



Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*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: www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet

Isaiah 40:11

Theme: Strong yet gentle

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

We are continuing our exploration of 'Fruits of The Spirit' by looking at Gentleness.

While there are many examples in the Old Testament of God being anything BUT gentle, the passage we are using from Isaiah introduces the idea of God being a good shepherd – a phrase echoed in Psalm 23 and one that we more commonly associate with Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus resets our relationship with, and understanding of, God and this passage sows the seeds for that to happen.

Your group might want to think about the ways in which gentleness is different from kindness and compassion – two of the other fruits of the Spirit we have explored in this series. One way might be to think about what the opposite of 'gentle' is.

It is possible that some members of the group will not have experienced gentleness at home but may have come across it at school or with grandparents.

Be aware, also, of children who find being gentle a challenge.

Together – prayer and games

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

Active game – Catch me if you can

“He will gather the lambs together and carry them in his arms”

You will need:

- tennis balls
- beanbags
- cuddle toys

What you do:

Ask for a volunteer to start. The volunteer stands in the centre of the circle. Other participants are given an item to throw gently to the volunteer. They take it in turns to throw their items – not all at once! The volunteer must catch, and hold in their arms, as many as they can. Once they drop an item, or their arms are full, the game is over and another volunteer can have a go.

Quieter game – Gently does it

You will need Jenga/Buckaroo/Kerplunk/Operation or similar game which requires you to be gentle to complete the game. Have some fun playing together drawing out the fact that we need to approach things with gentleness, that being heavy handed has consequences.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the Good News Translation

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2040%3A11&version=GNT>

Where can I find the story online?

Under-fives: A song version of the passage for toddlers, by Daily Music

<https://youtu.be/aBell4G70Hs?si=lyTyCFiPmz5MHKxU>

Five-to-elevens: A bedtime song based on the passage, by Youngsters Paradise

<https://youtu.be/QQCNUAnzQo8?si=MRBe2U3cyuP8b61o>

Songs to support the story

Under-fives: Oh, my shepherd, by Jana and Ron Alyara

<https://youtu.be/m6eJXXSpNvk?si=DMgb8BgebBxHwlxw>

Five-to-elevens: Lead on Good Shepherd (Patrick Mayberry), by Arrowhead Church, Morristown <https://youtu.be/tCMY7aHWCxg?si=Wz4-em47x5xsvBWZ>

Explore – ways into the theme

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

A new way to explore the theme

A Reflective Story on Gentleness

You will need:

- a piece of green cloth for the pasture
- a small shepherd figure
- several sheep figures (you could use cotton wool balls for sheep if you do not have figures)
- one small lamb
- one larger sheep to represent the mother sheep

- a strip of brown cloth for the path
- a small stone or block for a hill

(Lay out the green cloth slowly and carefully.)

Once there was a kind shepherd. *(Place the shepherd on the cloth.)*

The shepherd looked after many sheep. *(Place the sheep around the shepherd.)*

Some sheep were big and strong.

Some sheep were quick on their feet.

Some sheep knew the way along the path.

But one little lamb was feeling very tired. *(Place the lamb slightly apart from the others.)*

Maybe the lamb was very little.

Maybe the path felt very long.

Maybe the lamb felt a little scared.

Perhaps it had wandered too far from its mother. *(Move the mother sheep a little distance away.)*

The shepherd saw the little lamb. *(Slowly move the shepherd towards the lamb.)*

The shepherd did not shout.

The shepherd did not hurry the lamb.

The shepherd did not say, "Come on, hurry up."

Instead... *(Pause. Lift the lamb gently and place it in the shepherd's arms.)*

...the shepherd picked up the lamb and held it close to his heart.

The flock kept walking. *(Move the shepherd and sheep slowly along the path.)*

Slowly.

Carefully.

So gently.

The shepherd walked slowly enough for the lamb.

Carefully enough for the lamb.

Gently enough for the lamb.

And after a while... *(Move the shepherd towards the mother sheep.)*

...the shepherd brought the lamb safely back to its mother. *(Place the lamb beside the mother sheep.)*

The mother sheep stayed close.

The little lamb was safe and loved.

(Pause quietly.)

This reminds me of words from the prophet Isaiah:

"The Shepherd tends their flock;

they gather the lambs in their arms

and carries them close to their heart;

the shepherd gently leads them back to their mothers"

(Pause.)

Sometimes people think being strong means being loud.

Sometimes people think being strong means rushing ahead.

But the shepherd shows us a different kind of strength.

Real strength can be gentle.

We can show gentleness in our actions,

in our words,

and even in the way we think about other people.

(Open hands slowly.)

(Touch fingers lightly to lips.)

(Place a hand over your heart.)

And when we are gentle with others,
we help them feel safe and cared for too.

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. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).



Gently Bentley! by Caragh Buxton (2018: Child's Play (International) Ltd)

https://youtu.be/Bs4TMvmtYAc?si=_UNRE8haWZD-THf4

The story demonstrates that even an excitable five-year-old rhino like Bentley Brown can be gentle. He gets into all sorts of mischief but, despite all this, Bentley manages to be gentle with the new baby.

- I wonder when we have needed to be gentle with someone small, young, or needing care.
- I wonder if being gentle can sometimes be the strongest thing to do.

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

- Who is the passage talking about?
- Why does it talk about shepherds, not doctors?
- What does this passage tell you about God?
- What's the difference between kindness and gentleness?
- Why list both kindness *and* gentleness as separate Fruits of the Spirit?

Wondering: ways to reflect on the theme

- Can you be strong and gentle?
- Is gentle the same as weak?
- How can you show you're being gentle?
- What's the opposite of gentle?

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). 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:

- An egg – look at this egg, we have to be careful with it. It can break easily but it is very strong and keeps the contents safe.
- A teddy – I wonder how we care for this teddy; how can we show gentleness?
- A plant – this plant is very strong. It stands up tall but we have to be gentle with it because it could break easily.
- An image of some hands – when do we need gentle hands and not rough (in action not feeling) hands?
- 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)
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Prayerful activity

Egg Prayer

Hold the egg in your hands. See how fragile it is.

God, we are small and fragile. Thank you that you hold us safe in your hands.

Hold the egg at either end between your thumb and finger and gently press. The egg should not break.

God, you are strong – nothing can destroy you. But you are gentle with us.

Hold the egg in your palms. Cover the egg fully.

Thank you that you hold us gently in your hands.

Amen

Spoken prayer

Under-fives

Gentle God,
help us to be gentle every day.
Gentle with our hands, (wave your hands)
gentle with our words, (gently stamp your feet)
gentle with our friends. (Touch your own fingertips together)

Thank you that you hold us close, (hug yourself)
like a shepherd carrying little lambs. (like hugging a baby)
Help us to show your love today. (make a heart)
Amen

Five-to-elevens

Gentle God,
thank you that you care for us
like a shepherd cares for sheep.
(Stretch arms out wide like a shepherd gathering sheep.)

Help us to be gentle with others today.
(Make soft hands.)

When someone is sad,
help us to be kind.
(Put hands on heart.)

When someone is lonely,
help us to include them.
(Motion someone to come closer.)

When we are angry or upset,
help us to speak calmly and kindly.
(Take a deep breath.)

Thank you that you hold us close
and never let us go.
(Give yourself a gentle hug.)

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.

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.

Gentle initials

You will need:

- biscuits
- icing
- hundreds and thousands
- letter stencils

What you do:

Ice a biscuit and then carefully try to make your initial using hundreds and thousands. It's important to take time and be very gentle to achieve this.

Now try making an initial with a stencil. Is it easier or harder when we're not being gentle and taking our time?



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:

- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you a time when they acted gently towards someone else.
- Find ways to be gentle this week

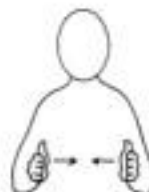
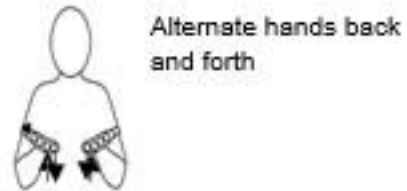
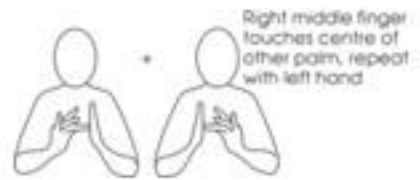
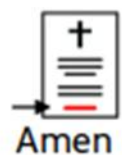
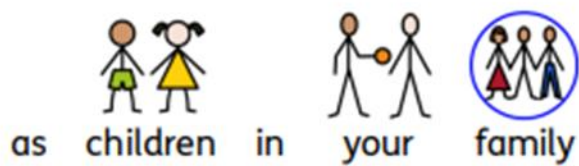
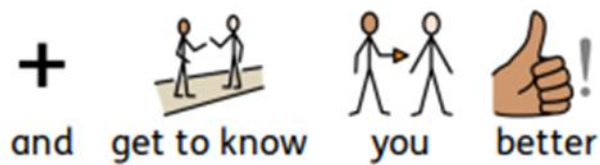
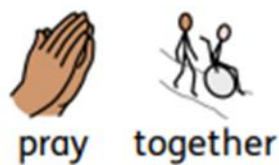
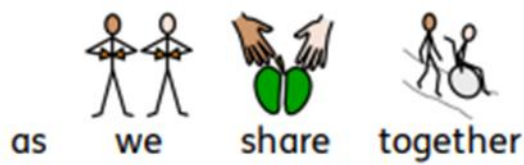
We hope you enjoyed exploring the theme of **Gentleness** with us.

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

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group **bit.ly/FACT_FB**

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Faithfulness**






The Lord's Prayer

 Our  Father,  who art  in  heaven,  hallowed be  thy  name.

 Thy  kingdom  come,  thy  will  be done





 on  earth  as it is  in  heaven.

 Give  us  this day  our  daily  bread

 and  forgive  us  our  sins  As  we  forgive  those  who  sin  against  us

 Lead  us  not  into  temptation  but  deliver  us  from  evil

 For  thine  is the  kingdom,  the  power  and  the  glory

 For ever  and  ever  . Amen

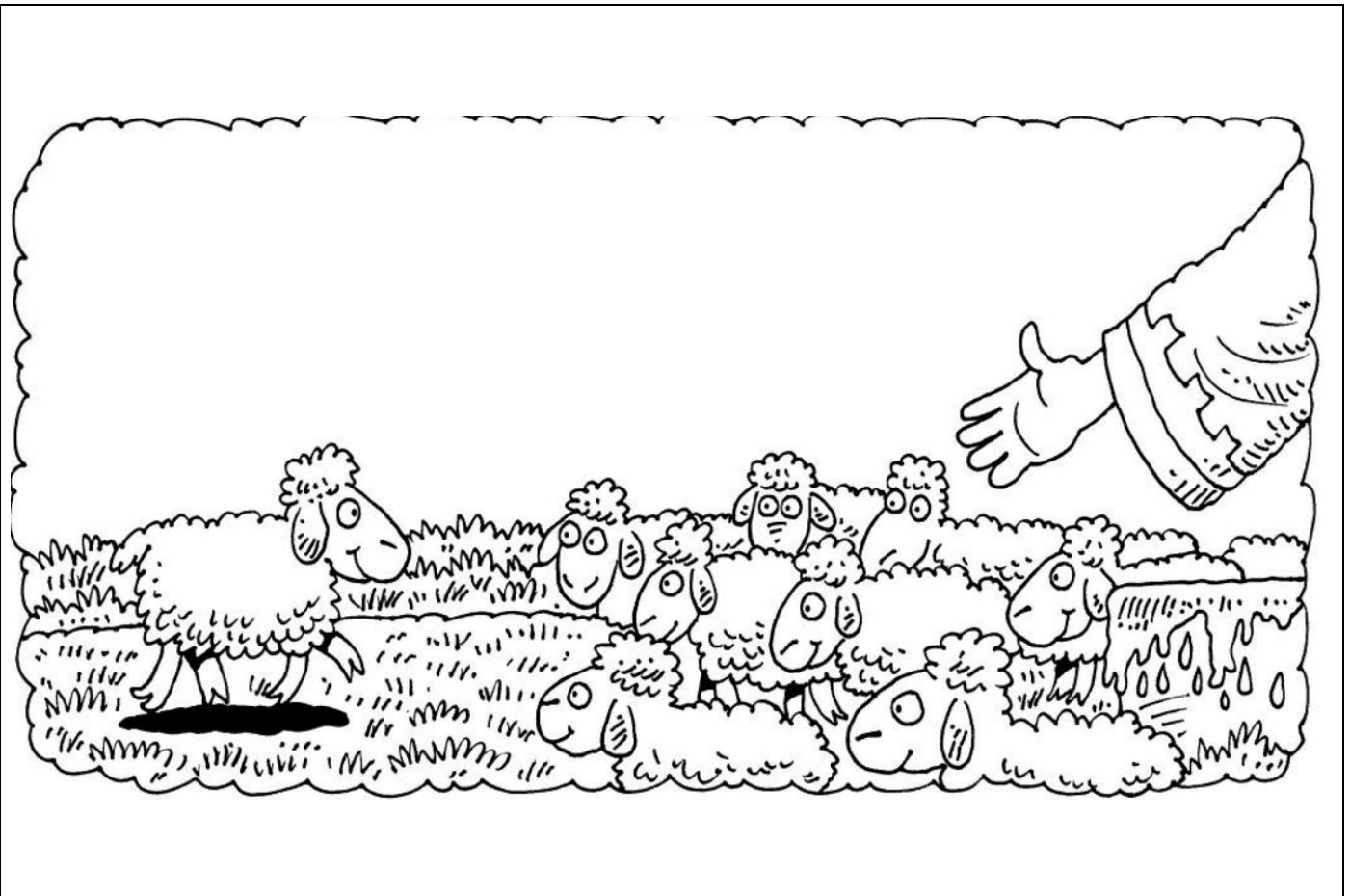


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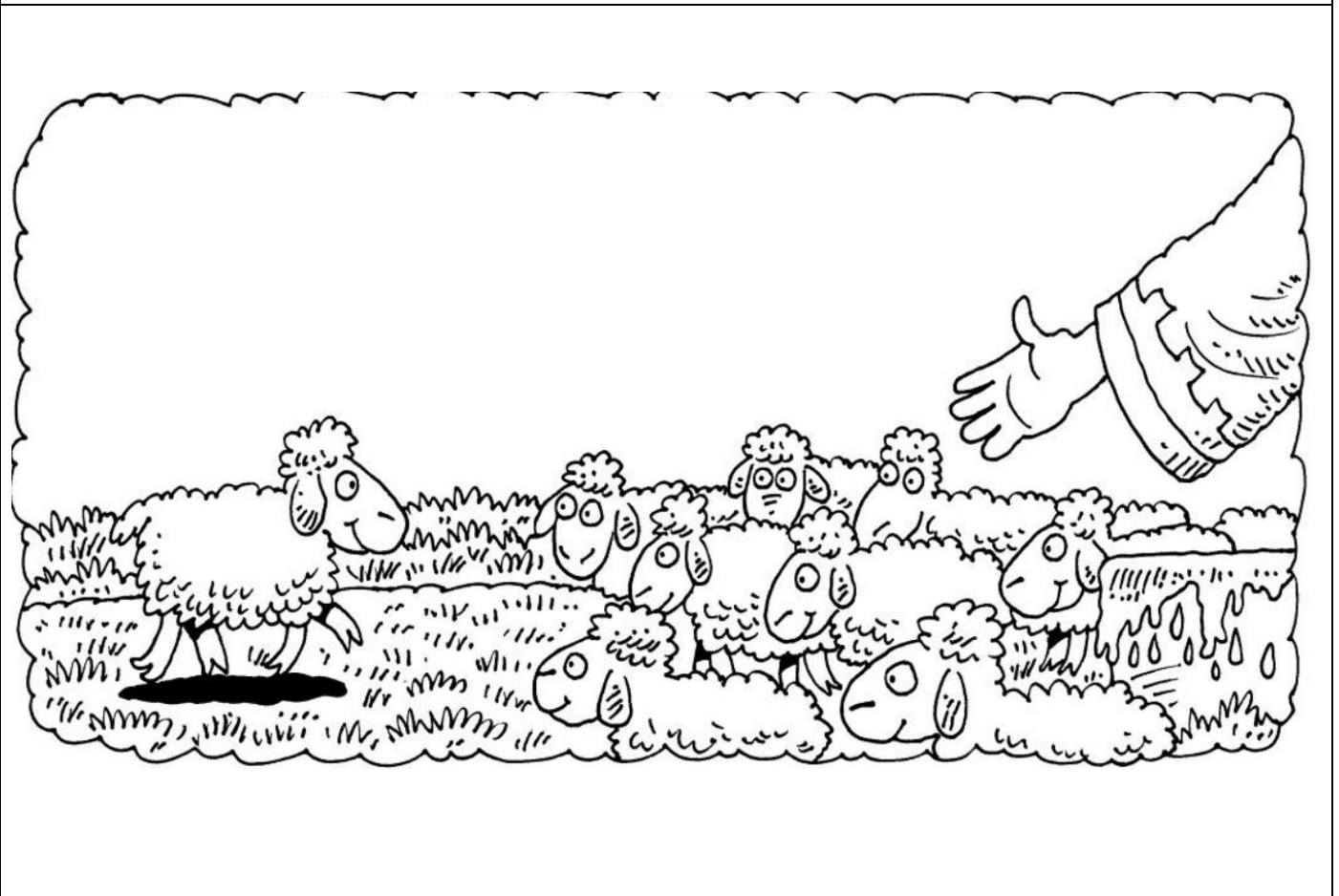


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