



*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>

## 1 Thessalonians 5: 25-28

Theme: Praying for and with each other

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

This is a letter written to the church in Thessalonica around 51 AD. Paul is the author and he is writing to encourage the Christians in the early church to live holy lives and share Jesus' love with others. His letter begins Brothers and Sisters: this isn't literally to his siblings but it is reminding the readers that we are all part of the family of God. We may need to be aware that some in our groups might not identify with either gender based term. Perhaps discuss with the children the benefit of using the word "friends" instead to include everyone.

Paul's final piece of advice in the letter is a reminder to pray together for each other and with each other. This is the emphasis on the session, the encouragement to pray when we are together and to pray for each other. It is also an opportunity to consider what prayers we use when we meet as a church group. for example the Grace. And why we sometimes pray together and sometimes individually.

When we were preparing this session we explored the passage in many different versions and found considerable differences in their emphasis: for example The Contemporary English works well for first two verses but not for ending bit about the grace, other versions do the grace bit well but not the start. We would encourage you to do the same and choose the version that uses the language best suited to your group.



# 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**

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## In-person game

**This game encourages the group to have fun in a game that needs you to look out for the needs of others and work together for the good of the group.**

**You will need 5 pegs per person in the group.**

**Begin by giving the pegs out, peg them onto the back hem of each person's top. Don't worry how many are on each, perhaps have one person with just one peg, one with none, one with 9 and so on.**

**The idea is to end the game with everyone having 5 pegs within a set time limit.**

**The team need to run around and take pegs off themselves and place them on others, looking out for who needs them.**

**The only rule is that you can only move one peg to one person at a time.**

**Have a few leaders around that can 'make things harder' by moving pegs around as children run past them.**

- **For older groups, you could play it with different coloured pegs. Every person needs to end the game with one of each colour on their back.**



## Online game

### Cooperative counting

The aim of the game is for the group collectively to count from 1 to 20. Any group member can begin counting, and then a different member from the group must call out the next number. However, if more than one person calls out at the same time, or an incorrect number is called, then the group must start counting again from 1. How many tries will it take for your group to reach 20?

- See if you can count to a higher number – how high can you count without making a mistake.
- Try counting with cameras turned off or eyes closed so that you cannot see other participants.
- Try using the chat function to type numbers instead of calling out.
- Replace certain numbers with actions instead of words – eg Clap hands instead of saying odd numbers. Hands on head instead of saying any multiple of 4.

An alternative game would be for everyone to hold their hands apart as widely as their camera will allow them to so that their hands are at the edge of the screen. Then try, without signalling when to do so, to bring hands together and clap all at the same moment, just by picking up on body language etc.

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## Experience

For this story we recommend using the Easy-to-Read Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+5%3A+25-26%2C+28&version=ERV>

### Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Jesus prayed - Lifekids <https://youtu.be/S81k0SCzOCY>

Over fives: Dania's story, the power of prayer – Samaritans purse <https://youtu.be/rVViBiO4Rm4>

### Songs to support the story

Under fives: Big family of God – Becky and Nick Drake <https://youtu.be/Rawq3usrzsE>

Over fives: This is amazing Grace – Kids version <https://youtu.be/FwDRdbtxMc8>

## Explore

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

### Letters to the church

In this week's Bible passage, Paul writes a letter to the early church in Thessalonica. In this activity, participants will be encouraged to think about what message they would like to give to their church today.

Look at Paul's letter in Thessalonians 5v12-28.

- What does the letter say?
- Why do you think Paul wrote this in his letter?
- What might this letter say to us now?

Invite participants to imagine that they were not going to see their church for a while.

- What would you want to write in your final letter to the church?
- What requests would you have for the church?
- What words of encouragement would you give the church?



- What would be your prayer for the church?

After reflecting on these questions, write letters or record video messages or voice notes for the church. Make sure that you share these messages with members of the church community.

## 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.



'Sharing a Shell' by Julia Donaldson

<https://youtu.be/aQ6SvbrEhvl>

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

- How does your church or your group pray for each other and how do you pray with each other?
- What does it mean to have God's grace in your life?

## Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if you have a special prayer you particularly like to say together?
- I wonder who prays for you?

## 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:

- Lots of small figures – play with these figures, talking about how we can pray for and with others. Consider what prayers we use when we meet as a church group, for example the Grace, or the FACT prayer.
- Prayer bear – have a small teddy which can be a prayer bear. Use this bear to help younger children to pray for and with others: you can pass it round and ask the children to say a one or two word prayer e.g. the world, my family, my friends, the church, etc. (You could have this around all the time to enable younger children to pray)
- Things you can join together like stickle bricks, Lego, Duplo, beads or some jigsaw pieces– talk about how we can join together and separate these, and when we pray, we can pray with others (joined together) or for others separately (separate them).
- A pot of bubbles – share the Grace together and ask each child to shout out the name of someone in the group as a blessing to them. All say together 'AMEN' when everyone has had a chance to blow some bubbles.
- 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?

### Paper Chain Prayers

This is a way of praying for each other whilst also praying as a group.

Give each child a piece of paper, the size to make paper chains; one colour per person.

Encourage them to write their name on their piece of paper and draw or write something they would like someone to pray about for them.

Then place all the bits of paper in the middle.

Each person takes a piece and prays for that person, either to themselves or by writing on the paper.

Then we tape them all together into a paperchain.

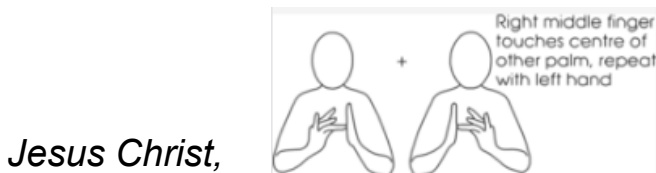
We can hold the chain together as a group and say one big prayer together.

This can be placed somewhere so that we can keep adding to it over the coming weeks.

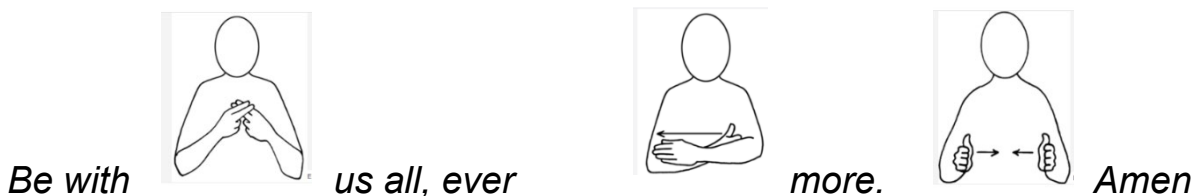
If you have one child in the group or a smaller number, then you can still do the prayer activity by having bits of paper with names on of those who are part of our wider church or community.

### Spoken prayer

Say The Grace using Makaton



Jesus Christ,





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## 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.

## Fingerprint activity

*You will need:*

Paint or ink pads

Wet cloth

Paper

Magnets

Canvas (optional)



The aim is for each person (adult and child) to have placed a fingerprint or two on each person's picture. You could draw a simple line picture on some card (or if there is time, those participating could draw their own), such as of a person holding some strings as though they were balloons or flowers. Everyone would add their fingerprint to a string to create a balloon/ flower on the end. An alternative picture could be of a basic background and each person's fingerprint represents them as people in the scene. Consider adding the words....'Pray for and with each other'.

To encourage everyone to keep on praying for each other during the week, attach a sticky magnet to the back of the picture so it can be placed on a fridge at home or use a canvas for each person so it can be placed somewhere at home.

However you create your picture, it is important to make sure that each person uses a different coloured paint (you may have to double up on colours if you have a large group) and contributes to everyone's pictures. Use this opportunity to discuss the talking together questions.

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## For and with cake

*You will need:*

Some cakes which have been made in advance by a leader

Some things to decorate them with (icing, chocolate, writing icing, sprinkles etc)

*What you do:*

Prepare some cakes in advance for the children to decorate. Say to the children that this cake has been made for you.

Ask the children to decorate a cake that will be shared with others afterwards. Encourage them to take the time to think about who it may be shared with, and pray for them as they decorate it.

Give the decorated cakes to each other or share with the church at coffee after worship. Encourage the children to say to the church that this is made for you and shared with you in prayer.



## 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:

- Find a friend or a family member that you can pray with – maybe pair up in the group and plan to pray for each other at the same time each day for a week.
- Find a prayer that is used by churches a lot and see if you can learn at least a few lines. Maybe a version of the Lord's Prayer, maybe the Grace if you did not know this already, maybe the Prayer of St Francis

[https://www.lords-prayer-](https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/famous_prayers/make_me_a_channel_of_your_peace_lyrics.html)

[words.com/famous\\_prayers/make\\_me\\_a\\_channel\\_of\\_your\\_peace\\_lyrics.html](https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/famous_prayers/make_me_a_channel_of_your_peace_lyrics.html)

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We hope you enjoyed exploring 1 Thessalonians 5 with us.

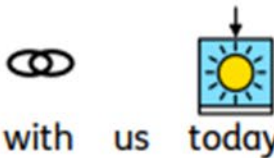
Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing [lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk)

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Daniel 9**.

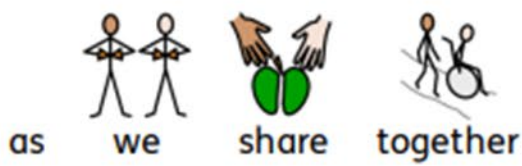




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



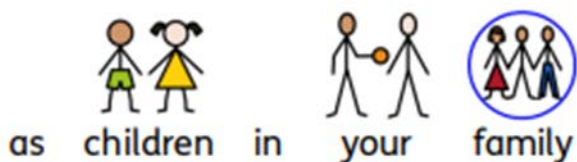
pray together



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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