



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 14: 1-2 – In my Father's House

Theme: There's a place for everyone in God's home

Contents:

Introduction	1
Together	2
Experience	3
Explore	3
Express	6
Handouts	10

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

Our theme for this month is 'home', and in today's passage Jesus gives us a tantalising glimpse of what God's home in Heaven might look like. Of course, we don't get too much information and are left to draw our own conclusions. In this metaphorical vision of heaven, various translations offer us the idea that God's house has many rooms, mansions (can a mansion fit inside a house?) or, in our recommended translation, dwelling places.

There may be children/young people in your group who don't have stable living accommodation so you will need to be aware of their feelings and understandings of what 'house' and 'home' might mean as you explore this passage.

Is a dwelling place different from a house? We sometimes say "let me dwell on that" – meaning to think about something. Is a dwelling place somewhere to be, to live, to stay? All three?

The passage suggests that there is room for everyone – is that the same as 'a room for everyone'? Different people have different needs, will the dwelling places that Jesus says he will prepare for us in his Father's house be tailor-made to fit our individual needs? Will they be the height of luxury with jacuzzis, a big television and a comfy couch? Or will they just have the basics of a bed and a chair? Will we have to share – and with whom would we be happy to share?

Let your imaginations run wild as you explore this passage together.



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 Room pairs

This week's games are both linked to the theme of houses.

- Make pairs of cards with items that go together in different rooms of a house, ensuring you have enough for your group. For example: Fridge and saucepan – kitchen; armchair and lamp – sitting room or toothbrush and sink – bathroom.
- Give each person a card from the well shuffled selection.
- When you give the signal to start, each person must say the name of their object quietly or act it out as they walk around the room.
- The aim is to listen carefully and to find the other person who has an object from the same room as you.

For younger groups, use pictures rather than words to make the game easier to join in with. To make things more challenging for older groups you could add objects that could fit into



more than one room. They will then need to work as a team to make sure everyone is in a pair.

Alternative game – Keys

- Sit your group in a circle and place a chair in the middle of the circle with a set of keys underneath.
- Choose one person to sit on the chair, with a scarf covering their eyes so that they can't see the rest of the group.
- Silently, choose a member of the circle to walk quietly around a full circuit of the seated group and into the middle to grab the keys.
- The seated player, or guard, has three chances to point correctly at the person trying to steal the keys. If they guess correctly, that player must sit back down and another player can try again. If the guard uses all their guesses, or the player reaches the keys, the successful player replaces the guard for the next turn.

Both of these games help us to start thinking about houses, the different rooms in a house and the keys to doors opening up the access to rooms and houses.

Experience

For this story we recommend using the New Revised Standard Version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=JOHN+14%3A1-2&version=NRSVA>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: This week's story is a little different, while everyone watches a Lego house be built read the Bible verse.

<https://youtu.be/el8QMvDws5M?si=QMuYY1u00ohc9T7D>

Over fives: John 14: 1-12 by Michelline M

<https://youtu.be/wZPWf2jWTmw?si=79mKJL1XS63nK0Jj>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: In my Father's house by Steve Green

<https://youtu.be/bt8hGnnvFHg?si=a-SVgyywYd25H4sX>

Five to elevens: John 14 – Jump start

<https://youtu.be/8CpNrH6z-7U?si=YLLHCU5S44Iem4BV>

Explore

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

A new way to explore the passage

Guided Meditation/Mindfulness

One person needs to read the piece calmly, enabling everyone else to take part in this. Maybe have some blankets, comfy pillows or cushions available. Have some gentle instrumental music playing in the background.

Script for reader:

We are going to have a mindfulness meditation.

It's going to help us to think about the place God has prepared for you.



In the Bible, Jesus tells us of a perfect place where God lives with his people and where there is a room ready just for us.

You might like to think about this more as we relax.

Find a space that's just right for you. Lie or sit down comfortably and close your eyes. You can use pillows or blankets to make yourself as comfortable as you can be.

Listen to my voice and relax. Sometimes we get a giggle during relaxation; this is ok but try not to disturb the people around you as we are all concentrating.

Take a few deep breaths as you begin to relax.

Breathe in long and deep to the count of five, hold it for three then release it slowly to the count of six.

Breathe a few times till we are all relaxed.

Now I want you to picture walking down a path.

Imagine a field of flowers, and look at the flowers swaying in the breeze.

What colours can you see, what sounds are there?

Is this the room where God has prepared a place for you?

Is God here?

You see a shed in the distance and walk towards it.

The door creaks as you step inside.

How do you feel?

The walls are bare and it smells like wet grass.

There is a chair in the corner - do you want to sit here and stay with God a while?

Is this the room where God has prepared a place for you?

You move on, and discover a house, with many rooms.

As you walk into the house, I wonder what you can see?

You see some stairs and a long corridor which leads to the kitchen - you smell baking, and feel warmth.

Is this the room where God has prepared a place for you?

You walk into the room at the front of the house,

What is in there, is there a table or a piano?

What is this room used for?

Where would you place a heart in this room?

Is this the room where God has prepared a place for you?

Picture yourself walking up the stairs. The steps creak a little and the rail is smooth.

Where do you go next?

At the top of the stairs there is a hallway with many doors.

Where do they lead?

Who lives in these rooms?

Is there a room that is just for you?

What is in that room?

Is there a bed with fluffy pillows, or a window looking out at a great tree?

Where is your favourite place to sit in this room?

Is it a beanbag on the floor or lying on the bed?

Where is God in this room with you?

Stay a while in this room, lying perfectly still.

Repeat the deep breathing for three breaths, as we did at the start. Breathe in for five, hold for three and breathe out for six.

When you are ready open your eyes and begin to sit up slowly.



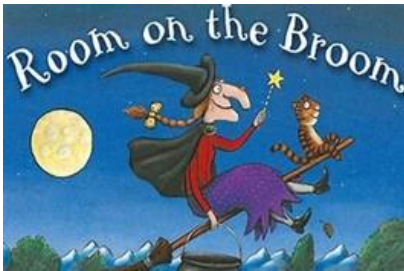
Discussion:

How did you find the experience?

What did you picture in your imagination? Perhaps you could paint or draw 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.



'Room on the Broom' by Julia Donaldson and Axel Sheffner
https://youtu.be/wnCpEAwMAnY?si=rgXXa-ZCyO_QpdJE

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

- Is it possible to believe in Jesus without believing in God?
- This passage is often used to give people hope. Why do you think this might give us hope?
- Jesus said their hearts were troubled. What do you think was troubling their hearts?
- Why does it have to be multiple rooms as opposed to one big room? Why is it important that we have a place designed just for us? What does that tell us about how God feels about us?
- How important is it to know what heaven is like?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder what you think heaven is like?
- If Jesus had prepared a place with you in mind, what would it be like?
- I wonder how God responded when Jesus told them what he'd promised?
- I wonder if you ever have a friend round for a sleepover. How might you make a 'special place' for them in your home?

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:

- Keys – talk about what rooms these keys might unlock.
- Some smaller boxes with room names on them – ask the children what is their favourite room.
- A teddy – ask the children to place the teddy in a room.
- A heart – this can represent God, ask the children where the heart should go.
- 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?

Prayers Around the House

Cut out images or draw pictures that remind you of each of the rooms in your home. Cut out a rectangle from card and cut out shapes for the windows and door. Stick your pictures behind each window and then stick a sheet of paper over the back to help keep your pictures secure. Cut out a roof shape and add that to the house.

Pray for each room in your house. Talk to God about the people who live in your house and use each of the rooms. Go around the group and ask for suggestions of prayers for each room. Here are some ideas to get you started:



Thank God for the food you have to eat and the people who cook in the kitchen.

Thank God for the toys and games you have and the comfy bed you have to sleep on in the bedroom.

Thank God for the comfort and warmth of your sitting room or family room and the people you share this space with.

Thank God for clean running water and proper drains and a safe place to wash and bathe, clean your teeth and go to the toilet.

Dear God, please bless our home.

Help us to be gentle, kind, and patient.

**To put up with each other,
and forgive those who do wrong
just as you forgive us.**

**Help us to know that love is
more important than anything else. Amen**

ALTERNATIVELY

Ask everyone to join hands and form a square to make a room. Ask the children, one or two at a time, to stand in the middle of the 'room' and to name someone they want to pray for.

Then say:

'Dear Jesus, Please keep them safe and bless them. Amen.'

Repeat until everyone has an opportunity to step into the 'room'.

(Adapted from ROOTS for Churches)



Spoken prayer

Dear God

In your house there are many rooms:

A room to be still and to listen;
Help us to listen for you and hear your voice

A room to dance and sing and rejoice;
Help us to dance with joy and sing your praise

A room to remember the needs of others;
We pray for all those who don't have a roof over their heads

A room for conversation and kindness, to welcome visitors and to make friendships;
Open the rooms of our hearts so that we may be people of welcome and friendship

A room where troubles and fears and tears can be shared;
Please help us....*Pause here for silent prayer*

A room that is big enough for everyone
to bring their dreams and to share their gifts.
In your house there are many rooms.

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.

Made with you in mind

This is a craft activity that allows us to consider the needs of others and create something for them. It gives us the opportunity to talk as we create, use the wondering questions provided.

You will need various resources to make up bespoke gifts for an individual, eg sweet baskets, toiletry bags.

Provide the group with the resources to make a bespoke gift for someone. For example, you could offer some shoeboxes, paper bags or baskets. Encourage the group to decide who they are making it for (you may be doing this around Fathers' Day, for example) and to design the gift with that person in mind.

Build a house together

You will need: A large cardboard box for the whole group and a smaller box for each child (the smaller boxes should all fit into the large one). You could use items to decorate the



rooms such as coloured paper, patterned paper, fabric, dolls' house furniture, smaller boxes, catalogues with furniture in etc.

This activity plays with the theme of Jesus' words. Provide the group with a large cardboard box and encourage them to build a room (using a smaller cardboard box each) with themselves in mind. Add them altogether into the large, creating a mansion with many bespoke rooms.

Habitats

You will need: books, internet access to research minibeasts habitats, the materials to make the habitats eg bug hotels.

Just as Jesus prepares a place for us in heaven, we are going to prepare a place for minibeasts here on earth. Encourage the group to research a minibeast and create a place especially for them. They could either make the place using the materials gathered or just design and draw it on paper.

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:

- This passage is about Jesus preparing a place for us in God's home, but while we wait, we can make a difference to our homes now. Perhaps you could do something to make your local environment a better place by clearing some litter or planting some flowers in some wasteland, or even tidying your room!
- Talk to as many people as you can, of all ages and even from different faiths, and find out what they believe about heaven.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **John 14:1-2** 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 **The wise and foolish builders?**

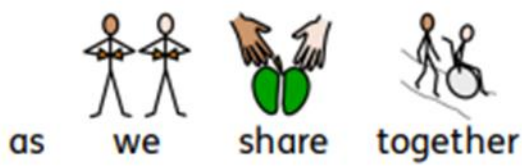




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



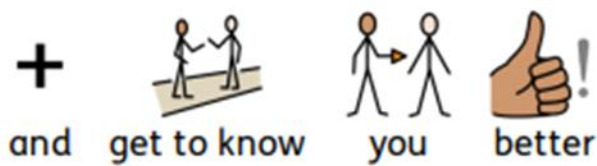
as we share together



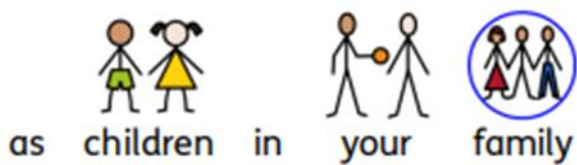
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen

