Living like Christ

Philippians 2: 1 – 11

12 creative ideas for Sunday School, RE lessons or Messy Church

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1. Fellowship in the Spirit

Paul writes in Philippians 2:2 that we have fellowship with each other through the Spirit. How can we make this fellowship visible?

What do you need:
- a large ball of wool

Ask all the children to stand in a circle. Give one of them a ball of wool. The child holds the end of the ball of wool and throws or rolls it to someone else in the circle. This child pulls the wool taught, and, holding on to the wool, throws or rolls the ball of wool to someone else. Once this has been repeated many times you will have a spider’s web of wool in the circle. All the children are connected through the wool – this represents our fellowship in Christ.

2. Look at how well I can boast!

What do you need:
- Red and green cards

In Philippians 2: 1 -11 Paul writes about the importance of unity. He warns the Christians in Philippi about the dangers of thinking that they are better than others, or boasting about themselves. ‘No,’ writes Paul, ‘you must be humble towards one another, and consider others better than yourselves.’

Sometimes in your children’s work you need to address things that are difficult, in order to talk about them and look for ways to make things work better.

Give each child a red and a green card. Ask the children to take it in turns to tell something. What they tell can either be true, or they can exaggerate it/ boast about it. The rest of the group has to listen and watch closely. If they think that the child is telling the truth, they hold up a green card afterwards. If they think that the child is exaggerating or boasting, they can show a red card. Afterwards you can ask the child if they were telling the truth or exaggerating/boasting.
3. Mission Possible

Philippians 2: 4 ‘And look out for one another’s interests, not just for your own’

Paul says that we shouldn’t think only of ourselves but also of others. Let’s make this practical straight away.

Option 1: If you all eat or drink together after your programme or service, ask the children to think about small things they could do for someone else. For example, asking someone what they would like to drink, and fetching it for them. Or clearing up someone’s plate. Get them to think about all the things they could do to care for someone else in that situation.

Option 2: Think together if there is anyone in your church who would appreciate some extra care and attention. Perhaps someone who is in hospital, or who is ill. You could make a cheerful video message for them, sing a song for them and record it, or make a huge card together.

4. Mirroring one other

Paul challenges the Christians in Philippi to mirror (or imitate) Jesus. But mirroring someone else is actually quite hard. To find out how hard it can be, ask two children to stand facing each other.

One child makes a movement or assumes a new position, and the other child has to be the mirror image. Can they do this? If child A moves very slowly, can child B mirror them?

The children can take turns to try this out. They can also take it in turns to be the child that moves, and the ‘mirror’.

What do the children think that it means to imitate or mirror Jesus?
5. What if Jesus had thought he was more important than other people?

**What do you need:**
- three printed pictures:
  - The birth of Jesus
  - Jesus washing the feet of the disciples
  - Jesus carrying the cross
- Empty A4 sheets of paper
- crayons or felt pens

How would the story of Jesus have turned out if he hadn’t found others more important than himself? Paul tells us that we should follow his example. He didn’t consider himself more important than others, but was prepared to do things that the ‘important’ people mostly wouldn’t have done. He made himself unimportant.

Look at the three pictures of Jesus’ life story. Choose one. What would this picture have looked like if Jesus had thought he was more important than others? Draw your own version of it. What do you think of what Jesus does?

6. Important unimportant

**What do you need:**
- 5 empty wine bottles
- 5 small glass bottles (beer or soft drink)
- 10 ping pong ball with faces drawn on them
- a NERF gun or water pistol

(If using a water pistol it might be better to play this game outside!)

Put the bottles on the floor in a mixed pattern of taller/shorter bottles, and put a ping pong ball on the top of each one. Paul says that we shouldn’t think that we are more important than other people, and think of ourselves as better than them. Some of these bottles think they are more important than the others – they are the taller ones. See if you can shoot them down!!

Talk together. How do you notice if someone thinks they are more important than others? How can you stay humble? What happens when everyone thinks others are more important than themselves?
7. Decorating a mirror

What do you need:
- a mirror tile for each child (you can buy these at DIY shops)
- pieces of cardboard cut out to 25 x 25 cm (for example from cardboard boxes)
- glue
- different sorts of dried pasta
- spray paint

1. First of all put the mirror in the middle of the cardboard square and draw around it. Cut out the middle square, trying to keep the edges as neat as possible.
2. Glue the cardboard frame on to another cardboard square.
3. Stick the pasta onto the frame – you can make all sorts of patterns with it.
4. Once the glue has dried, spray the frame with paint – do this outside on a newspaper.
5. Once the paint has dried you can stick the mirror in the middle.

Paul, who wrote this letter, said that we should try to imitate Jesus, to mirror what he did. When you look in a mirror, you often check if your hair’s looking alright. You might check that you’ve not got any food round your mouth, or a dirty nose. You want to check that everything’s ok. Paul says in his letter that if you want to live a good life, the best thing you can do is to look at Jesus and see how he lived and what he did.

People often take other people as an example. I want to be like him or her. Who is your example? Your parents, perhaps, or a pop star? Can someone be a bad example to follow? If you listen to what Paul says about Jesus, do you think he would be a good example?

8. Looking at Jesus – make two lists

In Philippians 2:1 – 11 Paul writes that we should take Jesus as our example and look to him.

What do you need:
- 2 A3 pieces of paper, and pens

Together with the children, make a list of what they see when they look at Jesus. Then make another list with the children of how Paul looks at Jesus in this part of Philippians 2.

What differences and similarities do the children notice in the two lists?
9. Jesus is number one

Philippians 2: 5 - 11

Read the above Bible text from the letter to the Philippians together. This is special! In the first few verses we read that Jesus humbled himself, and in the last few verses we can read that because of that, God exalted him, or raised him up. Even the angels look up to Jesus. Everyone knows – he is number one.

For older children – read verse nine again: ‘For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name.’ (Good news translation). For what reason? What did Jesus do?

If you could make a medal of honour for Jesus, what would it look like?

What do you need?
- self drying clay
- a plastic table cloth to keep the table clean
- pencils
- a rolling pin or empty wine bottle
- a round cutter (biscuit or scone cutter, or a glass, about 8 cm across)
- stamps and cocktail sticks to make shapes in the clay

It’s a good idea to have made some examples beforehand.

1. Take a piece of clay the size of a ping pong ball and put it on the table. Put a pencil on either side of the ball of clay and roll the clay out until the rolling pin reaches the pencils – in this way your clay will be evenly thick all over.

2. Using the cutter cut a round out of the clay.

3. Using a straw, make a hole in the clay about a centimetre from the edge. This is where the ribbon will be going through.

4. Decorate the medal by using stamps or cocktails sticks to make patterns. For children who can write, they can think about which word they would like to put on their medal; a word that describes Jesus.
10. Together we are one

Philippians 2: 1 – 2

Make a big painting together, consisting of lots of different small paintings. Paul tells the church in Philippi that they are one. They belong together. Read the text again carefully. What is it that binds the people in Philippi? Is that easy, do you think?

**What do you need?**
- For each participant you need a small canvas of 10 x 10 cm, paint and brushes, or wax crayons.

We’re going to make a painting of a meadow of flowers together. Everyone is going to paint their own flower, but the edges of your painting must blend seamlessly with the painting next to it.

Tip: write the name of each child lightly in pencil on the canvases, then put them all on the floor to make one big canvas. Then write on the four edges of the canvases the names of the children whose canvas borders on the other canvases. In this way the children will know who they have to work with to make sure that their paintings blend together.

Depending on the age of the children you could draw the shapes of the flowers that overlap two canvases. Then at the end you can put them back together, like a puzzle.

11. The parachute game

Paul writes in Philippians 2:2 that we have fellowship with and through the Spirit and urges us to be one in mind and spirit. What does it mean to be one? Does it mean that we should all be the same? Or is it actually a good thing that we’re different?

Put the children in a large circle and get them to all hold on to a large parachute. Practise raising and lowering the parachute together.

Raise the parachute and call out a word, for example ‘boys’. Now all the boys have to run underneath the parachute to the other side. Try to think of some things that only apply to one or two children, and others that apply to the whole group.

The point to illustrate in this game is that we can be very different to each other in some things and alike in others, but whether we’re alike or different, we can form one body, just as we are all holding the parachute.
12. Everyone is more important, and no one is more important than you

This activity consists of two parts.

Part 1:

Paul writes in Philippians 2:1-11 about the importance of unity. He warns the Christians in Philippi about the danger of considering themselves better than others, or boasting about themselves. In verses 3 and 4 he urges them not to look to their own interest, but to those of others, and value others above themselves.

What happens when someone else is more important than you?

Give each child a chocolate coin. Tell them they can hold on to it for a few seconds and that they have to then give it to someone who is more important than themselves. Because Paul says that we are to consider everyone as being more important, they won’t be able to hold on to their coin for long, because they must always give it away to someone else. No one is allowed to hold on to their coin for long, but that doesn’t matter, because they should get a coin from someone else. What happens is a chain of giving.

Part 2:

What happens if you consider yourself the most important?

Give each child a chocolate coin. This time, tell the children that they should consider themselves to be the most important for the moment. Tell them they can hold their coin for a few minutes and then give it on to someone who is more important than themselves.

What happens?

Everyone holds on to their own coin.

So what’s the difference between the first and second game? The end result will probably be the same; everyone ends up with a coin. But in the first game there was a whole chain of giving and receiving. In the second game nothing happened.