



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 139 – God made me and knows me

Theme: we have layers of identity and may each be very different to each other, but God knows and loves the inner us.

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

Psalm 139

This is a beautiful, yet in many ways challenging, psalm. It is a song of praise, written, it is believed, by David as he contemplates the awesomeness of God and the degree of involvement of God in his very being and existence, since before he was even conceived. It reminds us that God is everywhere and knows all things – simultaneously a reassuring and a somewhat intimidating thought.

Some children (and adults) may wrestle with this psalm and you need to be aware of and prepared for this. There are children, young people and adults who may not be happy with the way they formed in the womb or have developed since. It can be a challenge to consider that God knew this, and was involved in creating them just as they are, when they themselves feel at odds with their body, mind, spirit or the life they were born into. Consider children (and adults) who have a physical or intellectual disability or difference, who have body image issues, who have genetic uncertainty or inherited features, who have poor mental health, who are unable to live with their birth parents, who may not identify with the gender they were born with or the assumptions people make about their gender or sexuality or identity. No matter what your feelings about their situation, any sense of 'not being comfortable in their own skin' will make this a challenging psalm and a challenging session.



Allow children to be unique and unhindered in what they do and say in this session, though obviously not where this is hurtful or harmful to others. Let them feel free to explore wherever this psalm takes them. This may be challenging to you as a leader, but that's OK – you may learn and grow through it too.

Explore the idea that our identity is formed through several layers – things like race and gender, for example, are individual layers, together with character, environment, likes and dislikes, etc. But God is the only one who knows who we are when all those layers are peeled away – our soul, the actual 'us'. We all have a spiritual core which is of God.

Almost all children and young people, and most adults too, will have something about them that they wish was different, but each one of us has a value to God just as we are.

There is a saying that God doesn't make mistakes. How do you see God's positive in things that children or their families see as negative. Society tries to drum out of children characteristics like being gobby, anti-authority etc (and the church can be particularly guilty of this) but these could prove to be positives in the things God may ask them to do later such as speaking out against injustice etc. Can you help children discern what God particularly loves about them?

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 - Person Bingo

Everyone needs a bingo sheet and a pencil. Everyone then should mingle and find one person to match each of the traits on the bingo sheet. Get that person to sign the relevant box. The aim is to try find someone different for each box (or at least a signature from everyone in the group) if you can. There is a free box for someone who doesn't match any box already filled in. Highlight the fact that we are all different and that these things are to be celebrated as they help shape our identity.

short hair	can hop	can swim	has jewellery on	can ride a bike
can play an instrument		has a pet	was born in the winter	is left handed
has a sibling	loves maths	can wink	Is a vegetarian/ vegan	has been in a plane

Alternative game Human Guess Who

Many of us have played the simple board game Guess Who. You have a board with many different faces on and by asking YES/NO questions you need to guess who your opponent is.

This is fun to play in person too, on a giant scale.

You will need as many costumes or items of clothing as possible, to enable people to change their identities e.g. glasses, moustaches, hats etc.

The group change their identities and sit on chairs in rows (similar to the Guess who board game)

Choose one person to be the detective and have them leave the room whilst you decide which person they will need to find.

When they re-enter the room they have to use Yes/No questions to try to guess who the person is they are trying to find. They can remove people as they go along. But **MUST** make a guess when they are down to 2 possibilities.

This is a catchy game that your group will want to play again and again.

This game also works well on zoom



Experience

For this story we recommend using the Contemporary English Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A+13-16&version=CEV>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Psalm 139 reflection animation by Kidswise

<https://youtu.be/AsB24oSbpyM?si=S3gXwRhIrQLhkkBu>

Over fives: Psalm 139 Lego version by CodeCUK [https://youtu.be/7eQ7D-](https://youtu.be/7eQ7D-A00Bw?si=9gVurFyiXjEK7H1n)

[A00Bw?si=9gVurFyiXjEK7H1n](https://youtu.be/7eQ7D-A00Bw?si=9gVurFyiXjEK7H1n)

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Fearfully and wonderfully made by Doug Horley

https://youtu.be/_LlptOaP_Po?si=aAAgeuCVSmhb5ILX

Five to eevens: You know me by Hillsong Kids [https://youtu.be/d6jbHDmsz_k?si=Ik99-](https://youtu.be/d6jbHDmsz_k?si=Ik99-FIfWQpSSxxn)

[FIfWQpSSxxn](https://youtu.be/d6jbHDmsz_k?si=Ik99-FIfWQpSSxxn)

Explore

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

A new way to explore the story

Begin the exploration time by sitting in a group and taking it in turns to say your name, with everyone giving each person a massive welcome, cheering and shouting hooray to celebrate each other. Each person could say "My name's ***** and I'm here today".

See the making activity regarding self portraits, Use the craft as the explore section to dig into "who are you right now"?

Encourage the group to take time to create a fabulous self portrait, that shows who they are, including the bits that no one else sees or knows yet.

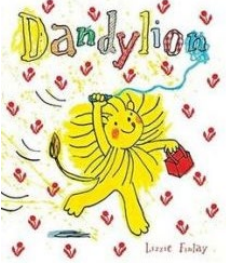
Use the wondering questions as you create together as well as during the sharing time once the portraits are finished.

It is a good opportunity to remind each other that the Psalm tells us that God knows us inside and out, better than we know ourselves and has it all written in God's book. You could put all the self portraits together into one big group book.



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.

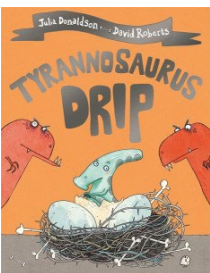
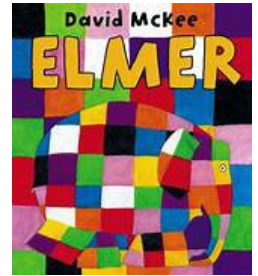


Dandy Lion by Lizzie Finlay

https://youtu.be/sHSZCSjRdAQ?si=yMvb9gvYUgs_87Jh

Elmer by David McKee,

<https://youtu.be/TUepS9yGANQ?si=TAYmmO-Gd8d1HM7L>



Tyrannosaurus Drip by Julia Donaldson

<https://youtu.be/tfvv9GLmaUM?si=OvKopS9sLCZIJvuB>

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

- The passage tells us that God hasn't made a mistake with us. (God saw, and it was GOOD) , I wonder how we celebrate the uniqueness of each other and ourselves? Which is easier?
- People who know us often make assumptions about who we are and tell us about ourselves. Do they ever get it wrong? How does it make you feel? Do you think you sometimes make assumptions about others?
- Do we ever hide who we are or how we are feeling? How and why do we hide?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder how God would describe you? What does God see when God looks at you?
- I wonder what's the most amazing thing about you?
- If you could change anything about you, what would it be?

What's in the Box?

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:



- Russian doll or stacking cups - Talk about being made up of lots of different layers.
- Play figure and a large heart. – place the play figure on the large heart and talk about how God has made us and loves each one of us
- A boiled egg – talk about each layer, as you peel the egg. Cut it open to reveal the centre and share how we all have a tough outer shell, but God knows the heart of each of us.
- Mirror – Talk about what does God see's when looking at 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 (e.g., stones, felt, twigs etc)

Express

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

Pass the Parcel Prayer

You will need: a box containing a play figure and some wrapping paper.

What you do: Wrap up a box containing a play figure in multiple different layers of wrapping paper. You can write on each layer something to pray for.

Inner layer: ourselves

Layers in between - our family, our schools, our neighbours our world.

Outer layer: thank you for...

Pass the parcel around whilst playing some music. When the music stops, open each layer and say a short prayer. If a child is unwilling to pray, they can pass the parcel to the next person in the circle, ask a leader to pray, or just say what the prayer is for and sit silently for a moment. When the child says amen, the music starts again.

Spoken prayer

Give everyone a couple of moments to think about something they feel they can do, are good or like about themselves.

When responding with **Thank you for making me, me** encourage the children to act out that thing (such as hopping, smiling, miming reading or writing, playing an instrument) With a well-established group or older group they may be able to act out something different each time the response is said. Stress that the action needs to be done in silence.

Creator God,

Thank you for making me, me,

Help us feel confident about who we are and what we are,

Thank you for making me, me,

Help us to accept there are things we can not do and instead thank you for all we can do.

Thank you for making me, me,

Help us to accept others as they are

Thank you for making me, me,

Creator God,

Thank you for making me, me. 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.

Self portraits with 'all about me' statements.

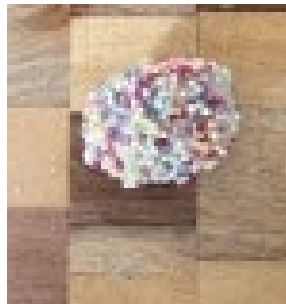
Provide as many different and quality resources as possible to enable the group to create fabulous self portraits. The group would need a good amount of time, so that their creations are not rushed.

The idea is to create a self portrait that shows who you are, it could include the parts of you that no one else sees as well as question marks for the things you don't know about yourself yet, but God knows.

Jelly baby layers

You will need:

Jelly babies.
A skewer,
White, and milk chocolate
Sprinkles
Food colouring (optional)



What you do:

Place the jelly baby on a skewer.

Melt the chocolate (one type at a time may make it easier to manage). If you wish add food colouring to the white chocolate.

Dip the Jelly baby into the chocolate and let it set slightly. You can do this in the fridge by placing the skewered jelly babies in a cup and placing the cup in the fridge.

Now melt the next type of chocolate and dip the Jelly baby in that. (You may find it easier to spoon the chocolate over the Jelly Baby). Spin the skewer slowly as this helps the chocolate to cover the whole of the sweet.

Repeat as many times as you wish, ending in a layer of sprinkles. Let it set hard, before taking it off the skewer and then cutting it in half lengthways to see all the different layers built up.



As the layers are added, the shape of the jelly baby changes and becomes less defined, but when we cut it in two, we can still see the baby at the heart of the sweet. We can have many layers to us, but God always see who we really are (without cutting us in half!)

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:

- What do you think God would say to you about what God most loves about you? Spend a bit of time saying it to yourself.
 - What do you think God would say to your friend about what God loves most about them? Try and find an opportunity to tell them what it is and praise them for being a special and wonderful person.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring **Psalm 139** 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 week's resource on **Galatians 3:27-29**



