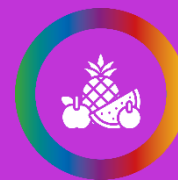




Faith Adventures Youth Resource



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

Embedded in Faith Adventures: Children Together, this youth resource is intergenerational in nature and designed to foster God-connection in church, home 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/How-To-FAYR

Isaiah 40:11

Theme: Strong yet gentle

Contents:

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

We are continuing our exploration of 'Fruits of The Spirit' by looking at Gentleness.

While there are many examples in the Old Testament of God being anything BUT gentle, the passage we are using from Isaiah introduces the idea of God being a good shepherd – a phrase echoed in Psalm 23 and one that we more commonly associate with Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus resets our relationship with, and understanding of, God and this passage sows the seeds for that to happen.

Your group might want to think about the ways in which gentleness is different from kindness and compassion – two of the other fruits of the Spirit we have explored in this series. One way might be to think about what the opposite of 'gentle' is.

It is possible that some members of the group will not have experienced gentleness at home but may have come across it at school or with grandparents.

Be aware, also, of children who find being gentle a challenge.

Together – prayer and games

Let's start our time with God and each other well

Use this opening prayer or encourage young people to open the session with a prayer of their own.

All mighty God,

Be with us as we learn more about you through stories and people in the Bible.

Help us to walk in your way and follow your path.

Be with us as we make decisions that affect our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Amen

Alternatively, you may join with the widgeit prayer found in Faith Adventures: Children Together, or else the Lord's Prayer found at the end of this session.

Active game – Out the other side

You will need:

- a hula hoop

It is easy to pass one person through a hula hoop – but how many can you pass through it at the same time? Place a hula hoop on the ground and invite the group (or as many as can fit) to stand in it. They must then lift the hoop so that they all pass through it until it is over their heads and they are free. The more people there are in the hoop, the gentler they will need to be.

Quieter game – Gently does it

You will need Jenga/Buckaroo/Kerplunk/Operation or similar game which requires you to be gentle to complete the game. Have some fun playing together drawing out the fact that we need to approach things which gentleness, that being heavy handed has consequences.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to Isaiah 40:11 in the Good News Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2040%3A11&version=GNT>

Isaiah 40:11 (Good News Translation)

11 He will take care of his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs together
and carry them in his arms;
he will gently lead their mothers.

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

Watch: Lead on Good Shepherd, by Patrick Mayberry
<https://youtu.be/UAJ7rwJWHZE?si=yKyJuH0fqluldzG4>

Questions for discussion

- Listen to this song and consider 'What does it mean to you, that God is our Good Shepherd?'

Explore

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

A new way to explore the theme

This is a new way to explore the Bible passage and the theme for this week.

A reflective story on Gentleness

You will need:

- a piece of green cloth for the pasture
- a small shepherd figure
- several sheep figures (you could use cotton wool balls for sheep if you do not have figures)
- one small lamb
- one larger sheep to represent the mother sheep
- a strip of brown cloth for the path
- a small stone or block for a hill

(Lay out the green cloth slowly and carefully.)

Once there was a kind shepherd. *(Place the shepherd on the cloth.)*

The shepherd looked after many sheep. *(Place the sheep around the shepherd.)*

Some sheep were big and strong.

Some sheep were quick on their feet.

Some sheep knew the way along the path.

But one little lamb was feeling very tired. *(Place the lamb slightly apart from the others.)*

Maybe the lamb was very little.

Maybe the path felt very long.

Maybe the lamb felt a little scared.

Perhaps it had wandered too far from its mother. *(Move the mother sheep a little distance away.)*

The shepherd saw the little lamb. *(Slowly move the shepherd towards the lamb.)*
 The shepherd did not shout.
 The shepherd did not hurry the lamb.
 The shepherd did not say, "Come on, hurry up."
 Instead... *(Pause. Lift the lamb gently and place it in the shepherd's arms.)*
 ...the shepherd picked up the lamb and held it close to his heart.

The flock kept walking. *(Move the shepherd and sheep slowly along the path.)*
 Slowly.
 Carefully.
 So gently.
 The shepherd walked slowly enough for the lamb.
 Carefully enough for the lamb.
 Gently enough for the lamb.
 And after a while... *(Move the shepherd towards the mother sheep.)*
 ...the shepherd brought the lamb safely back to its mother. *(Place the lamb beside the mother sheep.)*
 The mother sheep stayed close.
 The little lamb was safe and loved.

(Pause quietly.)

This reminds me of words from the prophet Isaiah:
 "The Shepherd tends their flock;
 they gather the lambs in their arms
 and carries them close to their heart;
 the shepherd gently leads them back to their mothers"

(Pause.)

Sometimes people think being strong means being loud.
 Sometimes people think being strong means rushing ahead.
 But the shepherd shows us a different kind of strength.
 Real strength can be gentle.

We can show gentleness in our actions, *(Open hands slowly.)*
 in our words, *(Touch fingers lightly to lips.)*
 and even in the way we think about other people. *(Place a hand over your heart.)*
 And when we are gentle with others,
 we help them feel safe and cared for too.

Modern parables

This section includes references to TV programmes, films, books, TED talks, TikTok etc aimed at this age group that will have been widely seen, or where a clip is available to use as a stimulus for discussion. You may also enjoy the picture book recommended for Faith Adventures: Children Together and explore the relevance of the story to the theme of the session in more depth – young people and adults are often well tuned in to the deeper meanings in materials aimed at younger people and the authors are often very aware of the adults reading the books to or with younger ones.

The Wild Robot (2024)

Watch this clip from *The Wild Robot*. Roz is a robot that has been stranded on an island. She finds an egg and her new mission is to look after it and the gosling inside.

https://youtu.be/7uM0qBn1nxs?si=zpD9ZHO_WDoRfM6A

We highly recommend watching the whole film.

Consider how the robot is made to be strong, even with weapons, but knew how to be gentle, even sheltering the gosling under her armour.

- How does the Bible show us how our big, strong God is gentle with us?

Group discussion

- How can we lead gently?
- Can you be strong and gentle?
- What does this passage tell you about God?
- What's the difference between kindness and gentleness?
- Why list both kindness *and* gentleness as separate Fruits of the Spirit?

Personal reflection

- When do we need people to be gentle with us?
- Is gentleness always the answer?
- How can you show you're being gentle?
- What's the opposite of gentle?

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Praying together

Prayers Respond to the theme by writing or saying a short prayer. Alternatively, use the creative prayer from Faith Adventures: Children Together for this session, or use the prayer activity below. Alternatively, light a candle and play some music while you listen and talk to God together.

Prayerful activity

Egg Prayer

Hold the egg in your hands. See how fragile it is.

God, we are small and fragile. Thank you that you hold us safe in your hands.

Hold the egg at either end between your thumb and finger and gently press. The egg should not break.

God, you are strong – nothing can destroy you. But you are gentle with us.

Hold the egg in your palms. Cover the egg fully.

Thank you that you hold us gently in your hands.

Amen

Spoken prayer

God of gentleness,
thank you that you lead us with care,
hold us close when life feels heavy,
and never treat us harshly.

In a world that can be loud, angry and impatient,
help us to be different.
Teach us to speak with kindness,
to listen before judging,
and to treat people with dignity –
especially those who are ignored, struggling or difficult to love.

This week, challenge us to choose gentleness in one situation
where we would normally react with anger, sarcasm or silence.
Help us to show your strength through compassion and self-control.

Amen.

Responding together

This is an opportunity for a social justice challenge, some research, craftivism, or a craft or STEM activity. You may have a specific activity chosen but free choice is also an option. Here are some suggestions for this week's theme. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

Research

Shepherding today is very different from how it was in Biblical times. But what are the main differences? Invite your young people to research the main differences between the role, and practices, of a shepherd in the two eras.

Gentle initials

You will need:

- biscuits
- icing
- hundreds and thousands
- letter stencils

What you do:



Ice a biscuit and then carefully try to make your initial using hundreds and thousands. It's important to take time and be very gentle to achieve this.

Now try making an initial with a stencil. Is it easier or harder when we're not being gentle and taking our time?

Challenge

Discipleship doesn't stop when you walk out of the church door – it is a part of everyday life. Take a challenge with you and try to make it part of your week.

You may think of your own suggestion of what you as an individual or a group might do in the coming week in response to what you have explored today. If not here are some suggestions:

- Use one of the “conversation starter” questions or the question below to talk with someone of a different generation or from a different setting and share your questions, thoughts, insights together. **Question: When do we need to be gentle and when do we need gentleness?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT Resources (jpit.uk) or *Commitment for Life* (cforl.co.uk)
- Try to be a gentle leader this week, finding opportunities to lead gently.

Thank you for exploring the **Isaiah** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk or by sharing it on www.bit.ly/FACT_FB

  
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

