



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>

John 1: 1-5, 14, 16-18 The Word is God

Theme: Grace is the word – God in Jesus brought us grace which changes everything

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

This passage, although one that is familiar to many people, is still confusing. It is the sort of passage that we sometimes find in the Bible that we brush over and hope nobody asks us to explain – because we find it difficult!

‘The Word’ can mean many different things – and it all depends on context. We talk about Ministers of Word and Sacraments, we talk of the scriptures as being ‘the word of God’ and, in this passage, we seem to have John describing Jesus, the Son of God, as ‘The Word’.

It’s confusing. It confuses us – so it’s probably going to confuse your group, too. It’s important to allow your group to say they don’t understand and to admit that we are confused, too. It is an opportunity for us to not have all the answers and invite the group to go on a journey of discovery together.

If, at the end of the session, everyone is still a bit confused – that’s fine, too!

Is this an Advent/Christmas reading? It is often used as such but, in truth, it’s a session you can keep for any time of the year. There are echoes of the creation stories when God talked things into existing (God SAID let there be light...)

We are focusing on the concept of Grace. Grace is something that is given without it necessarily being deserved. It is a gift that is given to everyone. The birth of Jesus, of God coming and living alongside us, amongst us, one of us, is a gift of Grace.



It redefines our relationship with God, and Jesus allows us to understand God differently. We can realise that we no longer need to earn God's love – God has, and will, always love us. Grace, indeed.

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 – Stuck in the Mud

This week's passage is about grace so let's play a game which involves people who would normally be "out" in a game being kept in because someone "saves" them. Stuck in the Mud is similar to tick/tag/it. One person is designated the catcher who tries to tag (touch) the other players who are all running around trying to avoid being caught. Once the catcher touches another player on the arm, shoulder or back, that player is 'stuck in the mud' and has to stand still, with legs apart and arms wide. They can no longer play until another player comes and either crawls between their legs or ducks under their arms and runs in a complete circle around them, after which both players are free to run around as before. Obviously this second player is running the risk of being touched by the catcher while they are doing it, but the aim is to keep as few people 'stuck in the mud' as possible.



Alternative game – Snakes and Ladders with Grace

I wonder how easy we find it to show grace to one another? Play a game such as snakes and ladders, but introduce a new rule. Opponents in the game can choose whether to let you off any forfeits – perhaps you don't have to go down the snake, or can even go up a snake if you land on its tail. It all depends on how generous the opponent is feeling. Can you let your opponent win?

Experience

For this story we recommend using Contemporary English Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A+1-5%2C+14%2C+16-18++&version=CEV>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: The Light, The Truth and The Way - a John 1:1-5 Children's Message

<https://youtu.be/ldKF3svrPTk>

Over fives: The Gospel Project for Kids: Christmas (John 1)

<https://youtu.be/qzEa81HYfKY>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: In the Beginning (John 1:1-5)

<https://youtu.be/2WwoFFJKo4w?t=67>

Five to eevens: Memory Verse Song – John 1:1-3

<https://youtu.be/x6gkcMPmio8?t=27>

Explore

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

A new way to explore the passage

Use a big printout of the passage – you may want a few copies depending on the size of your group. Lay the passage on a table top so that everyone can see it. Make sure there is space in the margins for drawing and between the lines for annotation.

As you wonder about the passage, talk about the connections you can make. What are the bits that you like the best? The bits you maybe don't understand? Are there any bits we could miss out altogether and still have enough of the story?

Write, draw or colour on the sheet to identify the things which stand out to you most.

Maybe highlight words you like in yellow. What do you like about them?

Does anything surprise you? Draw a surprised emoji by it. Why is it surprising?



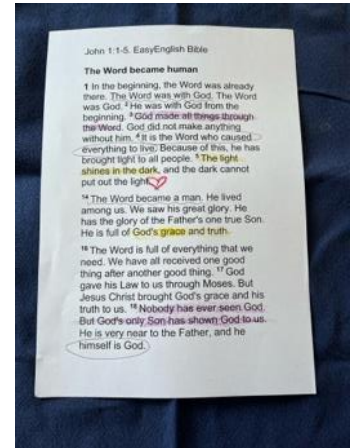
Circle anything you do not understand. How could you find out more? Do any of your group have a different understanding than you?

Underline things you think are important or mark them with an exclamation mark.

Highlight in pink any part that you may want to remember.

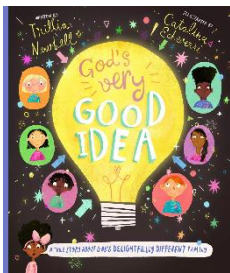
Draw heart shapes next to words which you want to keep in your heart.

If you have any other thoughts which come to mind when reading or hearing this passage, draw them in the margin or write/design words to remind you. Share your thoughts with each other or just quietly with God.



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.



God's very Good Idea By Trillia Newbell
<https://youtu.be/tDnFFqwHYy8?t=69>

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

- If you were to choose one word to describe God/Jesus, what word would it be?
- Do you think God should punish people for the things they do wrong?
- What do you think grace means? What difference does grace make to us?
- I wonder how big God's grace is? Does it ever run out?
- I wonder how easy it is to show someone grace? I wonder how you might do that? I wonder why you might do that?
- I wonder if grace means God never gets angry?
- Does grace mean we can keep doing what we've always done and it doesn't matter?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if there's been a time when you've done something wrong or naughty or not very nice and someone's still been kind to you and shown you they still love you?
- I wonder if God's grace is for everyone? How do you think it goes round everyone?

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:

- Words – talk to the children about the fact that lots of words are repeated in this passage.
- Hearts – talk to the children about how this passage reflects God's love.
- A gift – grace is God's gift to us.
- A candle/ or torch – light is mentioned in this passage a lot, Jesus is the light of the world.
- An image of the world – talk to the children about creation and that God was there at the very beginning.
- 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!).
- 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 (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)

Express

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

Creative Prayer

The light keeps shining in the dark,
and darkness has never put it out. John 1:5

Jesus came into the world to be a light that can never be put out and is with us in the good and the bad times, the joyful and the sad times. God is always with us.

You will need: a card circle or two paper plates stuck together

Draw on one side of your card or plate a smiley face and on the other an unhappy face. First look at the happy face and encourage everyone to think about all the things you are thankful for, what has made you happy this week? Take some time to be quiet and encourage those who want to share their prayers out loud. Turn the plate over to the unhappy side and encourage everyone to think about things that they are sorry for. Give some time for quiet thoughts. Now turn the plate or card back to the happy face remembering that God is always with us and knows us and loves us. Join together in an Amen and then say a blessing.



The Lord bless you and keep you,
the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and give you his peace
Amen

How to sign the blessing in Makaton can be found here: https://youtu.be/vRXwEtx_d2Y



Spoken prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive us when we forget that –
among all our Christmas presents,
you are the gift.
among all our fun and laughter,
you are the word made human.
among all the anger and conflict,
you are the prince of peace.
among all our darkness,
you are the light of the World.
among every moment of our lives,
you are 'God with us'.
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.

Truffle candles holder

We have been celebrating Jesus's birthday, the coming of the light that burns in the dark places and the darkness cannot defeat it. This little truffle birthday cake can remind us of that light that came into our world at the very first Christmas, the light of God's love.

You will need:

- 450g madeira cake, coarsely broken
- 180g chocolate, chopped
- 300g (2 cups) icing sugar
- 2 1/2 tbsp boiling water
- 250g (1 cup) hundreds and thousands (or sprinkles of your choice)
- A cake case
- A food processor
- A birthday candle



What you do:

Put the madeira cake in a food processor until it looks like crumbs. (If you don't have a food processor you could do this by hand, but make sure the crumbs are really small)
Melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water, making sure the bowl doesn't actually touch the water, or with short bursts in a microwave. Stir until smooth.
Add the cake crumbs and stir to coat the mixture thoroughly in chocolate.



Roll level tablespoons of the mixture into balls, squeezing firmly as you roll. Place the hundreds and thousands on a plate and roll the balls in them until coated all over. Place the finished truffle in a case and push a candle firmly into the top. It would be particularly fun to use a candle that relights when you blow it out!

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:

- As we move towards the new year, stand a candle, a lantern, a light in a window to shine out into the darkness to remind everyone that the light that came at Christmas brings a hope that will never be defeated by the darkness.
 - Grace is undeserved – we don't earn it, it is ours even if we don't know it. This week, try to do a random act of kindness for someone else, someone who you don't know or someone who you don't even really get on with. Can you do it secretly so that they don't know who did it for them?
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We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **John Chapter 1** 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 resources on **The Bible** ?

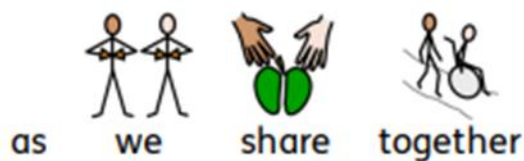




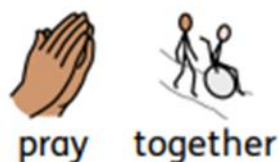
Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



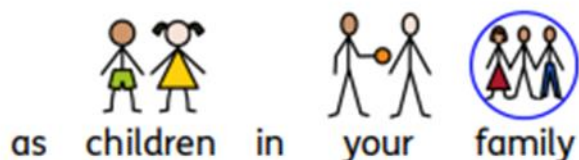
pray together



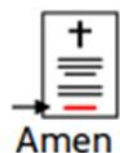
play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



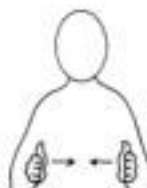
Amen



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

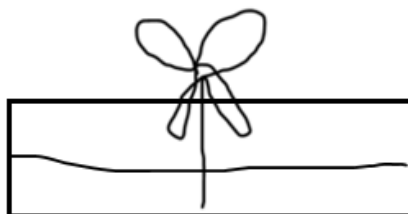
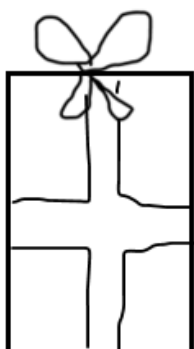


Alternate hands back and forth

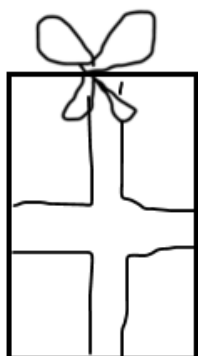


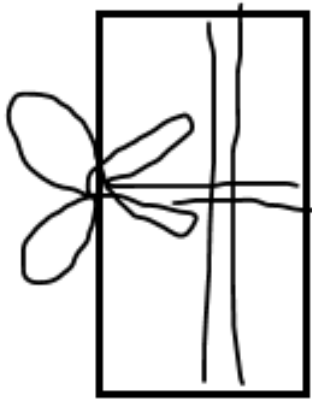


Grace



Grace





Grace

