



SESSION 1 of 4

The body of the Church

MEETING AIM

To unpack Paul's metaphor about the Church being like a body.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

BACKGROUND

In the years soon after his radical conversion, Paul went on several long journeys to tell anyone who would listen about who Jesus was. He planted dozens of churches along the way and went back to visit and encourage them as well as sending letters to them instructing them on wise ways to live. Today's passage comes from his first letter to the church at Corinth, Greece. It seems that there were some difficulties within the church community and Paul wrote to help sort some of them out. There may have been tension over who had which spiritual gifts and which were most important and Paul uses the metaphor of a body to talk to the Corinthians about how important each member was to the community – no matter their differing gifts.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass round a simple object. When a child has the object they can share their response to the question. If a child doesn't want to say anything they can just pass on the object. Ask the children to share what they think they bring to the group in terms of personality. It's a good idea to be able to say something positive that each group member brings in case they are struggling for ideas or don't feel great about their contribution.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: model of internal organs or pens, paper and scissors

If you can get hold of a science body model where all the organs fit into the chest, that would be ideal – perhaps you have a high school teacher in your congregation who would be able to borrow one. If not, draw a person shape and cut into pieces – hands, legs, head etc. Also draw some internal organs – heart, lungs, brain, and so on. Ask

the group to put the model or person pieces together, talking about which bits do what and why they are important.

15 BIBLE STORY

You will need: model or drawing from 'Intro activity'; Bibles; paper; marker pens

Admire the model or person you've just finished putting together. Take out a piece and ask what would happen if the body didn't have that thing. Replace it and take out another, asking the same question. Ask the group to find 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and have them read it together – perhaps get each person to read a verse. Ask the group what they think Paul is getting at. Talk to the group about the background to this letter: Paul had planted a church in Corinth and he'd heard that the people there weren't getting on very well. They were quarrelling and fighting about who was best or most important and about the ways that different people thought things should be done. Paul wanted to show them that each person was important not just to God but also to the community. They all had something different to offer; just like each bit of the body does a different but important job. And just as in the body we treat different parts differently depending on what they do, so we should be able to recognise the differences in one another and not try to make everyone the same.

Make a list together of all the things that need to happen for a church to run well – not just a Sunday service! Look at the list together and talk about how many different people it takes to make all these things happen. Some things we can all do, like looking out for other people, some things need you to have a particular ability in (perhaps like playing the piano), and some things people might have a passion for (such as serving tea and coffee and making people feel especially welcome). Talk about how a body has to work together to do anything; the two legs can't walk in different directions, for example. This means there has to be some sort of agreement on what the body is going to do. What sort of things do we need to agree on in this group or church so that we aren't trying to walk in two different directions?

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- If you were like a bit of the body, what would it be and why?
- Do you think the world values some people more than others? Do you think that we do this in church too?

- How can we make sure that people know they are an important part of the church or our group?
- Looking at the list you made in the 'Bible story', where do you think you could contribute to being part of this church?
- Some bits of the body are very definitely connected to others (eg the foot and the ankle), are there ways that we might be particularly connected to others in the church?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: gingerbread people biscuits; icing pens; icing; sweets and other decorations

Decorate gingerbread people together as you continue to reflect on Paul's ideas about us being part of the same body.

5 PRAYER

You will need: an outline of a person printed out on card; scissors; felt-tip pens

Cut the outline up like a jigsaw, ensuring there are enough pieces for each person to have one. Reassemble the picture in a central space. Gather the group round and ask them to choose a piece of the puzzle. They can add detail and colour to the front of their piece, but on the back they should write something they'd like to say to God about what you've talked about today. This might be what they want to offer in the group, or a question they have or a thought. When everyone has written their prayer and decorated their piece, reassemble the puzzle with the written prayers face down. Say "Amen" together.

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SESSION 2 of 4

The fruit of the Spirit

MEETING AIM

To explore what Paul means by the fruit of the Spirit.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Galatians 5:22-26

BACKGROUND

Paul had planted churches in Galatia (modern day Turkey) on one of his big trips. Probably most of the people there who'd decided to follow Jesus were not Jewish as he was. When he left, it's possible that other Jewish people had come in and tried to tell the new Jesus followers that they had to be more Jewish to be saved. Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia to explain to them that it wasn't necessary to do all the Jewish things in order to follow Jesus. In this very famous passage, he writes about the characteristics that the Holy Spirit grows in those who follow Jesus.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass round a simple object. When a child has the object they can share their response to the question. Ask the children to share any way that they are like their parents – either physically or in terms of characteristics or things they are good at.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: exotic fruit cut up on plates; forks or spoons

Show the group your exotic fruits and chat about what the fruit is and where it comes from. Encourage everyone to try some. Which is the most popular?

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: picture of a fruit tree or plant; Duplo or other large building blocks; stickers with the fruit of the Spirit written on

Give the group some background on this letter from Paul to the churches in Galatia.

Explain that he's trying to explain how we follow Jesus well and how the Holy Spirit changes and shapes us as we do that. Show the group picture of a fruit tree. Ask them if they can identify what sort of fruit would grow from the plant or tree. Say that we can identify what a tree or plant is by the fruit that grows on it. You don't get apples on a lemon tree!

Read Galatians 5:22-26. Ask the group if they can work out why Paul talks about fruit like this. What does he mean? Fruit is the stuff that we display in our lives that shows people what kind of person we are. Where does Paul say this fruit comes from? We believe that we are God's children so it makes sense that we would share some characteristics with our heavenly Father – just like the ways that you might be like your mum or dad. You can be like them because you share some of the same genes or because you spend time with them and their character rubs off on you.

Look at the list of fruit that Paul mentioned. Do these all sound like characteristics of God? Explain that we sometimes think about all these fruits as very different – like one is a melon and another is a grape but that's not quite right. One fruit builds on the next and so on. As you say this next paragraph, build a tower with the bricks – each one with a different fruit sticker on:

The first thing that we need to know as followers of Jesus is that we are *loved* by God. And when we really know we are loved, it's easy for us to love other people. And when we can really love, that brings us *joy* because we're able to see the good in others. We feel *peace* because we know how much God loves us. And when we have that peace, we can be *patient* with ourselves or others and we can choose always to be *kind* and do the right thing (*goodness*). And when we trust that doing the right and kind things are what we should be all about, our faith grows as we see how faithful God is to us and we begin to be *faithful* both to him and others, so we use what we have in a *gentle* way. And as all these things grow together, we realise that we have more *self-control*; we make wise choices in all the areas of our lives. All these things come from spending time with Jesus, seeing what he's like and letting the Holy Spirit change us to be more like him.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What does it feel like when you know you're really loved?

- Which of the fruit of the Spirit do you know you find hard?
- How would your life look different if you showed all these fruits?
- How might the world look different if everyone had the fruit of the Spirit growing in them?
- How can we spend time with Jesus and let him grow this fruit?

15 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: card circles; felt-tip pens; pencils; hole punch; string

Give everyone a card circle about 10cm in diameter. Ask them to use a pencil to draw a circle slightly in from the edge and then show them how to draw wedge shapes so that it looks like the cross-section of a citrus fruit. There need to be 9. Ask them to either write each part of the fruit list in a different wedge, or draw something to represent it. They can colour the outline rim to make it look like a slice of lemon, lime, orange or grapefruit. As you work, continue your discussion from 'Chatting together'.

Punch a hole close to the edge and thread a piece of string through so that it can be hung somewhere at home.

5 PRAYER

Teach the group a simple breath prayer that they can use throughout the week. Get everyone to find their own quiet space, get comfortable and close their eyes. As they breathe in, they simply say to themselves: "Be." When they breathe out, they say: "Loved." Encourage them to try praying this way a few times every day, remembering that God loves them and everything else grows from there.

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SESSION 3 of 4

The armour of God

MEETING AIM

To explore what the armour of God looks like for us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ephesians 6:10-20

BACKGROUND

Paul first visited Ephesus on his second big trip. Later on, Paul writes to the church there. A big theme of the letter is unity between those Jesus followers who were Jewish and those who weren't. At the end of the letter, Paul reminds the Ephesians that spiritual evil is a reality and he uses the metaphor of armour to help them understand how they can stand firm against it to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass round a simple object. If a child doesn't want to say anything they can just pass on the object. Ask the children to share what things they can't leave the house without.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: pens and paper

Divide into smaller groups and give each group a scenario, such as a day at the beach or a school day. Ask them to come up with a complete list of things they would need for their given situation.

Once the groups have finished, share the lists with one another.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: large long johns; a waterproof jacket; wellies; a hat; a mobile phone

Explain that Paul wrote to his friends in one of the cities where he'd planted a church. His letter helped them understand what it meant to follow Jesus. At the end, Paul talked to them a little bit about the fact that evil exists and they should stand firm against it. He used the idea of 'spiritual' armour they could wear to protect themselves and be well equipped to follow Jesus. People saw Roman soldiers all the time, so they would know what Paul was talking about. We

don't see many soldiers and they don't wear what the Romans did; you'll use some more everyday items. As you talk, dress a child in each item. Ask the group to imagine they need to be equipped for a day's adventure in the country, then tell this story:

Paul talks about the belt of truth; a Roman soldier's belt was very important because all of his other armour fitted onto it. We might think about it like wearing good underwear, maybe thermals. *Dress your volunteer in a big pair of long johns.* Paul links this to truth – truth of knowing who God is and who we can be because of that. That provides a basis for everything else.

Next, the breastplate of righteousness. A breastplate protects all your vital organs – heart, lungs etc. In our everyday lives we don't need an armoured breastplate, but we do need protection from the elements. *Give your volunteer a waterproof jacket to put on.* Paul was reminding the Ephesians that following Jesus kept them right with God.

Then Paul talks about wearing shoes of peace. Roman soldiers marched long distances, so it was important to have good footwear. It's important that we wear the right sort of shoes. *Give your volunteer some wellies.* Paul was saying that if we tread well in each situation then we'll be able to show people what Jesus is like.

After that, it's the shield of faith. Roman shields were important to protect individuals and used together to keep a group safe. We don't need to carry anything like a shield but having someone alongside us in our walk with Jesus is really important. *Find a friend for your volunteer.* Being with someone on the journey helps to remind you where you are going and how you might get there. It's great to have someone to encourage you when things seem tough.

Roman soldiers wore helmets and Paul says this is like the idea of salvation. When we follow Jesus we know that we are kept safe for ever but sometimes we might doubt that and wonder if it's really true. *Give your volunteer a hat.* You lose a lot of heat through your head so it's important to wear a hat to keep the heat in. We need to be putting good stuff into our minds to remind us that Jesus keeps us safe for ever.

Finally, Paul mentions the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. A Roman soldier needed his sword to attack and fight back when he was being attacked. The sword kept him alive. If we were going out in the hills for a day, we might take a mobile phone as a lifeline – it can tell us where we are and enable us to call for help. *Give your volunteer a phone.* When Paul, talks about the word of God, he's referring to the scriptures – for us, that's the Bible. When we read the Bible, we discover what God is like and how we can be his friend.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What are the most important truths that you know about God?
- How does following Jesus give us life?
- Who is walking alongside each of us in our journey with Jesus?
- What are the doubts we sometimes have?
- How can we make sure we are staying in touch with Jesus?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: felt in different colours; scissors; string; mini pegs

Let the children cut out some clothing shapes that remind them of the different clothes you talked about in the teaching time. They can cut a length of string for a washing line and peg the clothes shapes onto it so that it can be put up somewhere at home of a reminder of the things that protect and equip us. Chat together about what each piece of clothing symbolises.

5 PRAYER

You will need: the song 'Be strong and put on (the armour of God)' (*Massive, New Wine Kids*) and the means to play it

Teach the song to the group and make up some actions together. Sing the song to each other as a way of praying for their friends.

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SESSION 4 of 4

The power of the tongue

MEETING AIM

To explore James' thoughts about the tongue and think about how we use our words well.

BIBLE PASSAGE

James 3:1-12

BACKGROUND

The book of James was written by Jesus' brother (whose name was actually probably Jacob). In the years after Jesus death and resurrection he was one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem – mostly made up of Jewish Christians. His writing is like a letter but it's not to specific people, more like a summing up of his teaching and wisdom in several distinct sections. He uses lots of metaphors to encourage Jesus' followers to live well as they love God and one another. His teaching on the ways we use our words is very reminiscent of Jesus' own teaching on the same subject in Luke 6:43-45.

James focuses on the negative ways our words can impact others. However, try encourage children to think about how their words can build others up as well.

5 **CIRCLE TIME**

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass round a simple object. When a child has the object they can share their response to the question. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so that you have time for each person to share if they want to. If a child doesn't want to say anything they can just pass on the object. Ask the children to give a compliment to the person next to them.

10 **INTRO ACTIVITY**

You will need: a collection of random objects such as a shoe, a doorstep, a box, a piece of wood

Split the children into smaller groups and give each group one of your objects. Ask the children to come up with as many ways of using their object as possible. They should include lots of things that it wasn't designed to do!

For example, a shoe could be a wasp killing device; a doorstep could be a fingernail protector for a giant; a gift box may be a bed for a sleepy kitten. Make the point that lots of things can be used for many purposes.

10 **BIBLE STORY**

You will need: large sheets of paper; marker pens; video clips of each of the examples below in action

Give a little bit of background to the group on James chapter 3: James (Jesus' brother) is writing down lots of his ideas on how to live as a follower of Jesus. He has plenty to say about the way we use our words. In order to help his readers understand what he's saying, he uses metaphors or word pictures to illustrate what he means. Give out some huge sheets of paper and marker pens and as you talk through each idea, invite one or two volunteers to help you draw a picture of each thing.

In verse 3, talk about how the bits in horses' mouths work. You may need to explain this to the children if they don't have any experience of horses. If you have the facilities, show a clip of some Olympic show-jumping to help children get the idea.

In verse 4, draw a picture of a ship's rudder. Again, you might need to explain what a rudder does if the children don't know. Show a clip of someone operating a rudder if possible.

In verse 5, chat about forest fires. Show a clip if you can, but be sensitive to the fact that some children may be scared by this.

In verse 7, talk about the tongue, about the good and bad it can do. Show videos of people shouting angrily at people and then say positive things together other. What's the difference?

In verse 9, draw a person saying two opposite things. What is it like when someone does this? How do you feel?

Talk about the fact that God wants us to use our words well – to be positive, encouraging and loving, not destructive and unkind.

5 **CHATTING TOGETHER**

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Why does James use word pictures to talk about how we use our words instead of telling people just to be nice?
- Which word picture do you like best?
- Can you think of times when people have used words badly?
- Can you think of times when people have used words well?

- What are the ways that our society encourages us not to use our words well?
- How might we be more aware of the words we use?

10 **CREATIVE RESPONSE**

You will need: card, felt-tip pens; alphabet stickers (optional)

Before the session, cut a bookmark-sized piece of card for each person. Invite the children to write the word 'THINK' vertically down the bookmark (perhaps using stickers or fancy lettering) and then add the rest of the words like an acrostic: True; Helpful; Inspiring; Necessary; Kind.

As you create together, talk about how we always have these choices to make, every time we open our mouths. When someone says bad things to us, how should we respond? How might Jesus respond?

Encourage the children to take their bookmarks home; each morning they can look at the words and consider how they can be all those things during the day in the way that they use their speech.

5 **PRAYER**

You will need: speech bubbles (cut from paper or shaped Post-it notes); pens; large sheet of paper

Give each person a speech bubble and invite them to write a prayer about the way they want to use their words this week.

Once everyone has finished, invite the children to stick their prayer to the large sheet of paper. Finish with a short prayer asking God to help use our speech as Jesus would this week.

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