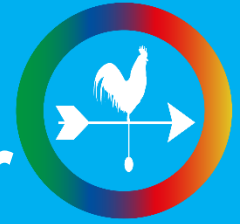




# Faith Adventures for Children Together



*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>

## Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 – A time for everything

Theme: There's a time for making choices

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

#### Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is a book of the Old Testament which is often believed to have been written by King Solomon – the name comes from the Greek word for 'Teacher'.

The passage we are looking at, Chapter 3 vv1-8, is one of the most famous passages. It talks about there being a time for everything – and then offers a list of what can be seen as 'opposites'.

Some of these opposites could potentially be triggers for members of your group and you will need to be aware of this when looking at the passage – particularly phrases like "There is a time to kill and a time to heal", "a time for war and a time for peace" and even "a time to cry".

We can't ignore such phrases, but need to be thinking how they might be within the lived experience of individuals with whom we are working.

We are using the passage to look at change and, in particular, how God is present at all times, whatever we are going through – and inviting us to think about how we include God when we have choices to make – because, every time we make a choice, something or someone changes as a result of that choice. And that is also true when someone else makes a choice that might affect us and invites us to think about how we deal with changes that are outside our control.



It is worth noticing that the passage mostly deals with ACTIONS rather than inaction. It suggests that doing nothing is not an option.

## 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 and online game

#### Would you rather?

This game can be played in person or online – in person you might like to designate one end of the room for one answer and the other for the alternative to give opportunity for a bit of running around. Online you might choose a different movement – e.g. hands on heads or hands on shoulders – for each answer. Ask the group the “would you rather” questions and get them all to respond. Then choose one or two of the group to say a bit more about their choice.

- Would you rather slide down a rainbow or sleep on a cloud?
- Would you rather walk through a tray of jelly or walk through a tray of baked beans?
- Would you rather be famous for doing something kind or for doing something clever?
- Would you rather give up watching TV or playing outside?



- Would you rather be a child your whole life or be an adult your whole life?
- Would you rather give up pizza for ever or never eat sweets again?
- Would you rather keep all your toys for ever and never have anything new or give all your toys away every year but have different new ones?
- Would you rather be silent all the time and never speak or talk all the time and never stop?
- Would you rather always giggle when people speak or always cry when people speak?
- Would you rather eat a worm or lick a slug?

## Experience

For this story we recommend using the Easy to Read Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+3%3A1-8&version=ERV>

### Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Bible for Kids by Raise Up Faith <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aVgbU-nYWA>

Five to elevens: the Voice, by Thomas Nelson Publishers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22eS8acYIKE>

A Time for Everything by Alabaster Co - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrpE0ulVpLo>

### Songs to support the story

Under fives: Bible Scripture Song for Children by His Little Sheep

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK\\_pmpF1S7o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK_pmpF1S7o)

Five to elevens: A time for everything - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkenkJVGmM8>

Turn! Turn! Turn! - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WB6jhbtDUZE>

## Explore

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

### A new way to explore the theme

#### Choose your path wisely

Read this story all together or as smaller groups. Each decision you make has a consequence and the story will direct you to continue, to an ending or maybe even back to the start of the story! The narrator must remember not to reveal the consequences until the group has made their decision.

#### A

Suddenly it came into view – shimmering temptingly in the evening sun. A door. It was in the middle of nowhere, with nothing to link it to a house or structure but it somehow looked as though it belonged. They were at the first point on the frayed map that they'd found all those months ago in their grandfather's cellar. If they had known the challenges they were going to face - they may have hidden it away, saving themselves and any future generations from having to make these choices. Angel looked at her brother; time was running out. They needed to decide! The Watson twins weren't far behind and if they found the magical wonders the map hinted at, who knew what they'd do. Should they:

1. *Destroy the map and return home? (Go to Ending A)*
2. *Trust the map and open the door? (Continue reading)*

#### B

Michael placed his hand tentatively on the door and pushed gently. With a soft whirring they were no longer in the clearing and the rollercoaster lurch in their stomachs was the only clue that they'd travelled anywhere at



all. The world that they found themselves in played with their senses allowing them to taste happiness and hear green music rustling through the trees. Before they could explore fully the map let out a melodic hum, focussing them on their task. They followed the path ahead until they reached two landmarks clearly marked on the map. A tunnel of trees that looked somehow forgotten and an archway of climbing roses with thick, waxy petals like curls of ice-cream. Should they:

1. *Step through the rose archway? (Go back to paragraph A)*
2. *Follow the tunnel of trees? (Continue reading)*

As they stepped into the cool shade of the trees, the children watched in amazement as the map's picture changed and all of the roses decorating its pathways disappeared completely. When they emerged, they stuck to the path ahead of them and with each step became more confident that the Watsons hadn't followed them through the door. They could barely believe the wonders around them: unicorns trotting casually by; fairies pausing their tasks to watch the visitors and trees shuffling past each other to get a closer look at the two children. But the mermaids stopped them in their tracks. They looked like they were having so much fun and they seemed to want them to join in! Surely it wouldn't hurt to stop and say hello. Should they:

1. *Ignore the mermaids and walk on? (Continue reading)*
2. *Stop and join the mermaid fun? (Go to Ending B)*

Slightly saddened, they continued along the road and to their astonishment noticed all the rivers and oceans marked on the map fade. The map was beginning to look empty. All that remained was their path and a mysterious building which seemed to be blocking their view of the treasure completely. The sun began to set gently, filling the sky with elaborate swirls of orange and pink. Against this colourful backdrop, a small cottage appeared in the clearing. There was no sight of an owner but smoke billowed softly from its chimney. As they got closer, they noticed three keys (all different shapes and colours) nailed to the door. Reaching out to take the largest key, the door creaked open letting the delicious smell of freshly baked cakes and bread escape as it did. Should they:

1. *Follow their noses and walk through the door? (Go back to paragraph B)*
2. *Choose a key from the door? (Go to Ending C)*

## **Endings**

### **Ending A**

They both agreed it was for the best but they were saddened by the thought of never seeing the treasures it had promised them. Michael hurriedly took the map from his sister's hand before she could change her mind. He built a small fire, feeding it small sections of the ancient parchment as it sputtered and gurgled. It was only as they were adding the final few pieces that they noticed that the door – which had gleamed brightly – seemed not only drab and lifeless but was becoming fainter by the second. Soon it would have disappeared completely.

### **Ending B**

Their conversation was very short and proved once and for all that mermaids are not to be trusted. The siblings unexpectedly found themselves swimming in the sea and could only sigh regretfully as the map slowly dissolved on impact with the water. The whole magical wonderland around them seemed to dissolve too and they found themselves back where they'd started; the door was nowhere to be seen.

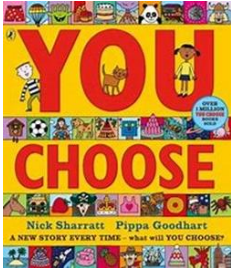
### **Ending C**

Holding the map closer to the door and its assortment of keys, the cracked paper began to glow and pulse until the smallest key of all floated from its position on the door – landing neatly in Angel's hand. When she placed the key gently on the map, it transformed before their eyes into a sturdy wooden chest with a smooth, domed lid. Michael and Angel looked at each other and opened it together. Inside was the most beautiful thing they had ever seen.....



## 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.



'You Choose' by Pippa Goodhart

Read by Emma Jane Wakelin [https://youtu.be/DKf\\_zyJGkzo](https://youtu.be/DKf_zyJGkzo)

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

- Is there a time for war? What would you go to war about?
- Sometimes we can't control what's happening, what choices do we have then?
- Can this Bible reading help us when we are thinking about changes of class, teacher etc?

### Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- Which is your favourite pair and can you think of a time when each of the pair would be the right thing to do?
- I wonder if you can share a time when you felt happy / sad? Angry / calm? When you chose to break something/mend something etc?
- I wonder who helps you make good choices about what to do and when to do it?

### 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:

- Watch or egg timer – to represent "time" (think about the different key times during the day or week and the different seasons throughout the year. What is your favourite season?)
- Stones – a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them in (scatter some stones around the floor. Gather the stones back together and form them into a pile)
- Lego bricks or Duplo bricks – a time to build and tear down (build a tower using the bricks, then knock the tower down)
- Plaster or bandage – a time to heal (think about those who look after us when we are hurt or feel poorly)
- Flower – a time to plant (give thanks for the flowers, trees, and all of God's creation)

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 (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)



# Express

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

## Creative prayer – turn, turn, turn

(Note for leaders: If your group is not used to praying out loud, it might be helpful if you have a couple of examples to offer to the group to start things off. If members of the group don't want to offer a prayer out loud, that should be respected.)

Invite the children to stand somewhere in your space. They don't need to stand in line, or in any order. Tell the group that they are going to be given the opportunity to pray for people, places or situations where they want change to happen. Praying is a choice that they can make – and praying can bring about change too. Their prayer can be a sentence, or just a word. When they have offered a prayer to the group, everyone should turn around to face a different direction – to demonstrate that change has happened and that there is a new way of looking at things.

## Spoken prayer

Ever-present God, who knows our hearts and minds  
Be with us when we have choices to make.  
Our choices can make ourselves, or others,  
be happy or be sad

### Help me choose

Hurt someone or be hurt by someone

### Help me choose

Show that we love or that we don't love

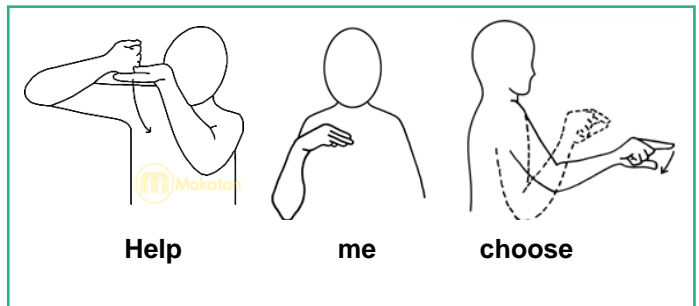
### Help me choose

Show that we care or that we don't care

### Help me choose

Ever-present God, who knows our hearts and minds

Be with us when we have choices to make and help us make the right one. 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.

## Freeze Frame

To give the group time to think a little more about the actions and choices in this week's reading, challenge them to produce the reading in a different media, maybe even to display it or share in in the church for the congregation to think about.

One option might be to use emojis. What emoji might represent each of the different actions? You could use standard ones from a phone or you could create your own.

Another option might be to freeze-frame the actions and photograph them in groups. How could you use your bodies to portray that option in a single photograph? Remember to check which children can be shown in



photographs and check you have consent forms filled in. If you don't have these permissions, perhaps the children could be the directors and position the adults to form the freeze frame instead.

Could you make a short video – think TikTok or Facebook Reel – that could be used on your church's social media account? Obviously, it will be essential to have signed permissions specifically for this purpose. See the URC CYW webpages for some sample consent forms.

Or how about using collage with images from magazines and newspapers, with the two halves of the page presenting a contrasting image or images? Think about what colours might be good to use, or what textiles might make a good backing, your collage can be slightly abstract as well as pictorial as long as it represents your thoughts and feelings about the two contrasting actions.

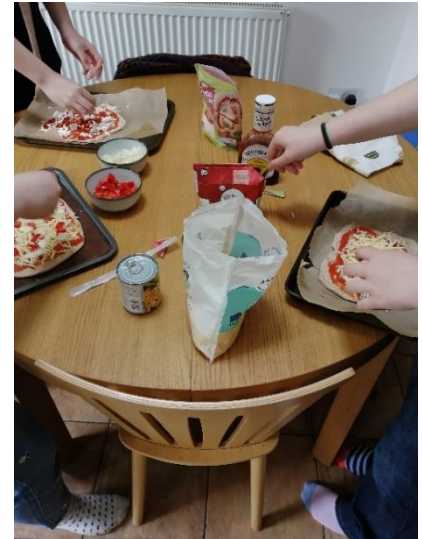
## Choices Pizza

- **You will need:**

- A choice of base: eg pitta or pizza base (gluten free should be an option if children have allergies or intolerances)
- A choice of sauce: eg tomato sauce or BBQ
- A choice of cheese: eg cheese or no cheese or vegan cheese
- A choice of toppings: eg ham, tomato, tuna, pepperoni, peppers

- **What you do:**

- Encourage the children to state their choices and their reasons for them. Although they have choice, they are limited by the things you've made available to them – some things they can control, other things they can't. Allow the children to make the pizza to their personal taste, reminding them that what's right for one person might not be right for everyone. Put the pizza on a piece of greaseproof paper with the child's name on for later identification! Cook in the oven on 200C for 10 minutes until base is crisp.



## 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:

There's a time to plant and a time to pull up plants – find an area of weeds and, wearing gardening gloves, pull the weeds up. Perhaps you could plant some wildflower seeds in the area instead.

There's a time to keep and a time to give away – why not make this a chance to sort out your bedroom and give some of your unwanted clothes or toys to someone who might like them, or to a charity shop?

We hope you enjoyed exploring the **Ecclesiastes** passage 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)

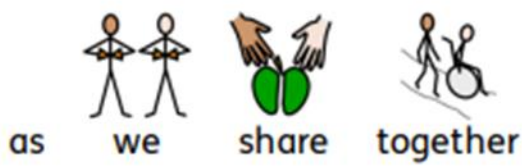
Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Solomon's prayer for wisdom**.



Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



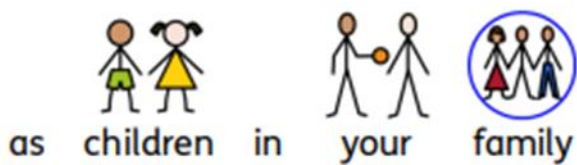
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



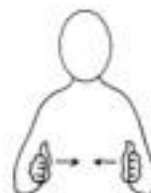
Amen



Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



Alternate hands back and forth





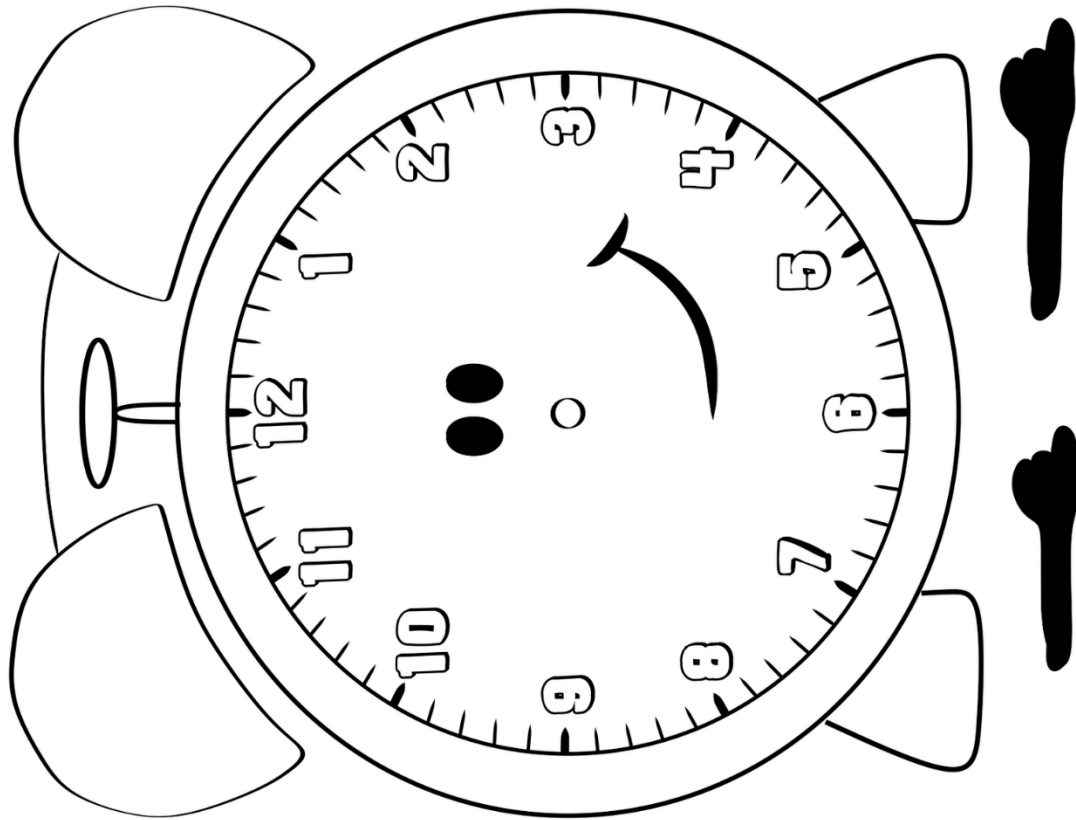


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