



Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*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: www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet

Title: Psalm 121: 1–8

Theme: God provides... help and protection

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning? Please use this section as a reference and information guide for leaders only – we don't expect it to be read out to the children.

The book of Psalms is a collection of sacred songs and poems written over many years by different authors. Although many people contributed to the Psalms, King David – once a shepherd boy chosen by God to be king – wrote over half of them. Psalm 121 is one of these much-loved psalms.

For the Israelites, Psalm 121 was more than just a song. It was sung by pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem to worship God at the temple during important festivals. Imagine hundreds of travellers walking together along dusty roads, singing these words as they climbed towards the city. They sang to encourage one another and to remind themselves that God was with them on every part of their journey.

As they travelled, the pilgrims faced many dangers – steep hills, rough paths, changing weather, wild animals, and the threat of robbers. The pilgrims' confidence was not in the hills, the road, or even in their own strength. Their help came from the Lord – the creator of heaven and earth. The

rest of the psalm describes God as the one who watches over people. God never sleeps, never looks away, and never leaves God's children unprotected. God is their constant keeper, guarding them wherever they go.

This message is especially reassuring at a time of year when Halloween can encourage people to focus on fear, darkness, or the unknown. Psalm 121 reminds us that, as Christians, our attention need not be on what frightens us but on the God who watches over us. Our security is found in God. We do not need to live in fear because God is our helper, our protector, and our refuge.

As we explore Psalm 121 together, we will discover that God's promise is not that life will always be easy, but that God will always be with us. God's care covers every part of our lives, and we can trust God to watch over us wherever we go.

Triggers: There may be children or young people in your group who do not feel safe or protected. In addition, children may disclose issues in this session as you discuss who or what they might need protection from. N.B. There are many ideas included in this session; please don't feel you need to include them all in your session.

Together – prayer and games

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**

Active game – Dodge ball variation: Protection, with places to hide

You will need:

soft balls
bean bags or scrunched up paper

Ask your group to stand in a circle, with two people in the middle. One of the people in the middle is the person to be protected; the other person is the shield. Those standing in the circle try to hit the person in the middle while the bodyguard attempts to block the attack. If the person being protected gets hit at any point the bodyguard returns to the circle, the person who was being protected becomes the bodyguard, and a new person to be protected is chosen from the circle.



Cat & Mouse – an active tag game with ‘safe spaces’

You will need:

tails for each mouse (lengths of ribbon, T-towels etc.)

Designate an area of play – ensuring the area is safe and free from clutter. Within this space allocate a mouse hole (safe space). Select one or two cats depending on your group size and give everyone else a tail. The tails can be tucked into the back or side of waistbands or held in a hand. The mice run around the area, avoiding the cats who are trying to get their tails. Once a mouse has lost its tail, they become a cat and join the chase. The mouse hole can be entered into by a mouse where they will be protected from any cat.

The bomb

This is a simple game that needs no resources and plays with the Psalms' imagery of God offering shade and protection.

Ask the group to stand in a space in the room.

Then ask them to look around the room and choose one other person who will be their bomb. Now choose a second person who will be their shield.

When you blow a whistle, the group all move around the room.

The aim of the game is to keep the shield between you and the bomb.

After some time, shout freeze. Everybody stops.

If your shield is not between you and your bomb you are out. (Just you, not your bomb or shield.) This will affect others. For example, if you were someone's shield then they now need to choose another shield before game can commence.

Trigger warning: If you are concerned about the word “bomb”, then you can say “glitter bomb”, or “water bomb”. Or you can say “the sun”, with the shield giving shade.

Quieter game – Storytime

This is a simple but fun storytelling game.

Gather the group to sit together and explain that we are going to tell some silly two-sentence stories.

Leader starts by showing what to do.

A “storyteller” says, “You’ll never guess what happened to me the other day.” They then say something awful and disastrous but humorous, e.g. “A giant bird flew overhead and pooped on me.”

Someone else needs to come to the rescue by saying “But...” They then give an explanation that makes everything OK again, e.g. “I pressed the magic button on my jacket and initiated my full body bubble wrap protection bubble.”

Then someone else has a go at being the storyteller.

Keep the game fast and silly. Your group will want to play this game again and again. If you think your group might need some help, you could prepare some storyteller sentences to place in the centre so that anyone can pick one if they need an idea.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

When planning the session, the team of writers read many different Bible versions to find the one that is most suitable for the age range. We also look at vocabulary and how God/Jesus is described. We are aware that a lot of churches stick with one Bible version. We appreciate it can be difficult to have many different Bible versions and that access to them online isn't always easy. Therefore, we have provided the passage in the recommended version for your convenience.

For this story we recommend using the Contemporary English Version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm%20121&version=CEV>

You may wish to research different versions of this reading on www.biblegateway.com
Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

The Lord will protect his people

¹ I look to the hills!

Where will I find help?

² It will come from the Lord,

who created heaven and earth.

³ The Lord is your protector,
and he won't go to sleep
or let you stumble.

⁴ The protector of Israel
doesn't doze
or ever get drowsy.

⁵ The Lord is your protector,
there at your right side
to shade you from the sun.

⁶ You won't be harmed
by the sun during the day
or by the moon at night.

⁷ The Lord will protect you
and keep you safe
from all dangers.

⁸ The Lord will protect you
now and always
wherever you go.

Copyright © 1995 by [American Bible Society](http://www.bibles.com) For more information about CEV,
visit www.bibles.com and www.cev.bible.

Where can I find the story online?

Under-fives: Psalm 121, by Bible Quest TV

<https://youtu.be/du7zLuWxLpE?si=zCzlsVatpEEMNVP>

Five-to-elevens: God is with me (Afrobeats Kids Worship), by Chibooks

https://youtu.be/5bhJlwnqDaQ?si=tdABcpu0P-aiX_vx

Songs to support the story

Under-fives: My God is so big, by LifeKids

<https://youtu.be/aDCTNhYqEko?si=HPaVlqFb75jczRA8>

Five-to-elevens: I can trust God, by LifeKids

<https://youtu.be/t9NhSFi-a50?si=08t6kCyvXvLCck4Q>

Explore – ways into the theme

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

A new way to explore the theme

Gather the group and ask what this passage is about.

Explain we are going to explore the themes of the psalm, which speaks about God providing protection. We will have some fun doing some science experiments. While doing them, let's ask ourselves what this experiment says to us about God's protection. We have given suggested link to the theme but encourage the children to wonder for themselves.

Protect the egg

You will need:

- an egg for each group
- a variety of junk/recycling materials and Sellotape
- a washing up bowl or similar to drop the egg into, unless you want a mess to clean up later!

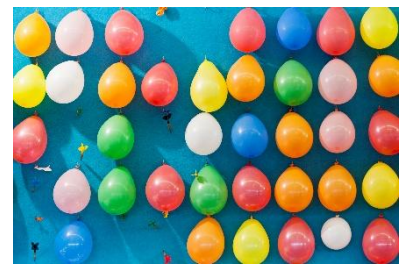
Get into small groups and challenge each group to create something that will protect an egg if it is dropped from a height. They can use whatever they choose to protect the egg but have a time limit in which to complete making their protective layer. Then hold each egg (in its protective container) as high as possible and drop it into the bowl below. Celebrate every egg that remains intact.

The unpoppable balloon

Possible link to theme. Think about the protection that God gives us – the balloon still feels the heat but because it is filled it is not destroyed.

You will need:

- balloons – be aware of latex allergies
- jug of water
- funnel
- tea light candle
- matches
- safety goggles
- tongs



Blow up one of the balloons in the usual way and tie off. Ask the group what will happen when this is passed over a flame. Leader wears safety goggles and lights the tea light. Using tongs hold the balloon and pass over it the flame (it will pop). Then fill a balloon with water and tie-it off – hold this over the flame; it will not pop. You can hold it there until the water boils.

You can find many other science experiments online which highlight protection.

You could split into groups and do an experiment each and present to the group.

Once the groups have had time to enjoy the experiments and try them for themselves, gather for a discussion around what God's protection looks like. Use the questions provided in this session plan.

This might be an opportunity to share stories/testimonies about times when you have felt God's protection.

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. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).

Under the Love Umbrella by Davina Bell

Bedtime Stories | Joe Talbot Reads Under The Love Umbrella | CBeebies #worldpoetryday
<https://youtu.be/-xAcQLHKyCs?si=mve3g-UuVaT5OMu5>

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

- If God protects everyone, why are some people living in danger?
- Does God only protect other Christians?
- If God protects us, does that mean we can do some risky things?
- I wonder how we know God is protecting us

Wondering: ways to reflect on the theme

- How does it feel to know that God is watching over you all the time?
- What do you fear the most?
- What do we need protection from?
- How do we know we are being protected?
- What's the biggest thing the world needs protection from and what's the biggest thing that children need protection from?

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). 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:

- An egg (this can be a hardboiled egg or an egg from a play set) – this egg has a shell which protects the soft insides from being harmed. I wonder what protects us, like this shell.
- An umbrella – these things protect us from the weather, to keep us dry, or give us shade from the sun.
- A shield or an image of a shield – what do you think a shield does? Some superheroes, like Captain America, have shields – they protect them from things which might hurt them.
- Some cushions – we can give a cushion a hug and it makes us feel safe; let's all give our cushion a big hug.
- A selection of hearts – I wonder if we could place this heart somewhere in the church where we feel God is with us and is keeping us safe.
- 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 (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc.).

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Prayerful activity – Protection Prayer Stations

You will need: items that provide protection and keep us safe

- pop-up tent
- umbrella, raincoat
- cooking apron, oven gloves
- blanket
- boots, safety shoes
- sun hat, hard hat, woolly hat
- face mask, medical gloves



Words of items we need protection from: cold, weather, rain, mud, sun, germs, dirt, heat, falling objects...

What you do: Children move round the objects and say what they are and what they protect us from, while thanking God for the protection provided to us.

Dear God, as the (*object you hold*) protects us from the ..., we thank you for always looking after us. Amen.

Spoken prayer

Christ be with me (jump on spot)
Christ before me (jump forward)
Christ behind me (jump back)
Christ beside me (jump to the side)
Christ beneath me (jump down)
Christ above me (jump up in air)
Christ be with me everywhere, all the time (jump everywhere)

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.

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.

Chocolate-covered foods

You will need:

jelly babies or strawberries or any other foods that can be covered; maybe apples
melted chocolate
hundreds and thousands (optional)
skewers

What you do:

Put your food on a skewer and dip it in the melted chocolate. You could dip it in some hundreds and thousands too.

God gives us help and protects us. As we cover the fruits and sweets in chocolate let's think about how we are protected by God.

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:

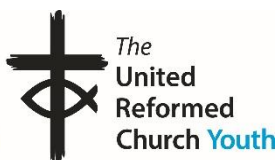
- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you about a time when God helped them.
- Where are the safe places in your school?

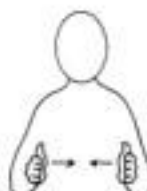
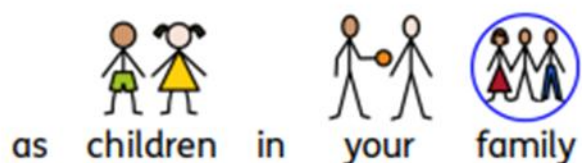
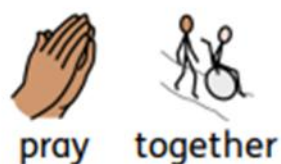
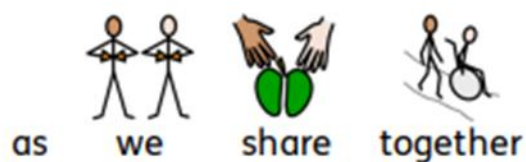
We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **protection** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing **sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk**

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group **bit.ly/FACT_FB**

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





The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

For ever and ever . Amen

