



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 104: 5, 31

Theme: God loves their world.

Contents:

Introduction	1
Together	2
Experience	3
Explore	4
Express	6
Handouts	9

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

The theme for this week is 'God loves their world' and we will be exploring this using selected verses from Psalm 104. We could have used all of the psalm! It is a poem of thanks, praise and love to God for all they have created for us and it would be useful for you to read the whole psalm to put into context the verses on which we will be focusing.

The material will coincide with the week in which many people celebrate Valentine's Day and, through the activities and prayers, we will be looking at how thankfulness and praise is part of the language of love.

God loves the world that they made – and part of our response to the enduring love that God has for us is to love the world, and all that is in it, as well.

We would never turn our back on someone we love – and neither does God.



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 - Musical Statues

Psalm 104 verse 5: "You built the earth on its foundations, so it can never be moved." How good are we at not moving?

You will need:

- some music
- a clear space

Start playing the music. This is the signal for the players to start dancing. At random intervals, stop the music. This is the cue for the players to freeze in place. The person in charge walks around and observes the frozen players to make sure they're still and not moving. Any player who is caught moving is out of the game for the current round. Repeat the gameplay until only one player remains.



Alternatively when the music stops you could invite people to create a tableau of something that God created. (They could join together to create something). Possible examples: Mountain, bird, tree, ocean, cloud. Other groups (or the leaders) have to guess what the other groups/ singles are representing. Continue play until there is a winner/winners.

Alternative game – Jammie noses

A game just for fun.

You will need:

- A jar of jam (out of date would be best)
- A bag of cotton wool balls
- Plates

What you do:

Put the group into small teams (or individuals can race against each other). The teams sit at one end of your room. At the other end is a plate full of cotton wool balls for each team. The team has a plate of jam. The teams race in a relay by dipping their nose in jam and running to the cotton wool, use their jammie nose to pick up a cotton ball and run back. They then shake their head over a bowl to release the ball. If the ball falls off during the run, it doesn't count. Once played the groups might like to choose other body parts to use e.g. elbows, toes, fingers, chin etc.

Experience

For this story we recommend using the Children's International Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20104&version=ERV>

Where can I find the story online?

For under fives:

Psalm 104 – The Laughing Grandma

https://youtu.be/FWjlHaNQ2zg?si=MvWbZ4A_hNIVEVFh

For five to elevens:

Psalm 104 – Anne Witton

https://youtu.be/Mw45__TYdHg?si=8P_nAAs9WTsNFqLt

Songs to support the story

For under fives:

How countless (Psalm 104:24) – Lifeway Kids Worship

https://youtu.be/G5pyGyZTjWw?si=xyidE2Cl_Khy7G0L

For five to elevens:

Countless (Psalm 104) – Creek Kids

https://youtu.be/cADUEHCMIbk?si=9Ekt_tyNaMsShtWn



Explore

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

A new story to share

As we explore Psalm 104 today let's explore the natural world through our senses using **Sensio Divina**, this literally means 'Divine sensing'. It is a meditative way to connect and talk to God through nature, it is normally made up of four stages, the preparation; the sensing stage; the imagination stage, and the spiritual stage.

This can be done outside, or inside, and in any environment, urban or within a green space. You will be surprised what things you can see inside (i.e. wood, wool, spiders webs, maybe leaves blown in or even condensation on the windows).

You can use this script or adapt it.

Take the children to the chosen space and allow them to move around to explore at will.

Take time to do this and encourage the children to explore the space.

Take some deep breaths and be aware of your surroundings

Shrug your shoulders and wiggle your fingers and toes, shake your arms and your legs to let go of any tension in your body.

While we explore the space together, be aware of distractions but do not focus on them.

Go at your own speed and wonder about all the things you see as you move around the space.

Try and keep as quiet as possible. If you get the giggles, just try and let them go and keep the quietness.

Begin with looking at the whole space, be wondering, use all your senses. (*encourage them to look at the really big things around as well as the very small*)

What do you hear, see, smell, or touch in this space?

What are your first impressions?

Don't think about the detail you see here.

Give the children a few minutes to look around them

Now take time to really look at the detail in what you see.

Wonder about God who created this detail.

How does this make you feel?

Imagine how long it took to create what you see in this space.

Image the process of growing and how it connects together.

Focus on the detail of what you see, feel or hear.

Wonder about how this was created.



Be aware of the creator God and what God is saying to us through the things we are seeing.

What is God saying to us about how we look after creation?

How do you feel?

How do you respond?

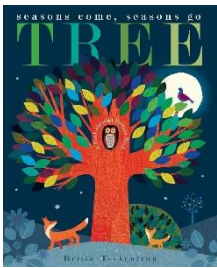
Take time to be in this space through all your senses.

Return to where you meet or stay where you are to wonder about the psalm and what you have seen during this meditation.

As a response to this see the "Respond" section of the resource, to create a picture collage using natural elements about what they have seen and how they respond to it.

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.



Tree by Britta Teckentrup

<https://youtu.be/T0D3xNIFnOI?si=ed6XUxR7HIHpWe1q>

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

- Do you think God would change or tweak anything?
- Did God make any mistakes? Is there anything God doesn't enjoy about creation?
- If the earth could talk what would it say?
- How can we show our love for creation?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder what God's favourite part of creation is?
- I wonder how creation praises God?
- I wonder what it looks like for God to enjoy the world?

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:

- Heart – talk about how God loves the creation they made



- Wet soil – talk together about the smell of the wet earth, that helps things to grow around us
- Fruit – let's taste that creation is good
- Sounds from a park <https://youtu.be/cJQQrI7nCeY?si=T3ADkEFjpF0eV3bc> – talk to the children about all the things we can hear in the world around us
- Seed pods – feel these seed pods, maybe we can shake them. These seeds will grow and become something new in God's creation
- A frame – if we place this frame down what things can we see within it, that God created
- 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 - Sensory praise

Gather together some sensory items that reflect nature. Try to include different textures, and if possible, smells and items to taste.

Here are some suggestions

- Some sticks or tree bark
- Something that is growing (snowdrops might be around at this time of year)
- Spring bulb
- Some seeds
- Pine cones
- Leaves
- Evergreen. spruce, pine scented greenery
- Fruit and vegetables
- Spices eg cinnamon
- Stones
- Sand
- Water

Place the items around the room. Encourage everyone to use all their senses looking, touching, smelling and tasting the items (where appropriate). Everything comes from God and is part of God's creation. Gather together to talk about the items they have been sensing and what they have been feeling and thinking. End by giving thanks for all of God's creation.

Spoken prayer

Praise God!

For mountains and oceans, a sky full of stars and golden sunshine:

Praise God for big things.

For insects, flowers and drops of rain:

Praise God small things.

For waves on the sea shore, stormy nights and heavy rain:

Praise God for loud things.

For a breath of wind, a gentle whisper:

Praise God for quiet things.

For elephants, and solid oak trees:



Praise God for strong things.
 For snowflakes and cobwebs:
 Praise God for fragile things.
 For butterflies wings, for hares and cheetahs:
 Praise God for fast things.
 For the growing trees and slugs and snails:
 Praise God for slow things.
 For my own heartbeat and the person sitting next to me:
 Praise God for close-by things.
 Thank you that you are big and strong but you show your love in gentleness.
 Thank you that, though you are loud as thunder, you speak to us in the silence.
 Thank you that, though you could be faster than the speed of light, you choose to walk at our
 pace and to hold our hand. **Amen** (Adapted From ROOTS for Churches)

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.

Nature Collage

You will need:

- Pieces of cardboard boxes
- Twigs, leaves, seeds
- Wool, pictures for magazines
- Glue and scissors



What you do:

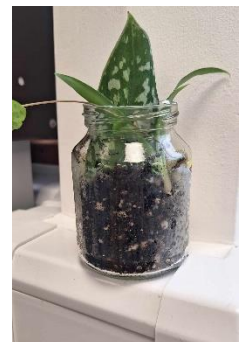
Using a piece of cardboard box as a canvas, create a collage using natural things, which reflects their response to the activity in explore. This may be what they saw or how they respond to God's creation.

Make a terrarium in a jar

A chance to think about the world we live in as we create a mini eco system in a jar. A terrarium is a miniature garden grown inside of a covered container. It's low maintenance and easy to make.

You will need:

- a clean and dry jam jar with lid for each child (or to make a group Terrarium a goldfish bowl), soil
- small gravel stones
- a collection of plants





What you do:

1. Choose which plants you want to put in your jar. They all need to be the same type of plant with the same type of requirements for example, Succulents make great plants for terrariums. If you use succulents you need all succulents. If you choose tropical plants, you need all tropicals.
2. Add 1 ½ inches of gravel stones in the bottom for drainage.
3. Fill the container about half full of soil. Make sure there's enough room for your plants on top.
4. Remove the plants from their pots and plant in the soil.
5. Add a few tablespoons of water to the soil.
6. You can add a few small decorations such as shells or beads if you'd like.
7. Replace lid.

The jar now sealed, will become its own ecosystem. When there is light and heat, water inside the terrarium evaporates through the soil. Since the environment is sealed, the water vapor hits the side of the container creating condensation. As it accumulates, it makes precipitation down the sides of the container back into the soil instead of evaporating into the air.

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:

- Make a list of questions you could use to find out a bit more about someone you don't know well, then use the list to get to know someone new, maybe someone at your church or in your school. **What do you love the most about the world?**
- Consider what you could do as a response to the things in the world you love, if it's your pets, you could play with them for an extra long time, if it's nature could you do something in your garden, if it's your family perhaps make them a meal/ snack and so on.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the **Psalm 104** with us.

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

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

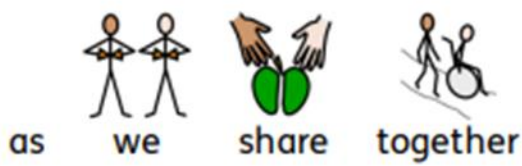




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



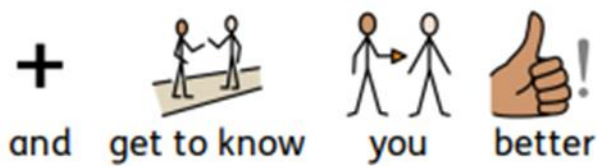
as we share together



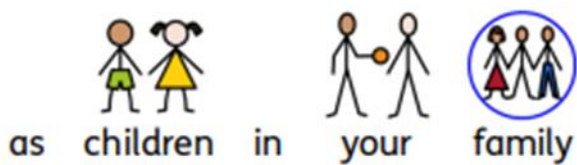
pray together



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



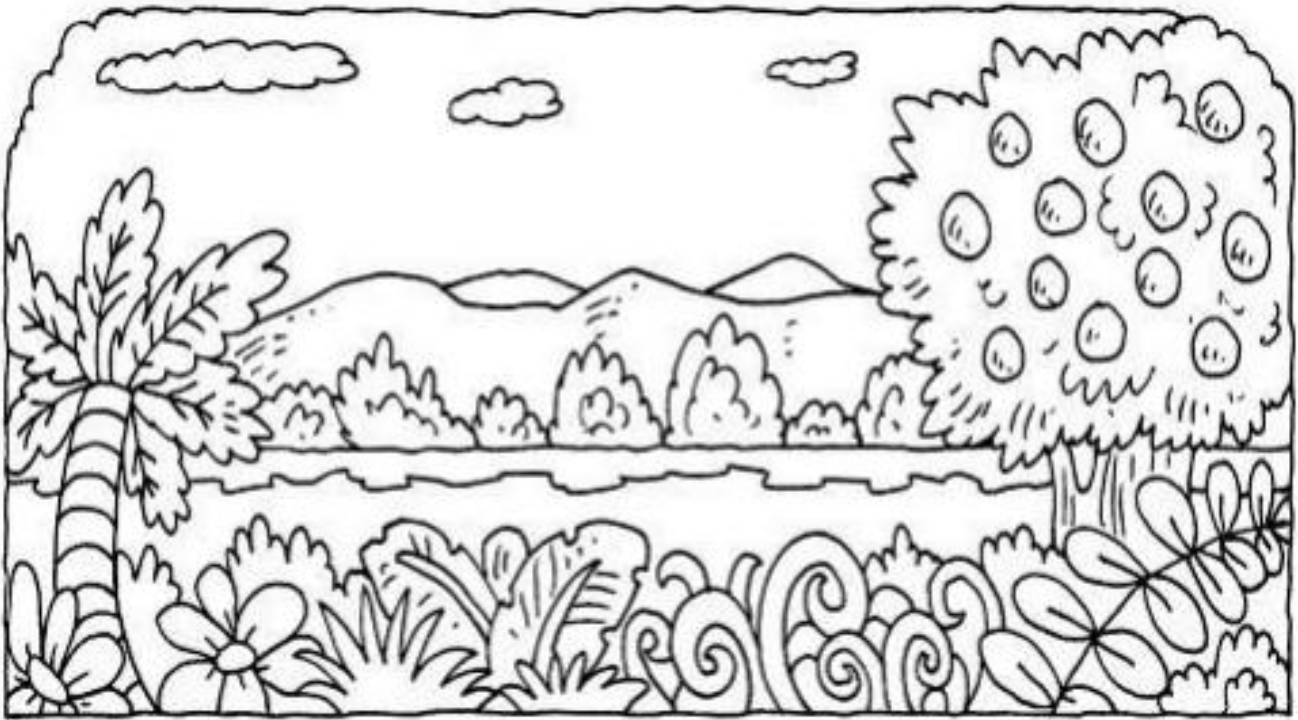


Illustration by lambsongs.co.nz via freebibleimages.com

