

THE BODY OF CHRIST

by Faye Wagner and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

I Cor. 12:12

FAITH STORY:

I Cor. 12:12-31

FAITH FOCUS:

Paul uses the human body as a metaphor for the church. Together, people form the “body of Christ.” In this body, we each have our own responsibilities and specific role to play and no one is more important than any other. Every part of the body is needed in order for it to operate well.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students understand that every Christian may have a different job in the church and that each job is equally important.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- Learn about teamwork through an activity
- Outline the passage
- Reflect on their role in the body of Christ

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Newsprint large enough for a student’s body to be outlined on it
- 2 Chalk board or dry erase board
- 3 Marker
- 4 Bible for each student
- 5 Paper and pens
- 6 Bake gingerbread cookies prior to class—one per student
- 7 Decorations for gingerbread cookies

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–7 minutes)

Welcome students, then divide them into groups of no more than five. Before students go to their groups, choose one person from each group and secretly give them these instructions: After 3 or 4 successful attempts to stand up, rather than cooperating, you try to hold the group down as it stands up.

Give the groups these instructions: Sit on the floor in a circle with your backs to each other. Link elbows. Try to stand up. This will work if you work together as a team. Do this 5 times.

CONNECT: (5 minutes)

Ask groups:

How did it go? Was this easy or hard to do? What happened? Was there a difference when everyone was working together and when one person was working against the rest of the group?

Transition statement: When you worked together as a team, or as one body, you could stand up. Paul used this “body language” to talk about the church. Let’s look at what he said.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15–20 minutes)

Hand out Bibles and read the passage from I Corinthians 6:12-31 together.

Divide students into small groups and ask them to look at the passage again and find verses that:

- Summarize the whole passage
- Could be portrayed in an animated cartoon
- Would be a good verse to memorize
- Would be good to use as the basis for a sermon
- You have questions about
- Make the most sense to you
- Make the least sense to you

(Write the above statements on chalk board or dry erase board so students can see them.)

Bring groups back together and discuss their answers.

APPLY: (10 minutes)

Ask for a volunteer to lie down on the newsprint and have their body outline traced onto the newsprint. Tape the body outline to the wall.

Ask: *If this body represents the church, where would you put Jesus? Write Jesus on the part of the body where he belongs.*

Invite students to write your name and their names on the body based on the roles they think

you all play within the church. Discuss where they wrote the names and why. Does each person play a different role? What are some of the different roles that people play in the congregation?

Some examples:

- Ears—people who listen to others
- Mouth—people who teach and preach
- Feet—ushers and those who maintain the building and grounds
- Hands—People who care for children and prepare food

Use input from Insights from Scripture during this discussion.

RESPOND: (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to each decorate a gingerbread person in a way that symbolizes their involvement, or what they could be doing, in the church of Christ right now. Encourage them to be creative and think outside the box. Some examples:

Singing or teaching: Large mouth

Youth group leadership: a hat

Service trip participant: blisters on the hands

Allow students to decide if they want to eat their cookies in class or take them home.

Close with a group prayer.

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE:

God works in congregations through gifts of the Holy Spirit manifested in the lives of the members. These gifts are both natural talents such as teaching, and supernatural abilities such as speaking in tongues. The key in this passage is that whether the gift is natural or supernatural, it comes from God, it is to be used “for the common good,” and it is not something for the individual to take pride in for themselves. The gift is there for the ministry of the whole community.

It can be a fine line to walk with youth as you help them acknowledge their God-given talents and call them to be used in your congregation, and at the same time help them understand that it’s not about them, it’s all about the church community as a whole. You will want to affirm the youth for their gifts, but you can use language such as “That was so great the way God used you in the worship team this morning.”

In a culture where competition in school, weekend sports, and striving to get good grades puts youth in a non-stop cycle of achieving and doing, it would be wonderful if our congregations can be places where God’s spirit flows through the youth, and their involvement refreshes rather than stresses them even more.

WORKS CITED:

Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, First Corinthians. Richard B. Hays, John Knox Press, 1997