have used our bodies in praise and worship as well as in prayer and caring. We will ask the youth to think about how our bodies are honored in these practices in the past and present.

Prayer: God of our past and present, the traditions we hold are ways to be faithful and true to you. Help us to know ourselves better by understanding where we have been and what we hold dear in the church. Amen.

Session Development

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

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Sabbath (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Sabbath is a long standing spiritual practice. Its importance is outlined in the earliest scriptures of the Old Testament. God rested after creation and expects us to do so as well. Taking Sabbath replenishes your body. More than simply physical rest, in Sabbath you nourish your soul as well. Reflect on how you observe Sabbath in your life. You might want to share a time of Sabbath you experienced. For this activity to be effective, participants need to be able to lie down, so if lying down is uncomfortable for someone, suggest a comfortable seated position.

Supplies:

- space for lying down
- “Relaxation Technique Scripts,” Attachment: Activity 1

Explain that whatever else it may mean, taking Sabbath is always about carving out time in life for rest. It could be as large as taking a vacation, or as little as stopping to put oneself at ease in a time of stress. It is unhealthy to neglect the need for rest. Invite the youth to lie down on the floor if they are able, or to sit comfortably in a chair. Lower the light level, if it is harsh. Have them close their eyes. Use the script on Attachment: Activity 1.

After several minutes of the relaxation exercise, allow a few more minutes of silence. Call youth back gently by inviting them, when they are ready, to open their eyes and sit up. Ask them about the experience. Was it difficult or easy? Why do they think it is challenging for us to take Sabbath? Do they and their families regularly take vacation time? How does that affect the rest of life?

2 Smelly Smelly

Leader preparation: This activity is designed both to help youth understand the traditional use of fragrance in the church and to think about how the sense of smell can bring us closer to God. You may want to read about use of incense in the church at <http://www.fisheaters.com/incense.html>. Refer also to Luke 1:8–12, John 12:1–8, and Matthew 2:11. In the act of worship, engaging all our senses enriches the experience. Think back on your own experiences in the church. Were smells a component? Considering that many of our youth come from unchurched backgrounds, think of ways to explain some of the traditional olfactory sensations related to church. You could ask for stories about favorite smells and the power of those smells to trigger memory. Becoming aware of this amazing bodily function will help the youth find yet another way to experience God in the world. Be sensitive to those who may have allergies or scent sensitivities.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- candles
- (optional) incense
- (optional) fragrant oil

Smell is a strong emotional sense. It is strongly associated with memory. Think of some of the smells that remind you of happy times, sad times, and so forth. You will be surprised at how many there are.

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 youth to describe their smell memories. Ask: *What are your favorite smells? Why? What memories do you associate with smells?* Invite anyone to tell his or her story briefly. Then, ask the group to imagine that they are in the sanctuary at church. Have them list some of the smells. Ask them to think of other smells associated with church in general. You may get responses related to fellowship, meals, communion, and so forth. Traditionally, we have had things like candles and incense to lift the senses. If available, light these as a demonstration. Ask the youth to imagine the smells that would be associated with an animal sacrifice (think barbecue). Invite the youth to comment on this activity thus far. What are they thinking about?

As you consider the ways we experience the world through the sense of smell, think about how we encounter God. Thank God for the sense of smell.

③ Fasting (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: As you prepare you might find this link helpful: <http://www.redstone.org/fasting.htm>. Fasting is an ancient tradition in the church. We don't fast as much as we used to. Have you ever fasted? What was it like for you?

Supplies: None

Explain to the youth that fasting is an ancient tradition. In its most familiar sense, to fast is to go without food for a period of time—although fasting can be extended to many other activities that are given up. During a food fast, one experiences hunger as a spiritual discipline that may put you closer to God by removing you from a physical focus to a focus on the holy. Ask them how long they think they could go without food before they would get hungry. What happens when we are hungry? How can denying ourselves help us to be better stewards of our bodies? Give consideration to how our physical hunger makes us aware of others' hunger and may lead to honoring their bodies by finding ways to help fight hunger. Issues we face to today include an overabundance of food while others lack food; a high-calorie diet that is poor in nutrition, overeating, and so forth. Hunger is a way of life for a large part of the world.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

④ Body Praying (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prayer is an important tradition in the church. We can pray alone or in a group. In this activity we will see how we may honor the body through the action of prayer. We communicate with God in many ways. Youth may have a very rigid understanding of prayer. This will give them the opportunity to see how we may praise God in countless ways through our wonderful bodies. Take a few moments to consider something you found particularly prayerful and create your own prayer. You may keep it to yourself or share it with the group.

Supplies:

- (optional) website: "Morning Body Prayer Exercise," http://www.oasis-min.org/Assets/Morning_Body_Prayer.html

Begin with a general question that should bring forth a variety of answers: *How do we communicate? What is prayer? How do the ways we communicate help us understand prayer?* After discussion, suggest that we might count any interaction with God as prayer. Just recalling that God is present is in itself prayer. Getting quiet or praying out loud counts. Moving or assuming a particular posture counts. Invite the youth to brainstorm ways we can use our bodies to talk to God. Ask them to demonstrate the ways. Someone might sing, kneel, fold hands, dance, and read. Encourage the youth to be creative and to think outside the box. Try this body prayer with the youth.

Stand with arms to your side. Then raise both arms as high as possible toward the ceiling. Whisper or say, “Hello, God. I’m listening.” Hold this position for a few moments. Then stretch arms as wide as possible. With arms wide open, name at least five blessings in your life. Then ask God to use your arms today to show God’s love. Now bring your arms around you in a hug. Whisper or say, “God, be present to me this day.” Invite the youth to name other positions to add to this prayer. Suggest that they begin each day in the coming week with this or a similar body prayer.

5 Dressing for Church

Leader preparation: The way we dress is part of the tradition of the church. In the past much care was given to proper attire for all occasions, including and often especially church. This activity explores attitudes about dress and adornment of the body as a way of honoring the body and, thus, giving honor to God. Consider the way we dress as well as jewelry, piercings, and tattoos or body art. This is an area of great concern to youth as they seek to be individuals, to fit in, and to be faithful—three goals that often conflict. Provide safe space to talk freely about these things by asking all to keep confidential any conversation and acknowledge all comments without judgment. You may want to separate by gender or age to facilitate easier conversation.

Supplies:

- Bible
- magazines, catalogs, newspapers with pictures of people, preferably close to the youth age.
- scissors
- two poster boards, one labeled “Dishonors the Body” and the other labeled “Honors the Body”
- tape

Read Song of Solomon 4:1–7 and 5:10–16 to hear a poem about the beauty of the human body. Have the youth look through the magazines, catalogs, newspapers, and other media to find at least three examples of how people dress the body today. When finished collecting the samples, ask them to gather to share their findings. Invite them to tape the pictures on the poster boards according to whether it honors or dishonors the body. There may be some discussion about each example. Encourage the group to talk about clothing, hairstyles, and other adornment. Ask: *In what ways do you think attitudes have changed about what we wear? If something is appropriate in one instance, is it appropriate everywhere? Does it even make sense to suggest that how we adorn our body honors or dishonors God? What do you think we should consider in adorning the body in order to honor it as a spiritual practice?*



6 Communion

Leader preparation: Get a copy of the words used for the institution of communion in your church. The scriptures are included on Attachment: Activity 6. Find the words that most resemble those used in your context. This activity may help the youth understand the embodiment of the God's love in the act of communion.

Supplies:

- Bible
- "Communion," Attachment: Activity 6
- chalice and paten and/or a loaf of bread and some wine (juice)

Place the chalice and plate with the bread and wine (juice) on a table in the center so all may see. Ask: *What is communion? Why do you take communion?* Acknowledge all answers. Encourage comments about the gathering together of persons to share in this important part of church tradition. Explain that Jesus himself instituted this meal and then share the words of institution. Look at the words carefully. How many body references can they find? Where were Jesus and his disciples? How were they honoring the body? Consider that they were having a meal. What does "this is my body" mean? How does Jesus sharing his body so fully honor the body? Take time to remember receiving communion. Ask the youth what it means to them, personally. How does the receiving of communion speak to them about the sacredness of the body?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Symbols (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: You will need to hold this session/activity in a church building—the more traditional the better. This activity looks at some symbols used in the church and examines their connection to the body.

Supplies: None

Take a field trip through a church to find symbols that honor the body. Look at the paintings, sculpture, stained glass, details on the altar, pulpit, Bibles, hymnals bulletins, and so forth to see what you can find. Be creative and free in thinking about how the body plays such an important role in our praise and worship. Invite discussion about what surprised the learners. What was especially moving to them? Were there any symbols where the body was not honored? Were there nonreligious symbols that struck them as honoring the body? If you meet in your own church building for this activity, invite the youth to pay closer attention to these things in the weeks ahead.

8 Giving the Offering

Leader preparation: This activity spends time considering the way the gifts we have are expressed bodily. Spend time with the song and think about how you offer yourself in the community. The youth often underestimate their gifts. Help them see how they can consecrate themselves to God in small but powerful ways. Give thought to how you use your own body as an offering to God. Consider how your gifts connect with your leadership in this faith practice learning.

Supplies:

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

Within the tradition of the church, the offering is a visible part of our commitment to God. It can come in many forms. We usually think of tithes and other monetary offering, but we also offer ourselves to God physically. Present the song and sing it together. Then look carefully at the lyrics. Ask the youth to think of ways they give to the church by performing physical tasks. How is this honoring the body as well as praising God? Is it possible to dishonor the body in this way? Who does too much in your church? If it isn't honoring the body, how can we change the approach so that it is? How do you think we can help those folks? Is it our responsibility?

9 Christmas in July—or Any Time?

Leader preparation: The church's tradition of celebrating Jesus' birth is very well known to the youth. Even those who have not been brought up in the church will know about Christmas. It could be fun to do a “Christmas celebration” at a different time of the year. This activity talks about the incarnation and what it means to people of faith.

Supplies:

- Christmas cards with images of the baby Jesus
- nativity set or crèche
- hymnals or song books with Christmas carols
- (optional) Christmas lights

Begin by having the youth define the word “incarnation.” After listening to and thinking about their responses, emphasize that it is that act of grace whereby Christ took our human nature and became human like us. How did he come into this world—a warrior ready to conquer? You might read one of the Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus in order to emphasize that he came as a weak and helpless baby. What does this say about the sacred nature of our human body? The Son experienced the fullness of humanity so that we could be in relationship with God.

Invite the youth to discuss the things Jesus probably experienced in thirty-three years of life. We don't know much about his childhood, but we can guess. Give emphasis to the things he may have experienced at their age. Take a moment to reflect on what it means to us, as Christians, that our Lord was human like us. Sing favorite Christmas carols.

Reflect

While tradition for the sake of tradition can be unhealthy, many traditions of the church give us meaningful connection with the past and with those who have gone before us in the faith. As we study the ways we serve God by honoring the body, we find a strong bodily connection in our tradition that helps us to hold steady to the path.

Attachment: Activity 1

Relaxation Technique Script

Breathe in—breathe out.
Breathe in—breathe out.
Listen to your breathing.
Quiet your mind.
Breathe in—breathe out.
Close your eyes and let the worries and cares of the day slip away.
Breathe in—breathe out.
Concentrate on your breathing.
Now relax your body.
Make fists.
Let your hands relax.
Tighten your forearms.
Let your arms go limp.
Tighten your shoulders.
Release them.
Feel your back tighten.
Relax your back.
Tighten your buttocks.
Release them.
Tighten your thighs.
Release them.
Tighten your calves.
Release them.
Flex your feet.
Let them relax.
Your entire body is relaxed.
Take a deep breath in.
Slowly release you breath.
As you release relax even more.
Breathe in—breathe out.

Attachment: Activity 6

Communion

Words of Institution of The Lord's Supper
(Except as noted, all texts from NRSV)

Luke 22:15–20

He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Matthew 26:26–29

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Mark 14:22–25

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Attachment: Activity 6 (continued)

The following is from *The Message*:

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Let me go over with you again exactly what goes on in the Lord's Supper and why it is so centrally important. I received my instructions from the Master himself and passed them on to you. The Master, Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread. Having given thanks, he broke it and said,

This is my body, broken for you.

Do this to remember me.

After supper, he did the same thing with the cup:

This cup is my blood, my new covenant with you.

Each time you drink this cup, remember me.

What you must solemnly realize is that every time you eat this bread and every time you drink this cup, you reenact in your words and actions the death of the Master. You will be drawn back to this meal again and again until the Master returns.

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Honoring the Body



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Younger youth are in a big transition from child to adult. It is a time of self-centeredness and self-discovery. However, in learning about self, they are often eager to help others. Perhaps this is a means of finding out who they are and what they are capable of doing. Youth are also quite receptive to personal narrative. Sharing a personal life experience of someone who affirms Jesus' teachings by work in the mission field could make a lasting impression.

About this Exploration

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

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

Leader Preparation

In this focus on context and mission, we want to consider especially the needs of the human body and our responsibilities for the care of the body as part of God's mission. We do not live in isolation, but in many relationships and contexts. We will deal with positive and negative aspects of human need, trying to heighten awareness of the myriad ways in which we are called to the corporal extension of God's presence on the earth.

Prayer: O God, so amazing yet so intimate, we embark on a time of reflection on what it means to be your child in service to others. Open our minds to the needs of your creation so that we might find our calling and be Christ to others in need. Amen.

Session Development

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

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

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Listening (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity explores the idea that we must listen to others to know how to serve them. Listening engages many parts of the body. One must hear, observe, and process the information in order to internalize it. By taking time to listen to another, we honor our own body's ability and that of the other by giving respectful attention. Spend time considering what it takes to truly listen. Are you a good listener? As a spiritual discipline, listening opens us to others in ways that help us grow as loving Christians.

Supplies: None

Invite everyone to say his or her name, address, and what that person would like to have for his or her next birthday. Give them all time to think about their answers, then ask them all to speak at the same time. Invite someone to list all the gifts. Why is it impossible? What does it take to truly listen to someone? Ask the youth how they think people feel when they are heard—or not heard. We honor another by respecting his or her voice. We must quiet our own voices to hear another person's voice. Invite the learners to pair off and answer this question to one another: Why do you think it might be better to ask what someone needs rather than assume you know what the need might be? As one person speaks, the other is to listen carefully, and then repeat what the first person said. Did the person actually listen? Switch and repeat the listening exercise. In what ways can active listening be a spiritual discipline?

2 Personal Space

Leader preparation: In this activity we will talk about personal space and how respecting others' bodies is a spiritual discipline. You have probably experienced a situation when someone gets too close or when someone steps back. There is great difference in how comfortable people feel with the physical presence of others. Think about family, friends, strangers—and your own comfort level. This is an exercise to demonstrate these differences and engage the youth in thinking about how to make others comfortable by understanding this need to feel safe.

Supplies

- a 60" tape measure
- several 5' lengths of string or yarn
- markers

Gather everyone in a circle facing inward to the center. As you stand in this circle, ask the youth to say what personal space is. *Is it different depending on your relationship with a person?* Your personal space is like an invisible bubble that surrounds you. If people move inside this bubble when they talk to you, it may make you feel uncomfortable. We will accept that the personal space for people in an intimate relationship is very small and that comfort with physical contact is included. *What is the personal space for a friend? For a stranger?*

Invite the learners to divide into groups of three to measure their own personal spaces using the string or yarn. Decide how far away you like people to be when you have a conversation if (a) that person is a friend; (b) that person is a mere acquaintance; or (c) the person is a stranger. Have the third person measure the distance between the two for each scenario and mark the piece of string or yarn;

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.

then compare the distances for each of the learners. Are there differences? Why or why not?

Ask the learners to think about how we can honor the body of another with regard to personal space, and why or how they think this might a spiritual discipline.



3 Backbone

Leader preparation: In this activity we will engage a piece of modern art to open conversation about how the human body might be honored as a reflection of service where we live and where we serve. Spend time with the artwork and consider the possibilities for conversation. The youth might mention strength as in physical strength, the supportive nature of the skeleton, or integrity. In the second part, when you consider context and mission, it might be a metaphor for strength of the congregation in outreach. Be prepared for literal and figurative interpretations. Encourage thinking outside the box and creative interpretation. Youth at this age may surprise you with the depth of their thinking.

Supplies:

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

Display the artwork where all will be able to see it, but cover it in the beginning so no one is able to see it. Ask for a volunteer. Once the volunteer is in place, invite the rest of the participants to turn their backs to the artwork and close their eyes. Now, uncover the art and ask the volunteer to look at it and describe the picture to the others. Then invite the whole group to look at the picture and experience it for themselves. If anyone is visually impaired, he or she could ask questions about the image. Suggest that everyone look at it from different points of view. Then ask what came to them or stood out to them in this time with the artwork? After some speculation, tell the group the title of the piece—“Back Bone.” Does it help to know the title? Why? How does this image express that idea? Have them spend more time with the work, considering this question: *How does the concept of backbone relate to where and how you live and serve others?* Then invite any who wish to share their thoughts.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Ha Ha Ha (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity is designed to have some fun, teach the youth the value of laughter, and relate it to mental and physical health. This is a physical activity and requires touching. Be aware of the sensitivities of any learners who may not be comfortable in this situation. This also requires a good amount of floor space to accommodate a group lying down.

Supplies: None

Invite the youth to lie flat on their backs, side by side, on the floor, like sardines in a tin. All their heads are at the same end. Each person places the left hand lightly

on the belly of the person to the left. Person 1 says “Ha.” Person 2 says “Ha Ha.” Person 3 says “Ha Ha Ha”—and so on up the line. They must say this seriously and without humor. Any “giggles,” that is, persons who cannot continue to say “Ha Ha” seriously, must be taken out of the line, and people then move together to fill in the space. Start the game again with Person 1 and keep going until everyone has giggled and no one is left. If no one giggles, send the Ha Ha’s back the other direction, continuing to increase by one.

When finished, divide into groups of two or three to answer these two questions: *How do you feel after laughing? Why do you think God gave us the ability to laugh?* Describe a time when laughing eased a difficult situation. It is said that laughter improves the mood, strengthens the immune system, and lessens pain. Laughter also relieves stress, which improves health in many ways. It is truly a gift from God that helps care for the body.

5 Sabbath Is Not Just about You

Leader preparation: Read Exodus 23:10–12. Note that Sabbath benefits not only the worker, but also others in the sphere of work. We will reflect on this scripture as it pertains to our various life contexts.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- paper and pencils for the learners

Read aloud Exodus 23:10–12, and then pause for silence. After a few moments, ask another person to read it aloud. *What did you notice in this reading?* This is about taking Sabbath, that is, about resting after a period of work. This passage about Sabbath is different because it suggests that others are the beneficiaries. On newsprint or a whiteboard write ME in the center and draw a circle around it. From that center draw lines radiating outward. To whom are we connected? Brainstorm the relationships. Now invite the youth to make their own connections. Encourage associations in family, including their pets, church, school, community, and the world. Think about how taking regular rest affects others in our own spheres. For instance, if we choose not to shop on Sunday, how does that affect others, such as businesses and store clerks? If we choose to take a Sabbath from driving or riding in a car, how does that affect the environment? Consider how things would be in our world if as a nation we practiced this kind of Sabbath.

6 Music Music Music

Leader preparation: Music is very important to youth. This activity connects their favorite songs to ways we honor the body. You may want to set criteria for which songs are appropriate in your setting. If possible, have them share the audio of one song in each category by playing their songs on their phones or mp3 players (you will need speakers), or you might be able to find the songs on the Internet. Helping youth experience their music through the lens of faith may give them a tool for spiritual growth.

Supplies:

- equipment for playing songs, if needed

Suggest sitting comfortably in a circle and ask the learners to think for a few minutes about their favorite music. Ask the youth to name a favorite song that applies to the following:

- A positive body image
- Celebrating the senses
- Respecting the body
- Taking care of yourself
- Healthy emotions

Were the learners able to name at least one song that fit in each category? What songs in their libraries highlight the opposite of those five things? Should we listen to music through a filter of faith? How does listening and responding to music honor the body?.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Helping Others by Manual Labor (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Young people are often eager to do physical work, if it means helping someone less fortunate. We've heard about getting dirty for Jesus. Most cities have a food bank and rely on volunteers to process their incoming food. You can use a food bank locator, such as <http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx>, to find a food bank in your area. Habitat for Humanity is another way to help by physical labor: http://www.habitat.org/getinv/volunteer_programs.aspx. Maybe you can do some important manual work around your church campus or a local school, or help with persons no longer able to take care of their yard. Choose a place to do manual labor for others in the name of Jesus. Be mindful of age requirements. Spend time researching these and other local opportunities for service to others. For the beginning of this activity, you will need to plan for a work project where you meet.

Supplies:

- Bible
- tools necessary to get the job done, such as brooms, mops, dust cloths, tools, shovels

Read 2 Corinthians 4:15. Physical labor can lead to spiritual growth. Share with the youth the information you gathered in your research. Discuss how being physical can honor the body and God. You may have a cleaning project in the room or building where you meet.

Prayer: O most Holy God, we give thanks for our bodies and the ability to work. Please accept this labor as our gift to you. We ask your continued blessing on those who live and work in this place. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

To extend this activity, if possible, arrange a field trip to work at one of the places you found. Be sure to secure permission for the youth to go off site, and provide an opportunity for debriefing the experience. You might ask: *How were we honoring our bodies in this experience? How did you experience God today?*

8 Getting What You Need

Leader preparation: In this activity we will engage a specific work of art and create something to share love with another person or persons.

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
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- card stock
- colored pencils, crayons, pens, markers
- various craft materials, glue, sequins, beads, feathers, construction paper, scissors

Invite the youth to spend time looking at the artwork “Margot Embracing Her Mother” by Mary Cassatt. Encourage them to experience the image, noting shapes and colors, characters, background, and so forth. Allow a few minutes, and then ask the youth to say words or phrases that immediately came to mind while experiencing the artwork. List these on newsprint or a whiteboard.

Human beings need love. Ask learners to think about a person or persons they would embrace. Explain that each participant will create a card for this person(s). Encourage creativity. Someone may want to make small cards and others shaped cards. They may be decorated simply or extravagantly. Let them feel free to make more than one as time permits. Encourage each youth to give his or her card to the designated person and, when doing so, to embrace the recipient.



9 We Are All People

Leader preparation: This activity considers how we relate to people with disabilities. These sites from the United States and United Kingdom have useful information about language and actions: <http://www.arcind.org/index/Help-for-Families/Importance-Of-Words-Action-And-Respect.asp>, <http://www.miu-sa.org/ncde/tools/respect>, and <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/disability/support/>. A good reference book is Hannah Carlson and Dale Carlson, *Living with Disabilities* (Bick Publishing House, 1997). Young people like a first-hand explanation of how they encounter life. A person who used a wheelchair, for example, can share experiences about getting around the city or in the church building. You might work with the youth to prepare questions before the meeting.

Supplies:

- “Develop Communication Skills,” Attachment: Activity 9

Talk with the youth about communication with regard to disability. Attachment: Activity 9 contains a chart on positive and negative phrases to show the power of words. Invite a person who uses a wheelchair or a person with another disability to visit your group. Have a conversation. After listening to what the guest has to say, encourage the youth to ask questions so that they might gain better understanding about interacting with persons with disabilities. Discuss how this is a way to honor the body and helps us to care for one another as Jesus desires.

Reflect

We use our bodies in daily living at home, school, and community settings. It is important to remember that the body is the temple of God as we go about caring for one another. God calls us to be God’s physical representative on earth to carry out the divine mission of care for all creation.

Attachment: Activity 9

Develop Communication Skills

The Americans with Disabilities Act, other laws, and the efforts of many disability organizations have made strides in improving accessibility in buildings, increasing access to education, opening employment opportunities, and developing realistic portrayals of persons with disabilities in television programming and motion pictures. Where progress is still needed is in communication and interaction with people with disabilities. Individuals are sometimes concerned that they will say the wrong thing, so they say nothing at all—thus further segregating people with disabilities. Listed here are some suggestions for how to relate to and communicate with and about people with disabilities.

Words

Positive language empowers. When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to put the person first. Group designations such as “the blind,” “the retarded” or “the disabled” are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people with disabilities. Further, words like “normal person” imply that the person with a disability isn’t normal, whereas “person without a disability” is descriptive but not negative. The accompanying chart shows examples of positive and negative phrases.

Attachment: Activity 9 (continued)

Affirmative Phrases	Negative Phrases
person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability	retarded; mentally defective
person who is blind, person who is visually impaired	the blind
person with a disability	the disabled; handicapped
person who is deaf	the deaf; deaf and dumb
person who is hard of hearing	suffers a hearing loss
person who has multiple sclerosis	afflicted by MS
person with cerebral palsy	CP victim
person with epilepsy or with seizure disorder	epileptic
person who uses a wheelchair	confined or restricted to a wheelchair
person who has muscular dystrophy	stricken by MD
person with a physical disability, physically disabled	crippled; lame; deformed
unable to speak, uses synthetic speech	dumb; mute
person with psychiatric disability	crazy; nuts
person who is successful, productive	has overcome his/her disability; is courageous (when it implies the person has courage because of having a disability)

Attachment: Activity 9 (continued)

Actions

Etiquette considered appropriate when interacting with people with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Outlined below are tips to help you in communicating with persons with disabilities.

General Tips for Communicating with People with Disabilities

- When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.
- Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

Tips for Communicating with Individuals Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

- Speak to the individual when you approach him or her.
- State clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- When conversing in a group, remember to identify yourself and the person to whom you are speaking.
- Never touch or distract a service dog without first asking the owner.
- Tell the individual when you are leaving.
- Do not attempt to lead the individual without first asking; allow the person to hold your arm and control her or his own movements.
- Be descriptive when giving directions; verbally give the person information that is visually obvious to individuals who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps, mention how many steps.
- If you are offering a seat, gently place the individual's hand on the back or arm of the chair so that the person can locate the seat.

Attachment: Activity 9 (continued)

Tips for Communicating with Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation (perhaps tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
- Look directly at the individual, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face. Use short, simple sentences. Avoid smoking or chewing gum.
- If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- If you telephone an individual who is hard of hearing, let the phone ring longer than usual. Speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.
- If you do not have a Text Telephone (TTY), dial 711 to reach the national telecommunications relay service, which facilitates the call between you and an individual who uses a TTY.

Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Mobility Impairments

- If possible, put yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level.
- Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device.
- Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- Do not assume the individual wants to be pushed—ask first.
- Offer assistance if the individual appears to be having difficulty opening a door.
- If you telephone the individual, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for the person to reach the telephone.

Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Speech Impairments

- If you do not understand something the individual says, do not pretend that you do. Ask the individual to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back.
- Be patient. Take as much time as necessary.
- Try to ask questions that require only short answers or a nod of the head.
- Concentrate on what the individual is saying.
- Do not speak for the individual or attempt to finish her or his sentences.

Attachment: Activity 9 (continued)

- If you are having difficulty understanding the individual, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the individual if this is acceptable.

Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities

- If you are in a public area with many distractions, consider moving to a quiet or private location.
- Be prepared to repeat what you say, orally or in writing.
- Offer assistance completing forms or understanding written instructions and provide extra time for decision-making. Wait for the individual to accept the offer of assistance; do not “overassist” or be patronizing.
- Be patient, flexible, and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.

Remember

- Relax.
- Treat the individual with dignity, respect, and courtesy.
- Listen to the individual.
- Offer assistance but do not insist or be offended if your offer is not accepted.

INFORMATION FOR THIS FACT SHEET CAME FROM THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY; THE MEDIA PROJECT, RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON INDEPENDENT LIVING, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, LAWRENCE, KS; AND THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR ACCESS UNLIMITED, CHICAGO, IL..

Honoring the Body



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group

Younger youth are more rooted in the here and now than in the future. They almost never consider that they will age. They are wrapped up in their own world and keenly aware of their own bodies. As a result, a youth's self-image can be distorted. It is important to plant seeds for the future—seeds that may not develop for years. Remember that while you may get very little response today, what they experience may profoundly affect them in the future.

About this Exploration

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

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Ezekiel 37:1-14
Matthew 22:34-40

Leader Preparation

In this focus on future and vision we want to consider the way we look at the human body as we look to the future. There are problems with the way we treat and show respect for our bodies and the bodies of others. We need to be more aware and concerned and make an effort to be more in line with the “kin-dom” of God, as we celebrate our diversity, provide basic human needs, and simply love one another as Christ loved us.

Prayer: Precious God, as we gather and study about the gift of our bodies, help us to see the full vision of hope that is your vision for us. Give us wisdom as we work toward a future as your children in a world that you created to be good and whole. 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 Exercise (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity explores how regular exercise honors the body by helping it function at its best. A walk is recommended, but alternative activity could be simple calisthenics or playing catch. If youth are appropriately clothed, you could choose to play running games. Young people may enjoy dancing as another option.

Supplies: None

Take a walk—not a five-mile hike, but rather a simple walk around the building or down the street. As you walk, talk about how physical exercise helps improve muscle tone, posture, heart function, and more. Ask participants what they do for physical activity. Consider ways to add steps to your day. Invite the youth to add to this list:

- Take stairs instead of elevators.
- Walk or ride a bike instead of traveling by car.
- Park in the far back of the parking lot and walk farther to the door.
- Get off the bus a stop or two before your usual stop and walk the rest of the way.
- Use the farthest entrance into your school from your parking spot or bus stop, and walk through the building to your classroom.
- Use the restroom or water fountain that is farther from your locker.
- When making a phone call, stand up and pace around as you talk.
- Hide the TV remote and walk to the TV to change channels.
- During TV commercials, get up and walk around the house.
- Return the shopping cart all the way into the store after grocery shopping.
- Never use a drive through. Get out and walk into the fast food restaurant.

Walking can also provide some quiet time to pray or reflect on the day. It is also a positive influence on mental health.



2 Aging

Leader preparation: Aging is probably not on the top of the minds of younger youth. They are most likely feeling that they are invincible, and growing old is far from their thoughts. However, there are people of all ages in their lives, and honoring the body as a faith practice includes understanding the process of aging and what it means in a faith community.

Supplies:

- a sheet of paper for each participant
- artwork: “Out of Work,” by Käthe Kollwitz, https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1502057828?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=15626&store_id=1401
- hymn: “I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry,” by John Ylvisaker (tune: Waterlife), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYnmtQI50ic>
- videos: “41 Years in 60 Seconds,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGgd0DUKok4&feature=related>, and “85 Years in 40 Seconds,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A91Fwf_sMhk&feature=related

- 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.

Sing or play “I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry.” Listen carefully to the words. Invite the learners to view “Out of Work” by Käthe Kollwitz and note the different figures in the picture. *What do you notice about these people? In what ways, if any, do the song and the picture relate to one another?*

Distribute paper and have the youth list some of the people in their life who are infants, children, youth, young adults, older adults, and elderly. Aging is an important part of the life cycle; there are many changes that take place as we age. Have the youth name these changes.

Watch the two YouTube videos about aging. Then review the list of changes the youth made. What else would they like to add to their lists?

Appreciation of our bodies at all ages is a way of faithfully honoring the body because God is with us throughout our lives.

Encourage your learners to take the list and pray for the people they identified.

3 Gender

Leader preparation: Younger youth are at the age when they are more and more aware of gender and sexuality. Honoring the body takes on special meaning for adolescents. We will consider gender roles in this activity. The larger topic of sexuality is beyond the scope of this short activity, except to say that our gender is part of our sexuality.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

On one sheet of newsprint put the words “male” and “female.” Invite the learners to consider, first, the differences between boys and girls as they would have understood it when they were three or four years old. List their responses under each heading on the newsprint. This list might include superficial characteristics—assuming, for example, that anyone with long hair must be female, and that perhaps that person’s gender might change with a haircut, or words that describe clothing such as dresses and pants. Create a second similar sheet of newsprint. This time, under each category, ask the youth to list roles as they see them today. Some roles may occur on both columns or even on both sheets. Ask how they view gender roles differently as a youth than when a young child. How many of these roles have to do with our bodies? If so, do the differences in our physically male or female bodies really determine our roles? How so? How do we honor the body as we view ourselves as either male or female? How might we dishonor the body in these gender distinctions?

Close this discussion by thanking God for our different genders and the way we respect ourselves and each other faithfully.

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 Dem Bones (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Ezekiel 37:1–14 and Genesis 2:7. These stories speak of God breathing life into lifeless bodies. In this activity we will dance and sing and talk about life and hope.

Supplies:

- Bible
- (optional) song: “Dem Bones,” traditional African American spiritual, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnhI3IkLO7s&feature=related>

Invite the youth to read the story from Ezekiel 37:1–14, going around the room, each taking one sentence. Allow those who do not want to read to pass. After the reading ask what their first reaction was to this amazing story. Then, invite them to imagine dried up bones lying about. Have them try to picture the bones coming together to form a full skeleton and many skeletons forming a whole army. Have them act out the story by lying (or sitting) lifeless and then becoming animated to dance around moving limbs that were once disconnected, as you reread the story. Sing along or just listen to “Dem Bones.”

What does this story say about God, the body, and life? When have you felt as if you had no life until God blew new life into you or held you together? The faith practice of honoring the body is connected to trusting God to dwell in us.

5 Fear

Leader preparation: God gives us emotions to experience and respond to the world more fully. In this activity we think about what it means to fear something. Fear is an emotion that can be healthy or unhealthy. Spend time with the art piece “Man in a Wheelchair on a Tightrope.” Think about what you fear and how fear has been manifest in your life and how it has affected you.

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&dimvals=0&ui=c5dd66dac7d541809fb8256c7daa3064&searchstring=wheelchair+and+tightrope>

Display the artwork, but keep it covered until after you have introduced the topic of fear. We all face fear at some point in our lives. The body responds pretty dramatically to fear—“fight or flight.” Ask the group to think about when fear is helpful. When is it unhealthy? What frightens them? Now, uncover the artwork and invite the learners to study it. Invite reactions to the image. Ask them to look again, this time thinking how they would feel if they were the tightrope “walker.” What if they were in the audience watching? Maybe they could imagine being the circus owner who put him up there. Invite them to share their thoughts. In what ways can fear be a special gift from God? Fear, along with other emotions, helps us to live in the world. Say a prayer of thanks to God for emotions.

6 Suffering and Pain

Leader preparation: In this activity we think about how we honor the body when it is not whole—when it is suffering or in pain. The purpose of this exercise is to explore the love God has for us even in our brokenness. It is important for youth to see that in our suffering and pain—as well as when everything is going well—we encounter a loving God who cares for us as we care for one another.

Supplies:

- note paper
- several squares of 8" x 8" inch paper
- colored pencils or markers
- one or two 6-foot lengths of rope or heavy string, depending on the size of your group
- clothes pins

Suffering is an ageless concern of humankind. In what ways do we suffer? Why do we suffer? When we suffer from broken bodies and feel pain, we can know that we are not alone—Jesus suffers with us. Caring for our body or that of another who is suffering is a way to honor the body. Ask the group to think of those they know who are suffering with illness or some other brokenness. Do not forget to consider depression, heartbreak, anxiety, addiction, loneliness, or fear.

Ask participants to make a list of persons they know who are suffering. The list could include categories of people as well, such as refugees, victims of war or abuse, children with deadly diseases, and so forth. Then invite them to take a paper square and create a prayer for each person. When all are finished, use the rope and clothes pins to display the prayers across the room, on a wall, or on a bulletin board. Be creative.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Stepping Into the Future (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity looks to the future in terms of who we might be in ten years, thinking about what it means to honor the body as a long-term faith practice. Consider the ways care of the body might affect the way we live into the future. Anticipate that youth might not think very far into the future, so they may need some encouragement to think about themselves even at age 21 or 25.

Supplies:

- construction paper
- pens or pencils
- pairs of scissors

Trace one foot of each of participant on a sheet of construction paper and have them cut out the footprints. As they work ask: *How do you see yourself in ten years?* Invite them to decorate their feet with images or words describing how they see their future selves ten years from now. *How does Jesus fit into this future picture? If you are serious about honoring the body as a faith practice, what role will that play in this future self?*

8 Funerals

Leader preparation: This activity focuses on the practice of preparing the body for burial as a way of honoring the body even after death. You might want to invite a pastor to discuss his or her experiences with preparing for and officiating at a funeral. Be especially aware of any recent losses. Include pets in the discussion. The youth may ask questions about the afterlife.

If you have the time and think it would be helpful, make arrangements to visit a funeral home

Supplies: None

Funeral practices of viewing the body, burial, and cremation are used to celebrate the life of a person and help those left behind to say good-bye to the person. Ask: *Have you been to a funeral? What do you remember about it?* Explain that, as we return to God in death, the body is held in honor as the vessel that held the Divine.

Read Luke 23:52–56. Recall how Jesus' body was taken from the cross and carefully prepared for burial. Such care is an example of how we honor the body even after death.

There is more than one way to honor the body at the time of death. Some people choose to be cremated. They often hold the belief that it is better to honor the memory of the person, not the dead body. Or perhaps they hold beliefs about environmental concerns and prefer to have the body return immediately to the natural elements. Some people choose to donate their body to science or their organs for transplant. Others prefer to be embalmed and have a funeral where people can view the body and say a final farewell. In this case, immediately after death the body is covered. Then it is washed and made beautiful, clothed, and laid out.

Invite the youth to discuss these options with regard to the faith practice of honoring the body. What role does their faith play in making this kind of decision?

Option: As an extension of this activity you might plan a visit to a funeral home for a tour, or invite a funeral director as a guest speaker.

9 The Greatest Commandment

Leader preparation: This activity is an art project reflecting on Matthew 22:34–40 and on the way it encompasses the practice of honoring the body.

Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- roll of aluminum foil
- Bibles

Distribute the Bibles. Ask the participants to find Matthew 22:34–40 and read it silently. Invite those who are willing to mime the text.

On newsprint or a whiteboard draw an outline of a person. Add a heart and a brain. It's fairly easy to think of ways to love God with heart and mind. Have the youth add to the newsprint specific ways to love God with heart and mind.

The New Testament Greek word for "soul" is *psuche*, or psyche. It's the word the English language borrows for ideas such as psychiatry, psychology, psychosomatic, to "psych" up your team, to "psych" out your opponents. The Old Testa-

ment Hebrew word for “soul” is *nephesh*, which means to breathe or blow. In Genesis God formed a living being from the mud of the earth and breathed into the being the breath of life (*nephesh*). Suggest that the soul is the inner essence of our being or personality—it’s who we are at the core. It’s our conscience, our inner self, our identity. It’s how we define who we are. It’s our will, where we make our decisions and choices. Ask: *Where would you put the soul on the newsprint? How can we love God with all our soul?*

Invite the youth to sculpt something that represents the passage to them. Aluminum foil is very malleable and great for sculpting. Give them time to create their pieces, and then ask if they would like to share with the group what it represents or means.

Reflect

Honoring the body is a lifelong faith practice. As we look to the future, caring for our bodies and the bodies of others provides for better physical and mental health that leads to a fuller richer life in Christ.