Faith Adventures for Children Together

Committed to URC Children Together: enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus together in the home, church and beyond.

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link: https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf

Psalm 90

Theme: If God is for us, who can be against us?

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning? – lorraine

This is one of the Psalms of David and we know that it was written at a time when the psalmist was definitely under threat – King Saul is looking for David and intends to kill him or have him killed. And yet David is confident that the Lord will protect him and watch over him, he need not be afraid of anyone. This is the man who was a shepherd boy, who protected the sheep from lions and wolves, and who fought the giant Goliath using only a slingshot and stones. But now he is on the run.

Later in the psalm he asks God to punish those who are threatening him. We know, through Jesus, that this is not how God works, but David has never heard the teachings of Jesus and is speaking from his own emotions and experiences. We also know from experience that, even when we trust in God, sometimes our feelings and our bodies can be hurt by other people. But God can fill us with strength and courage and helps us not to be afraid (while not taking foolish risks, however, as we have discussed previously). Nobody can break that bond with God – apart from us – and God will always take care of us, even taking us to be with God in heaven. So individually we are weak but if we trust in God we will be strong.

Trigger warning – if you have refugee children or children who have experienced abuse or violence in your group, they may have first hand experience of threat from others and fear (or actual experience) or being hurt. Be prepared to listen to their story or to provide a safe place to seek comfort and support if needed. Refer to and follow your church's safeguarding policy and procedures in case of disclosures.

Together

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend
(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today
(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,
(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,
(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,
(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,
(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family
(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN
(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.
Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.
Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,
Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.
Amen

In-person game - Blindfold car drive

For this game, everyone needs to be in pairs. One partner stands behind the other, with their hands on their partner's shoulders. The front partner closes their eye or uses an eye-mask or blindfold so that they cannot see where they are going. Pairs should be spread out around the room and told that the important thing is that they must avoid bumping into anyone else or into walls or furniture.

Whenever the leader calls out "First gear", the pairs start to walk around the room, the partner at the back 'steering' the person who cannot see. Whenever the leader calls out "Second gear", the pairs walk faster (still not running – we don't want any crashes!) Whenever the leader calls out "Reverse", the pairs have to walk backwards. And whenever the leader calls out "Emergency Stop", the pairs have immediately to stand still.

The game can be adapted so that pairs who crash are immediately out if you are concerned about safety. It can also be adapted so that the last pair to stand still for an emergency stop are out.

Alternative game - Water Bomb roulette

This is a game about being brave, and a little bit about trusting your partner. It is an outdoor game. You will need a water bomb per person. Everyone needs a partner. Form two lines, about arm's length apart, each person facing their partner. Each player throws the water bomb to their partner and (hopefully) catches the water bomb that their partner throws to them. If they are unsuccessful and one of the water bombs bursts, the pair sit down and are out. If they are successful and each catch the water bomb without it bursting, they both take one step back so that they are further apart next time. The winner are the pair who are able to keep the exchange of water bombs going over the longest distance without bursting them.

Experience

For this story we recommend using the EasyEnglish Bible
https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+56%3A3-4&version=EASY

Where can I find the story online?
Under fives: When I am afraid, I put my trust in you- A bible story for kids by Bible Wonders for Kids **https://youtu.be/kKRpNl3g4UU?si=dOpAgAf0E7gpDAyl**
Over fives: Psalm 56:3-4. By We Are The Clay **https://youtu.be/e8t54-sdywo?si=KhXOjENFOHNUf7g5**

Songs to support the story
Under fives: Brave by Saddleback Kids
https://youtu.be/s_LQ8pytZJU?si=8D85UnidoJlOwUFf
Over fives: Strong and Courageous by Justin Graves Band
https://youtu.be/t34ajxa7TCI?si=OpqfiUui6Y3WAzoP

Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the passage

There are lots of things we trust in life but don't really understand, maybe can't even see.

Here are a couple of examples:

- When I click 'send' on an email or message, I trust that it will somehow go to the person I sent it to and they will be able to see it.
- When I press the switch on the wall, I trust that the light will come on.
- When I put my foot in my boot, I trust there won't be a crocodile in there…. Ok, I trust there won't be a spider in there.
- When I do something wrong, I trust my family will still love me.

Can you think of other things we trust but don't understand? Can you make (and maybe illustrate) some examples of "when I…… I trust that….." sentences?

I wonder, how can we trust God when we can't see God?

Think together of examples you know of where God has proven trustworthy. These might be Bible stories you remember or examples from personal experience or things people have told you. Share stories of when knowing someone was there helped you feel braver – e.g. when you went to toddler group, you could go and play with other children because you knew your trusted adult was there; when you did your music exam, you felt brave because you knew everyone was thinking of you and wishing you success.

There may be a member of your congregation who would like to come and talk to the group about times when they have trusted God and it has helped them to be brave in a difficult situation.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.

'Don't Be Afraid Little Ones' by M Christina Butler and Caroline Pedler

https://youtu.be/GK4y1rldiag?si=1eCi1ZntiB7-oBrg

Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- What do you think the psalmist means when they say people can't hurt us?
- Do you find it hard to trust people? What makes it harder or easier?
- How can we share with God when we're feeling hurt or afraid?
- I wonder what it means for God to have our back?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder who you trust most to keep you safe? Who helps you feel brave?
- I wonder if God has ever helped you feel brave?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- A padlock – talk to the children about keeping things safe, a lock keeps things safe, just as God is with us and keeps us safe.
- A rainbow – God has promised to keep us safe.
- A hugging heart – God is always with us so we do not need to be afraid.
- A blanket or soft toy – Talk to the children about what helps them when they are afraid.
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc

Express

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Doughnut Prayers

In the passage this week, God is like our lifeline, or a lifebelt or lifejacket, that can offer us protection if we get into difficulties. God is always there for us and just knowing God's around can help us feel braver and safer.

Have you ever noticed that a ring doughnut is the same shape as a lifebelt. Doughnuts can remind us: if you need God's help and courage, *donut* forget to pray!

You need a ring doughnut for this prayer. (Asda sell gluten free doughnuts in their frozen section)

Hold the doughnut for a moment and look at it. Remember that God is your protector.

Thank you – silently or out loud thank God for always being there, then take your first small bite of the doughnut.

Sorry – silently or out loud say sorry to God for the times you forget or find it difficult to trust God. Can you think of any times that's happened recently? Take another small bite of the doughnut.

Please – silently or out loud ask God to help you to be brave. Maybe you have a particular thing that you want to pray about or maybe it's just in general. Ask God to help you to trust in God's protection. Take a third small bite of the doughnut.

Amen – pop the last bit of the doughnut in your mouth and enjoy the feeling that God wants all good things for you.

Spoken prayer

Invite the group to share things that frighten them: e.g. spiders, snakes, balloons, loud noises

Loving God, whom we trust, give us courage

There are many things that frighten us.

Some of the things that frighten us can hurt us, too.

We know that we have to be sensible when there is danger around us.

Give us the courage to face the danger if it is safe to do so.

And the courage to turn away if it is not.

Loving God, whom we trust, give us courage. Amen

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond. https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Lifesavers

You will need:
Ring doughnuts (could be larger ones this time!)
Writing icing
Fondant icing
Jam or chocolate spread
Cake decorations and small sweets

In our prayers, we thought of God being like a lifebelt – a source of reassurance and protection – and we used doughnuts to remind us of that because they are similar in shape.

This is a fun activity to reinforce that message. Using one ring doughnut each, use the available icing and decorations to decorate your doughnut. Maybe you could write on it "God saves" or "Trust God" or something similar amongst the other decorations.

Trust experiments
We sometimes have to trust what people say or what we read. Here are two experiments that children can do which rely on them trusting others to be telling them the truth.

You will need:

- A balloon
- Sticky tape (especially if you can get clear tape)
- A needle or pin

What you do:

Inflate the balloon fully and tie the neck so that it stays fully inflated. Cut a piece of sticky tape and place it flat on the outside of the balloon. Now take a second piece of tape and place it across the first to form a cross shape. Now take a needle or pin. Normally if you stick a needle or pin in a balloon, the balloon will pop with a loud bang. Would you believe you can stick the needle/pin in the balloon through the sticky tape and it will not burst? (It will, eventually, so you need to make sure you clear it away before that happens if you have any children who are frightened by balloons)

You will need:

- A glass
- Water
- Thick card (big enough to completely cover the top of the glass)
- A safe place to do the experiment – over a sink or large bowl or outside

What you do:

Fill a glass to the brim with water and place a piece of thick card to completely cover the top. Turn the beaker/glass upside down, keeping the piece of card in place with your hand. (You could do this over someone else's head if they're feeling really brave!) Now move your hand away. Believe it or not, the piece of card should stay in place and the water remain in the beaker/glass.

In both cases something unseen is stopping the disaster happening. In the first case the clear tape is reinforcing the skin of the balloon and considerably slowing down the expansion of the hole made by the needle, which is what makes the balloon pop. In the second case, it is the air pressure under the glass which is holding the card in place.

We may not be able to see God, but we can trust God.

Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- There is a prayer that many Christians use called the Serenity Prayer. Serenity is about being calm and peaceful and not worrying about things. See if you can find out the words of the Serenity Prayer and write them down somewhere you can read them every day or even see if you can learn them off by heart.
- We have been thinking about trusting in God and not being afraid, even when things are tough. Can you do something that is a bit outside your comfort zone this week?

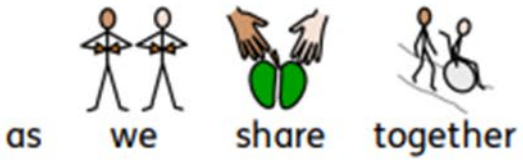
We hope you enjoyed exploring **Psalm 56** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing **lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk**

Why not have a look at next month's resource on **God is….**

Jesus our friend,

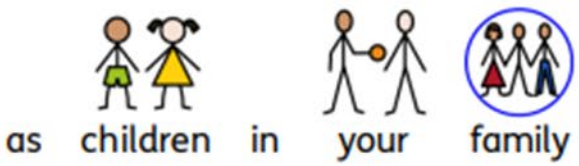
be with us today


as we share together

pray together

play together

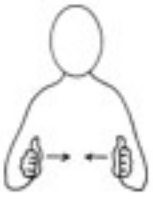
and get to know you better


as children in your family

Amen

Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand

Alternate hands back and forth



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