



# Faith Adventures Youth Resource

*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: <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Faith-Adventures-How-To-FAYR.pdf>

## Psalm 139 – God made me and knows me

**Theme:** we have layers that make up our identity but God knows and loves the inner us.

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### Introduction: What would be helpful to know before we begin?

Psalm 139 is a beautiful, yet in many ways challenging, psalm. It is a song of praise, written, it is believed, by David as he contemplates the awesomeness of God and the degree of involvement of God in his very being and existence, since before he was even conceived. It reminds us that God is everywhere and knows all things – simultaneously a reassuring and a somewhat intimidating thought.

Some people may wrestle with this psalm. There are children, young people and adults who may not be happy with the way they formed in the womb or have developed since – you may even be among them. It can be a challenge to consider that God knew this, and was involved in creating them just as they are, when they themselves feel at odds with their body, mind, spirit or the life they were born into. This may include those who have a physical or intellectual disability or difference, who have body image issues, who have genetic uncertainty or inherited features, who have poor mental health, who are unable to live with their birth parents, who may not identify with the gender they were born with or the assumptions people make about their gender or sexuality or identity. Any sense of ‘not being comfortable in their own skin’ has the potential to make this a challenging psalm and a challenging session and some sensitivity and awareness will be needed, no matter whether you understand this or not.

This is an opportunity to be unique and unhindered in what is done and said in this session, though obviously not where this is hurtful or harmful to others. Feel free to explore wherever this psalm takes you, without judgement. This may be challenging to you if you are a leader, but that’s OK – you may learn and grow through it too.

Explore the idea that our identity is formed through several layers – things like race and gender, for example, are individual layers, together with character, environment, likes and dislikes, etc. But God is the only one who knows who we are when all those layers are peeled away – our soul, the actual 'us'. We all have a spiritual core which is of God.

Almost all children and young people, and most adults too, will have something about them that they wish was different, but each one of us has a value to God just as we are.

There is a saying that God doesn't make mistakes. How do you see God's positive in things that others might see as negative? Society tries to drum out of children characteristics like being gobby, anti-authority etc (and the church can be particularly guilty of this) but these could prove to be positives in the things God may ask them to do later such as speaking out against injustice etc. Can you help each other discern what God particularly loves about them?

## Together

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

If used in a mixed-age group, then young people can support younger ones in using the gathering prayer in Faith Adventures: Children Together. If used in a youth group, you could 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*

### **In-person game – this is a variation of the game in Faith Adventures: Children Together**

Everyone needs a copy of this bingo sheet and a pencil. Within the group, try to find someone different to match each category and get them to sign the relevant box. There is a free box for someone who doesn't match any box already filled in.

Has short hair	Can whistle a tune	Can speak another language	Is wearing jewellery	Can skateboard
Can play an instrument	Has met a celebrity	Has an unusual pet	Can wiggle ears	Is left handed
	Has caught a fish	Doesn't use social media	Gets up early on a weekend	Can do a cartwheel

## Alternative game

See this week's Faith Adventures : Children Together for an alternative game of Human Guess Who

# Experience

Research different versions of this reading on <https://www.biblegateway.com/> Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

The Message: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A+13-16&version=MSG>

**Watch:** Psalm 139 Lego version by CodeCUK  
<https://youtu.be/7eQ7D-A00Bw?si=9gVurFyiXjEK7H1n>

**Listen:** Far too Wonderful by Shane and Shane  
<https://youtu.be/GmsgYY-INf8?si=UUKclayJmnOjs2os>

# Explore

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

## A new way to explore the theme

There are many layers to who we are, some of those layers are put on to protect us, some are taken off as we allow ourselves to be vulnerable in front of others. Some layers are put on to fit in with those we are with. But who are we when all the layers have been stripped away? God sees past all of the layers.

Have a selection of pictures representing different things people can put on and take off to explore the idea of layers.

Warm coats, light coats, umbrellas, face masks, sun hat, sunglasses, scarves, things for your hair, bright tops, different hats, blankets.

As you look at these things, how might you use them? Think about what other, more metaphorical, ways we "put on" a layer – might we assume a different 'identity' in different settings (e.g. are we different with our parents than we are with our friends?), might there be times when we choose to 'mask' the real us to make ourselves feel less vulnerable?

Use different mediums to create 'the real you' - design the person however you wish and include words which would help to describe your personality and character rather than just physical attributes. Discuss "God's book" – like a photograph album or yearbook with everyone in it. What do you think your page might look like?

## 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.

**Watch:** NWTCTube – Butterfly Circus

<https://youtu.be/cnzEIqbBVK0?si=n3vrjdVqqbJOXCFm>

### Questions for discussion

How do you feel watching this?

Where do you see God in this clip?

What does this film teach us about how we should view others?

Does this film raise any questions about how we view identity in another?

### Talking together: Going deeper

Does this Psalm work for people who are not comfortable with the way they developed in the womb? Are they also fearfully and wonderfully made?

What does identity actually mean? Which parts of our identity are due to nature and which are due to nurture? Can we change our identity?

The passage tells us that God hasn't made a mistake with us. (God saw, and it was GOOD) I wonder how we celebrate the uniqueness of each other and ourselves? Which is easier?

### Conversation starters

How do you find your own identity?

Why do we sometimes feel we need to be the same as the crowd?

What assumptions do people make about you? What might you make about others?

## Express

How do we respond to what we've discussed and express our faith personally?

### Praying together

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.

### Creative Prayer

Our identity is built up in layers – only God knows the true 'us', what we might choose to call our soul. In the centre of a piece of paper, draw round a jelly baby. Using different colour pens, draw bigger and bigger outlines around the central figure. In the space between each of these lines, write the following words: inheritance - appearance – family – friendships – education – social life – media – life experience – society . As you draw each line and write each word, offer to God the influence these things have upon you, ask that God will keep you true to the person God created you to be, thank God for the wonderful creation that is you.

## 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. See Faith Adventures: Children Together for a craft and a STEM activity which may also be appropriate. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

If possible, read the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. Inspired by a real child with a facial difference, this book deals with the story of Auggie who was initially home schooled and chronicles the first year in school in fifth grade. It deals with friendship, bullying, conflict and growing independence for a young person who looked different from everybody else.

What people are you aware of who have not been held back by features of identity which make them stand out or seem different? Find out, for example, about Isaac Harvey MBE (a former member of URC Youth), Nick Vujicic, Rosie Jones, URC Minister Alex Clare Young. All people have differences that make them uniquely them. Regardless of who we are, we can live our best life, even when people might try to convince us our particular differences make us less capable or less valued (and sometimes those people can be ourselves and our own self-doubt).



In the poem "A Summer Day" by Mary Oliver, we come across the memorable line "Tell me, what is it *you* plan to *do* with *your one wild and precious life*?". How would YOU answer this question?

## 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: **Do you think your identity changes depending on who you are with or where you are? What part of your identity never changes?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](http://Resources.jpit.uk) Commitment For Life [cforl.co.uk](http://cforl.co.uk)
- During the week, stay aware of when you are 'putting on' a layer of identity and when it might be worth taking the risk of showing the 'real' you.

Thank you for exploring the Psalm passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk) or by sharing it on [https://bit.ly/FACT\\_FB](https://bit.ly/FACT_FB)