

February 2012



“God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose,”
(1 Corinthians 12:18 NRSV.)

600 Hoffmann Drive
Watertown, WI 53094
800-369-4636

Dear Colleague at the Cross,

What does it mean ...*to minister WITH people with disabilities?* How do we educate, enlighten and empower others to respect and include all people in God's family? How do we support others to become all that they are **Meant to Be**?

At Bethesda Lutheran Communities, we seek to provide resources to congregations, schools and other ministries, supporting them in this endeavor. We strive to provide you with our very best. Thus, it is my privilege to announce the availability of Bethesda's new disability awareness curriculum, **Meant to Be**, free on our website, beginning March 1, 2012, in observance of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

Our free curriculum includes several pieces including sermon notes, devotions, a chapel and Bible lessons for all ages from early childhood through adulthood. For the first time, we also offer a four-part Bible study series for those who would like to dive deeper into God's Word, reflecting on Christ's healing and compassion.

Bethesda ministry consultants around the country are prepared to support you with supplemental materials, personal visits with your congregational or school leadership, and years of experience in the field of disability ministry. To find the ministry consultant nearest you, and to locate the **Meant to Be** materials, visit our website at BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org/Awareness or email us at ReligiousLife@mailblc.org. If you do not have Web access or need further assistance, call 800-383-8743, ext. 4410.

It is my hope that you prayerfully consider using Bethesda's **Meant to Be** Disability Ministry curriculum and that you will help include all people in the Body of Christ. Feel free to contact a ministry consultant in your area to get started.

Peace and Power in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles E. Werth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "W".

Rev. Charles E. Werth
Vice President of Religious Life and Church Relations

Lives
Transformed



Resource Guide

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Find these free, downloadable resources from Bethesda Lutheran Communities. While appropriate at any time of the year consider using during March Developmental Disabilities Month.

www.BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org/Awareness

☐ Resource Guide

☐ Welcome Letter

Ⓜ **Meant to Be Introductory Clip**
(QuickTime and Windows Media Player)
for opening a worship service, Bible class or meeting to begin discussion on Intellectual and Developmental Disability Awareness

Ⓜ **Meant to Be Music DVD**
Sing-a-long with lyrics

📁 Supplements

☐ **Certificate of Commitment** (8 x 10 - fillable)

☐ **Meant to Be Lyrics**

☐ **Poster** (8.5 x 11 - fillable)

☐ **Poster** (11 x 17 - fillable)

☐ **Terminology Bulletin**

☐ **Volunteer Bulletin**

📁 Meant to Be Materials

- ☐ **Adult Bible Study** - Stand alone session
a lesson for Bible classes or Christian groups based on the Apostle Paul
- ☐ **Adult Bible Study Series** - a four-part series
for a Bible class, Christian group or Disability Ministry Team that chooses to dive deeper into God's word, reflecting on Christ's healing and compassion
- ☐ **Chapel Talk**
for Christian school or classroom devotions.
Are you seeing the e=whole picture?
- ☐ **Children's Message**
to be incorporated within a church service or used a Bible class
- ☐ **Devotion**
for opening a meeting based on John the Baptist
- ☐ **Devotion**
for people with disabilities based on The Woman at the Well
- ☐ **Early Childhood Bible Study**
a lesson and activity based on the theme: We are all part of God's family
- ☐ **Early Childhood Bible Study** (Teacher Copy)
- ☐ **Elementary Bible Study**
a lesson and activity based on the anointing of King David and the story of Goliath
- ☐ **Elementary Bible Study** (Teacher Copy)
- ☐ **Sermon Notes with Outline**
- ☐ **Litany**
based on 1 Corinthians 12:18 to coincide with the sermon
- ☐ **Women's Bible Study**
Who are you meant to be?
- ☐ **Youth Bible Study**
a lesson based on the anointing of King David for Junior and Senior high school students





Adult Bible Study

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”



Imagine a high-hurdler, tensed in the starting block before a race. The gun goes off, and simultaneously, her body propels forward. As she runs, you can see the years of training and discipline as she moves toward the first hurdle. Her body is an economy of motion. Nothing is wasted. She barely clears the hurdle, not really jumping, just easily stretching over it. It seems as if she defies gravity, as if her feet never touch the ground. Then the final sprint and forward lean, and the race is over before the echo of the starting pistol has left the stadium.

A well-trained athlete, whatever the sport, is a beautiful example of how, when everything works together, the result seems to be perfection. It is when the outcome looks as if it were simply meant to be.

Several times in his letters, Paul uses the example of an athlete to describe his life desires.

Read **1 Corinthians 9:24–27**.

1. *To which two athletic events does Paul refer? What obvious contrast does Paul make between the athlete and the Christian?*

As is the case with most analogies, this one falls short of describing the Christian life exactly. *What phrase in verse 24 does not apply to the Christian?*

2. *What was Paul’s purpose according to this passage? How could the discipline of the body affect his, and your, spiritual efforts?*

Greek culture was well-known for its admiration of athletic achievement. The city of Corinth was no exception. In fact, it hosted a series of athletic contests that were second only to the Olympics in ancient times. For this reason, most of the members of the Corinthian church would be familiar with Paul’s example.

It would be like a writer today referring to the home-town professional sports franchise.

2 Timothy 4:6–8 might add further clarification to this example. Read this passage.

3. *What additional information do Paul’s words here provide? Who wins the “crown of righteousness?”*

Paul’s use of these examples might lead us to think that he was a strapping athlete, strong and physically fit. However, careful reading of his letters reveals quite the opposite.

Read **2 Corinthians 12:6–10**.

4. *What is the result of “Paul’s thorn”? How was Paul made strong in his weakness. How are we made strong in our weaknesses?*

It is impossible to know exactly what Paul’s “thorn” was. However, we can be fairly certain that it was a physical disability and that it was at times debilitating. There are some additional hints in his letter to the Galatians.

Read **Galatians 4:12–14**.

Here Paul refers to a “bodily ailment” that caused him to remain among these congregations.

5. How did Paul describe this ailment? Have you ever faced a bodily ailment that held you back from something? What were Paul's expectations because of this ailment? What were your expectations because of your ailment? Ironic and significant: Paul had a bodily ailment that, at times, slowed him down. Revisit v.#13. What could this mean?

Read **2 Corinthians 10:10**.

6. What further light might this shed on Paul's disability?

Ironic and significant: Paul had a physical burden that went uncured and yet he is given the power through Christ to lift others burdens.

Paul was one of the greatest men of God that ever lived, but God chose to allow him to live with a disability that could have interfered with the work that he had been called to do. The passage in Galatians tells us that he was acutely aware of the effect that his appearance could have. However, Paul was able to embrace his disability and use it to teach others.

Read **1 Corinthians 12:12–26**.

7. How might Paul's personal experience with disability have shaped what is written here? Paul had spent considerable time in Corinth (see Acts 18). How might the knowledge of Paul's disability affected how Corinthians understood Paul's Letters?

Reopen your discussion on **2 Corinthians 12:6–10**. Does this passage add anything to your understanding of Paul's view of weakness?

Return to the opening paragraph about the hurdler and apply Paul's example of the Church as the human body. Think about how each body part is essential for the racer to perform at her peak. As you imagine her running the race, think about which parts of the body are visible and obviously contributing to her efforts. Then consider those parts which you cannot see.

8. Could the runner compete if his heart was not pumping blood to his muscles, or if his lungs were not replenishing the blood's oxygen levels?

Finding body parts that are not essential to the overall performance of this athlete would be difficult. Remember, success in the race is only a small part of the big picture.

Paul wanted the church at Corinth to understand that no one should feel inferior, and at the same time, no one should feel superior. This is not solely a case of self-image.

9. What does 1 Corinthians 12:18 tell us about our place in the body? Compare this verse to Ephesians 2:10. Why should we feel neither inferior or superior?

As baptized Christians, we are equal participants in the mission of the Church. In fact, every one of us is indispensable in this mission, even those individuals who appear weak to our sensibilities. You might be saying, "Wait a minute, I thought this was a study on people with disabilities!"

It was! **The lesson to be learned is that God does not consider disabilities when he calls us by Word and Sacrament—he only asks us to do our part**, the part that he has already predetermined us to do. Should we, as the Body of Christ, see anyone any differently?

Adult Bible Study Part 1 of 4



Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Opening Discussion

How many people here know someone with a disability?

How does your friend or family member cope in his/her community?

Are there things that your friend or family member may need help with when it comes to completing certain tasks?

Do you have a disability? Would you be willing to share with the group?

How do others treat your friend, family member or you?

Introduction

We have just discovered a wide range of both abilities and disabilities. Through this opening discussion, we see that the term “disability” is not very precise, especially if we are defining an intellectual or developmental disability. If we continued our analysis, we would learn that this label is applied, not only to people whose disabilities are obvious, but also to individuals who have operated in what we would call the “social norm” for most of their adult lives.

“I prefer to be called Joseph, not the man in the wheelchair.”

—Joseph

We have also discovered that saying a person has “a disability” is largely useless as a descriptive term and usually tells us little about **who the person really is**. While these various labels and terms are helpful in the fields of medicine and social services, they have little use in most everyday life situations.

“I know I need extra help in math, but I wish they wouldn’t call the class special!”

—Matthew

Because these labels follow the individual throughout her life, they serve to accentuate her differences and push us into “dealing” with her by providing “special” services and attention. These efforts are well intentioned but often counterproductive. They run the risk of increasing her isolation and adding to feelings of inadequacy.

1. *How can labels help? How can they hurt?*

When someone does not fit the social norm, our efforts are to force normalcy on them. Words such as “mainstreaming” and “integration” often disguise society’s attempt to change the very

“If I go to heaven and there is no Down syndrome, who will I be?”

—Gineen

essence of who a person is to fit its view of normal. There is little consideration of how the person with disabilities sees herself. We do not understand that having a disability is “normal” for her; we do not allow her to embrace her disability as being a part of who she is. We only ask her to change.

2. *Think about your friend with disabilities. Do they want to change? Should they change?*

3. *Would they still be who they are if they changed? Why or why not?*

“Maybe the issue in heaven is not that I will hear, but that you will understand my language.”

—Alex

WITH them vs. TO them, and what does the Bible really have to say about disabilities?

Asking questions of this nature is an essential step in engaging the Body of Christ in our mission to all people, not only those with disabilities. We are all “created in Jesus Christ to do good works;” we are all **Meant to Be**.

Disability and the Bible

There are many mentions of persons with disabilities in the Bible. In order to gain a biblical perspective, we will have to look at several passages in their cultural and historical context. In addition, let’s consider the spiritual implications of each example. We are certainly aware of the limitations of medical knowledge in ancient times. We may be further hampered by the fact that the Hebrew culture of the Bible was not as advanced in the healing arts as were other ancients. The Egyptians, Babylonians, and the Greeks each were considerably more “scientific” in their approach to the treatment of injuries and disease.

“My teacher always says that this (points to the left) is my good leg and this (points to the right) is my bad leg. I wonder why she says that. As far as I know, legs can’t do anything wrong.”

—Patrick

Our purpose in this study is not to criticize the social services industry; it is to determine the Church’s responsibility in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Is proclaiming the Word and administering the Sacraments enough? What adjustments need to be made, what efforts initiated? How do our attitudes have to change so that we may effectively minister

Both the Old Testament and Hebrew culture reflect a holistic, or entire person, approach to health and healing that seems foreign to our modern thinking. The physical and the spiritual were intertwined, and the emphasis was on prevention more than treatment. Disease and disability were considered the result of sin. They were therefore directly connected to the sin of the affected individual and healing was associated with God.

Read the following passages together. **Exodus 15:26**, **2 Samuel 12:13–19**, **Psalms 38:1–8**.

4. *What do these passages tell you about the attitudes toward health and healing among the Hebrew people?*

Essentially, in the Hebrew worldview, all difficulties faced in life were caused by the presence of sin in the world. Healing is strongly connected with the coming of the Messiah, as is the presence of general well-being.

Read **Psalms 103:1–5**, **Malachi 4:2**, **Isaiah 1:1–9**.

5. *What do these passages tell us about what was anticipated with the coming of the Messiah?*

Miraculous healings were fairly uncommon in the Old Testament. Read these accounts **1 Kings 17:17–24** and **2 Kings 5:1–14**.

6. *What New Testament events are brought to mind?*

How do these actions, such as cleansing and the raising of the dead, foreshadow what would happen when Jesus came?

“People always ask me how I got this way. I just tell them that I was born this way. It is who I am.”

—Justin

So far we have dealt with disability and disease in the broadest of senses. Today we recognize that there is a difference between the two terms. Not all diseases result in a disability and not all disabilities are caused by diseases. We know that what we call “disabilities” can be the result of differences in the individual’s genetic code as well as external causes. We also know that a person with a physical or intellectual disability may be

completely healthy in all other ways. We have considered what the biblical attitude toward disease and disability, now let us look at its attitude toward the individual.

Read **Leviticus 21:16–24**.

7. *What does this seem to say about God’s attitude toward any disability?*

In order to enter the Old Testament priesthood you had to be a male from the tribe of Levi, the smallest tribe of the people of Israel, numbering only 23,000 males older than 1 month old out of a total male population of over 600,000.

8. *How does this additional information affect the interpretation of the Leviticus 21 passage?*

See Numbers 26:57–62

An important part of the study of Scripture is keeping passages in the correct context.

9. *What other factors influence how we understand this passage?*

The work of the priest was often strenuous and grueling, a fact that can easily be missed with our modern experience

and impression of the pastoral office. The Hebrew priest was responsible for performing the ritual sacrifices and burnt offerings using animals ranging from turtledoves (easy) to bulls (not so easy). The priest would kill the animal, drain its blood and sprinkle it on the altar for a burnt offering. The priest would then quarter the animal, offering each of the parts on the altar until they were entirely consumed by the fire. They tended the fire, making certain that it did not go out, or that the ash did not build up. As the sacrificial system changed, the custom was to offer a sacrificial lamb each day, morning and evening to foretell Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. No wonder priests were forced to retire at the age of 50!

10. How does knowing about the duties of a priest change your interpretation of the Leviticus 21 passage?

The limitations imposed on the priesthood are obviously not intended to portray anything regarding God's attitude towards

persons with disabilities. The Old Testament sacrificial system pointed toward the perfect sacrifice that would be offered by the wholly innocent Son of God, Jesus Christ. All involved, from the animal "without blemish" to the priest had to reflect, or demonstrate, at least on the surface, the perfection of Jesus who would offer his blood as the atonement for all the sins of humanity.

Next session, we will continue with our study of what the Bible says about disabilities. We will concentrate especially on the work that Jesus did during his earthly ministry and touch base with the Apostle Paul and the early Christian Church.

Adult Bible Study Part 2 of 4



Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Last session we discovered that the Bible does have a lot to say about disability and disease. We learned that the Old Testament attributed all human difficulty and suffering to the presence of sin in the world. We also discovered that, in general, the Hebrew worldview included a close connection between spiritual and physical well being, and the belief that healing was based on God’s blessing. It was also closely connected to the coming Messianic age, or what we call the Kingdom of God. We then dug into a passage in Leviticus 21 that, at the outset, appeared to degrade disability. Yet when considered within its proper context, its implications were limited and practical in nature.

“I was never allowed to see my sister. They said that I would hurt her. I had to live at the hospital.”

—Andrea

Events of healing were a rarity in the Old Testament, a sharp contrast to the passages that we will consider in today’s study. In the Old Testament the emphasis on prevention, usually through the isolation of the individual with disabilities or disease, a tendency that will be reversed in the actions of Jesus.

Let’s look at some of the examples of Jesus’ healing and see if we can discover a common thread or theme and possibly gain a better understanding of the Biblical view of disability.

Read **Matthew 8:14–15, Mark 1:29–31, and Luke 4:38–39.**

1. *What and who do these passages have in common?*

How do the gospel writers present this story differently?

Luke was a physician and yet he tells us that Jesus “rebuked the fever.” *What does this seem to suggest?*

Read **Luke 5:17–26**, one of the renditions of the healing of a man’s paralysis.

2. *The man’s friends believed that Jesus could heal his paralysis, but what does Jesus do before he heals him?*

Jesus’ forgiveness of the man causes a stir among the religious leaders. *What is the basis of their objection?*

Jesus then uses the man as an object lesson for the religious leaders. *How does he accomplish this?*

Jesus’ question to the Pharisees in verse 23 is obviously meant to get them thinking. *How would you answer his question?*

One of the most compelling examples of a culturally created disability is seen in how persons with leprosy were treated. Because certain strains of the disease were both contagious and incurable, all unusual skin conditions were viewed with suspicion. Leviticus 13, an entire chapter of the Bible, is devoted to instructions about leprosy; it even addresses “leprosy” diseases in clothing (mold and mildew). The Old Testament inclination toward prevention led to the isolation of anyone who had symptoms that remotely resembled leprosy. This Levitical attitude was obviously carried over into the New Testament period. Jesus’ contacts with these social outcasts are among the most moving healing episodes in the gospels.

Read **Luke 5:12–16**. Then read **Leviticus 13:45–46**.

3. *In what ways were the Levitical guidelines violated... by the individual? and by Jesus?*

Parallel Passages:
Mark 1:40–44,
Matthew 8: 1–4

What part of the Levitical code did Jesus uphold?

What other populations have been labeled “outcasts” by society? What were the reasons for this label?

Leviticus 14
will help with
this answer

Before we continue our study, we need to acknowledge that the Bible never specifically mentions either intellectual or developmental disabilities.

In fact, it does not even allude to them. There are a few cases where mental illness is portrayed, most notably when King Nebuchadnezzar “ate grass like oxen” in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel. David “pretended to be mad” out of fear of

You will notice that most of the Biblical translations still refer to people with leprosy as “lepers” or individuals who are paralyzed as “paralytics,” etc. These remain labels and only serve to identify people by their traits or by their disabilities, in effect dehumanizing them. “People First” language assures that we see the person before we acknowledge their disability, whatever it may be.

King Achish (1 Samuel 21:13), and Saul exhibited symptoms of depression in 1 Samuel 16. **While mental illness can certainly be a disability, it is not the same as either intellectual or developmental disabilities.** We must make a similar distinction in the following passages.

Read **Mark 5:1–13**.

4. *What is different about this healing?*

How were the demons made manifest in the life of this man?

Would you consider this a disability?

“There are still times when I have something bad happen in my life, that I wonder what it was that I did wrong. Does that ever happen to you?”

—James

Some scholars say that the New Testament uses demonic activity to explain actions and events due to a lack of scientific knowledge. Many even say that this is the Bible’s way of portraying mental illness or even intellectual and developmental disability.

In Mark 5:1–13, and other times when Jesus cast out demons, what evidence do we have that Scripture is referring to intellectual or developmental disability?

Earlier, we noted that the Old Testament often viewed disease and disability as direct retribution, or punishment, for a specific sin. This attitude was exhibited by some of Jesus’ disciples.

Read **John 9:1–7**.

5. *What does the disciples’ question tell us about their attitude toward disability? What does Jesus’ response say about this specific occasion?*

Are we to assume that all disability is given by God to display his works? Why or why not?

“I want to be fully included. I don’t want to be excluded. I don’t like when people stare at me and look at me like there is something wrong with me. I want to promote a positive outlook. When I come to this church I get a warm feeling and people don’t stare and look at me funny.”

—Paris

Today’s lesson has centered on the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. We have seen some dramatic events and familiarized ourselves with some of the prevailing attitudes of his time. Jesus fulfilled the ancient prophecies regarding healing. There was not a disease, infirmity, or a disability that he could not cure or remove. However, he did more than just cure. **He exhibited the love of God through acceptance and inclusion.** Just as there was no physical condition that he could not overcome, there was no group of outcasts he would not embrace. He touched men covered in leprosy prior to their healing, he confronted demons, he accepted the Gentile. Jesus paid little attention to the social behaviors and attitudes of his day. He was about restoration.

Next session, a look at the early church and the Apostolic age.

Adult Bible Study Part 3 of 4



Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

In the past two sessions, we have looked at how the Old Testament treated disability and disease and contrasted this with the healing outreach that was a large part of Jesus’ earthly ministry. We identified the Old Testament’s emphasis on prevention rather than healing, and observed that this often led to the isolation of the affected individual. We also noticed that Jesus never refused to heal those who approached him, never made demands of them or imposed conditions, and that forgiveness of sin was often a part of the cure. **Jesus’ healing events were a picture of God’s perfect grace, his power acting as he wills without human participation.**

*Visit John 1: 14–18
and Acts 20:24*

“Even when I get really sick, my friend Angelo visits me. Sometimes he comes to the hospital. He even shakes my hand.”

—Juan

If you count them up, there are over 40 healing accounts in the four gospels, and we can be sure that many more went unrecorded. Still, we can be certain is that disease and disability did not vanish during Jesus’ years on earth. This opinion is supported by the fact that the Apostles continued a healing ministry after Jesus’ ascension, and because we still experience these things first hand.

Read **Luke 13:10–17**.

(Visit **Mark 7:31–37**, **Luke 7: 1–17**, **Luke 8: 40–56**.)

1. *What was the woman’s disability in this passage? How long had she had her disability? To whom did Jesus attribute her disability? If Satan was present and powerful while Jesus was walking the earth, what does that tell us about our situation? The woman in this scene did not ask to be healed. Why did Jesus heal her? What lesson was Jesus trying to teach the leader of the synagogue?*

In the past sessions we have learned that the Hebrew worldview included a belief that disease and disability were retribution, or punishment, for individual sin. Revisit **John 9:1–6**.

2. *Does Jesus’ response to the disciples’ question support this belief?*

“I have always been unable to see. I don’t know life any differently. Sometimes people say that I am ‘missing so much.’ How can I miss something that I have never known before? Maybe there is something in my life that they are missing. Should I be constantly reminding them of that?”

— Kenneth

Return to **Luke 13** and read verses 1–5.

Although this passage does not speak directly to disease or disability, it does speak to human suffering.

3. *How does Jesus’ statement here relate to the passages that we have just considered?*

Focus on verses 3 and 5.

4. *What is Jesus’ central message in his response to the question asked?*

Read **Luke 4:18–21**. (In Luke 4, Jesus is reading from Isaiah. See **Isaiah 61: 1–2**.)

5. *How did Jesus’ healing miracles fulfill this prophecy from Isaiah?*

“Not a day goes by when someone doesn’t comment about my face or stare or point at me. People laugh at me all the time. It’s like they think I can’t hear them. Maybe they just don’t care if I hear them. Maybe they think it doesn’t matter if I hear them.”

—Emily

Reconsider the woman in the synagogue that we read about in Luke 13.

6. *What spiritual language did Jesus use that is connected to this Old Testament reading?*

It is apparent that we should no longer consider disease and disability as retribution against the individual sinner, but rather, as a constant reminder that we live in a sinful world and are subject to its power and influence. Jesus came to free us from this bondage, but full freedom will not be realized until his permanent kingdom is established on his return. While Jesus was on earth we were given a glimpse of the Messianic kingdom, what we call the Kingdom of God, that is to come. His healing

miracles were only a foretaste of his perfect creation, his heavenly kingdom which he has already established. Until that time, life continues with its suffering and struggles.

It is best not to use the words suffer, ailment, illness or defect when referring to a person who has intellectual or developmental disabilities. Unlike diseases, his disability is a part of who he is; it is not caused by an outside agent, nor is it curable.

7. *Discuss the differences between viewing sin as retribution and the actual consequences of sin.*

Did you know that one of the greatest theologians of all time had a disability? Next session we will look at what the Apostle Paul has to say about church unity and the partnership between the weak and the strong. If you would like to read ahead, look at 1 Corinthians 12.

Adult Bible Study Part 4 of 4



Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

This is our final session on the Bible and disability. We began by establishing that the Old Testament often presented disease and disability as being retribution, or punishment, for an individual’s sin, that the Levitical laws were geared toward the prevention of disease, and that the Hebrew worldview looked to God and his Messiah to bring healing to them. We also studied a passage that, at first glance, seemed to be very degrading to persons with disabilities, but discovered that it was specific to a small percentage of the Hebrew people, that it spoke to the priest’s ability to perform his function, and that the appearance of perfection foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Revisit Leviticus 21.

“I would never put words in Christ’s mouth, but it seems to me that he was saying, ‘I love you. I have compassion for you. I can help you with your burdens; but the ultimate thing I can do for you is forgive you. That is what I am all about. It is my perfect gift to you.’”

—Sandra

As we moved to the New Testament, everything changed. Jesus’ emphasis was on healing, not prevention. He demonstrated power over every type of disease and disability, even those that were manifestations of demonic possession. He *never refused* a request for healing, and in many cases healed individuals who had not asked for relief, showing his compassion. He would often use a healing event as a teaching moment, especially when dealing with the religious leaders. Jesus also dispelled the notion that disease and disability were directly related to sinful acts, attributing them instead to the presence and power of sin and the devil in this world. He lifted burdens with his acts of healing, just as his death on the cross would lift the world’s burden of sin.

was often accompanied by healing events, and in some cases a healing presented the opportunity to share their story. Just as importantly, the accounts of Jesus’ power to heal became a part of their proclamation, as the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection became the standard formula.

Read **Acts 10:34–43**. This occurs immediately after God revealed his plan for the Gentiles to Peter.

1. *What truths does Peter affirm about healing?*

How are Jesus’ miracles used by Peter?

What is the “ultimate” miracle?

Even the Apostle Paul was given the power to heal (*see Acts 28:7–9*), a fact that is ripe with irony, as we shall soon see.

Read **2 Corinthians 12:6–10**.

2. *How is Paul’s “thorn” consistent with other disabilities that we have studied? What is the result of Paul’s thorn?*

Discuss how Paul was made strong in his weakness.

How are we made strong in our weaknesses?

It is impossible to know exactly what Paul’s thorn was. However, we can be fairly certain that it was a physical disability and that it was at times debilitating. There are some additional hints in his letter to the Galatians.

Read **Galatians 4:12–14**.

Here Paul refers to a “bodily ailment” that caused him to remain among these congregations.

3. *How did Paul describe this ailment?*

See Acts 3.

Miracles of healing continued after Jesus’ ascension. As the apostle’s began to preach the Gospel, their presence

Have you ever faced a bodily ailment that held you back from something?

What were Paul's expectations because of this ailment?

What were your expectations because of your ailment?

Read **2 Corinthians 10:10**.

4. What further light might this shed on Paul's disability?

***Ironic and significant:**
Paul had a physical burden that went uncured and yet he is given the power through Christ to lift others' burdens.*

Paul was one of the greatest men of God that ever lived, and God chose to allow him to live with a disability that could interfere with the work that he had been called to do. The passage in Galatians tells us that he was acutely aware of the effect that his appearance could have.

However, Paul was certain that his thorn was not sent by God, but that it

Discuss the difference between empathy and pity.

was a "messenger of Satan." Rather than see it as an impairment, he was able to embrace it in his instruction to others.

Read **1 Corinthians 12:12–26**.

5. How might Paul's personal experience with disability have shaped what is written here?

Paul had spent considerable time in Corinth (see Acts 18), how would knowing of Paul's disability affect you as a Corinthian hearer of his letter?

How does society define: President Roosevelt, Stevie Wonder, Helen Keller, Phil Keaggy, President Ronald Reagan, Marlee Matlin, Joni Eareckson-Tada?

Did your group discuss each person's accomplishments first or did you ask, "What's wrong with that person?" Why?

Reopen your discussion on 2 Corinthians 12: 6–10.

6. Does this passage add anything to your understanding of Paul's view of weakness?

Paul tells us that the Body of Christ, the Church, is a collection of "differently-abled" individuals. No one is more important than another; no one is without a place. There are no "handicapped" within the Body, only those whose function is critical to the health and well-being of the Christian Church.

It is recommended that this Bible class follow up this study by visiting and discussing the *Meant to Be Terminology Worksheet*.

***OPTIONAL:** Look up the history of the word "handicapped." How do you feel about using this term now?*



Chapel Talk

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Materials needed:

The chapel talk attachment pictures or the actual articles mentioned (a badge, a stethoscope, music notes or pages, a board eraser, a calculator, BFF, a heart)

Bible, an easel, poster-size paper for your list of phrases.

I have a few pictures in front of me. Let's see if you can guess who they are meant to belong to:

[Show pictures one at a time: the badge=policeman, stethoscope=doctor, music and violin=musician, board and eraser=teacher, calculator=related to business]

Great! We have a policeman, a doctor, a musician, a teacher, and an accountant. Now stand up (or raise your hand) if you feel that you are meant to be a police officer. [Continue with the other occupations]

Jobs are important, but they're not *all* we're meant to be! Let's see if we can figure out what *you* are meant to be. [Write "Meant to Be" on the paper]

[Hold up the BFF sign] The letters on this page mean something. What does BFF mean? Correct! It means "best friends forever!" This is a great thing to be.

[Hold up the picture of a heart] Look at this symbol. Pretend it has something to do with your parents and how you treat them. What would you think it means? Correct! You should love, and be loving, to your parents. This is a great thing to be.

These are great ideas and worthwhile goals, but these are not *all* you are meant to be! God tells us that in 1 Corinthians 12:18 [read 1 Corinthians 12:18]. You are each a member in the body—his body, the Church. As members of the body of Christ, you each have a very special part to play – a wonderful life that God carefully planned out just for you.

The most important thing that you are meant to be is a Christian who loves and serves God and the people God puts in your life!

I have heard some people say that to be a Christian, you must be perfect. Is this true? No, it is not true. Christians are not perfect, they are just forgiven! You don't have to be perfect to fulfill your role as a faithful, loving part of the Church body.

Even if someone has a 'disability,' God can use them in a mighty way! St. Paul, one of the most amazing men of all time and a leader and teacher of all Christians, had a disability. He asked God to take it away from him, but God decided that it was better for Paul to keep it. Maybe he did this so he would be more humble as he did his job in the Church body; we are not exactly sure why. We are not even sure what the disability was! Maybe that shows how unimportant that detail is to God. He uses *all* of us, no matter what we can or cannot do physically! Even though Paul had a disability, he could still tell others the good news! God loves us so much, that he sent his son Jesus to die for us. Our sins are forgiven and we can live with him forever. What are *you* meant to be? You could be a teller of good news, like Paul. [Write "teller of good news" on the paper]

Let's look at another verse in the Bible. [Read **1 Samuel 16:7**] What do you think God is saying here? [discuss]

God is more concerned about what is inside or who you really are, than what is on the outside or what you may look like. A disability, like being blind or having autism, doesn't keep you from being useful and valuable to God.

In the human body, all of the parts are different from each other. The hands, ears, heart, and kidneys all look and work very differently, but each one helps the whole body be healthy and work well together. The eyes can't say to the feet, "We don't need you!" God made us *all* just the way we are so we can do the special things he plans for each of us to help run his body, the Church. What are *you* meant to be? A special, useful part of Christ's body, the Church. [Write "part of Christ's body, the Church" on the paper]

Let's look at more verses in the Bible [Read Matthew 22:37-39]. What does Jesus say are the two most important things for us to spend our lives doing? Right! **Love God** and love **each other!**

Can you love God and love other people? Yes!

Can a person who wears glasses love God and love other people? Yes!

Can a person who uses a wheelchair love God and love other people? Yes!

So what we are saying is, God loves everyone just as they are.

What are *you* meant to be? A person who loves and serves God and other people. [Write "loves and serves" on the paper]

What are *you* meant to be? A Christian who knows it's the faith in the heart that counts [hold up the heart], not what you look like.

What are *you* meant to be? A member of the Church who appreciates and values *all* of the other members, just as they are.

What are *you* meant to be? A person who knows that disabilities are temporary; they are only part of this world. Faith and love are the things that last forever!

What are *you* meant to be? A member in the body of Christ, the Church, just as he made *all* of us to be.





OFFICER

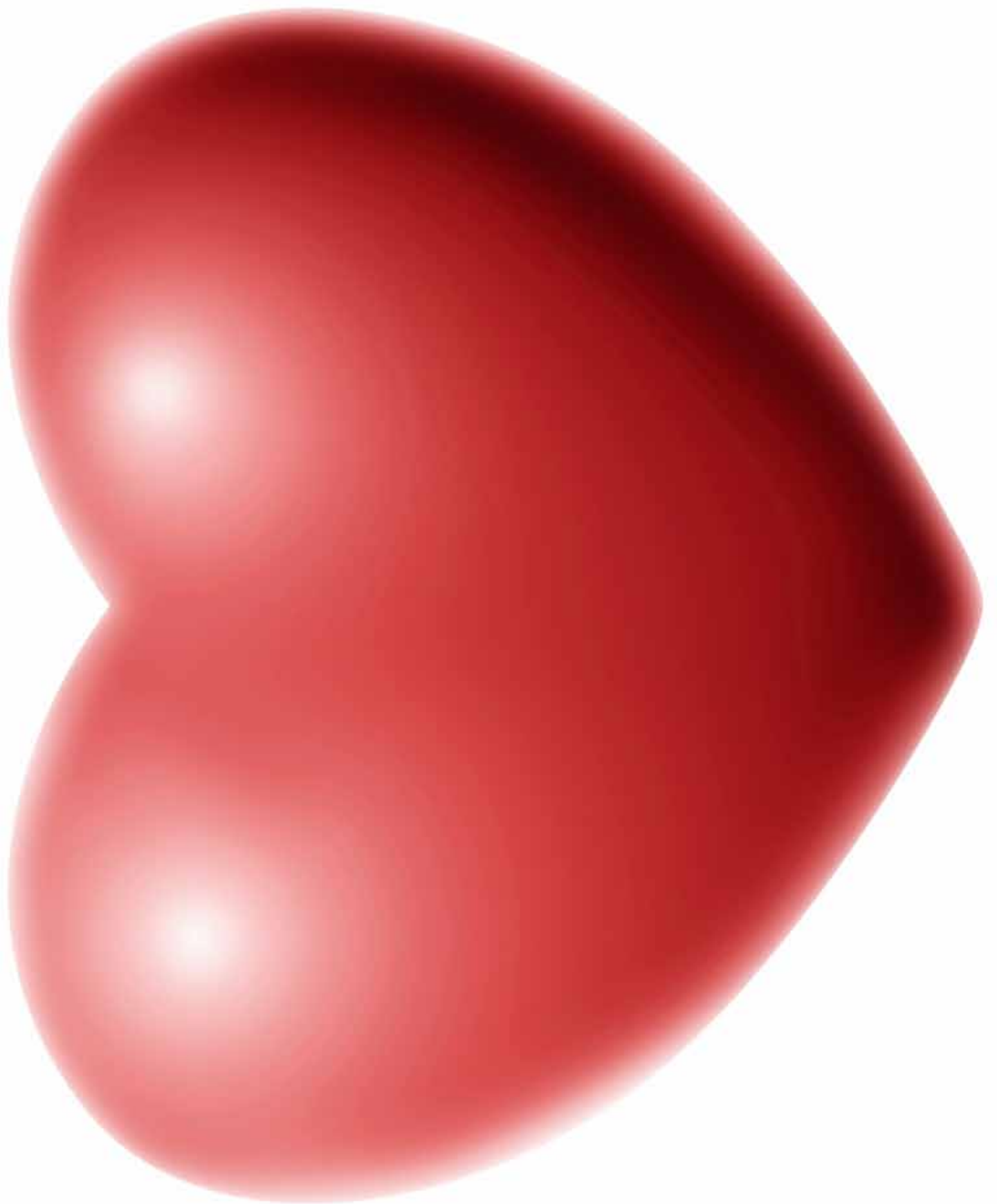
POLICE



$$1 + 1 = 2$$











Children's Message

Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God's family.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NIRV)

God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be.

Materials Needed to build the snowman (all made of paper): One large white circle, one medium white circle, one small white circle, a black top hat, black eyes, orange carrot nose, small black circles to form the mouth, two stick arms made of brown paper and other pieces of your choice, an easel or a place to tape snowman together, tape and a marker.

[Pass out the pieces of the snowman.]

Today we are going to build a snowman. When you think that it is your turn to add your piece, come on up to the board and we will tape it on.

Should we start with the nose? (No!) Should we start the arms? (No!) What piece should we start with. The largest snowball? (Yes!) [Continue to build it in order: body, head to toe.]

It takes all the different parts coming together in the right places and in the right order to make the snowman. How does he look? This was *meant to be* a snowman!

What does "meant to be" actually mean?

[Write "meant to be" on the snowman]

The dictionary defines this phrase as: intended to be something, to go with something, to predict something, to imply something, to add up to something.

Think about how Jesus can use all of you [point to the group] as his body, to work together to make something or do something that helps others and makes a difference.

Let me read the Bible verse again. [Read 1 Corinthians 12:18.] When Paul wrote this verse, he was helping us see God's plan, what God means to happen...what is meant to be. God wants *All* people, no matter who they are or where they come from, to use their unique gifts that God gave them for his glory.

We work best for God when we work together. Here is an example.

If one of you was asked to pick up litter in the church parking lot, it would probably be lonely, tiring, and not very fun. Now, if two of you were chosen to pick up litter in the church parking lot, that might be a little better. You could talk and encourage each other. You could get done in half the time! But what if all of you did this job together? It could be fun! It would go pretty fast. And, the best thing is, your group would have time to do other things.

God puts us all together for his good use. There is a reason that we are all here...just like there is a reason for all of the parts of the snowman. We all belong. We are all meant to be in God's family and work together for his glory. God wants us to work together to do something useful, like helping others. God uses old and young people, people who walk and people who roll in a wheelchair, big and little people, those who are blind and those who see. God planned to put us together all along—he meant all of us to be part of God's Family!!

Let's say the Bible verse together: (Break it into two or three sections saying "repeat after me." Then, try the whole verse together.)

Prayer: Dear God, you are so good! You meant for us to be here today, hearing this message from your word. Please put it in our hearts, so that we work together the way you meant for us to work together. We pray this in our Savior Jesus' name. Amen.



Devotion

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

John the Baptizer

A man came who was sent from God. His name was John. He came to give witness about that light. He gave witness so that all people could believe. (John 1:6–7).

John gives witness about Jesus. He cries out and says, “This was the one I was talking about. I said, ‘He who comes after me is more important than I am. He is more important because he existed before I was born’” (John 1:15, NIRV).

When the President of the United States of America decides it is time to visit the Prime Minister of Great Britain, there are certain plans to be made ahead of time. Before the President takes his trip, people inspect Air Force One, his hotel reservations are made, the meals he will eat are planned out and most importantly, his itinerary is written. The President has a very important message to share with those he is visiting. His focus needs to be clear and precise. His success begins with those who go ahead of him and take care of the details before his trip. His arrival is planned for; all need to be ready.

John the Baptizer was meant to be the one who did this job for Jesus before his ministry began. He prepared people for Christ’s arrival. God would share his message of love, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. It was up to John to get the people ready to hear this message. In the same way, God uses each of us to get people ready for Jesus’ message.

Brainstorm for a Moment:

1. *Who are the people in your community who need to hear this message of God’s love for them through Jesus?*

Did you mention:

- Single parents and their children
- People who are homeless
- Newly retired men and women
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Children and their families

Write down some ideas on how you would prepare these individuals/groups to hear Jesus’ message.

John came to develop relationships with people so they could have a relationship with Jesus. This is our task as well. God chooses to partner with us in this ministry outreach and in the faith formation process. People’s hearts will be prepared

to believe what they see living in our hearts. It is the old adage, "Actions speak louder than words." As Jesus shows himself through our actions, people will develop a trust and a relationship with him.

To share Jesus' good news message with any individual or group, they will need to have a relationship with you. These people want to see Jesus at work in your life.

Pick one of the mentioned groups. Brainstorm together ways in which you might prepare them to hear Jesus' message.

2. How do you see yourself developing a relationship with a person within this group?

What would you find most challenging in developing a relationship with a person from this group?

What benefits do you see coming from this relationship?

If time permits, consider other mentioned groups asking the same three questions.

At Bethesda Lutheran Communities, our mission is to equip the church to minister with people with intellectual and

developmental disabilities. As God equips you through training and study of the word, you will be given the opportunity to be a John the Baptizer in the life of a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As you share of your life and become a friend of people with disabilities, they will come to know Christ and grow in their Christian faith.

We believe that people with and without disabilities need a personal relationship with Jesus for saving faith. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. *Who might God bring into your life so you can share Jesus with them?*

Prayer: **Thank you God for sending John the Baptizer to get the people ready to hear your good news message. He told them that Jesus, your son, was coming to save them from their sins. As we prepare to share this message with others, we think especially of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Please equip me and my church in sharing this good news message of Jesus' love for them. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**



Devotion

for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

The Woman at the Well

A woman from Samaria came to get some water. Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew. I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” She said this because Jews don’t have anything to do with Samaritans.

The woman said, “I know that Messiah is coming.” (He is called Christ.) “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus said, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

(John 4:7, 9, 25-26 NIrV)

Carol had just left a music concert in the city. She wasn’t used to getting around in the city and Carol got lost. She saw an open gas station and stopped to ask for help. The worker that night was able to tell Carol how to get home safely. Within a few minutes Carol was heading toward her home. The person she was a *helpful stranger*.

A woman in the Bible from Samaria was lost, too. The woman did not know Jesus; he was a stranger to her. The woman and Jesus were at the well at the same time. A well is where people in the Bible would go to get water. It was a hot day and both Jesus and the woman needed water to drink. God meant for them to meet this day at the well.

While the Bible does not tell us the name of this woman who met Jesus at the well, there are a few things we do know about her. One thing is that this woman came from a group of people

who lived in the country of Samaria. A lot of people did not want Samaritans, so they did not like this woman. During Bible times, people traveled by walking or riding animals. If people had to travel through Samaria to get to another country, they would walk all the way around the country just to avoid meeting Samaritans.

Imagine, this would be like walking all the way around the State of [insert name] to get to [name a neighboring state].

1. Have you ever gone out of your way to avoid someone or something? Has anyone gone out of the way to avoid you?

Another reason people were not friends with the woman at the well was because she had sinned. People had judged the woman and decided that she could not be their friend. They decided that she was bad.

2. *Are you friends with everyone you know or just a few people you know?*

Are there people who judge you and decide not to be your friend?

Why do you think people decide not to be your friend?

Do people judge you, or say bad things to you, because you have a disability? How does this make you feel?

The woman came to the well in the hottest part of the day when she knew no one else would be there. She hoped that if no one was there, then no one could be mean to her, or stare at her, or make her feel sad. She thought she would quietly get her water and go home. Then she met Jesus. Jesus did not judge the woman; he did not care that she was from Samaria.

3. *Do you know that Jesus is your friend?*

How does that make you feel?

Have you ever been somewhere where people did not want to be with you? Maybe you were ignored or people walked away from you. Share what happened in your situation.

How did this make you feel?

Why do you think people choose to treat other people this way?

Some people are afraid of people with disabilities. They don't know what to say or how to be a friend.

Sometimes people do not understand what it means to have a disability.

4. *How can you help people understand?*

Has there been a time when you or someone close to you helped others know about disabilities?

Teaching others makes you an advocate for people with disabilities.

God wanted Jesus and the woman to talk that day. God wanted the woman to know that Jesus was her friend. Some people did not like this woman, but Jesus did. Some people may not like us, but Jesus does. Jesus loves us so much that he died on the cross to save us from our sins.

Jesus rose from the dead and gives us all life forever in heaven with him.

The woman at the well was an advocate, too. She told others that Jesus would save *all* people from their sins. Including the people of Samaria. You can share God's message with people you know. Telling others about Jesus makes you Jesus' advocate.

5. *What are some of activities you like to do at home?*

In your community? In your congregation?

These are gifts God gave you to share with others.

You are important to Jesus, just like the woman at the well.

You can use your gifts to be an advocate for Jesus.

God wants us to be kind to other people. God wants us to be helpful.

6. *Who can you be a friend to?*

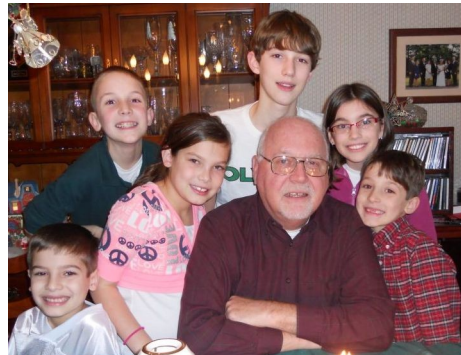
Who can you tell that Jesus loves them?

Dear Jesus, thank you for being my friend and Savior. There are people who do not like other people that are different from them. There are people who don't know you as their friend. Help me tell them about your love for them and everyone. In your name I pray. Amen.

Who is Meant to Be in God's Family

Circle the people who are meant to be in God's Family.

www.BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org



Early Childhood Lesson



MEANT to BE

Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God's family.



Bible Verse

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

Opening Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for loving us all the same. We are all part of your family. Help us remember that. Help us be kind to others. Help us show love to others. In your name we pray. Amen.

Message

Did you know that Jesus was a teacher? Yes, Jesus taught people about his Father, God, just like I teach you about God. One time Jesus was teaching people on a hillside about some of the things that God wants us to know. You can find the stories in the Bible. While Jesus was teaching, some parents brought their children to him. They wanted Jesus to bless them. When some people tried to tell the parents to take the children away, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Don't keep them away. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people like them." (Matthew 19:14 NIV)

Isn't that wonderful? Jesus said that even the children are meant to be in God's family!

Do you think mommies are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think daddies are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think brothers & sisters are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think your neighbor is meant to be in God's family?

Yes...we are ALL meant to be in God's family.

Do you think people who use a wheelchair are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think people who are blind are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think people who can't hear are meant to be in God's family?

Yes...we are ALL meant to be in God's family.
Let's pray...

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for being a teacher. Thank you for loving children. Thank you for the Bible. Help us remember that everyone is meant to be in your family. Help us love others. Help us tell others about you. In your name we pray. Amen.

Who is Meant to Be in God's Family

Circle the people who are meant to be in God's Family.

www.BethesdalutheranCommunities.org



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Early Childhood Lesson

Teacher Copy



Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God's family.



Bible Verse

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

Opening Prayer (consider saying a few words & having the children repeat the words)

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for loving us all the same. We are all part of your family. Help us remember that. Help us be kind to others. Help us show love to others. In your name we pray. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

Let's play a game called **Who Belongs.**

When I call out something, if you have it or are wearing it or believe it **stand up & yell I belong!**

For example...if you are wearing red today, stand up... now yell ***I belong!***

Great! Now sit down...here we go:

Wearing blue

Have a bike

Like cookies

Have a pet

Like to swim

Here's a tricky one...is everyone listening?

Who is in ***(name of teacher's)*** class...that's right!
Everyone should be standing. Everyone is in my class.
Everyone is meant to be here!
Good job; now sit down and let me talk to you about another place that we are all meant to be.

Message

Did you know that Jesus was a teacher? Yes, Jesus taught people about his Father, God, just like I teach you about God. One time Jesus was teaching people on a hillside about some of the things that God wants us to know. You can find the stories in here, the Bible (show the Bible). While Jesus was teaching, some parents brought their children to him. They wanted Jesus to bless them. When some people tried to tell the parents to take the children away, Jesus said, (open your Bible to read verse) "Let the little children

come to me. Don't keep them away. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people like them." (Matthew 19:14 NIV)

Isn't that wonderful? Jesus said that even the children are meant to be in God's family!

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Do you think people who are blind are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think people who can't hear are meant to be in God's family?

Yes...we are ALL meant to be in God's family. Let's pray...

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for being a teacher. Thank you for loving children. Thank you for the Bible. Help us remember that everyone is meant to be in your family. Help us love others. Help us tell others about you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God’s family.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

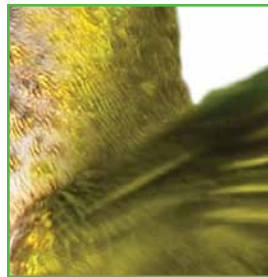


Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the maker of us all. You love us and you want all of us to be a part of your family. Help us hear your word today. Help us listen. Bless us as we study and learn together. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

Do you know who created you? Do you know whose plan it was that you would have brown hair or green eyes? Did your parents get to pick out if you were going to be a boy or a girl or was that someone else’s decision? That’s right! God created you; it was his plan and he loves you very much!



Can you tell me what each picture above is?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What is it about each picture that makes you think it is what you think it is?

Look at the answer key. How did you do?

What made the pictures hard to guess?

We were only given one characteristic, or part, of the picture. We did not see the whole thing!

This situation happens with people many times, too. Take David, for instance. Some people could not see all that David was meant to be because they only saw him as a little kid. Look it up in 1 Samuel!

God Meant for David to be King

Read 1 Samuel 16:1

- The prophet Samuel was saddened by the fact that King Saul had stopped following God's plan. Because of his sinful ways, God and Samuel rejected him and his family as king. What did God tell Samuel to do?

Read 1 Samuel 16:6–7

- Why do you think Samuel thought that Eliab was the son God wanted to anoint, or name, king?
- What did God say to Samuel?
- What do you think it means to "*look at the heart not the outward appearance.*"

Read 1 Samuel 16:10–11

- How many of Jesse's sons came to Samuel to see if they were to be the king?
- At first, David was not brought to Samuel. Where was he?

Read 1 Samuel 16:13

- How did Samuel let David's father and brothers know that David was chosen to be king?
- David was the youngest brother, and probably the smallest. He was the one they sent to watch the sheep. Even though David was these things, God had a plan. He knew what he meant David to be...king!

God Meant for David to Defeat Goliath

Read 1 Samuel 17:3–4

- The Israelites (God's chosen people) were on one side of the battle & the Philistines were on the other side of the battle. How tall was Goliath, the Philistines' champion?
- That is almost as tall as a basketball hoop and taller than most of your bedroom ceilings at home!

Read 1 Samuel 17:8–11

- Would you want to do battle against someone who was nine feet tall?

Read 1 Samuel 17:16, 32–33

- After 40 days, no one was willing to fight Goliath. Finally, David said that he would try it.
- What did King Saul say to David?

Read 1 Samuel 17:37

- David knew that he could trust God and his plan to make him king.

Read 1 Samuel 17:40, 45, 47

- Goliath had a sword, spear and a javelin to fight with; what did David have?
- Why did David pick something simple like stones to defeat Goliath? Who did he want to have credit for defeating the giant?

Read 1 Samuel 17:49

- David was a young boy, nowhere near nine feet tall, but he defeated Goliath with God's help.
- God meant for David to beat Goliath in battle.

God has a plan for all of us. He knows what we are meant to be. He can see past the small things that others think about us and see the big plan for our lives.

Do you know what a disability is? Do you know anyone with a disability?

If I were a person who was blind, I could not see. But, what *could* I do?

If I were a person who was deaf, I could not hear. But, what *could* I do?

God does not want us to look at the outside, at what people may look like or what people may or may not be able to do. God wants us to look at the heart. If we only see someone as a person with a disability, it is a little like looking at the first pictures we looked at. It is NOT the entire person.

God loves us all the same. God forgives us all the same. God knows what we are meant to be.

Closing Thoughts

Throughout David's life, he had people protect him and help him until it was time for him to be king. They saw David as he was meant to be. They saw God's plan for his life. God has a plan for all of our lives. We are all meant to be in his family. We are all meant to be loved. We are all meant to be forgiven. We are all meant to be in heaven with him some day. It is important for us to see everyone, including people with disabilities, as part of God's family...all that they are meant to be.

Check below all of the ways you can help others become all that they are meant to be.

- teach others about Jesus**
- don't talk to others**
- include others in church and school**
- ignore those who look like they may need a friend**
- be kind**
- walk past someone without saying hello**
- be a friend**

Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the one and only true God. You see us for all we are meant to be. Help us share this good news with others so that they can come to know you. Forgive us when we forget to be kind to others, especially people that seem different from us. Help us see the heart of people and all that they are meant to be, and not just a piece or part of them. Thank you for loving us all the same. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



1. CAR



2. HUMMING BIRD



3. BIRTHDAY CAKE



4. VIOLIN



5. APPLE



Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God's family.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."



Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the maker of us all. You love us and you want all of us to be a part of your family. Help us hear your word today. Help us listen. Bless us as we study and learn together. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

Do you know who created you? Do you know whose plan it was that you would have brown hair or green eyes? Did your parents get to pick out if you were going to be a boy or a girl or was that someone else's decision? That's right! God created you; it was his plan and he loves you very much!



Before we start our Bible study, let's look at some of these photos. Can you tell me what this picture is?

Why do you think it may be a picture of (the students guess)? (discuss)

I can see why you may think it is a picture of (the students guess) because of (characteristics).

(Repeat the above with each picture)

Let's see if we were correct. (Turn to answer key)
How did we do?

Why do you think that we had trouble guessing what each picture actually was?

Correct! We were only given one characteristic, or part, of the picture. We did not see the whole thing.

This situation happens with people many times, too. Take David, for instance. Some people could not see all that David was meant to be because they only saw him as a little kid.

Let's look in the Bible to find out what I am talking about.

God Meant for David to be King

Read 1 Samuel 16:1

- The prophet Samuel was saddened by the fact that King Saul had stopped following God's plan. Because of his sinful ways, God and Samuel rejected him and his family as king. What did God tell Samuel to do?

Read 1 Samuel 16:6–7

- Why do you think Samuel thought that Eliab was the son God wanted to anoint, or name, king?
- What did God say to Samuel?
- What do you think it means to "*look at the heart not the outward appearance.*"

Read 1 Samuel 16:10–11

- How many of Jesse's sons came to Samuel to see if they were to be the king?
- At first, David was not brought to Samuel. Where was he?

Read 1 Samuel 16:13

- How did Samuel let David's father and brothers know that David was chosen to be king?
- David was the youngest brother, and probably the smallest. He was the one they sent to watch the sheep. Even though David was these things, God had a plan. He knew what he meant David to be...king!

God Meant for David to Defeat Goliath

Read 1 Samuel 17:3–4

- The Israelites (God's chosen people) were on one side of the battle & the Philistines were on the other side of the battle. How tall was Goliath, the Philistines' champion?
- That is almost as tall as a basketball hoop and taller than most of your bedroom ceilings at home!

Read 1 Samuel 17:8–11

- Would you want to do battle against someone who was nine feet tall?

Read 1 Samuel 17:16, 32–33

- After 40 days, no one was willing to fight Goliath. Finally, David said that he would try it.
- What did King Saul say to David?

Read 1 Samuel 17:37

- David knew that he could trust God and his plan to make him king.

Read 1 Samuel 17:40, 45, 47

- Goliath had a sword, spear and a javelin to fight with; what did David have?
- Why did David pick something simple like stones to defeat Goliath? Who did he want to have credit for defeating the giant?

Read 1 Samuel 17:49

- David was a young boy, nowhere near nine feet tall, but he defeated Goliath with God's help.
- God meant for David to beat Goliath in battle.

God has a plan for all of us. He knows what we are meant to be. He can see past the small things that others think about us and see the big plan for our lives.

Do you know what a disability is? Do you know anyone with a disability? (discuss)

If I were a person who was blind, I could not see. But, what *could* I do? (discuss)

If I were a person who was deaf, I could not hear. But, what *could* I do? (discuss)

God does not want us to look at the outside, at what people may look like or what people may or may not be able to do. God wants us to look at the heart. If we only see someone as a person with a disability, it is a little like looking at the first pictures we looked at. It is NOT the entire person.

God loves us all the same. God forgives us all the same. God knows what we are meant to be.

Closing Thoughts

Throughout David's life, he had people protect him and help him until it was time for him to be king. They saw David as he was meant to be. They saw God's plan for his life. God has a plan for all of our lives. We are all meant to be in His family. We are all meant to be loved. We are all meant to be forgiven. We are all meant to be in heaven with him some day. It is important for us to see everyone, including people with disabilities, as part of God's family...all that they are meant to be.

How can you help others, especially people with disabilities, become all that they are meant to be? (answers—try to bring out: teach others about Jesus, include others in church & school, be kind, make sure our church & school are accessible, be a friend)

Check below all of the ways you can help others become all that they are meant to be.

- teach others about Jesus**
- don't talk to others**
- include others in church and school**
- ignore those who look like they may need a friend**
- be kind**
- walk past someone without saying hello**
- be a friend**

Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the one and only true God. You see us for all we are meant to be. Help us share this good news with others so that they can come to know you. Forgive us when we forget to be kind to others, especially people that seem different from us. Help us see the heart of people and all that they are meant to be, and not just a piece or part of them. Thank you for loving us all the same. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



1. CAR



2. HUMMING BIRD



3. BIRTHDAY CAKE



4. VIOLIN



5. APPLE



Leader: God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be.
1 Corinthians 12:18

All: We are the body of Christ. Each one of us is a part of it.
1 Corinthians. 12:27

L: So God created man in his own likeness. He created him in the likeness of God. He created them as male and female. *Genesis 1:27*

A: We are the body of Christ. Each one of us is a part of it.
1 Corinthians 12:27

L: Then the Lord God made a woman. He made her from the rib he had taken out of the man. And he brought her to him. *Genesis 2:22*

A: We are the body of Christ. Each one of us is a part of it.
1 Corinthians 12:27

L: I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you. All nations on earth will be blessed because of you. *Genesis 2a and 3b*

A: We are the body of Christ. Each one of us is a part of it.
1 Corinthians 12:27

L: You are a holy nation. The Lord your God has set you apart for himself. He has chosen you to be his special treasure. He chose you out of all of the nations on the face of the earth to be his people. *Deuteronomy 7:6*

(continued)



Leader: God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be.
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1 Corinthians 12:27

L: Jesus went through all the towns and villages. He taught in their synagogues. He preached the good news of the kingdom. And he healed every illness and sickness. *Matthew 9:35*

A: You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

L: I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me. My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. *John 10:14, 27*

A: You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

L: All the believers were agreed in heart and mind. They didn't claim that anything they had was their own. They shared everything they owned. With great power the apostles continued their teaching. They gave witness that the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead. And they were greatly blessed by God. *Acts 4:32- 33*

A: You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

L: God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be.

1 Corinthians 12:18

He makes the whole body grow and build itself up in love. Under the control of Christ, each part of the body does its work. It supports the other parts. In that way, the body is joined and held together. *Ephesians 4:16*

A: He who gives witness to these things says, "Yes. I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. Revelation 22:20- 21

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Meant to Be Lyrics

by Jubal Myer

Chorus

Open my eyes, open my heart to all the things
you want to impart.
Everything you want me to do and all the
grace I need to get through.
Lord, help me be all I am meant to be.

Each of us has things we're given we're supposed to do,
And the power to do these things has all come from you.
But then we get in the way because we tend to sin.
When we lose sight of your will, Father, rein us in.
(Chorus)

Each of us must face some challenge; that's the way we grow.
Keep in mind his love for us, what he wants us to know.
That he's always there for us, in all we do and say.
Follow him to where he leads us, he has shown the way.
(Chorus)

We're all meant to be together; none should go alone.
Side by side we'll do his bidding, until he calls us home.
While we're here, let's make a difference, giving what we're giv'n.
Knowing God's provided for us, and we are forgiv'n.
(Chorus)

(Chorus)

Tag
Father your love rises above giving us all more than enough.
In all we do and we go through may we give the glory to you.
Lord, help us be all we are meant to be.



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Father Your love rises above giving us all more than enough.
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Theme Activity* in Two Parts for people of all ages and abilities




Objective

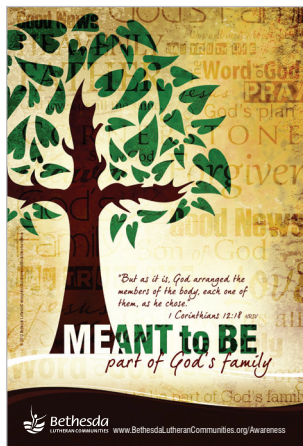
The participants will understand they are beloved members of God's family.

Bible Basis

1 Corinthians 12:18 NRSV

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

Materials Needed	Part I	Part II
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meant to Be heart patterns (found at the end of the lesson) • Crayons • Round or heart shaped muffin tins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meant to Be tree trunk (pattern at the end of the lesson) use two 22x28 poster boards taped together to make a canvas 28x44 or large piece of butcher/ craft paper • Small rectangles of brown construction paper • Glue sticks and double-sided tape or mounting putty (fun-tak)



Download the original Meant to Be poster at <http://bit.ly/M2Bposter>.



*Based on an activity created by the Rev. David Wiist and the "Straight Ways" Thursday night Bible study group meeting at Concordia Lutheran in Evansville, Ind. This is the collage the group created.

Share your finished project with Bethesda!

Email a photo to marketing@mailblc.org. We will share selected submissions on Facebook.



www.BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org/MeantToBe

Part I

Opening

Leader: There is a story about a baseball player on the day he retired. After the baseball player's last game, a reporter came up to him.

"You love baseball. Who will you be once you are not a professional baseball player?" the reporter asked.

"It's true," the man answered. "Baseball is here in my heart [point to your heart]. **Being a baseball player is a big part of who I am. But, it isn't all that I am.** [Repeat pointing at your heart for emphasis] I'm an uncle and a friend. I love animals, especially my two dogs. I'm a good cook—I make great chili."

The man continued talking to the reporter. He said, "All these things, like being a baseball player and a friend and a cook are wonderful gifts from God. These bits and pieces come together to make up who I am. The most important thing, though, is **I am a child of God** [put your hand on your heart]. **I am and will always be a member of God's family.**"

Activity

- Give every participant a sheet with hearts to decorate. As you do, say, "As you decorate one or both of the hearts, think about all of the things in your heart that make up who you are."
- Use crayons to decorate the hearts.
- When the group is finished with their hearts, collect them for Part 2.
- Ask the participants to take a crayon of their favorite color, unwrap it, break it up and put the pieces in the muffin tin.



Note: If the group is small, encourage the participants to break up several crayons in order to fill the pans. If you are combining Part 1 and Part 2 in one day, have a helper take the tins to an oven and melt the crayons. If leading Part 2 on another day, take the filled muffin tins home to bake.



Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for all the pieces of our lives that make us who we are. Thank you for loving us just as we are. Thank you for making us part of God's family. In your name we pray. Amen.

Heart-Shaped Crayons: Use heart-shaped muffin tins or put a marble on the outside of each paper liner to create a heart shape. Spray the tins or the liners with non-stick spray. Fill the muffin cups with unwrapped crayon pieces. Put the tin in an oven preheated to 250 degrees. Keep an eye on the oven; in a matter of minutes the crayons will melt into one piece. Cool completely before removing the crayons from the tin.

Part Two

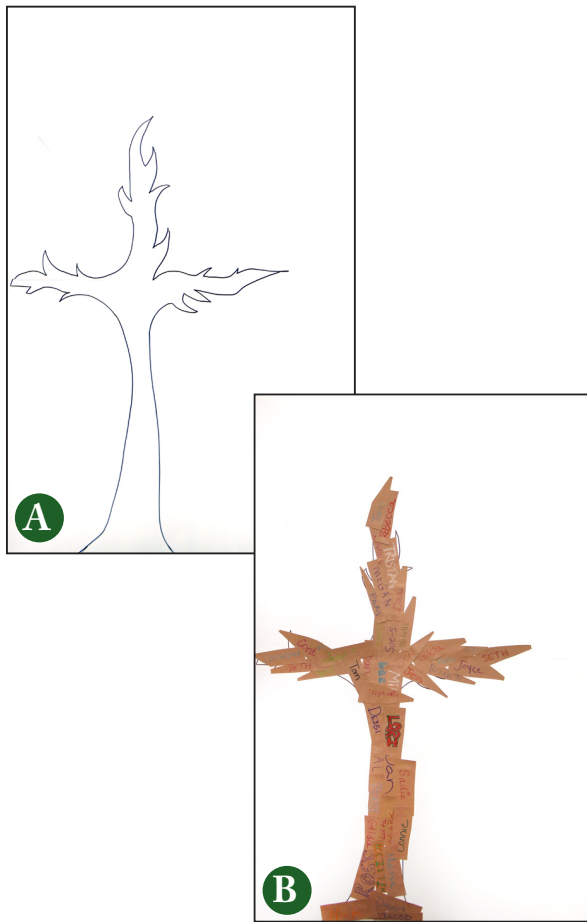
Ahead of time

(1) Create the cross-shape tree trunk. Using the provided pattern as a guide, draw the trunk on the poster boards or craft paper, see sample A below.

(2) Place crayons or markers and small rectangles of brown construction paper on the tables.

Opening

Leader: Welcome! It is a blessing to have each one of you here today. It is a blessing to be here together. Last time we decorated hearts and talked about the pieces of our hearts that make up who we are. Today, we'll talk more about who we are as loved members of God's family.



Activity

- **Point to the tree trunk and ask, What do you think this is?** [Some may say a tree trunk; some may see a cross—guide the group to both answers.]
- **Why is the cross so important for Christians?** (Jesus died on the cross.) When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, he beat sin, death and the devil.

Have you ever heard of a family tree? On a chart shaped like a tree, some people write down their names of their relatives—their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and so on.

Because of Jesus, we are all part of God's family. The cross is our family tree.

Invite each participant to write their name on one of the rectangles. Then, ask them to write the names of others they keep in their prayers or those in need of prayer. Each name should be on its own rectangle. Be aware of those who need help writing.

Collect the rectangles. Hold them in your hands and pray, **Dear heavenly Father, bless each of these people. Help them know your love. Be with those who are sick or sad. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

Glue the rectangles on the tree trunk, see sample B above.

Return the hearts to the people who made them, and ask them to cut them out. Be aware of those who need help cutting.

Leader: When the group is finished cutting, have them hold the hearts in their hands, as you say, Listen to this Bible verse: ***“Know the plans I have for you,” announces the LORD. “I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come.”*** [Jeremiah 29:11 NIrV]

Last time we talked about all of the pieces of who we are. Remember the story of the baseball player? The man is not just a baseball player. He is a friend and an uncle. He loves animals, especially his two dogs. He likes to make chili. Most important, the man is a loved child of God, a member of God's family.



- **Who would like to tell us about how they decorated their heart to show the important pieces of who you are?** Maybe you drew a picture or maybe you colored in a certain way to remind you of something. Would anyone like to share? [Listen to as many who would like to share. Try to encourage participation.]
- Thank you for sharing. God specially created each one of us. We are each made up of different pieces. Look at the heart(s) in your hand.
- **Does your heart look the same as the person sitting next to you?** (no)
- **Is it in the shape of a heart?** (yes)

Some things about us are different: we like different things and have different talents and skills. Some things about us are the same: We all belong to God's family and God loves us all the same.

- [Point to the tree trunk] **What is missing from our tree?** (leaves)

Guess what. When we attach the hearts to the tree, they will look like leaves. Let's do that now. [Have a helper ready to put up the hearts. Note how they are placed on the poster.]

- Last time, when we worked on the hearts, **did you guess they were leaves?**

People are more than just what they look like. It's good to take time to get to know someone and learn about the many pieces of their heart, not just the parts that are easy to see.

Wow! Look at our tree. Our pieces came together and made something beautiful. Each one of us is an amazing piece of God's plan. Each one of us belongs to God's family.

- **How does it make you feel to know that you belong to God's family?**
- We did something else last time, just after we decorated our hearts.
Do remember what we did?

Remember, we took crayons, broke them up and put them in a tin. The broken pieces were put in the oven until they melted together. Now we have crayons of many colors. [Give one crayon to each person.] Look at the bits and pieces and how they fit together. This is a gift for you to remind you that **we are all a part of God's heart—we all belong in God's family.**

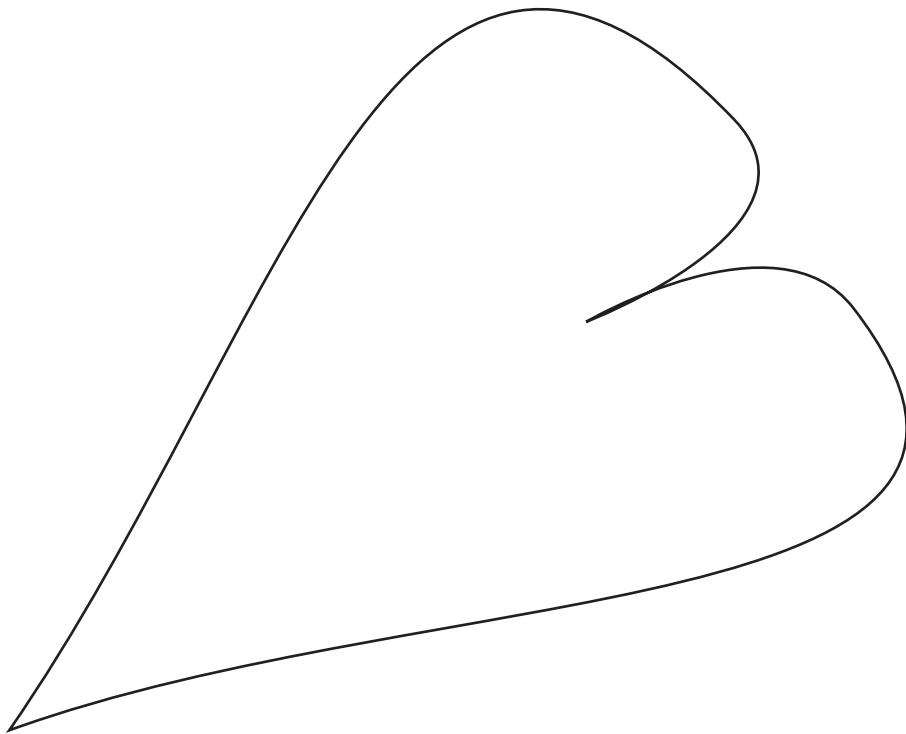
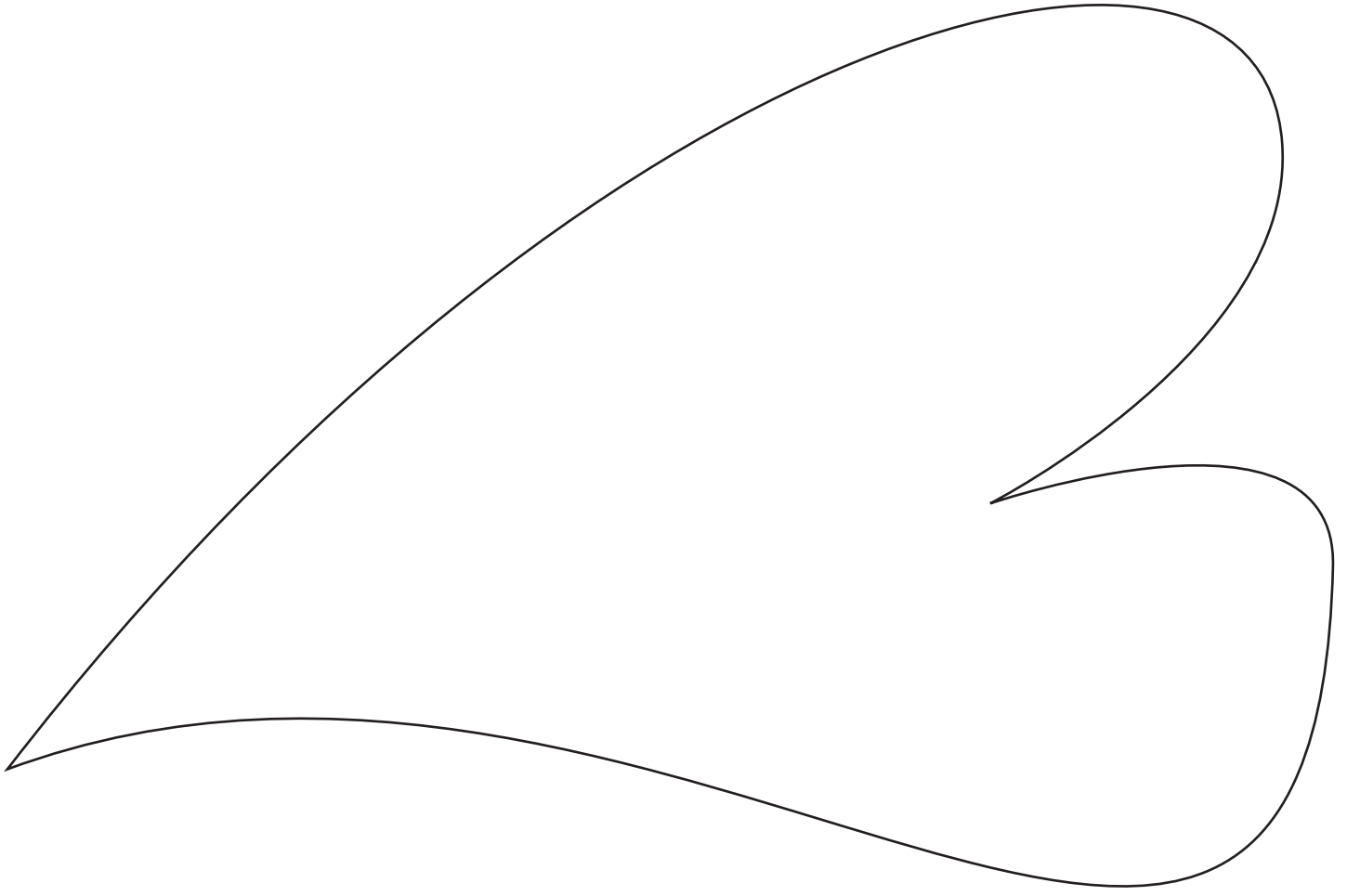
Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for making us part of your family and loving us just as we are. Thank you for the beautiful pieces of our lives. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

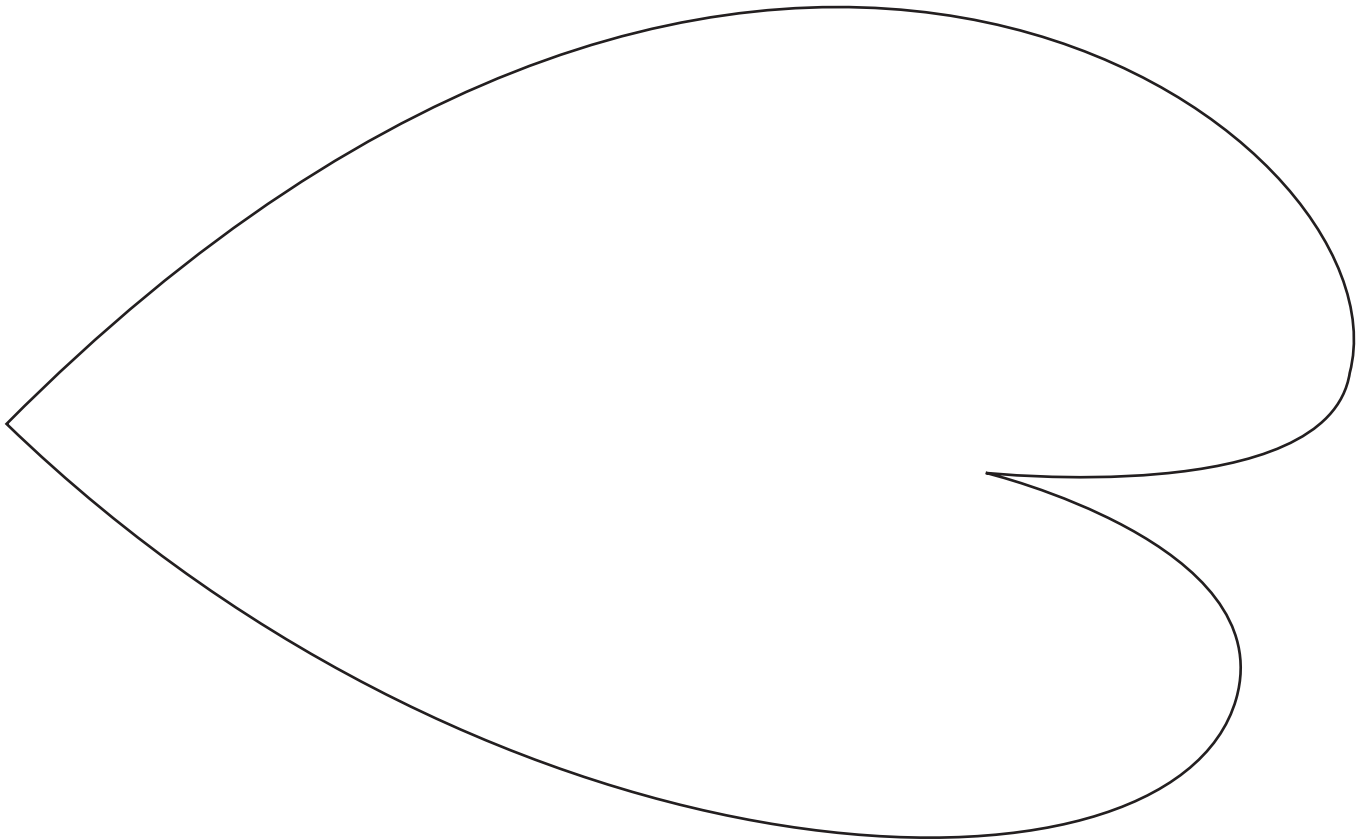
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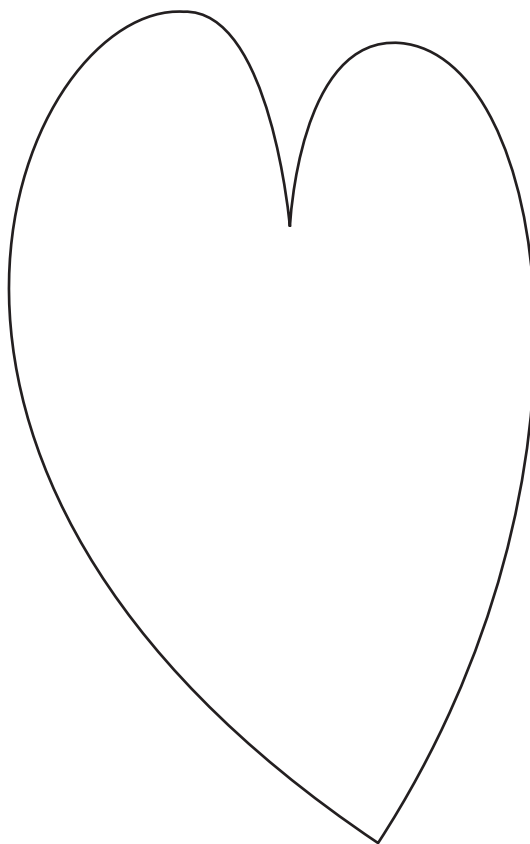
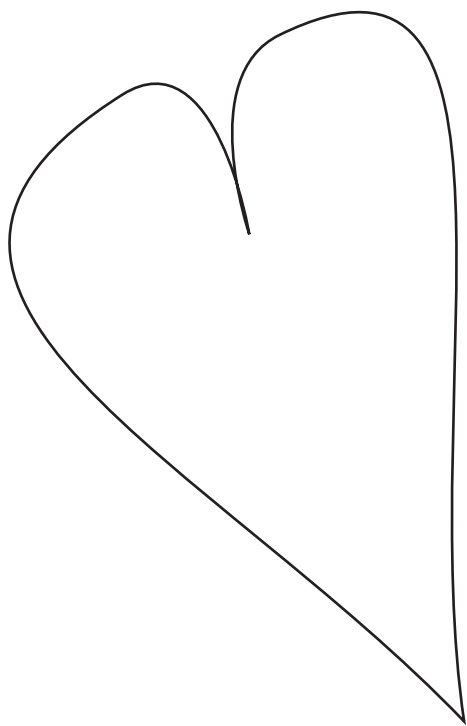
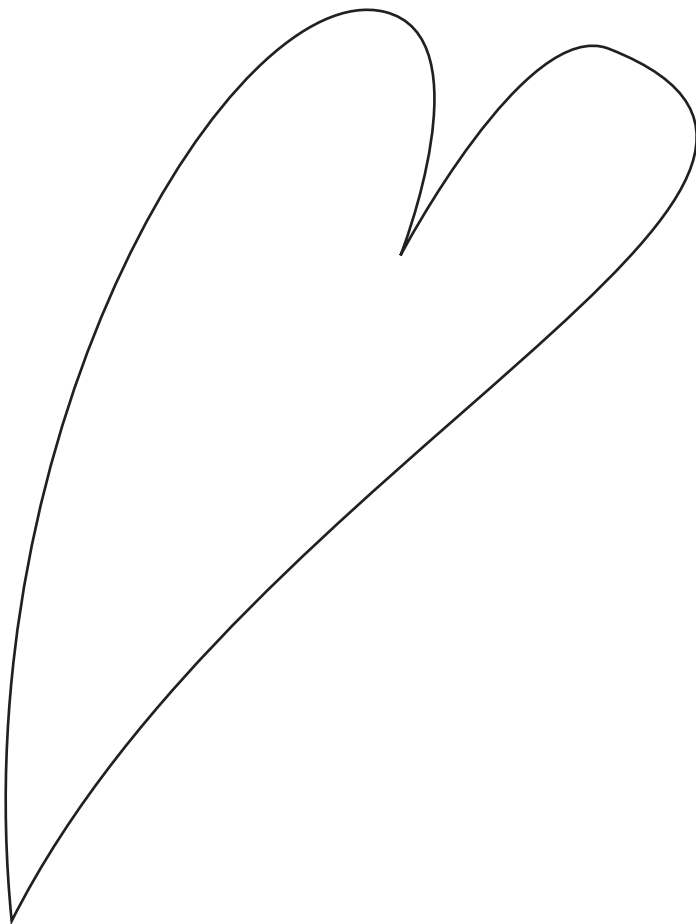
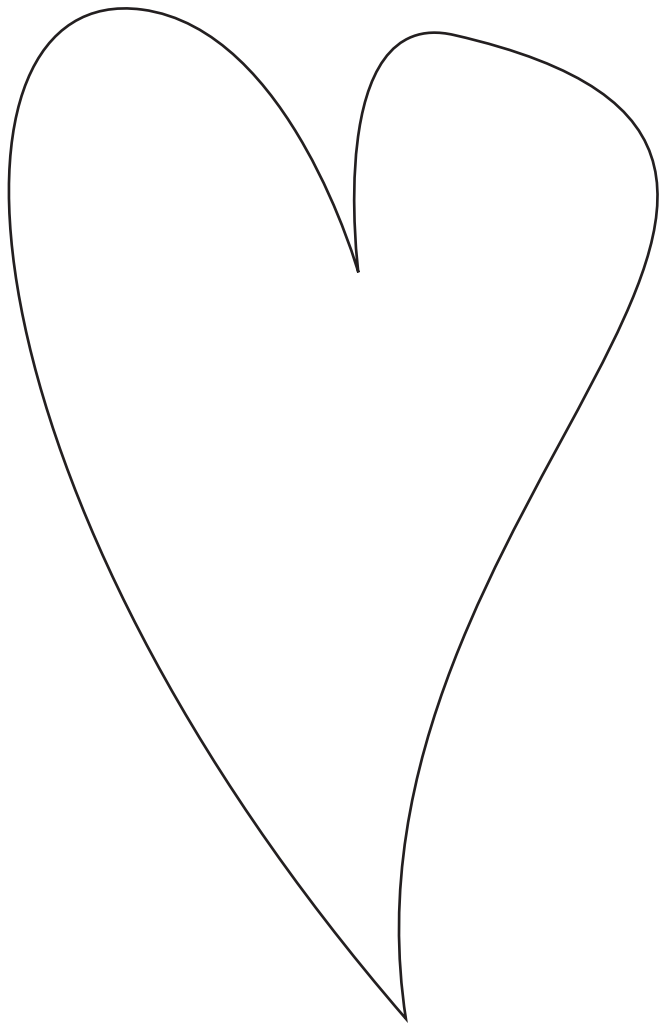
Heart patterns 1



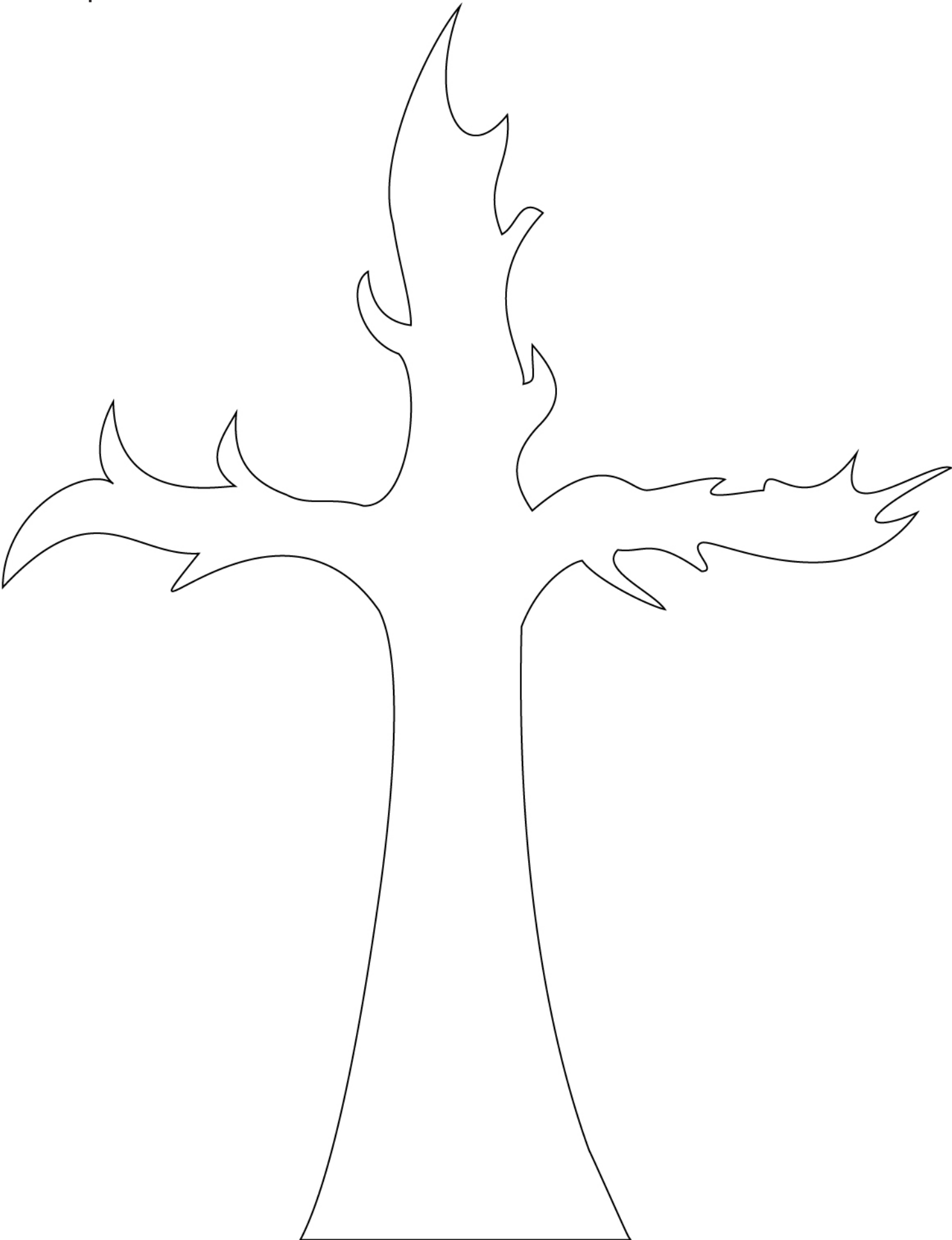
Heart patterns 2



Heart patterns 3



Tree trunk pattern



WE WANT TO BE

part of God's family

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

1 Corinthians 12:18 NRSV



Sermon Notes

Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God's family.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

Purpose

This outline is intended to help prepare a sermon that encourages members to serve their Lord Jesus together, since we are all part of the body of Christ, the Church. This sermon calls particular attention to people with and without disabilities serving together in Christ's ministry.

Basic text: I Corinthians 12:18

But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose. (NRSV)

God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. (NIRV)

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (NIV)

God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. (ESV)

Goal, Malady, Means Statements

Goal: People will know that since Christ died for all, all believers (no matter their gifts or abilities) are meant to be united as one in the body of Christ, the Church.

Malady: We see some people as less valuable than others and don't really see them as one with us, members of the body of Christ, the Church. (Emphasis on disabilities)

Means: Through the use of Scripture and biblical illustrations, the Holy Spirit will guide people to realize that all believers in Christ are meant to be an integral part of Christ's body, the Church, living lives of witness and service to him.

Opening Prayer: Lord God, you called us by your Holy Spirit to faith in Jesus Christ, who died for us and rose again unto eternal life. You placed us in your Church, the body of Christ, putting each of us exactly where we were meant to be. We thank you, praise you and ask you to bless us as we worship you together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Supporting Scripture for illustrating the “Meant To Be” theme:

Genesis 50:20 – Thought: Joseph’s brothers sought to do him harm. God, on the other hand, used Joseph’s trials to help the lives of others during a time of famine.

1 Samuel 16:6–7 – Thought: Samuel looked for the biggest and strongest of Jesse’s sons to be the next king of Israel, but God said that David was the one who was meant to be king.

Esther 4:14b – Thought: A plot was hatched to destroy all Jews living in the Persian kingdom of King Xerxes. Esther, a Jewess, was chosen queen and was in a prime position to help her people. In God’s plan, she was meant to be there at that time for that purpose.

John 9:3 – Thought: Jesus’ disciples asked who sinned that this man was born blind, but Jesus said this was meant to be so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

Acts 9:4 – Thought: Though Saul had been violently persecuting Christians, God called him and made it clear that he (Paul) was meant to be a missionary to the Gentiles.

All believers in Christ, regardless of needs, abilities, disabilities, ethnic background, race or gender are meant to be productive, forgiven servants of Christ, full and active members of the body of Christ, the Church.

Sermon Outline: Meant to Be INTRODUCTION

Were you meant to be a musician with a God-given talent for music or a mechanic with a God-given mechanical ability to fix anything? Our text tells us that God placed all the parts of our human body exactly where he wanted them to be, so they can perform the functions God meant them to do. Later in this chapter, we see that God placed us into the Church, Christ’s body on earth. Each of us has a distinctive place in the body of Christ. God put each of us exactly where we are for his purpose.

Meant to Be

I. People were meant to be with God forever

- A. Originally created in God’s image: holy, sinless, living eternally
- B. But with Adam and Eve all mankind became sinful
- C. Sin broke man’s perfect relationship with God and separated man from God

II. Jesus Christ was meant to be our Savior

- A. God promised he would send a Savior to fix our broken relationship with God
- B. Reconciled with God, man now can look forward to eternal life
- C. Jesus was meant to be the Savior of all people, regardless of abilities or disabilities

III. All believers in Christ are meant to be a part of his body, the Church

- A. Rejoicing together that God has saved us from our sins
- B. Living each day with God’s help, strength, compassion, love, and grace to get us through all the ups and downs of this earthly life, with or without disabilities.
- C. Reaching out together in mission with people with developmental disabilities to reach more of the lost who are also meant to be God’s redeemed people

CONCLUSION – The pastor should emphasize that all believers in Christ are meant to be an integral part of Christ’s body on earth, the Church, and that no one should be overlooked or kept out of our Christian fellowship. All should be welcomed with the open arms of Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer – Thank you, Heavenly Father, for the gift of faith in Jesus that you have given us through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Preserve us in that faith always. Help us respect and love all your people, regardless of needs or abilities, so that we may share together in the fellowship of your son Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

Terminology People First Language



Always speak directly to the person who has a disability, not just the family, friend or staff member that accompanies them.

Don't give excessive praise or change your tone of voice when speaking with a person with disabilities. It can be patronizing.

If addressing an adult with disabilities, use the same respect and conversation content that you would use with an adult without disabilities.

Don't assume that a person with disabilities is not capable of attending certain classes or participating in certain activities or events. Ask them directly about their desires to participate or attend. It is not for us to decide for them...it is their choice.

USE AFFIRMATIVE LANGUAGE	AVOID NEGATIVE LANGUAGE
Person who has	Suffers from, victim of, afflicted by
Person with a disability, People with disabilities	Handicapped, crippled, victim, unfortunate, disabled
Person with Down syndrome	Downs child, mongoloid, feeble-minded
Person with Autism	Autistic
Uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
Person with an intellectual disability or has a developmental disability	Retarded, mentally defective, impaired, feeble-minded
Deaf or hard of hearing	Deaf & dumb, hearing impaired
Communicates using Sign Language, speech disability, communication disability, non-verbal	Tongue-tied, mute or dumb
Has a physical disability	Lame, crippled, deformed, feeble, Palsied, CP or spastic
Seizures	Fits
Has a learning disability	Learning disabled, slow
Paralyzed	Invalid or paralytic
Mental illness or emotional disorder	Crazy or insane
Blind, low vision, partially sighted	Blind as a bat, sightless, the blind

Terminology People First Language



Always speak directly to the person who has a disability, not just the family, friend or staff member that accompanies them.

Don't give excessive praise or change your tone of voice when speaking with a person with disabilities. It can be patronizing.

If addressing an adult with disabilities, use the same respect and conversation content that you would use with an adult without disabilities.

Don't assume that a person with disabilities is not capable of attending certain classes or participating in certain activities or events. Ask them directly about their desires to participate or attend. It is not for us to decide for them...it is their choice.

USE AFFIRMATIVE LANGUAGE	AVOID NEGATIVE LANGUAGE
Person who has	Suffers from, victim of, afflicted by
Person with a disability, People with disabilities	Handicapped, crippled, victim, unfortunate, disabled
Person with Down syndrome	Downs child, mongoloid, feeble-minded
Person with Autism	Autistic
Uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
Person with an intellectual disability or has a developmental disability	Retarded, mentally defective, impaired, feeble-minded
Deaf or hard of hearing	Deaf & dumb, hearing impaired
Communicates using Sign Language, speech disability, communication disability, non-verbal	Tongue-tied, mute or dumb
Has a physical disability	Lame, crippled, deformed, feeble, Palsied, CP or spastic
Seizures	Fits
Has a learning disability	Learning disabled, slow
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Volunteer

Share your time to assist in the spiritual growth of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

MEANT to BE

Enrich the lives of people with intellectual developmental disabilities, and in turn, they will enrich yours!

- Make a regular visit to a group home for a time of singing, prayer and fellowship activities.
- Lead a formal Bible class, weekly or monthly.
- Begin a disability-friendly Sunday school or Bible class and share the love of Christ.
- Assist in confirmation or baptism instruction on a one-on-one basis.
- Help someone participate in worship.
- Provide transportation for social/fellowship opportunities.
- Contact a group home or assisted living manager to learn how you can share your gifts and talents.



Volunteer

Share your time to make a difference in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and they will make a difference in yours!

MEANT to BE

Prayer & Postage

Write to and pray for people supported by Bethesda Lutheran Communities

Help with a Bible Class at Your Church

Play music • Lead singing • Be a classroom companion

Be a Friend

Sit with your friend at get-togethers

Call and send holiday cards

Go shopping or to a movie

Have a Bible Study or watch a DVD

Do activities together: crafts, board games, servant events, etc.

Be a Church Leader or Organizer

Have a monthly recreation program at church

Movie night • Game night • Dances

Create teaching aides for Bible class

“... don’t just talk about love. Put your love into action. Then it will truly be love.” 1 John 3:18 NIRV

Women's Bible Study



Lesson Truth

God created you to be exactly who you are, with all the gifts and challenges that make up your “self.” No matter what the expectations of others or the insecurities in your heart, God has crafted you for a specific purpose and is eager for you to realize your potential.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Jeremiah 1:5 (NirV)

“Before I formed you in your mother’s body I chose you. Before you were born I set you apart to serve me. I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.”

Opening Prayer

Father God, open our hearts to hear your call on our lives. Let the criticisms and expectations of others and our own self doubts take on less importance as we learn to embrace the people you meant us to be. Amen.

Opening thoughts

As women today, we have many pressures and expectations imposed upon us regarding what, and who, we are meant to be. There are pressures about what we are meant to be doing or the choices we are making. There are superficial expectations; for example, how we should look or what foods we should eat. We feel judged about how we spend our time, who we associate with and how much we accomplish in a day. It can be very overwhelming.

What are some pressures that you face?

What are some things that you do to help yourself when you feel overwhelmed?

Thankfully, we can remember that our heavenly Father is here for us. If we focus on what God means for us to be, we will not be discouraged. (See **Joshua 1:9**.)

Meant to be unique

We are uniquely made! Reread **Jeremiah 1:5**.

Each of us is exactly as we were *created* to be. What freedom to know that it doesn't matter how we compare to others! God does not compare. God designed us as he meant us to be, gifted specifically for his purpose, **BEFORE** we were even conceived!

1. *How does this passage make you feel? Do you feel a sense of relief?*

God is talking directly to you in this passage. Rewrite this passage using your name and your thoughts.

The verse goes on to say that God set us apart, or consecrated us, before we were born. That means to dedicate solemnly to a purpose or goal. It means we have specific work to do. God means for us to use our gifts to further his kingdom.

2. *What are some gifts that you have that can further God's Kingdom?*

Do you see, or know of, any specific gifts that others in this room have?

Telling others about our Savior Jesus, his love and the free gift of salvation is our ultimate purpose. Our gifts are means to that end; they are the tools we have been given to achieve that purpose.

We can be encouraged by looking at some women in the Bible who had amazing experiences as they lived the lives God had planned for them.

Meant to be courageous

Esther is a surprising story on many levels. You can read her story in the Book of Esther. It isn't very long, and the plot is laced with many twists, turns and complications. It is as good as any mystery novel! Esther was just as unsure, young, deceitful, reluctant, fearful, and self-serving as we may be. Her gifts, though, led her to be exactly what God meant for her to be. She was courageous and trusted in him. God used her in powerful ways to save many lives. She literally saved a nation!

3. *It is hard to walk the line of fear and courage.*

Have you ever felt afraid? Did you pray for courage?

What happened?

Meant to be influential

Priscilla was quite the missionary. You can visit her story in Acts 18:1–26. She worked alongside of her husband, Aquila, in their thriving business at a time when that was not typical. She was mentored by Paul when he was in Rome on one of his early missionary trips. She became most influential as a co-founder of the early Christian church. Priscilla talked to everyone, everywhere about Jesus. She told everyone who would listen about the crucified and risen Lord. She is credited with the expansion of the church, though women were not allowed to speak in the public arena at that time. Her home was a place of teaching and learning and was one of the first “house churches.” Many of her students went on to be gifted teachers sharing the good news.

4. *Have you been gifted with the talent to share your faith easily?*

Who was the last person you talked to about Christ?

Meant to be a leader

Deborah's story is told in the book of Judges, chapters four and five. She was gifted as a judge. A “judge” in Israel was someone who led the tribe in times of peace and settled arguments and problems. War found them gathering the tribes and leading the defense or offense against the enemy. Deborah once encouraged

and sent a small band of Israelites into battle against the much larger army of Canaan. She summoned the most able military general and told him what to do! Her tribe was victorious against many odds and this gave them their first access to the fertile land of Canaan.

5. *Have you ever needed to “take charge” of a situation?*

Did you like being the leader?

Are there places or groups you can lead within your congregation?

There are many more wonderful stories of women in the Bible living out the lives they were meant to have. Take some time this week to visit:

Ruth and Naomi in the book of **Ruth**

Elizabeth in **Luke 1**

The wife of Pontius Pilate in **Matthew 27:19**

Dorcas in **Acts 9:36–43**

Mary, the mother of Jesus, in **Luke 2**

Meant to Be Part of God's Kingdom

As in the Bible, we are all uniquely gifted by God for a purpose. Being human and prone to judgment of others, however, it is often hard for us to see others' gifts. Consider the following scenarios:

- The neighbor who spends more time in her garden than picking up her kids toys in the front yard
- The chronically happy person who exasperates us because they are *never* anything but happy
- The teenager who never looks us in the eye and is constantly staring at his electronics
- The man in the wheelchair who draws throughout every service and meeting
- The coworker who cries on a dime
- The man behind us who sings *very* loud
- The woman with intellectual and developmental disabilities who runs to the coffee/snack table during the last hymn of the service
- The widow who tells story after story about when she was young

6. *Have you ever found yourself grumbling or making assumptions about others?*

Why do you think we judge others?

What could you do next time you feel frustrated with another person?

Revisit the scenarios above. *What gifts may God want us to see in these people?*

Closing thoughts

There are times we get discouraged. We feel that the expectations of those in our lives are unending. We struggle to identify our gifts and flounder when trying to use them. Christ is the answer!

Seeing the giftedness in others—especially someone who rubs us the wrong way or whose disabilities are visible—is often challenging. Christ is the answer!

Consider asking others what they like about themselves. Take the time to help others feel capable and flourish in God's Kingdom. Inspire someone to know they are meant to be part of God's family. Christ is the answer!

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, we know that you want us to use our gifts to spread the word about you. Be with us when we get discouraged. We know you want us to see your gifts in others. Help us to do so and be an encouragement to them. Help us never dismiss or belittle anyone's contribution to our God's Grand Design and to embrace and encourage the diversity God created. In your name we pray. Amen.



Jr. & Sr. High Bible Study

Lesson Truth

God created each person to be unique in carrying out his plan of salvation.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Opening Prayer

Father God, we praise you that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. You created each of us to be a blessing to those around us and to the world that we live in. Please forgive us when we don't place value on your creation or when we tear each other down. Lift us up, Lord. Fill us with a spirit of love and acceptance for each other. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

“Line Up!” Activity

This activity will get your whole group moving and working together as one. On the count of three, line up:

- By Height: Shortest to Tallest
- By Birthday: January 1 through December 31
- By Shoe Size: Smallest to Largest

Opening Discussion

Would the people with the smallest and largest shoe size please stand.

1. *Would the person with the smallest shoe size make a better president? Why or why not?*

Would the shortest and tallest people please stand.

2. *Would the person who is taller make a better teacher? Why or why not?*

Would the people with the earliest birthday in the year and the latest birthday in the year please stand.

3. *Would the person with the latest birthday in the year be able to share God's word more effectively than the any other person? Why or why not?*

WANTED: The Lord looks at the Heart

Just seeing the word **WANTED** may conjure up a whole lot of pictures in your mind.

4. *What do you think of when you see the word **WANTED**?*

In the Bible verses we are about to read, God sent Samuel to find a new and faithful King to serve over his people. King Saul had disappointed God and God **WANTED** a certain someone to fill this role.

Read: I Samuel 16:6–11

God knew exactly what person he **WANTED** to fill the role of serving his people as king over Israel. One by one, all seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel until there was only one left.

5. *What qualities would you desire to have in the leader of your country?*

What qualities would God desire in the leader of the Israelites?

As Samuel first listened to God's leading, he knew that the new man to serve as king over Israel had not yet been found.

6. *Why is waiting to find the right leader difficult? What are some things you can do to insure that you make wise decisions when voting or selecting a leader?*

CHOSEN: This is the One

Take a minute and remember back to your grade school years, that horrible moment when the teacher says, "We're picking teams." Perhaps you were the one who was always picked first, or maybe someone in the middle, or even the person who was **CHOSEN** last. That moment felt horrible; but once the game got going, it didn't really matter who was picked when because you were now playing like a team and everyone had a part to play in winning the game.

Read: 1 Samuel 16:11–13

Waiting patiently is not always an easy thing to do, especially if you feel that you have not been **CHOSEN** quickly enough. Samuel's mission would not be complete until he found the one **CHOSEN** by God to serve as the next king of Israel. He waited as the seven brothers passed by him and none were chosen king.

7. *As Samuel waited for this youngest son to arrive, what did he tell the group to do?*

Can you imagine the tension in the room?

Is there a time you can share when you felt impatient, where you felt that you were waiting forever? What was going on and how did you handle it?

As the youngest son David arrived, the Lord said, "This is the one."

Finally, this young man was **CHOSEN** to be king over Israel.

SET APART: The Lord Came Powerfully

Have you ever prayed that God would make it perfectly clear what you are meant to do and how to do it right?

Does anyone wish they had the ultimate answer from God *right now* about something...a clear-cut answer, no questions asked?

8. *Would any of you be willing to share a concern you have with the rest of the group? How can he/she know God's answer to this prayer?*

Would anyone else be willing to share your concern?

Some answers to prayer are very clear, while other times we have to wait for an answer. In Samuel's case, God clearly directed him that David was to be the king over Israel. God **CHOOSE** David. God **SET APART** David for several reasons.

What does vs. 7 tell us God looks at when choosing a leader?

9. *What do you suppose this means?*

*As God looks at your heart, what task may God have you **SET APART** to do? Do you have any ideas of a task in the future?*

One last, powerful action took place symbolizing that David was **SET APART**. While in the presence of his family, Samuel anointed him with oil. This action of blessing is God's way of reinforcing his decision. It seals the deal. In David's case, it signified that he was to serve as God's **WANTED**, **CHOSEN** & **SET APART** king—serving over all the Israelites.

Closing Thoughts

People with disabilities are **WANTED, CHOSEN & SET APART**, just as God's entire family is, to share God's Plan of Salvation with the world!

10. *Consider the people you know with disabilities. What gifts do you see in them when it comes to sharing God's love with others? What about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; what gifts do you see in them? How can your group include people with disabilities into the family of believers in your church?*

Reread 1 Samuel 16: 7.

Please keep this verse in mind as you work to include all people, with and without disabilities, in meaningful ways in the life and ministry of the Church at large and in your own local church.

Closing Prayer

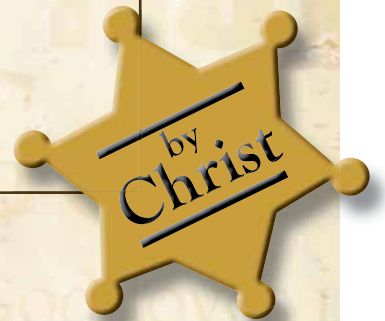
Dear Jesus, as we read today in scripture, outward appearances mean nothing to you because you look at the heart. Help us look at the heart of the people who you surround us with. Enable us to see the gifts all people bring and use them wisely in our classes and churches. Open our eyes to see the gifts that we can bring to glorify your name as well. Fill us with your Holy Spirit. In your name we pray. Amen.

Optional Activity

As part of the closing prayer, group leaders may provide a word of blessing individually over their students. Students may also do so over their leader. For deeper meaning, you may choose to use anointing oil with the blessing.

· WANTED ·

A large rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing a response to the 'WANTED' header. The background of the entire page is a textured, parchment-like surface with faint, golden script and words such as 'God's plan', 'Cornerstone', 'Forgiveness', and 'Good News'.



I am **WANTED**; why do I come to church? _____

I am **CHOSEN**; my favorite Bible verse is _____

I am **SET APART**; my gifts & talents are _____

Certificate of Commitment

presented to

for supporting people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities by

Thank you for focusing on the heart of others.

*"But as it is, God arranged the
members of the body, each one of
them, as he chose."*

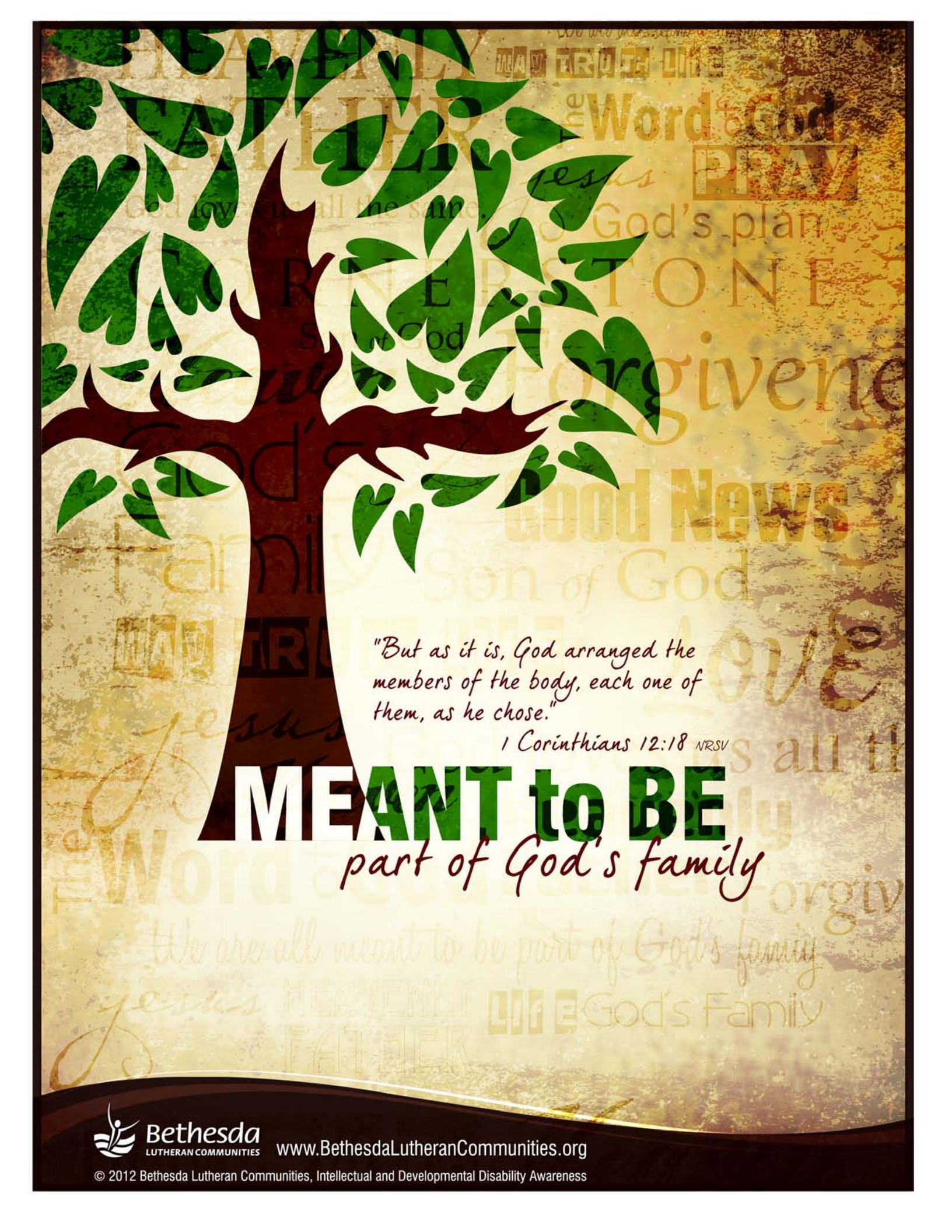
1 Corinthians 12:18 NRSV

MEANT to BE

part of God's family

Signature & Date





"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

1 Corinthians 12:18 NRSV

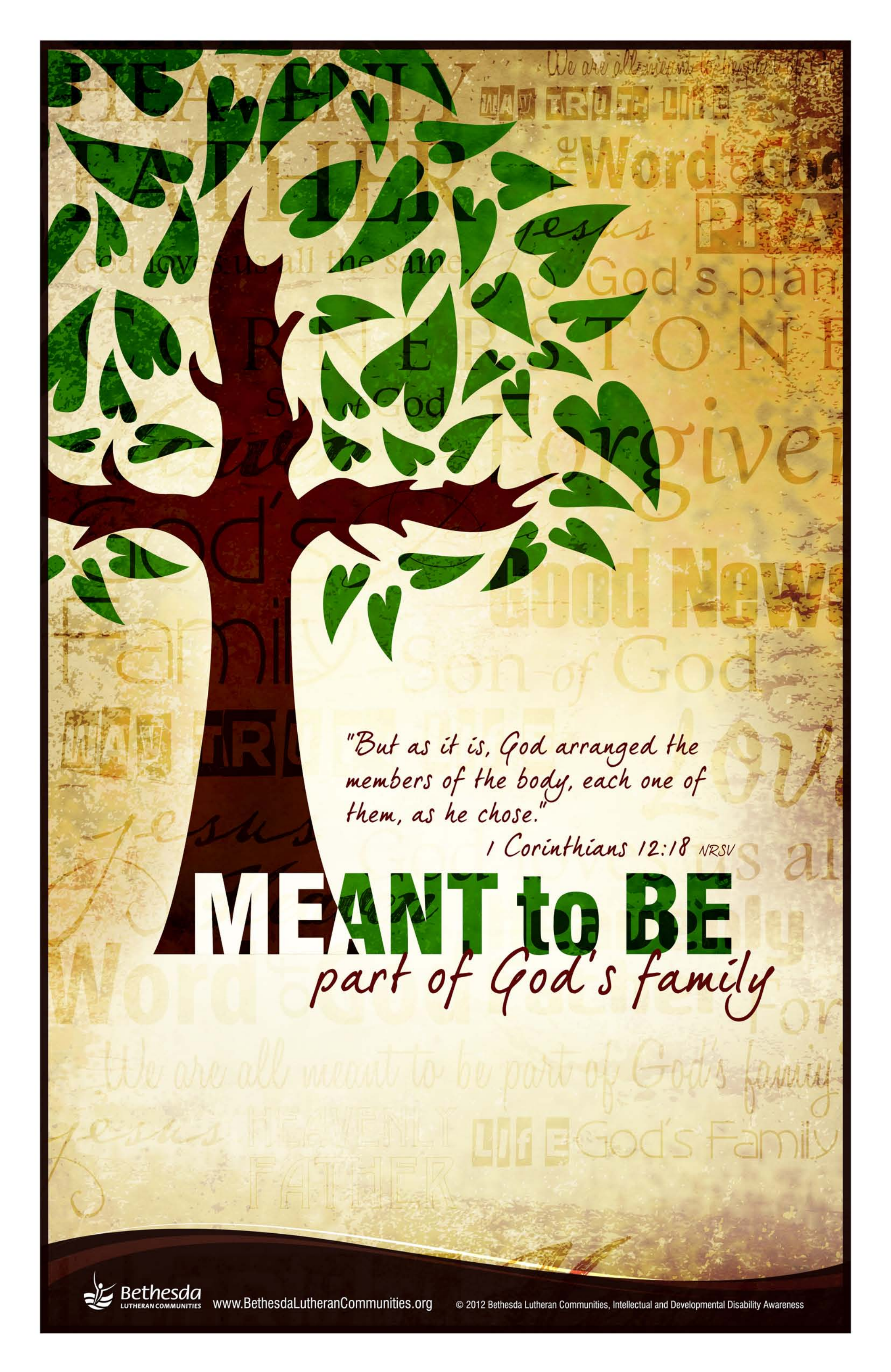
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Bethesda
LUTHERAN COMMUNITIES

www.BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org

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"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

1 Corinthians 12:18 NRSV

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