



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>

Ezekiel 37: 1-14 Valley of dry bones

Theme: The hope of the Holy Spirit as an influence in our lives.

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

Ezekiel

So far in this month's series, we have explored how we are all influencers, God as an influence and Jesus as an influence. In this episode we explore how the Holy Spirit is an influence especially in the dry areas of our lives.

In this passage we see the prophet Ezekial telling us of the time God gave him a vision. Ezekial was living amongst the Jewish exiles in Babylon, giving them words of warning and hope from God. He lived and prophesied with them for around 22 years speaking God's words into their situation. The prophesy in this chapter was giving hope about the future of God's people, how they would be brought back together as a nation.

We will use this prophesy as a way of exploring what other dry areas of life need God's Holy Spirit to breathe life and hope again.

This is released in September at the start of a new school term inviting children to consider where the dry patches are and where do they need God to move and breathe life and hope into.

Be aware of the children in your group and the potential areas that they might want to discuss in response to the story and theme, ensuring we provide an appropriate and safe space for sharing.



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 - Clapping game

Sit in a circle.

One person begins by clapping their hands together once. This "clap" is passed clockwise around the circle.

Explain then that anybody who chooses to can clap twice. This changes the direction the clap travels in (i.e., it goes back to the person it just came from).

When somebody claps three times in quick succession, then the person throws the clap across the circle to someone else.

When someone claps four times the clap misses a person.

When someone claps five times you clap with the person sat next to you.

Try to build up speed without making mistakes! You could make up your own rules for this game with the group.



Alternative game - Pick up sticks

Follow this link to an online version of pickup sticks.

<https://www.kongregate.com/games/cranberrygame/pick-up-sticks>

To play this game, you will need either giant pick-up-sticks if you have them, or simply use cocktail sticks, bamboo skewers or garden sticks or canes, depending on how big you want them to be and how many players you have.

To play this game online invite players try to pick up as many sticks within the 30 second time limit. Sticks at the top of the pile must be selected first before you can remove the lower sticks. Take turns and see who can reach the highest number of sticks.

Experience

For this story we recommend using the Contemporary English Version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2037&version=CEV>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Them Bones by Bible Block Stories

<https://youtu.be/R9BCayyHXfc?si=jRIUcPjDUAdft9p7>

Over fives: The Valley of Bones by The Biggest Story

<https://youtu.be/ChCfxddGNDY?si=38WQEuL6RMsasgwm>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Dry bones (Dem bones) by Muffin songs

<https://youtu.be/HrzBsUtUdts?si=VdANjYvJjUm4NuPG>

Over fives: Holy Spirit by City Kids Worship

<https://youtu.be/EUUrRMxKIo0?si=xgWaxA67Bx1eKdLp>

Explore

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

A new way to explore the passage

This passage is a great opportunity to have a go at some puppetry work. It is VERY simple to make and work this Paper Boy Puppet, even under fives can get involved in the making and working of the puppet boy.

Here is a video of one of our writer's churches nativity based on a puppet boy – to give you an idea of what you can do with them. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJozozqFUgU>



Explain that just as Ezekiel saw the bones come to life, rise up and walk; we are going to have fun making this pile of paper become a walking 'person'.

Start by making the puppet, one puppet for each group of three children.

You will need two long bits of paper and some sellotape.

Measure the strips of paper to be about the length of a trestle table. Thin lining paper works best.

Next work along the strip of paper crumpling it in your hands to make a long crumpled roll. Repeat with the second paper.

Then fold the paper roll in half and tape about 20-30cm to make a circle at the top. This will become your head / tummy. Repeat with the second roll.

Take the circle of one roll and place it up between the long 'legs' of the first roll. You will see that the top roll will make the head and arms shape with the bottom roll making the tummy and legs. Tape in place where the shoulders would be.

Now you are ready to bring your puppet person to life.

Slightly bend where the wrists, ankles and elbows would be to allow the puppet to move freely.

It takes three people to bring the puppet to life. One works the head (from the neck area) and one arm/hand, the second works the waist and other arm/hand and the third works the arms and feet by placing their hands on the feet area.

Practice making your puppet do simple movements, sit down, stand up, wave, begin to walk, try jumping and dancing and so on as you get better.

You will be surprised how easy it is to move them.

Here is a simple 3 minute video of how to make and move the paper puppet.

<https://youtu.be/pFEnZfS5IXQ?si=bLu6-EYpvt9Jm9vt>

Once you have found your confidence (the children will not want to stop playing with their puppet). You could use them to bring the story to life.

After puppet time is finished you could ask the group to consider how they 'influenced' the puppet when moving it, the difference they made to the roll of paper.

I wonder how the Holy Spirit influences our lives in similar ways?

Just as it took three of us to work our puppets, we have talked about how God is an influence, how Jesus is an influence and the Holy Spirit is an influence and the fact that all three work as an influence in different ways in our lives.

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.



Funnybones is a classic story where a lovable family of skeletons have an evening adventure.

Funny Bones by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

Read by Give us a Story!

https://youtu.be/gweOq4OT-H0?si=sbb7wEniAMmC_OpP

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

- What is the point of the bones in the story?
- How does it feel when people aren't listening to you? Does God always listen?
- What examples of God blowing the Holy Spirit have you seen in your life?
- What difference has the Holy Spirit made in this story?
- What other examples of the Holy spirit working in the Bible are there?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder what the dry areas are in your life or in the world that you would like God to blow the Holy Spirit into?
- I wonder if you've felt or seen God's spirit work in your life?

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:

- A dogs play bone - talk about the bones in the story and how they joined together to walk again.
- Bubbles – the Holy Spirit blow over the bones and amazing things started to happen.
- A Press Base Puppets. Or a version of paperboy – talk to the children about the bones rising up again.
- Windmills – we can't see the Holy Spirit but we see the effects it has.
- 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 (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)



Express

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

Paper Puppet Prayers

You will need:

- A4 paper torn in half lengthways
- Thread
- Scissors
- Pens

Sit and reflect on those things in your life that feel lifeless. Share them with God and imagine your dreams and your hopes starting to breathe and coming to life as possibilities. What might you need to do? Write these dreams and hopes onto one of the two pieces of paper. Who needs your prayers? Think about the people who might be sad or worried or sick and write their name onto the second piece of paper. When you have completed your prayers scrunch up the two pieces of paper lengthways.



Follow the instructions from the explore section to make a paper puppet from your two sections of prayers. You will see in the pictures where coloured thread has been used to show the joins of the two pieces of paper.

Think about how the Holy Spirit breathed life into the dry bones and ask the Holy Spirit to breathe life into your prayers.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, stir us up, fill us with your spirit and put life and energy into our prayers. Amen

As an alternative you could make concertina paper people for younger children.

Spoken prayer

Encourage everyone to lie on the floor if they are able

Dry Bones, listen to the word of God.

(wiggle your arms and legs)

Dry Bones, feel the breath of the spirit blowing. *(sit up)*

Dry Bones, be filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit.

(stand up and shake your arms and legs) **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.

Pasta people

You will need:

- Paper
- Glue
- Various types of pasta

What you do:

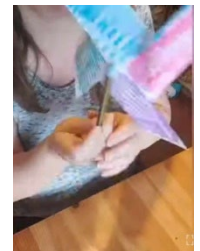
Create a pasta person using the different shapes of pasta. You could make a whole family or even create some animals.



In the story today we here about the dry bones coming to life and rise up and walk. Maybe your people could be walking, jumping or even dancing.

Exploring wind

Talk about how we can feel the wind and see the effects of the wind but cannot see the wind itself. The wind has an influence of whether we wear a coat, whether we should go outside and on such things as wind chimes. The Holy Spirit is the same, can be felt, effects seen but you cannot see the Holy Spirit itself. Explore this idea by experimenting with wind.



First make a windmill.

You will need:

- Scissors
- Square of paper
- Pens
- Pin
- Blue tac
- Pencils/ stick/ straw
- Fans with different settings.

What you do:

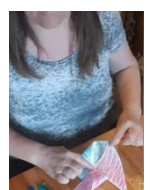
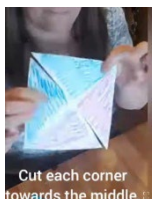
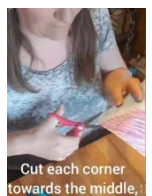
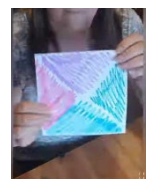
Push a blob of blue tac to the top of a pencil/ stick or straw.

Decorate both sides of a square of paper.

Cut from the corners towards the middle stopping an inch from the centre.

Fold the corners into the middle.

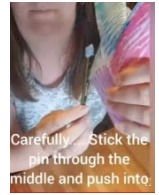
Secure with a pin.





Push the pin into the blue tac leaving a gap to allow the windmill to spin.

Now experiment with the windmill, try blowing on it, take it outside to see if there is any wind to move it, use a handheld fan on different settings and a large fan. What happens each time?



A video showing out to make the windmill can be found here:
https://youtube.com/shorts/z9Z_bXqM1Sc?feature=share

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:

- Perhaps you could make something for the garden that will move when the wind catches it, then each time that happens you could ask for the Holy Spirit to influence your life.
 - Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you about a time when they felt the holy spirit work in their lives.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Ezekiel** with us.

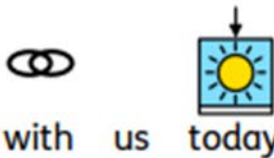
Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **1 John 3**

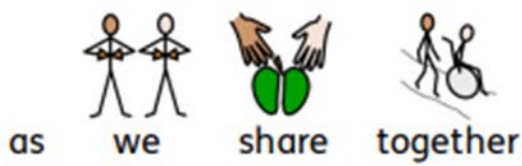




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



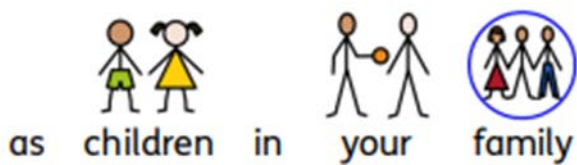
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



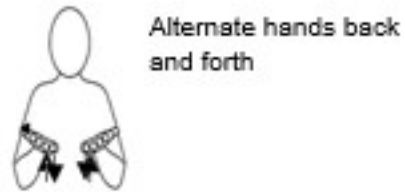
as children in your family



Amen



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



Alternate hands back and forth



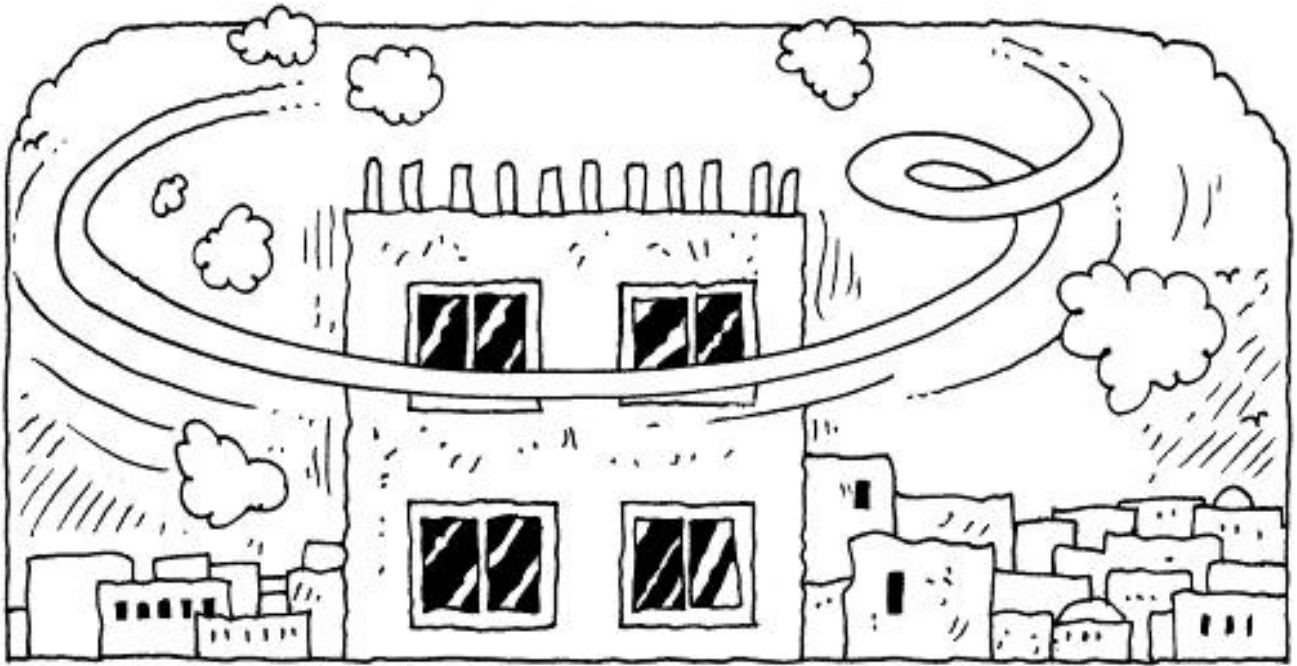


Illustration by lambsongs.co.nz via freebibleimages.com Richard Gunther and Jill Kemp

