Lesson 11: We Are the Body of Christ

Overview:

Key Focus: The body of Christ is powerful when we are in unity.

Bible Story: The Body of Christ Works Together

Scriptures: John 17:11, 20–23; Romans 15:5–6; 1 Corinthians 12:12–21; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:26–27; Acts 9: 36–42

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:14 (NKJV) For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Prep:

Materials Needed:

- 4 index cards

Classroom Prep:

- Write each word on an index card: *head, eye, ear*, and *hand*. Hide the index cards around the room or tape them under chairs.

Engage:

Today we will talk about unity. When things are in unity, they act together as one. A puzzle has many pieces, but they all go together to make one picture. What happens if a piece gets lost? (The puzzle picture isn't complete.) **What are some other things that have a lot of parts to it but functions as one thing?** Allow responses and ask what happens if one of the parts doesn't work or gets lost. (Possible answers: sports team, they would lose the game if players didn't work together or show up for the game; bike, it wouldn't work if a tire was flat or the chain broke; cake, wouldn't taste good if ingredients were missing)

There are many things we use every day that depend on many parts working together. Every time you turn on a light, all of the wires and pieces work together to bring you light. When things work the way they are designed—life is good. The same thing is true with the family of God. He wants His family to work together. Let's find out more about unity and Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse Activity:
Display and discuss the verse. In a large open area, have the children form groups of three. Select a threesome to lock arms and hop from one side of the area to the other while the group says the verse. If the threesome unlocks arms for any reason, they go back and start again. See which groups can stay in unity and reach the other side.

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:14 (NKJV) For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Bible Story:

Did you know that before Jesus returned to heaven, He prayed for you? Read John 17:11, 20–23. **What do you notice that Jesus kept repeating?** (Jesus wants His followers to be one like He and God are one.) **What does it mean when someone keeps repeating something?** (It means it is important.) **Jesus wants to make sure that His followers act like He and God who are parts of the same God. Let's say together the three parts of the Trinity that are God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each part of the Trinity has a different role, but they work together as God. God the Son came down to the earth to live as a human so that He could pay the price of all sin. When God the Son returned to heaven, God the Holy Spirit came to live inside and fill us with power gifts so that we can use our authority to help others know about salvation. Jesus points out that the world will know that God loves them when Jesus' followers act as one.**

Jesus repeats the importance of His followers acting as one in another New Testament book. Read Romans 15:5–6. **What do you think "like-minded" means?** (Possible answers: Like-minded means we all think alike; we have the same views; we share the same ideas about something.) **We can all be like-minded and agree that God loves us. We can all be like-minded and agree that Jesus died to pay for our sins and offer us eternal life. We don't all have to be like-minded and agree that blue is the best color or cats are the best pet. God's Word is the important thing that Jesus' followers need to agree about and be like-minded about what God's Word says. We learned in the last lesson that we have the mind of Christ. When we use our mind to think like Christ, we are like-minded with Jesus so we know we are thinking the right things!**

When we say "yes" to Jesus, we become a Christian, or a follower of Christ and part of the family of God. Each Christian is a separate person with separate likes and dislikes and different talents, but Jesus wants us to be one in unity. How many of you say chocolate ice cream is your favorite? Have children stand to vote. **How many of you say vanilla ice cream is your favorite?** Have children stand. **How many of strawberry cream is your favorite?** Have children stand. **There are different opinions of ice cream, but you are all here together worshiping God!**

Right now, I want everyone to practice doing something as one in unity. Let's all stand and look around the room for four index cards. When the four cards are found, have everyone return to their seats except those holding the cards. Read the cards and have those with cards stay at the front with you and they should act out what is read in the verses about their word. **Jesus uses the example of a human body to show what it means to be one in Christ.** Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–21. **These verses show what a disaster it would be if the human body acted like each part was the most important and didn't need the other body parts.** Allow the children to comment about how ridiculous that would be. **Sometimes Christians act like the body parts in these verses. What would happen if the worship team thought they were more important than the pastor? Or an elementary Sunday school teachers thought they were more important than the youth workers?** Allow responses. **We are all different parts of the body of Christ with different gifts to be used, just like our Memory Verse says.** Recite together or read 1 Corinthians 12:14. **Our pastor doesn't do everything at church by himself. Who are some of the people in our church who use their gifts to work together at church each Sunday?** Answers should include church workers, such as pastoral team, worship team, facilities, teachers and volunteers, greeters, parking lot volunteers, ushers, etc.

We know there are many different human body parts, but one body part is extremely important, the head. Why is your head so important to your body? (Possible answers: The head contains the brain; without a head I couldn't eat or see or hear.) **Without a head, your body wouldn't be able to function at all. The body of Christ has a head also.** Read Colossians 1:18. **The body of Christ is the church of believers in Jesus around the world. Our church isn't the only church in the world. Jesus' followers live all around the world and together, we all make up His church that is the body of Christ. Jesus is the Head of the church of believers. As the body of Christ, we all must follow along where the Head directs us. That's why it is so important to renew our minds so that we are using the mind of Christ to know what to do and where to go to tell people about Jesus.**

Unity isn't easy, but it is something that Jesus shows us how it works in real life. Read 1 Corinthians 12:26–27. **When someone at church has a baby, we all rejoice. When someone has a family member die, we are all sad for the loss. That's how Jesus wants His body to work together. Let's look in the book of Acts to find an example. Remember that we learned it was in the beginning of Acts that the Holy Spirit came to bring us power and authority in the name of Jesus to do miracles.** Read Acts 9:36–42. **The body of Christ loved Dorcas, mourned when she died, and rejoiced at the miracle of her being alive again. They acted in unity and cared for each other. Peter came and saw the body of Christ acting in unity. He prayed and God answered the prayer. What happened when people heard the miracle of Dorcas being alive again?** (Many people believe on the Lord.) **When we show Christ's love and unity, people want to know about Jesus and the free gift of salvation. When you are part of the body of Christ, you have the job of being in unity with other believers so that people who aren't part of the body will want to be part of it!** Lead a cheer for people wanting to be part of the body of Christ.

Bible Story Questions:

- **What did Jesus pray for His followers to act like?** (Jesus prayed for His followers to be one like He and God were one.)
- **What funny example in the Bible shows the danger of not working together in unity**? (The example of the human body parts shows what happens when Christians don't work together.)
- **Why did people ask Peter to come to the home of a dead woman?** (The people loved Dorcas and were very sad that she died. They went to get Peter because they had heard about the miracles he did.)
- **What happened when Peter came to Dorcas' house?** (He prayed, she came back to life, and people believed in Jesus.)
- **Who is the Head of the body of Christ?** (Jesus) **How do you show that you are part of the body of Christ?** (Possible answers: I listen to the Head; I renew my mind so I use the mind of Christ that is in me; I work together with other believers.)
- **What can you do this week to show that you are in unity with other members of the body of Christ?** (Answers will vary.)

Bible Story Activities:

Games:

- Gather everyone in a large group in the center of an open area. Choose a volunteer to be the "head" that directs the chain of people through the group and open area. Have the head join hands with someone and lead the pair through the people. The person who was added to the head joins hands with someone as the chain passes. Continue this process of each person who is added gets to add on a new person. If the chain breaks, choose a new head and begin again. If the group is successful in adding everyone in the group, have them do a cheer for the unity of the body of Christ! Play again as time allows and select a different head each time.

- Ideas for Working with Younger Kids:
  Recite and do the actions to the song, "Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes." Between each time singing it, identify each part of the body as part of the body of Christ. Point to your body and have the children do the same and repeat what you say. Point to your head, "Christ is the Head." Point to your shoulders and name two children, "__ and __ are the shoulders." Point to your knees and name two children, "__ and __ are the knees." Point to your shoulders and name the rest of the children, "__ and __ are the toes."

- Ideas for Working with Older Kids:
  Read and talk about 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. Afterward, invite volunteers to act out the

body of Christ trying to use their spiritual gifts independently as shown in the passage. Then, have them act out the body of Christ working together using their spiritual gifts.

Worksheet:
Read together the clues and words in the Word Bank. Let the children work in pairs to complete the crossword puzzle. On the back of their papers, have them draw a picture of your church members as the body of Christ.

Affirmation/Declaration:
I am part of the body of Christ.
Jesus is the Head.
I will work together with the body to do what our Head says!

Make Connections:

Biblical Worldview Connection:
People tend to view Christians as disunified with many denominations bickering over doctrinal issues and trivial methods of the worship service. When the body of Christ unifies and obeys the Head, Christians will have a powerful testimony to the world. Encourage the children to live out their biblical worldview through showing unity and working together to do the task of showing people God's love for them and desire for a relationship with people through forgiveness of their sins.

Missions Connection:
God's Word shows the powerful testimony of unity. As missionaries work together, they bring glory to God and that reaches people and touches their hearts. Pray for unity among missionaries from your church. Remind the children they are missionaries who have a mission field wherever their feet take them. Encourage them to work well together so people will see God's love and want to know more about His Son, Jesus Christ.

Family Connection:
Have fun this week watching for examples of your family working together in unity as you prepare meals, take care of the household, and do activities. Point out good attitudes of like-mindedness and acting as equal members of one body. Celebrate each family member for their unique contributions to the family and their importance as a member of the family God put together. Also, send thank you notes to your pastor and other members of the local body of Christ who use their gifts to minister to your family.

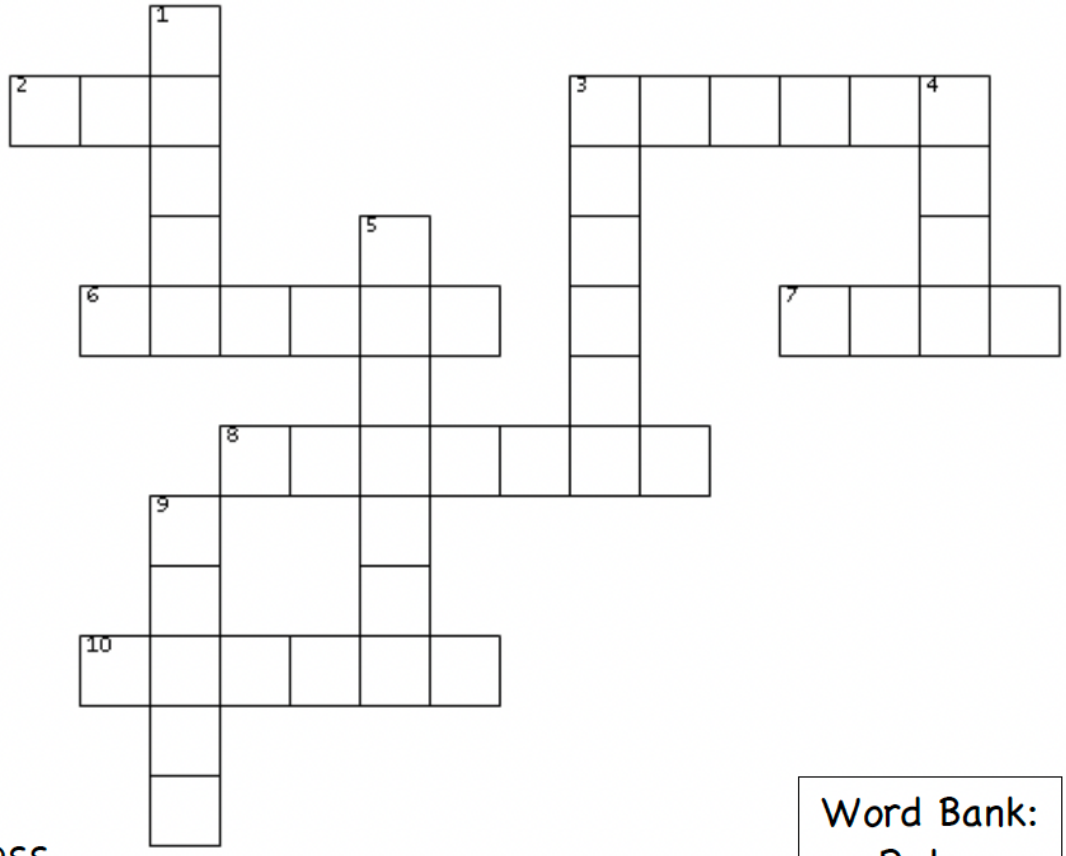
Prayer Points:

Point out that praying in unity is powerful. Have everyone join in a large prayer circle and hold hands. Share a prayer request for your church or someone in the class or church. Also thank God for the church body that came together in unity to put on today's service. Choose a volunteer to pray for that request. When "amen" is said, have everyone drop hands and shout "yes" as they stomp a foot and throw up their hands. Explain that "amen" means that you agree and want what was prayed to happen. Everyone shows unity in prayer and in agreeing with the prayer.

Name _____

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Use the words in the Word Bank to fill in the puzzle.



ACROSS

2. We are to be ____ like God and Jesus.
3. The body of Christ is the _____.
6. Jesus _____ for His followers.
7. We are the _____ of Christ.
8. _____ is God in three parts.
10. Believers should be like-_____.

DOWN

1. _____ brought Dorcas back to life.
3. Christians are part of the body of _____.
4. Christ is the _____ of the body.
5. Unity helps people _____ in Jesus.
9. We need to work in _____.

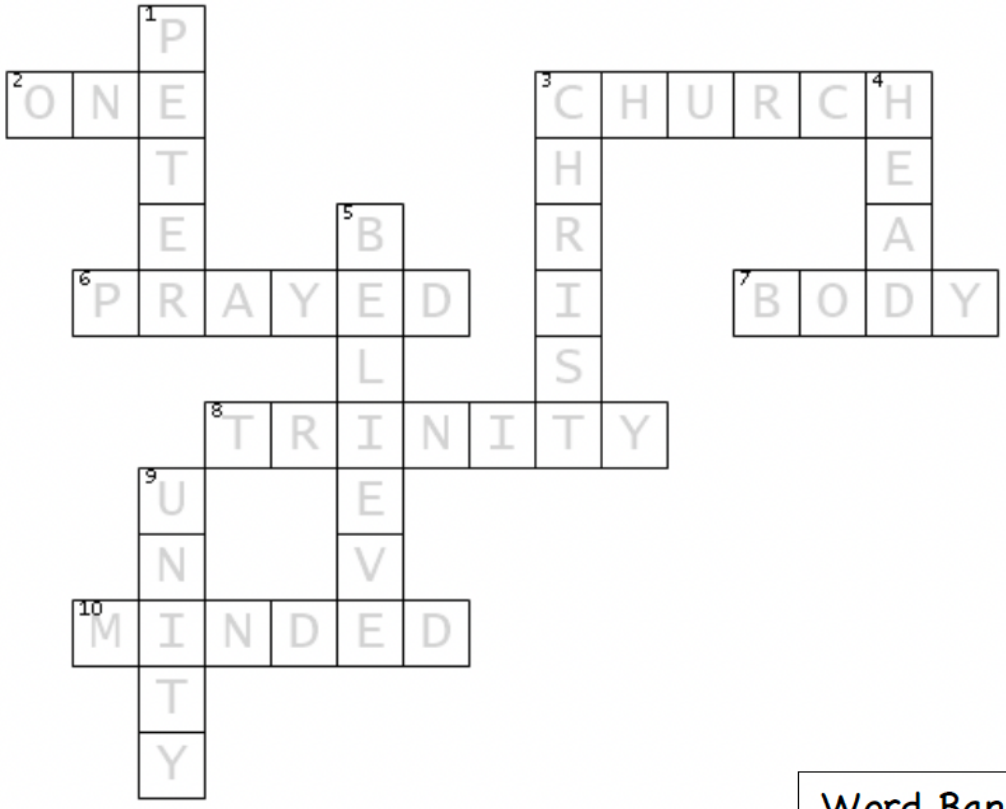
Word Bank:

Peter
Christ
head
body
unity
minded
one
prayed
believe
church
Trinity

ANSWERS:

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Word Bank:

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