

30 - 45 MINUTE EXERCISE - BLESSING

Please note, that this exercise will work best with older children, and you must also feel confident that it is safe for them to act sensibly around long lengths of rope.

If you do not feel confident, then this activity is not advised, though it can be done with string or jute ribbon on a much smaller scale or individually.

Introduce the session by relating it to what you do as your weekly practice. However, the order this time will be to start with roots, then moving to shoots and fruit.

For this to work, if done as suggested, you will need to buy a large quantity of rope. This is not as expensive as one might imagine and cheaprope.co.uk offer some very reasonable prices. For aesthetic purposes sisal, manila or hemp rope would be best, with sisal being the cheapest at around £60 for 220 meters of 10mm width rope.

You need:

- 9 or 12 lengths of 10 meter long thick (10mm or more) rope. The number of groups you have need to be in multiples of 3 if possible so that they can plait the ropes together.
- A photo or the name of each child printed on paper
- Sheets of A4 (at least a dozen)
- Pencils and colouring pens/pencils
- Big leaves cut out of green paper, enough for one per child.
- A large bowl of fruit, enough for every child to have a piece.
- A tall stepladder and camera/phone for taking a photo at the end.
- A large space in which to operate, i.e., church or village or school hall. It can be done outside in good weather.
- The children will need to be taught to plait before the session.

1. Each child is placed in a small group of 2-4 children and each group is given a long length of rope.
2. The children are then asked to form a semi-circle at one end of the space. This will be where the roots start so make sure that there is room for a trunk and branches to emerge. Tie loose knots at the $\frac{1}{3}$ point and the $\frac{2}{3}$ point of the gathered rope, so that the three sections are equally divided.
3. Starting at the left end, they plait their group's rope with the two groups to their right, and so on until all ropes are plaiting. Each group should leave 1 metre of their rope unplaited first, so that the roots start thin and then become wider.
4. The groups of three plait together to form the trunk. If you have four groups meeting, the teacher/TA/parish volunteer will need to know how to plait with four strands.
5. Having made the trunk, separate again into 3 or 4 groups for the thick arms of the tree and then eventually back to the original single ropes for the smaller branches.

6. Having made the tree, take the children back to the roots and ask them to sit in their groups again. Ask each group to write on a sheet of A4 what the needs of the world are and place them under their roots. These may be needs personally, locally, regionally, nationally, or globally. Encourage the children to share what they have written down.
7. Ask the children to gather round the trunk and hand them the pictures of themselves or ask them to draw one if you have time. We are going to think now about how each pupil can be part of the trunk which is growing for good. How could each of them try to meet the needs which they have just expressed, so that world can grow and flourish? Ask them to write their contribution on the back of their photo or self-portrait and leave the picture next to the trunk.
8. Then ask the children to move up to the branches back into their groups of three. Give each of them a cut-out leaf and ask them to imagine what the world would be like if each of them met the need in the way they suggested at the trunk. Ask them to write it on the leaf.
9. Each child should pick up a piece of fruit and place it next to their leaf.
10. You can introduce the nine fruits of the spirit at this point from Galatians 5; 22-23, namely love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Place the name of each fruit of the spirit under the actual fruit, particularly where you see similarities.
11. End with an invitational prayer.