



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: Matthew 7: 15–16a

Theme: “Frienemies” (Be careful choosing new friends)

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

Fantastic Beasts Introduction

The Bible is full of a fascinating variety of stories: family dramas and heroes overcoming unlikely odds; songs and poetry; historical sagas – not to mention some surprisingly ordinary situations described in Jesus' parables! But not all of these fabulous tales are about humans and their relationship with the God who created them – sometimes humans don't get a look in! The Bible is full of stories and songs which delight in the created world – and the animals that are a part of it. We are often reminded not to underestimate animals, or the wonderful world that we share with them.

A new school year is an exciting time. There may be new classes, new activities, and lots of opportunities to make new friends. Having good friends can help us grow in confidence, feel supported, and enjoy life together. But not everyone who seems friendly always has our best interests at heart.

In Matthew 7:15-16, Jesus warns us to be careful: *"Watch out for false prophets... By their fruit you will recognise them."* Jesus teaches us that what people say is important, but what they do is

even more important. Their actions, kindness, honesty, and the way they treat others reveal what is truly in their hearts.

As you meet new people this year, think about the qualities you value in a friend. Do they encourage you to do what is right? Are they honest and kind? Or do they pressure others, spread rumours, stir up arguments, or say one thing while doing another?

This doesn't mean we should judge people quickly or refuse to befriend those who are different from us. Instead, Jesus encourages us to be wise. Good friends help us grow, show respect, and bring out the best in us. We should be careful of friendships that lead us away from kindness, honesty, and God's ways.

Leader's Note: This topic may raise experiences of lying, betrayal, bullying, or hurtful relationships. Encourage respectful discussion and remind the group that everyone deserves friendships built on kindness, honesty, and respect.

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

The games encourage teams to be observant and to notice small differences. They also help to raise questions about whether it is always easy to notice when people are trying to trick you – or disguise themselves!

Dressing up show-down

Split your group into two teams. Each team will need a basket or box of dressing up clothes – try to make the contents of the boxes as similar as possible. Position the teams in a line behind the dressing up box.

Each turn, the player at the front of the line has 30 seconds to choose items from the box that make the best outfit for the job title read from a pre-prepared list by the leader. (For example, for 'spy' they may choose a hat and glasses; for 'PE teacher', they may choose a whistle and hoodie). The leader decides which team has chosen the best outfit and awards one point. The player goes to the back of the line, and the next person in the team steps forward.

The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

If you don't have access to lots of dressing up clothes, you could play charades instead – use the pre-prepared list and each member of the team takes a turn at acting out the job they have been given. When the other team members guess correctly, someone else can step up and try the next job on the list!

Quieter game – Circle swap!

Sit your group in a circle and choose one player to step out of the room. While the chosen player is out of the room, two members of the circle swap an item of clothing – perhaps a shoe or a cardigan. When the chosen player is invited back in, they must guess who has made the swap.

If you have a small group, you could choose someone to be a leader instead. Everyone in the circle starts doing the same action (tapping their knee, clapping or clicking their fingers). The leader must change the action and the rest of the circle must follow them, but without the returning player guessing who is the leader.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the Contemporary English version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%207%3A%2015%20-%2016a&version=CEV>

Where can I find the story online?

Under-fives: A story about a wolf in sheep's clothing, by Otto's Tales at PragerU

https://youtu.be/v6Pa7GbGLVo?si=g2z_zRP4a1-Rc4xo

Five-to-elevens: A story about a wolf in sheep's clothing, by Otto's Tales at PragerU

https://youtu.be/v6Pa7GbGLVo?si=g2z_zRP4a1-Rc4xo

Songs to support the story

Under-fives: Jesus is my friend always, by GOKidz Asia

https://youtu.be/LdqkJ8-r2q0?si=Hr_3XM8eKTgVn9fx

Five-to-elevens: My best friend (Hillsong Kids), by Southall Kids Ministry

<https://youtu.be/r66lCyFzfxw?si=olWNsMDMvP69zAon>

Explore – ways into the theme

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

A new way to explore the theme

Explain that the reading today was warning Christians to be wise because sometimes there are people who say they are speaking for God but who are not. It is an opportunity to think about how good we are at knowing people and choosing our friends wisely, especially at the start of this new school year.

How good are you at making judgements and wise decisions?

Starter activity – two truths and a lie, discernment game

You will need your leaders to create three facts about themselves: two are not true and one is true.

They tell the children the three facts, who then have to try to guess which ones are true and false.

How well do you know your leaders?

Cake or not cake game

Another discernment game could be to use this site to have some fun seeing if you can guess which images are cakes and which are not.

You will need a laptop linked to a screen to play the game live.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/articles/cake_quiz

This passage is about prophets but we are using it to think about friends.

People are not always who they seem to be.

Good Friends and how to find them.

Draw around a person to create an outline. As a group, encourage the children to draw and write what makes a good friend inside the body outline. Chat as you complete it. Answers might include: kind, trustworthy, funny, gentle, compassionate, same interests etc.

Then around the outside draw or write how you can know the person is genuine, to be able to choose them as a friend. Answers might include: take your time to get to know them,

don't rush into it, ask questions to get to know someone, watch how they are with others, do they get you into trouble?

- What will you do this term when choosing new friends at school?

Your group might like to think about what kind of friend they are too. Here is a quiz they could take.

Childline friendship quiz <https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/games/friendship-quiz2/>

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).



Zootopia: Bellwether is the bad guy

<https://youtu.be/BX6S4qOCYcU?si=ck4icbsQla-U1LFq>

In *Zootopia*, the assistant mayor (Bellwether) is a sheep who epitomises the term "a wolf in sheep's clothing": on the surface, she appears to be a sweet and finicky, albeit overworked, sheep doing all she can to help the city, but inside, she hides a ruthless and embittered mind.

- I wonder who you trust as a friend?

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

- What was Jesus trying to help us think about with this parable? Why did he choose sheep and wolves as his illustration? What else could he have chosen?
- The passage talks about wolves disguised as sheep, attacking you. What might that look or feel like for us?
- This passage tells us that we are in control of our own choices. How do we choose friends well?
- Why did the wolves choose to dress up as sheep and not something else?

Wondering: ways to reflect on the theme

- What do you like dressing up as? If you could be any animal, which one would it be and why?
- Who can you speak to if someone is being unkind?
- When you have chosen the wrong friend, how can you put it right and move on?

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:

- Cotton wool balls or pads – what does the cotton wool feel like? Can you disguise objects around the room so that they look like a sheep?
- Disguises – explore a selection of hats, scarves and glasses – do you still look like you? What code name would you give yourself?
- Mirror – look in the mirror. Can you find your eyes? What colour are they? Is your hair long or short; curly or straight?
- Spot the difference games – use a printed spot-the-difference activity, or a spot-the-difference book such as *Where's Wally?*
- 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

Friends

You will need:

- A4 coloured or plain paper
- scissors
- pens



Use half a sheet of A4 paper and cut along its longest length. Fold the paper zig zag style until you have six equal sections. Draw a person onto the top section. Make sure the arms and legs/skirt (see image) extend to the full width of the paper, so they remain attached when cutting out. Cut out and then decorate to represent your friends.

As those gathered carry out this activity they should pray for their friends. Then close by bringing the prayers together by saying:

Dear Lord, help us to choose our friends well; friends who will care about us and support us each day. We thank you for all the friends that are represented here today. Help us to be good friends in return. Amen.

Spoken prayer

Ask the children to do thumbs up  and thumbs down  where they feel it is appropriate.

Dear God,

Thank you for giving us wisdom. Help us to use it well as we make friends. Your word warns us to watch out for those who seem nice but aren't on the inside. Help us to watch for wolves in sheep's clothing in our own lives. Help us to be good friends to all we meet. 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.

Disguised Biscuits

Using a fun selection of biscuit cutters, set your group the challenge of disguising their chosen biscuit. If you don't have time to make biscuits in your session, you could bring pre-made biscuits or buy shaped biscuits to decorate.

Offer the group a selection of sweets, sprinkles and coloured icing to disguise their biscuits. Perhaps your snowman will become a smiley face, or your unicorn a horse! Could you disguise your crocodile to look like a rainbow? Or your dinosaur to be a moustache?

For the biscuit dough:

225g plain flour

100g baking margarine

100g caster sugar

Vanilla essence or flavouring of your choice



Method (makes 15-20 biscuits – depending on the size of your cutters):

- Mix together the margarine and sugar, then add vanilla essence
- Slowly add flour until the mixture comes together into a ball of dough
- Cool the dough
- Roll out the dough evenly and cut shapes
- Bake at 180c or gas mark 4 until golden (10-15 mins depending on the size and shape)
- Cool on a rack before decorating

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 an experience they have had with a friend.
- Could you go fruit picking and only pick good fruit?

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Friendship** 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**

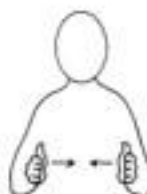
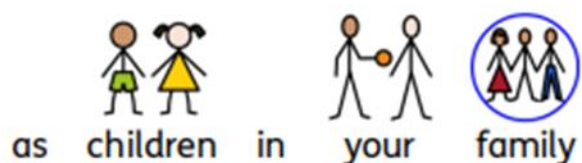
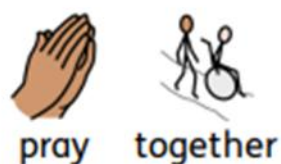
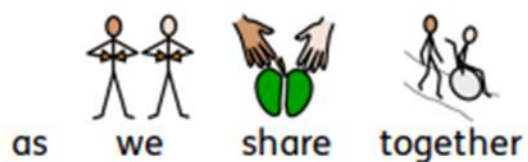
Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Balaam's Donkey**



The
United
Reformed
Church **Children**



The
United
Reformed
Church **Youth**



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



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