



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

Title: Matthew 1: 18-25

Theme: Love actually

Contents:

Introduction	1
Together	2
Experience	3
Explore	4
Express	5
Handouts	9

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

Welcome to the final week of our Advent material. This week we'll be focusing on the final Advent candle – which traditionally symbolises love.

The passage we have chosen to explore doesn't actually mention the word 'love' at all, but it is implicit in the relationships involved; Joseph's love for Mary, Mary's love for Joseph and God's love for them both (which was reciprocated) and God's love for the world.

There is much we don't know about the relationship between Mary and Joseph. We can make assumptions that he was probably significantly older than she was (and she was likely to be about 14 years old). We don't know how they met, whether the marriage was arranged or a freely chosen relationship.

We can assume that Joseph's willingness to end the engagement quietly to spare Mary's blushes was a decision taken out of love. Mary's decision to remain with Joseph could have been pragmatic (she'd need a father for her child) but could also have signified love – and the hints in some of the Gospels that Jesus had a younger brother, suggests that the relationship was strong and long lasting.

Along with the suggestions in this session, there are many other activities and crafts on the theme to be found in the 'Love Is...' resource book published by the United Reformed Church. Each local URC was sent a copy but it can be downloaded here: [Love Is...: 2023 Children's and Youth Work Theme - United Reformed Church](#)

We hope that some of the suggestions offered here might be used to form part of a service led by your young people, or others.

It is possible that you will have children and young people as part of your group who have experience of difficult or dysfunctional relationships at home or as part of their friendship group. Spend some time thinking about how you will reconcile these experiences within the theme of 'Love'.

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 widget prayer found in the Faith Adventures: Children together or else the Lord's prayer found at the end of this session.

Either play these games or play a game that your group love to play

Active game - How much do you love me?

This is an adaptation of Grandma's Footsteps, just for a bit of love themed fun. Choose a leader to be 'IT'. They stand facing the wall at one end of the room. The group stand at the opposite end.

The group shout 'How much do you love us?'

The leader answers with a number e.g 'I love you 5 lots' and the group take that amount of steps forward, edging closer to the leader each time.

When ready, the leader will respond with 'I love you Forever!!!!' And will turn around trying to catch one of the group who are running away to the far end of the room again.

Whoever is caught can be the leader role next

Quiet game - Recognise my voice

The group sit in a circle and a leader sits in the middle blindfolded.

Someone is chosen to go first, they then say 'I love you', trying to disguise their voice. The leader tries to guess who it was.

If they guess correctly, they then become the leader.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to the Good News Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%201%3A18-25&version=GNT>

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 Birth of Jesus Christ

¹⁸ This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately. ²⁰ While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. ²¹ She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus—because he will save his people from their sins."

²² Now all this happened in order to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, ²³ "A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel" (which means, "God is with us").

²⁴ So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to. ²⁵ But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Good News Translation® (Today's English Version, Second Edition) © 1992 American Bible Society.

Listen: Do Not be Afraid, For I Have Redeemed You by Chet Valley Churches.

<https://youtu.be/v2rO0LhSWJ0?si=MsoreZjmzHejhN9e>

Watch: An angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream. Matthew 1:18-25 by Forest Park Studios.

<https://youtu.be/YmgW-LloLsc?si=9P9Z97xFo46iv7PF>

Questions for discussion

- What does it mean to be Gods?

- I wonder how many times we are told in the Bible to not be afraid?
- Mary was called, Joseph was called.....I wonder if you feel called?

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.

Alternatively, you may wish to use the explore section from this week's Faith Adventures: Children Together to guide your exploration of the theme this week.

It's Christmas week and a lot is happening, therefore the explore section is a simple and straight forward activity which could be lifted and used in many settings.

The following video clip is a Christian remake of the famous Christmas adverts we see on telly. This has taken inspiration from a John Lewis advert and used to depict God's love being gifted to us at Christmas in the shape of Jesus. Watch the clip together and use the following questions to prompt discussion.

John Lewis Christmas advert 2015 – remake by Dan Rackham:

https://youtu.be/KoxTF_31yyE?si=JmmWmqRjgp0wkgoR

- Why is Christmas about love?
- How do we know God loves us?
- How can we share God's love this Christmas?
- What sorts of love are shown in today's Bible passage?
- 'Mary and Joseph were needed to bring God's love to the world', what are your thoughts on this statement?

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.



Lava by Kuana Torres Kahele, Napua Greig, James Ford Murphy
2014 DisneyMusicVEVO

https://youtu.be/uh4dTLJ9q9o?si=G_ddEjmDoZwtg3Lw

Lava is an unexpected love story, with lots of waiting. Look back to the beginning of Matthew's gospel – how many generations did God's people wait for Jesus?

Group discussion

- John 3:16 says 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' What else could God have done to show love to the world?
- What is the difference between liking and loving?
- What different types of love can you see in the Bible passage?

Personal reflection

- I wonder if Joseph loved Mary? How did he show it?
- I wonder how we can share God's message of love?

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Praying together

Prayer 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.

Loving God, we thank You for the gift of Jesus, born into our world to bring light and hope.

In Matthew's gospel, we see Joseph's love shown in his courage, his kindness, and his choice to trust Your plan.

We thank You for the reminder that real love is not just about feelings, but about actions – patience, forgiveness, and choosing what is right even when it is hard.

Lord, we know it isn't always easy to love the people around us. Sometimes friends let us down, family life feels messy, or the world seems too full of anger.

But You call us to be people of love – people who reflect Jesus in what we say and do.

So today, we ask: Fill us with Your Spirit, so that our words build up, not tear down.

Give us courage to show kindness, even when it goes unnoticed.

Teach us to forgive as You forgive us.

And may we, like Joseph, trust Your guidance and step into the future with faith and love.

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.

In the UK, we really only have one word for love – but it encompasses a broad spectrum of different emotions and actions. We don't love a football team in the same way as we love a parent, for example.

Greek love

The Greeks have many different words for different types of love. Using the internet, or other research options, see how many you discover – and how many you recognise.

Which one do you think best defines God's love for us?

Stained glass heart biscuits

You will need:

- 175g/6oz chilled butter, cubed
- 225g/8oz plain flour
- 75g/2¾oz caster sugar
- one tsp vanilla extract
- one large egg, beaten
- about twenty boiled sweets (in a mixture of colours)



For this recipe you will need a large and small biscuit cutter – stars, circles and other Christmas shapes all work well.

What you do:

You can prepare the biscuit mixture in advance to save time.

Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4. Line two baking sheets with baking paper.

Place the butter, flour and sugar in a food processor and pulse until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add the vanilla and beaten egg and pulse until it forms a smooth dough.

Using a rolling pin, roll out on a lightly floured work surface until the dough is about 5mm/¼in thick. Use your large cutter to cut out the shapes. Then use a small cutter to remove the middle (where the 'glass' will sit). If you don't have any small cutters you can cut the middle out by hand, leaving about 1cm of biscuit around the edge. Use a cocktail stick or skewer to make small holes if you want to hang them by thread or ribbon.

Re-roll any scraps of dough to make more biscuits.

Separate the sweets into their colours and put them in plastic bags (one colour in each bag). Crush using a rolling pin until broken into fine grains. Sprinkle these grains in the middle of each biscuit in a generous layer that covers the hole. You can stick to one colour per biscuit or create a rainbow effect by mixing the colours. Bake for about 15–18 minutes or until the biscuit is a pale golden brown and the



sweets have melted.

Leave to stand on the trays for about 5 minutes, or until firm enough to move. Carefully transfer to a cooling rack and leave to cool and firm up.



While you are eating them remember for God so loved the world that they gave their only son.

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. **How have you seen love demonstrated?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT, Resources (jpit.uk) *Commitment for Life* cforl.co.uk
- Invite each young person to think of *one person* in their life who needs to experience love this week. Encourage them to take one small step – a kind message, a prayer for that person, or an act of help – as their way of living out Joseph's example of love in action.

Thank you for exploring the **Matthew** 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

