

Wholeness Through Christ

BALANCE and CONNECTION



Lessons for Young Children
Ages 3–5

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Wholeness through Christ:
BALANCE AND CONNECTION

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Independence, Missouri, USA

Contents

Blessings of Community	3
Unity in Diversity	6
Grace and Generosity.	12
Worth of All Persons.	17
All Are Called	20

Blessings of Community



Focus

To imagine being part of one of God's communities

Focus Scriptures: Act 2:1–11, 41–47

Objectives

The learners will:

- Create an early Christian fish symbol
- Learn the names of the class participants
- Hear how early Christians tried to live the way Jesus taught
- Discover ways to share in communities to which they belong

Resources

- *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A* by Ralph Milton, Wood Lake Publishing, 2007, ISBN 9781551455471, available through Herald House (<http://www.heraldhouse.org/cart/edit.asp?p=129081>)
- Or the NRSV version of the Bible

Materials

- Two fish symbols cut out of construction paper for each student (template provided)
- Crayons, markers, or stickers for decorating the fish
- One pillow or mat for each child to sit on (optional)
- A biblical costume or headdress for the storyteller to wear (optional)
- One wire hanger to create the fish mobile
- A length of string or yarn to hang each fish onto the mobile
- A light colored piece of cloth or roll paper big enough to include the handprint of each class participant (including teachers and helpers)
- Permanent marker to trace and label handprints
- Craft supplies to decorate the community cloth (glitter, markers, paints, stamps)
- Tape, pins, or nails to stretch and hang the community cloth

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson.

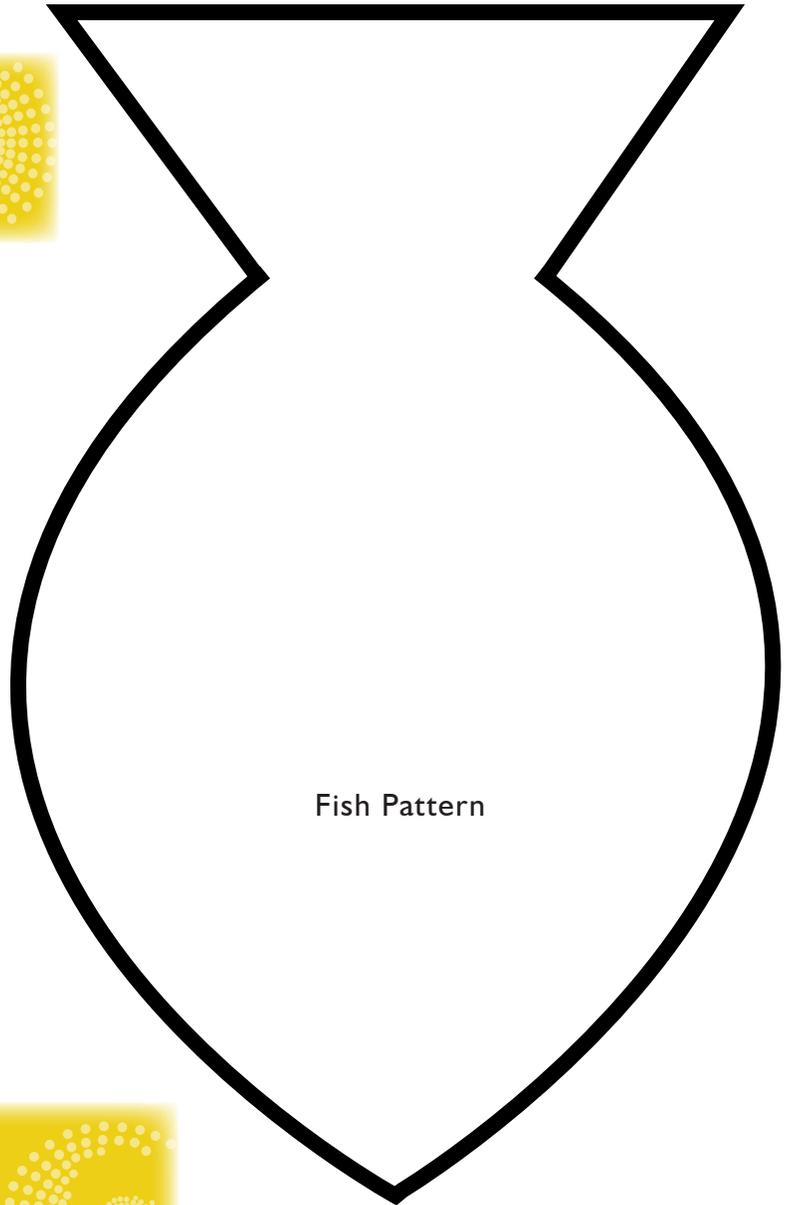
With a warm smile, welcome each child by name.

Provide each child with two fish cut from construction paper.

Explain that some people use this fish symbol to show each other that they love Jesus.

Have or help each child put their name on and decorate each of their fish with crayons, markers or stickers you provide.

Introduce each child to the class by holding up one of their fish and say, for example, “This is Jacob, and he loves Jesus.”



2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Invite the children to sit in a circle for story time. Providing a pillow or mat for each child to sit on helps them understand this is a time and place for them to listen to a story.

Before beginning to tell the story, put on a biblical headdress or some other biblical costume. Dressing the part makes the story more real.

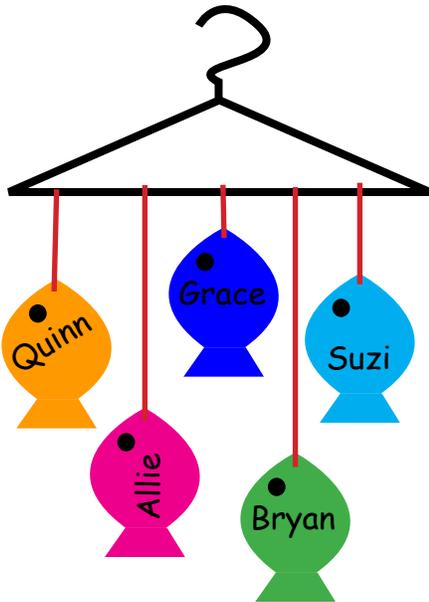
Ask the children to imagine they are living in a time so long ago there were no televisions, no radios, no clocks, or cars. It was very different

from how we live today. Tell the story, “Susanna Has a Good Idea” based on Acts 2:41–47. *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A, page 106*, or retell the Acts scripture as story.

After telling the story, point out there are some ways we are the same as the people who lived long ago—we are people who love Jesus and try to live the way Jesus taught. Some of the people lived in communities with each other just as we do today. Ask what communities they are part of? Examples could be church, family, school, neighborhoods, and friends.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.



I Can Share...

As a child thinks of something he or she could share with their family, church, neighborhood, or school community—such as a song, a hug, a story, or a chore—have them “swim” one of their fish around the room and then tie their fish on the clothes hanger mobile. Tell the children the mobile will hang there all week to remind them of what they did today.

A Community Together

Sing together the song “A Community Together”
(tune: “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”)

You, you, you and me (point to others and then self)
A community together
We sing and pray and share God’s love.
We’re following God’s way.

Part of a Community

Explain that this week you are part of a reunion community, too. Work together to design a cloth or paper that represents your community. Stretch and tape a cloth or roll paper to a table or to the floor to keep the cloth from shifting. Trace children’s hands with markers. Decorate them. Print their names under the handprints. Hang up the cloth for the rest of the week.



4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Remind the children the fish symbol shows our love of Jesus to one another. Ask them to think of one person they will see that day. Invite them to give their second fish to that person and say, “I love Jesus!”

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Gather in a circle and pray “Dear God, we thank you for our community and all the wonderful things we do together. We thank you for our new friend (name each person in the circle). In Jesus’ name, Amen.” Send each child off with the blessing, “God loves you and I love you!”

Unity in Diversity



Focus

To discover how including different kinds of people can make our church strong

Focus Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:4–12

Objectives

The learners will:

- Remember what they learned in the previous session
- Discover how the church is like a person's body
- Hear how early Christians discovered how to be a strong church
- Imagine ways they can help make the body of Christ (the church) stronger

Resources

- *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A* by Ralph Milton, Wood Lake Publishing, 2007, ISBN 9781551455471, available through Herald House (<http://www.heraldhouse.org/cart/edit.asp?p=129081>)
- Or the NRSV version of the Bible
- “Body Song” included with this lesson

Materials

- One pillow or mat for each child to sit on (optional)
- A biblical costume or headdress for the storyteller to wear (optional)
- One piece of light colored construction paper for each child. Print “Every person is important!” on the top of each paper.
- Three (connected) paper dolls, pre-cut for each child. Fold a sheet of copy paper into three equal parts. Using the provided template, cut paper dolls from the folded paper. Make sure not to cut through the hands. Do not unfold.
- Fabric scraps cut to use as clothing for the dolls
- Glue
- One piece of scrap paper for each child
- One pencil for each child
- One cookie or cracker for each child
- One copy of the “I can make the church stronger!” resource sheet (included)

1 Gather

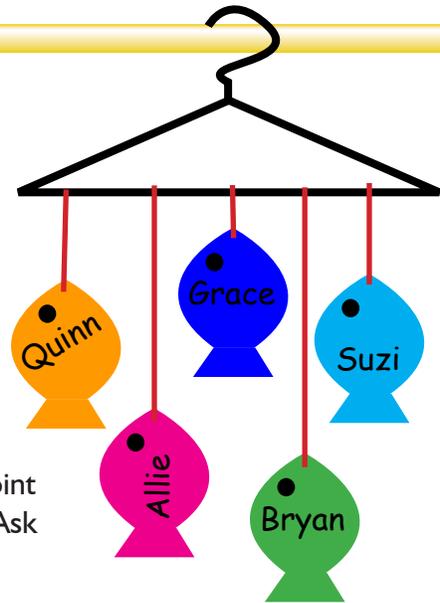
Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson.

With a warm smile, welcome each child by name.

Once the whole class is present, point to the fish mobile made in the last session. Ask the children to explain what they remember about the fish. Help them recall that those fish are a way to show each other that we love Jesus.

Look together at the handprint cloth made in the last session. Point out an individual handprint and read the name written under it. Ask the other children to connect that name with that child.

Explain that today we will discover how the church is like a person's body. Point out one child's particular body part. Ask them to show how that body part works. For example, "Hi Lindsay. I am so happy to see you today. I notice you have two eyes. Can you make them blink?" Other examples, two hands that can clap, two feet that can run, one mouth that can giggle, two ears that can hear, one nose that can smell.



2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Invite the children to sit in a circle for story time. Providing a pillow or mat for each child to sit on helps them understand this is a time and place for them to listen to a story.

Before beginning to tell the story, put on a biblical headdress or some other biblical costume. Dressing the part makes the story more real.

Ask the children to imagine they are living in a time so long ago there were no televisions, no radios, no clocks, or cars. It was very different from how we live today. Tell the story, "How to Be a Strong Church" based on 1 Corinthians 12:4–13. *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A, page 118*, or retell the 1 Corinthians scripture as story.

After the story, play a game where you ask the children to do some activity without the benefit of a key part of their body. For example, have them race across the room while only using one foot, have them walk across the room without using their eyes, give each child a paper and pencil and ask them to draw a church without using their hands, ask each child to eat a cracker or cookie without using their mouth. (Be sure to eventually let them eat it.)

Discuss why different parts of the body are valuable. Talk about the various parts of the body of Christ (the church) and how valuable each part is. For example, those who pray, or sing, or tell stories, or help those who are sick, or clean the building, or play instruments, or give money. Each part of our church body does something different, but we need each part.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

Every Person is Important

Help children unfold their previously prepared paper dolls (page 10) and glue them to the construction paper titled "Every person is important!" Let them color the dolls and choose fabric to glue on for clothing.

Point to one of the dolls and ask the children, "I wonder what she or he is good at doing?" or "I wonder what he or she likes to do." or "I wonder how she or he feels when they share their gift with others?" Continue discussing how different each doll is to reinforce that every person in our church helps us be a strong church. Every person is important."



Tape or pin the dolls around your space as a reminder of what was learned today.

The Body Song

Sing together the song "Body Song" which is included at the end of this lesson. Explain that everyone makes our church strong.

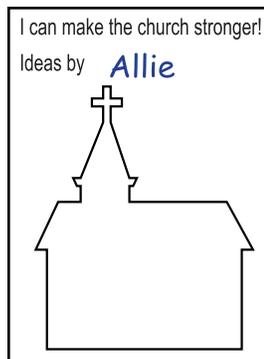
4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Gather in a circle and ask each child one at a time what they might do to make the body of Christ (the church) stronger. Encourage them to think about ways to contribute right now as well as ways to contribute as they grow.

Record their answers on the "I can make the church stronger!" resource sheet (page 11).

As the children prepare to leave, hand out their resource sheet. Ask them to think of someone they will see that day with whom they will share their ideas.



5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Gather in a circle and pray "Dear God, thank you for loving us. Send us out knowing how much you love all people. In Jesus' name, Amen." Send each child off with the blessing, "God loves you and I love you!"

Body Song

Oh, a bo - dy can't walk on its nose, and a bo - dy can't eat with its toes. 'Cause
 What if the bo - dy were all hair? And how can an eye sit in a chair?

each lit - le mem - ber has a spe - cial work to do to make the bo - dy grow. Oh,

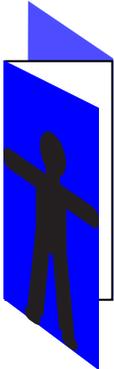
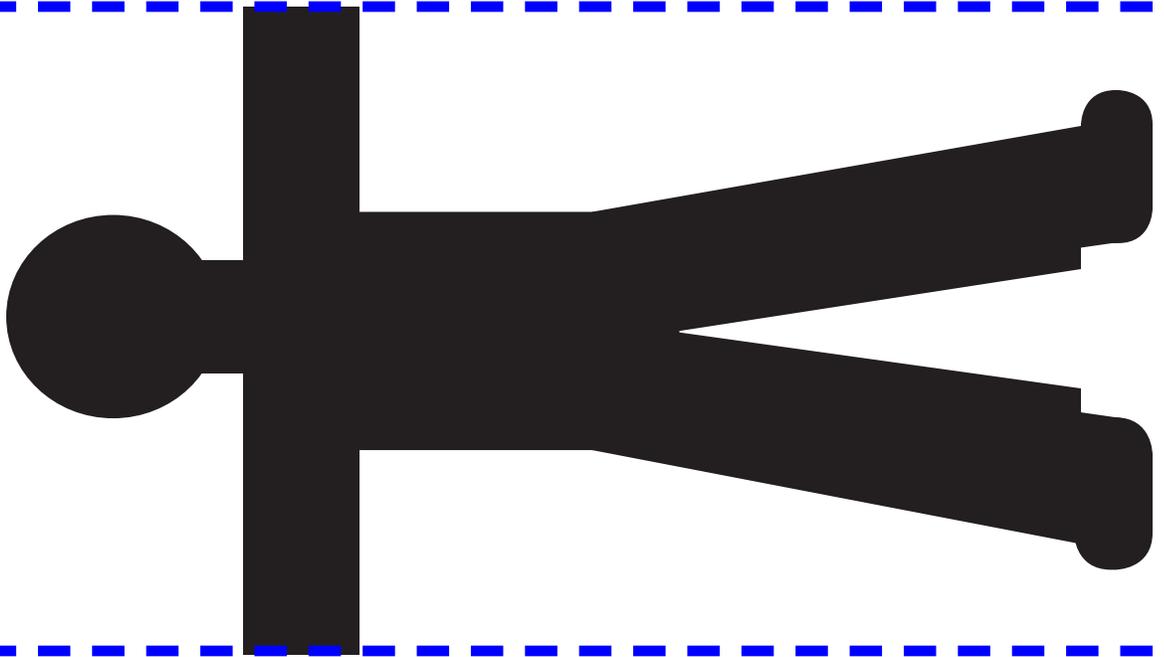
I can't do with - out you and you can't do with - out me. 'Cause

each lit - tle mem - ber has a spe - cial work to do to make the bo - dy grow. grow.

Text: Unknown
 Music: Unknown

9.9.13.5.Refrain.
 BODY SONG

FOLD THIS THIRD
BEHIND THE MIDDLE

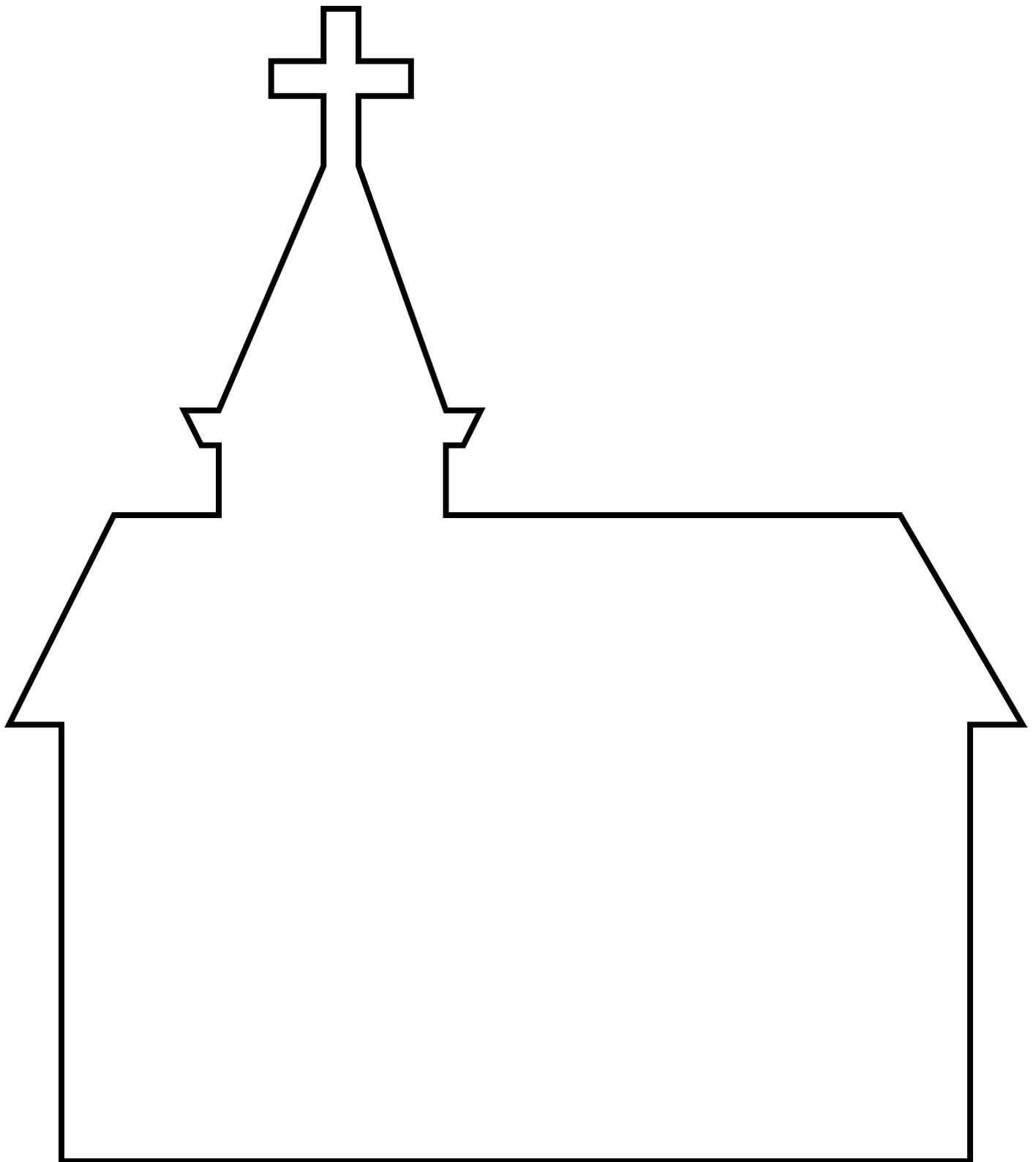


Fold as
shown.
Blue
side
shows
top of
paper.

Cut around doll
through all 3
layers. Do not cut
“hands.” Arms
will be one
continuous piece.

FOLD THIS THIRD
OVER THE MIDDLE

I can make the church stronger!
Ideas by _____



Grace and Generosity



Focus

To understand that God's love flows both when we give and when we receive

Focus Scriptures: John 4:1–29

Objectives

The learners will:

- The learners will:
- Remember what they learned in the previous session
- Discover how overflowing water is like God's love overflowing
- Hear how both Jesus and the woman at the well needed each other's gifts
- Imagine ways God's love is overflowing. Imagine ways their love is overflowing.

Resources

- *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A* by Ralph Milton, Wood Lake Publishing, 2007, ISBN 9781551455471, available through Herald House (<http://www.heraldhouse.org/cart/edit.asp?p=129081>)
- Or the NRSV version of the Bible

Materials

- Water containers large enough for all the children and teachers to gather around them. You may need more than one container. Plastic storage containers work well.
- Ladles, cups, or containers for each child to fill with water.
- A few clean towels or rags for drying off hands.
- Two copies for each child of the “Folded Paper Cup” resource sheet (included) cut out ahead of time
- One pillow or mat for each child to sit on (optional)
- A biblical costume or headdress for the storyteller to wear (optional)
- A pitcher of water to fill each child's paper cup
- One water drop cut from blue construction paper for each child (template provided). Label the bottom of each drop “God's love is overflowing” on one side and “My love is overflowing” on the other side
- Pictures cut out ahead of time of ways God's love is overflowing. For example, nature, personal relationships, food, clothing, shelter, books, medicine
- Pictures cut out ahead of time of ways our love can overflow. For example, giving or getting hugs and smiles, giving or receiving money and goods, teaching or being taught
- Yarn or string for hanging water drops

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson.

With a warm smile, welcome each child by name.

Once the whole class is present, point out the different paper dolls around the space. Ask the children to remember what they learned during the last session. Help them recall that every person in our church helps us be a strong church. Every person is important.”



Explain that today we will learn about giving and receiving God’s love.

Have children and teachers gather around container(s) half filled with water. You may need more than one container. Allow each child to experience filling and overflowing cups or containers with water. Remember to ask children to push up any long sleeves. Point out how the water is overflowing just like God’s love.

Explain how God shows love through giving us the gift of water. What would it be like if our love for others was overflowing just like the water and just like God’s love?

After drying off hands, follow the instructions on the folded paper cup resource sheet, help each child make two cups. One to fill with water and drink from and one to share later.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Invite the children to sit in a circle for story time. Providing a pillow or mat for each child to sit on helps them understand this is a time and place for them to listen to a story.

Before beginning to tell the story, put on a biblical headdress or some other biblical costume. Dressing the part makes the story more real.

Ask the children to imagine they are living in a time so long ago there were no televisions, no radios, no clocks, or cars. It was very different from how we live today. Tell the story, “The Woman at the Well” based on John 4: 5–30, 39–42. *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A, page 84*, or retell the John scripture as story.

In the story of the woman at the well, Jesus asked the Samaritan woman to share her water and cup. He was hot and tired. He needed her gift. This story is not only about what Jesus did for the woman, but what the woman did for Jesus. God’s love is about giving and receiving.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

If You're Thirsty

Sing together the song "If You're Thirsty" (tune: "If You're Happy and You Know It")

If you're thirsty and you're hot, have a drink.
If you're thirsty and you're hot, have a drink.
If you run and jump and play,
And you're busy all the day,
You'll be thirsty and be hot, so have a drink.

Love Overflowing

Give a paper water drop (pattern page 15) to each child and a copy of the two phrases. Read the phrases "God's love is overflowing." and "My love is overflowing." Let children glue one of the phrases to each side of the water drop.

Showing some of the pre-cut pictures, briefly describe the love being shared. Point out that love flows both when we give and when we receive.

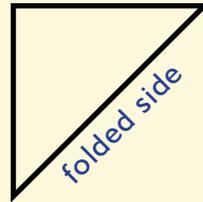
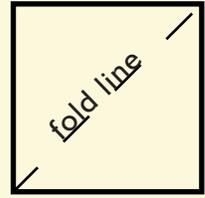
Encourage children to choose pictures they would like to glue onto their water drops.

Attach a piece of yarn or string to each water drop. Hang them around your space for the rest of the week.

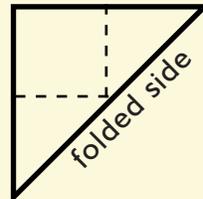
Fill Your Cup

Give each child two copies of the folded water cup pattern (page 16), already cut into squares. Help children fold their cups to hold water.

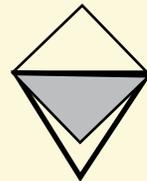
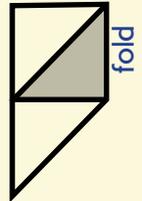
Make copies on white paper and cut along outside solid line.



Fold the square along the dotted line.



Fold one bottom corner over to touch the middle of the opposite side. Repeat with the other corner.



Fold down the small triangular pieces at the top of your cup—one over the front and one over the back.

Open cup between flaps that fold over and back.



Put water in one of the paper cups each child made. After they drink the water, talk about how good the water tastes and feels.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Ask the children to think of someone they will see today that they love with an overflowing love. Have them take the second paper cup they made and offer to serve water to that person as a way to show their love.

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Gather in a circle and pray "Dear God, we are thankful for the friends all around us. May we find ways to give and receive your love with them. In Jesus' name, Amen." Send each child off with the blessing, "God loves you and I love you!"

Water Drop Pattern

Love Overflowing Activity

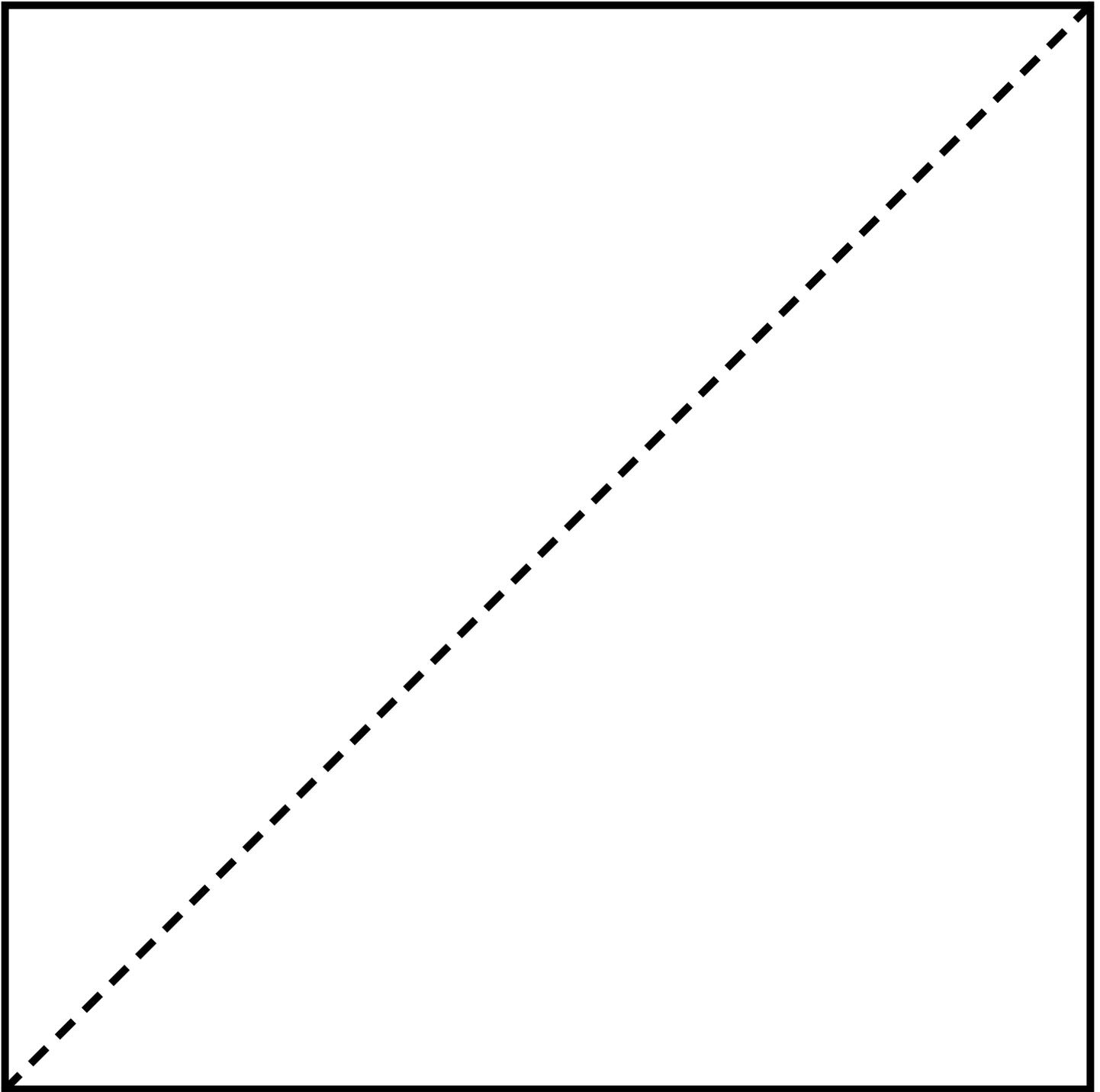
God's love is overflowing.

My love is overflowing.



Folded Water Cup

Fill Your Cup Activity



Instructions

1. Make copies on white paper and cut along outside solid line.
2. Fold the square along the dotted line.
3. Fold one bottom corner over to touch the middle of the opposite side. Repeat with the other corner.
4. Fold down the small triangular pieces at the top of your cup—one over the front and one over the back.

Worth of All Persons



Focus

To hear over and over again that God's love is for everyone

Focus Scripture: Acts 10:1-11:18

Objectives

The learners will:

- Remember what they learned in the previous session
- Discover that God loves each person
- Hear how Peter learned that everyone can be part of the church
- Hear and see themselves as a "Beloved child of God"

Resources

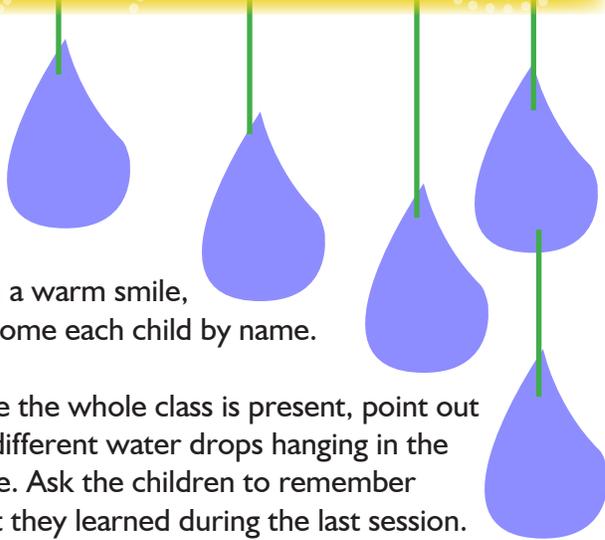
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- Or the NRSV version of the Bible

Materials

- One small paper plate for each child
- Pre-cut eyes, ears, noses, mouths from various felt colors and in various shapes for the paper plate face
- Pre-cut different lengths of yarn in various colors for hair on the paper plate face
- Crayons or markers
- Glue
- Tape or pins for hanging paper plate faces
- One pillow or mat for each child to sit on (optional)
- A biblical costume or headdress for the storyteller to wear (optional)
- One pre-cut card stock or poster board square (about 6 in/15 cm square) for each child with one peel-and-stick mirror or reflective material (such as Mylar™ or foil) cut smaller and glued in the middle of each square. Print "Beloved child of God" around the edge.
- Sequins or glitter to glue on the reflective pictures

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson.



With a warm smile, welcome each child by name.

Once the whole class is present, point out the different water drops hanging in the space. Ask the children to remember what they learned during the last session. Help them recall that we want our love overflowing just like God's love is overflowing.

Provide each child with a small paper plate.

Invite them to choose from pre-cut eyes, ears, noses, mouths and hair and glue those features onto their plate. They may also color the face.



Help the children discover how different each of the paper plate faces is. Point out that real people also have different faces. Explain that it doesn't matter what a person's face looks like. God loves each one.

Tape or pin each face around your space for the rest of the week.

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Invite the children to sit in a circle for story time. Providing a pillow or mat for each child to sit on helps them understand this is a time and place for them to listen to a story.

Before beginning to tell the story, put on a biblical headdress or some other biblical costume. Dressing the part makes the story more real.

Ask the children to imagine they are living in a time so long ago there were no televisions, no radios, no clocks, or cars. It was very different from how we live today. Tell the story, "Cornelius Becomes a Christian" based on Acts 10:1-11:18 *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*, page 44, or retell the Acts scripture as story.

After telling the story, ask the children, "I wonder how Cornelius would have felt if Peter decided not to go to visit his house. How would you feel if you were not allowed to be part of this class? Reinforce the idea that God's love is for everyone. All people are invited to learn how to live in God's way.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

The Blessing Song

Sing together the song “The Blessing Song”
(tune: “B-I-N-G-O”)

Blessings are God’s way of love,
And we are all a blessing.
B-L-E-S-S (clap as each letter is named)
B-L-E-S-S
B-L-E-S-S
And we are all a blessing.

You Are Loved by God

Gather in a circle with teachers and other adults included. Tell them you would like to share some good news with them. Whisper in the ear of the person on your right, “You are loved by God.” Encourage them one by one to whisper this good news in the ear of person sitting next to them. Having adults placed in the circle helps the message stay clear. Ask the last person in the circle to shout the good news to the whole group.

Beloved Child of God

Place a prepared reflective square face down in front of each child. Invite them to turn the squares over and look to see a “Beloved child of God.” Encourage them to decorate the borders with markers or crayons, or glue on sequins or glitter.

Using their reflective pictures, have them examine each other’s faces. Talk about the likenesses and the differences. Affirm that all faces and the people who wear them are loved by God.

4 Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived out.

Have each child think of someone they will see that day whom they would like to surprise. Suggest they say to that person, “Would you like to see a beloved child of God?” Have them look at their reflection in the “Beloved child of God” picture. Say to them, “You are a beloved child of God!” Practice a few times with the children so they understand how to share this fun surprise.

5 Bless

Prayer of blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and hope.

Gather in a circle and pray “Thank you God, for all the love that surrounds us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” Send each child off with the blessing, “God loves you and I love you!”

All Are Called



Focus

To discover we are each chosen by God

Focus Scriptures: Matthew 9:35–10:8;
10:24–39

Objectives

The learners will:

- Remember what they learned in the previous session
- Discuss how it feels to be chosen to do something
- Hear how Peter learned that with God he could do things even when he was afraid
- Know they are chosen by God
- Share memories from their time in this class

Resources

NRSV version of the Bible

Materials

- One pillow or mat for each child to sit on (optional)
- A biblical costume or headdress for the storyteller to wear (optional)
- A sack or bag in which each child will take away the crafts they made: fish from the mobile, paper dolls, water drop, and paper plate face
- One plain, smooth strip of cotton cloth (about 4 in/10 cm X 36 in/90 cm) to make a stole. Print “I am chosen by God” on each stole
- Tape to secure the fabric
- Fabric markers and foam stickers for decorating the stoles

1 Gather

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson.

With a warm smile, welcome each child by name.

Once the whole class is present, point out the different paper plate faces hanging in the space. Ask the children to remember what they learned during the last session. Help them recall that God's love is for everyone.

Ask the children if they have ever had a time when they were chosen for something they really wanted to do. For example, say a prayer at church, sing a song in front of people, stay overnight at a friend's house, visit an older person in a care facility, collect the offering during a church service, tell a story to someone. Talk about those experiences. Share an experience of your own.

Have the children stand up, and ask them to show you how it feels to be chosen to do something. Have them show you how it feels with their face. Have them show you how it feels with their hands. Have them show you how it feels with their feet. Have them show you how it feels with their whole body.

Ask the children to identify who is chosen by God to be a child of God. Help them understand that we are all special to God. Have them show you with their whole body how it feels to be special to God.

"Peter is a Little Bit Afraid"

Based on Matthew 9:35–10:8; 10:24–39

Peter was one of Jesus' friends who traveled with him. Jesus needed help going to all the places where people wanted to hear about God's love. So Jesus asked Peter. Peter was excited to be chosen. He really wanted to help Jesus, but he was a little bit afraid. "I'm afraid to go to strange places without you. I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!"

Chorus: I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!
(wrap arms around your body)

I don't know where to go. I don't know what to say. I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!

Chorus: I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!
(wrap arms around your body)

How do I help sick people feel better? I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!

Chorus: I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!
(wrap arms around your body)

I've not been to those towns. I don't know anyone there. I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!

Chorus: I'm a little bit afraid! I'm a little bit afraid!
(wrap arms around your body)

Jesus put his hand on Peter's shoulder. "Of course you're afraid. But remember, when you are afraid, God will be with you. Like a friend. Like a mother, or a father. You will still be afraid, but you will feel strong enough to do it anyway."

"Don't be afraid of the people you meet. Remember that God cares for them just as God cares for you. You've heard me talking to all the people. Talk to them about the same things. You've seen me help sick people feel better. When people know they are loved, it helps them feel stronger inside."

"Try hard to remember that God is with you everywhere. All the time! In the daytime and at nighttime. If you can remember that, you will feel strong enough to talk to strangers even when you are afraid."

2 Engage

Invites exploration and interaction.

Invite the children to sit in a circle for story time. Providing a pillow or mat for each child to sit on helps them understand this is a time and place for them to listen to a story.

Before beginning to tell the story, put on a biblical headdress or some other biblical costume. Dressing the part makes the story more real.

Ask the children to imagine they are living in a time so long ago there were no televisions, no radios, no clocks, or cars. It was very different from how we live today. Tell the story, "Peter is a Little Bit Afraid," found on page 20. Encourage children to repeat the chorus and action as the story is told.

Point out to the children that just like Peter, they are chosen by God. Each of them is special to God.

3 Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing.

That's What It's All About

Sing together the song "That's What It's All About" (tune: "Hokey Pokey") (Stand in a circle.)

You put your helping hands in (reach both hands into the circle),
You put your helping hands out (put hands behind backs),
You put your helping hands in (reach both hands into the circle),
And you spread God's love about (spread hands in a half circle).
You use your hands for helping (hold hands out to each other),
And you spread God's love around (spread hands in half circle).
That's what it's all about! (clap, clap, clap, clap, clap)

You put your smiling face in (bend head into circle with a smile),
You put your smiling face out (straighten head),
You put your smiling face in (bend head into circle with a smile),
And you spread God's joy about (spread hands in a half circle).
You use your smile to welcome (look at each other and smile),
And you spread God's joy around (spread hands in a half circle).
That's what it's all about! (clap, clap, clap, clap, clap)

I Am Chosen by God

Give a prepared piece of fabric to each child, and show how it can be worn around the neck as a stole. Point out the written message, "I am chosen by God." Use tape to secure each stole to the table or floor so the fabric doesn't move as the children decorate the stole with markers or foam stickers. Explain that each time they wear the stole, they will remember Jesus' message that they are chosen by God.

