

Loving God's family



Bible verses:

Ephesians 4:1-6,11-16
The unity of the body



Aim:

To explore the idea of unity and its importance in the world



Today's fruit:

Peace



This week we are introduced to Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

We will think about the importance of unity within the Church and how the Holy Spirit's peace joins us. The children will also have the opportunity to consider the gifts and talents God has given them and how they can contribute to the body of Christ.

The letters written to the early churches are often seen to give encouragement and instruction. We see the importance of peace for the new churches as they work together.

Each child will need:

- Pens/pencils and paper
- *Explore It ideas* handout

You will need:

- Today's fruit sign: *Peace*
- A large outline of a human body - see Action it
- Coloured shapes of paper and glue (optional) - see Action it



Start it

Say:

Think about all the different people that you know. It might be a family member, friend, teacher or church leader. Choose a person who you think deserves a gift.

Ask the children to share the person they have chosen and why they think they deserve a gift. When each child has shared, give them some paper and pens/pencils and ask them to design

the perfect gift for that person. It doesn't have to be a gift that already exists; it can be their own creation. The children can share their idea with the rest of the group and may want to take it home to show the recipient.

Sing it

Say:

Our session today is all about unity within God's Church. Our memory verse reminds us of how we can treat each other in a way that will keep us united. Let's share it together.

Memory verse

'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.'

(Ephesians 4:32 *NIV*)

Say:

To help us remember the words of Ephesians 4:32, we're going to sing a song based on this verse.



Video

'Ephesians 4:32' (memory verse song for kids) by ACPA Music (1:15)

Share it

Ask:

- Have you ever written a card or letter to someone? Why did you write it?
- When might we send letters or cards to people?
- There is a whole section in the Bible full of letters. (They are all in the New Testament.) Which ones can you name? **Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude.**

Say:

Paul wrote many letters to help the first churches as they began to figure out what being a Christian meant. In his letters he challenged them about the best way to follow Jesus and live as a united church community. Because his letters had lots of instructions and guidance, they are sometimes called epistles, from the Greek word meaning letter or message. We will be looking at Paul's letter to the Ephesians, so let's learn a little more about it.

Video

God's Story: Books of the Bible: Ephesians by Crossroads Kids' Club (3:45)

Ask:

- In which part of the Bible would you find Paul's letter to the Ephesians?
- What two kinds of people would you find in the church at Ephesus? How were they different?
- What did Paul say was the most important thing about each person?
- What does unity mean?
- What does every member of the Church have in common?
- In what way are our differences a gift from God?
- Why is unity so important to Jesus?

Say:

We learn more about the importance of unity in Ephesians 4:1-6.

Read:

'I am in prison because I belong to the Lord. God chose you to be his people. I tell you now to live the way God's people should live. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient and accept each other with love. You are joined together with peace through the Spirit. Do all you can to continue together in this way. Let peace hold you together. There is one body and one Spirit. And God called you to have one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God and Father of everything. He rules everything. He is everywhere and in everything.'

(Ephesians 4:1-6 ICB)

Ask:

What are some of the ways Paul suggests people within the Church should live?

Discuss

Discuss the terms 'humble', 'gentle', 'patient' and what it means to 'accept each other with love'. Why do the children think this is often difficult for people to do, even when they are Christians and love Jesus?

Display the *Peace* sign.

Say:

Ephesians 4:3 reminds us how we can stay united. On our own, it can be difficult to be humble or gentle, and we can find it challenging to accept others with love. Verse three points out that we need the Holy Spirit's power to be at peace with one another. It is the Holy Spirit who grows the fruit of peace within each one of us.

Action it

Paul told the Ephesians that, within the Church, we are all joined together in peace. He then went on to describe the Church as a body.

Read:

'And Christ gave gifts to men – he made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and tell the Good News, and some to have the work of caring for and teaching God's people. Christ gave those gifts to prepare God's holy people for the work of serving. He gave those gifts to make the body of Christ stronger. This work must continue until we are all joined together in the same faith and in the same knowledge about the Son of God. We must become like a mature person – we must grow until we become like Christ and have all his perfection.

'Then we will no longer be babies. We will not be tossed about like a ship that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from men who are trying to fool us. Those men make plans and try any kind of trick to fool people into following the wrong path. No! We will speak the truth with love. We will grow up in every way to be like Christ, who is the head. The whole body depends on Christ. And all the parts of the body are joined and held together. Each part of the body does its own work. And this makes the whole body grow and be strong with love.'

(Ephesians 4:11-16 *ICB*)

Ask:

What kinds of gifts did Paul say God gives to his people?

Say:

When you think about a human body, every part is important in making sure the person is healthy and working well. Paul describes the Church as a body with each part playing an important role. God gives each one of us gifts and talents that we can use to support the Church. If we do not use them then the Church suffers.

Explain that the children are going to take time to think about the gifts and talents God has given them. You will need an outline of a human body drawn on a large sheet of paper, eg draw round a child on the back of some wallpaper.

Ask each child to write their name on the body and list the gifts, talents and personality traits that they bring to help the body of Christ. Depending on the size of the group, you may be able to let all of the children write within the outline of the body; or you may want to supply coloured shapes to write and stick on the body.

Take the opportunity for the children to encourage each other as they add gifts and talents that have been missed to the names of other group members. Challenge the children to think about how they are using their gifts and talents to keep the body of Christ strong and healthy.

Say:

As you can see, we are all different and bring our own gifts and talents to serve Jesus. Sometimes those differences can make it difficult for us to understand each other. That is why Paul's message of unity is so important. As you serve in church, remember that we are all joined together in peace.

Pray it

Say:

Our Bible reading today says that we are 'joined together with peace through the Spirit' and guides us to let peace hold us together as a church (Ephesians 4:3-4 *ICB*). We have already thought about peace in our church community, but what about peace in our wider world?

Ask the children to think of places in the world, including our country, where we need God's peace. What situations have they seen on the news or have people discussed at school? Share their concerns together as a group and remind them that we can ask for God's peace in these situations. Sing 'The peace song' together and then use the song's prayer to close the session.

Song

'The peace song' by Cheeky Pandas TV (3:10)

Say:

Dear God,

We pray for your peace on earth from Heaven to our hearts.

We pray your peace on earth that never will depart.

So quiet our souls, our Saviour is near, he'll cast away our fears.

God's peace is with us here.

Amen.

Explore it

Remember to send home the *Explore It ideas* for children and families.



Loving God's family

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.



Bible verses:

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Peace



Serve

In this week's session you took time to think about the gifts and talents God has given you. How could you use those gifts to serve others in your family, church or community?



Discover

Watch the clip with someone at home. What do you discover about the body of Christ in this clip? How can we be healthy members of God's family?

Ephesians 4:1-16 kids spot by Christ Church Anglican Lavender Bay



Song for the week

'Ephesians 4:32' (memory verse song for kids) by ACPA Music (1:15)



Memory verse

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