

Body Matters

**A series of eight sessions on the body of Christ
for children aged 5-11, followed by an all-age celebration**

Introduction:

This series was written for use in the Sunday School of my local Anglican church in Lobley Hill, Gateshead. There were three leaders, each playing a different role, and about twenty children each week. Some of the material was delivered to the whole group and for some of the time, the children were divided into smaller groups for age-appropriate activities. The objective was to teach the children the Bible truths found in Paul's letters about the body of Christ by pretending to be a sports team with a team coach, a team physiotherapist and a team sports psychologist. This material could easily be adapted for any size group, geared towards a particular age within the range and delivered by any number of leaders. You will need to tailor the material to the group that you have, but there is plenty of variety and choices of activities to pick and choose from.

Theme:

This material is best delivered within the context of a Sports Clinic. The hall should be decorated with anatomy- and sports- related posters and objects. There are three different sports professionals named in the material and they should be dressed in a medical uniform (white coat or blue tunic) or sports and fitness gear. They should treat the children as part of a team.

Refreshments:

If these are to be served at some stage throughout the session, it would be great if they could be healthy drinks and snacks - water or fruit juice and fruit / raisins / cereal bars.

All-age celebration:

At our church at the end of the eight sessions, we held an all-age service for all the Church family. The children could bring their parents along and there was a presentation, all-age worship and an insight for the adults into what the children had been doing and learning about. The order of service is available as an idea for use by you in your church.

Format of each session:

Each session is divided into four parts. In our situation, we divided the children into two age groups (5-7 and 8-11) for the middle two activities. One age group worked with the physiotherapist while the other group worked with the coach. Then after refreshments, the two groups swapped over and worked with the other sports professional. This meant that the groups were a more manageable size and the activities could be much more focussed on the right age group.

1. Intro from sports professional of the week
2. The physiotherapist: Choice one from four or five "Physical" activities that can be adapted for a range of ages between 5 and 11
3. The coach: "Spiritual" activity which can be simplified or extended depending on the age of the children
4. The sports psychologist: Team-time is a time to talk about what has been learnt and any issues or problems that have come up though the session. This was done as a whole group and then the children divided up into three smaller groups to pray with one of the sports professionals.

Content:

Session One	Body Beautiful	Ephesians 2:17-22
Session Two	United!	Ephesians 4:1-6
Session Three	Body Parts	1 Corinthians 12:14-27
Session Four	Mind your head!	Colossians 1:15-18
Session Five	Fit for life	1 Corinthians 9:24-27
Session Six	Doctor Doctor!	1 Corinthians 3:1-9
Session Seven	Body builders	Ephesians 4:11-16
Session Eight	Heartbeat	Colossians 3:12-17
All-age worship	Stay safe	Ephesians 6:10-17

Session One: Body Beautiful

Bible reading: Ephesians 2:17-22

Intro from sports professional: the physiotherapist

"Gather round all of you, quickly, quickly.

We are your team of sports professionals and you need to listen hard, take in and act on what we say.

My name is and I am your physiotherapist for this eight week course.

Your coach is and (s)he will build up team spirit.

..... is a sports psychologist, helping you over the next few weeks to develop the right mental attitude for what lies ahead.

Today I want you to take a moment to think about your own body.

Have you ever noticed how different bodies are?

Yes, we all have the same basic ingredients, put together in approximately the same order...but what diversity, what differences....

I've seen some amazing things in my time, I can tell you...another time maybe!

For example, stand up if you think you have..

- curly hair....
- freckles....
- detached ear lobes....
- smelly feet! etc. (use other examples as well if you like)

(After each one a comment like.....Wow! You're amazing....You really are unique.....Feel special because you are.....One in a million.)

All of you - be proud - you are who you are. Be glad."

The Physiotherapist: ideas for physical activity

1. Make a poster or bookmark each using appropriate size white card. Print hand- or finger-prints on it with paint and put Psalm 139:13 on (either get the children to write it on or give them a printout of it to stick on - see Session 1 Resources A)
2. Perform a relaxation exercise to soothing music, all lying on the floor and tensing and relaxing each part of the body in turn. This makes the children more aware of each part of their body.
3. Fill in an ID sheet each with the usual Name, Age, Hair etc but also more unusual facts such as Feet, Legs, Nose etc to describe as

well. (Session 1 Resources B) Compare each of the cards - could you find any exactly the same? Of course not! Everyone is totally unique.

4. Have the names of famous people in a hat. Each child takes a turn at taking a name out and describing that person for others to guess. However, they can only describe what they physically look like, not what they do.
5. Play the Beetle game drive in pairs. If you throw a 1 on the dice, you draw a head, a 2 draw a body, a 3 the right arm, a 4 the left arm, a 5 the right leg, a 6 the left leg...you must start with the body.

The Coach: spiritual activity

1. The Bible Passage

In the time that Paul was writing this letter, the Jews saw themselves as God's chosen people and everyone else were called the Gentiles. In this passage, Paul shows how Jesus came to change all that.

Ephesians 2 (TEV)

17 So Christ came and preached the Good News of peace to all--to you Gentiles, who were far away from God, and to the Jews, who were near to him. *18* It is through Christ that all of us, Jews and Gentiles, are able to come in the one Spirit into the presence of the Father. *19* So then, you Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are now fellow citizens with God's people and members of the family of God. *20* You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself. *21* He is the one who holds the whole building together and makes it grow into a sacred temple dedicated to the Lord. *22* In union with him you too are being built together with all the others into a place where God lives through his Spirit.

Through the death of Jesus, all people, Jews and Gentiles, can now be built together into a place where God lives, a family - the family of God.

2. Applying the Bible Passage

- a. Place a pile of Duplo bricks in the middle of the group
- b. Each child takes it in turns to say "I am special because..... and then pick up a brick. Go round all children three times if possible.
- c. Tell the children to fix their three bricks together - there

will probably be some variation, which makes the point that we are all different

- d. Then join everyone's bricks together ...We can all bring our unique selves to be part of a bigger structure... Together we are the Church, the family of God, the place where God lives through his spirit. Read through verse 22 again.

The Sports Psychologist: Team-time

Encourage the children to discuss with each other what they have learnt from today's session.

Give each child the shape of a Duplo brick. Encourage them to write their own prayer to God on it.

Help them with ideas of things to say eg.

"Thank you God for making me me. (stop there for youngest group)

There is no-one else quite like me. Thank you for....

Help us to join together to become a special place for you.

Break into smaller groups to pray these prayers out loud.

Take them home as a reminder of what they have learnt this week.