



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 23: The Lord's my shepherd.

Theme: A story about God being with you.

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

Psalms

Over the next two sessions, in our theme of 'stories', we will be looking at sheep and shepherds – starting this week with the most well-known psalm of all, Psalm 23: "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

This can be read as a 'bedtime story' – that gives us comfort before going to sleep at night and makes us feel safe.

It is generally accepted that King David wrote this psalm. David was originally a shepherd so was able to write it with some experience of the role of the shepherd and, interestingly, wrote the psalm from the perspective of the sheep – with God as the shepherd. The next session's material will be exploring what it might have meant to the people who were listening, and to us today, when Jesus tells the story of The Good Shepherd. The two stories are linked – and you can see how they are connected in this Godly Play video: <https://youtu.be/4I9GiHqIshU?si=f10PZ-GDtyzZDQdz>

There are positive and negative images in the psalm, emphasising that God is with us in both the good times and the bad times. Some of the imagery may be difficult for members of your group who are scared of the dark, or are themselves experiencing 'dark times'. Similarly, the idea that God will prepare a banquet or provide everything we want might be difficult to understand for those who are experiencing food poverty and the cost of living crisis at home.



The psalm is written in a very personal way: look at how often a personal pronoun is used (The Lord is MY shepherd). This psalm assures us all, individually, of God's presence and support in our own life.

Further ideas on how to explore this reading can be found at [Families_on_Faith_Adventures_-_week_67_-_Forever_Love_.pdf \(urc.org.uk\)](https://www.urc.org.uk/families-on-faith-adventures-week-67-forever-love.pdf)

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

See this week's Faith Adventures : Children Together for suitable games for this theme.

FACT details an **obstacle game**, have a read and then encourage your group to design their own obstacle course.

Alternative game - alphabet

Sit in a circle. Go around the circle using the letters of the alphabet starting the phrase with God gives me...finish the sentence by describing specific items and perhaps using a verb or an adjective to describe the item eg God gives me a tasty tomato... a dancing daffodil...

Experience

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

Watch:

Stand by me by Ben E King https://youtu.be/7rZyI7kPZMI?si=wYEX_jDRsTkjDGSL

Dear Evan Hansen, You are not alone <https://youtu.be/R83hecEr8bY?si=b-2HPbrYvFDd17ic>



Questions for discussion

Watch the YouTube video and listen to the lyrics of the song.

- I wonder if you know the story of Dear Evan Hansen? If not spend a few minutes researching the film and finding out what the Connor project is. Which character do you relate to?
- One of the lyrics in the song says 'stand by you' - What does it mean for you?
- One of the lyrics in the song says to 'be found' - What does it mean to you?
- Do you know of any other songs or films which explore the topic of loneliness and being supported by others?

Explore

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

A new way to explore the theme

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.

Alternatively:

Follow the meditation in the FACT session and then have a go at writing your own version of Psalm 23

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.

Short Ted Talk about loneliness, You are not alone in your loneliness by Jonny Sun Loneliness in an online world and how we can all be alone together.

https://youtu.be/gi6rMXu_veE?si=xR-4-X6TbI6pXyJI

Talking together: Going deeper

- I wonder why David felt he needed to write this Psalm.
- Why does the shepherd need a rod **and** a staff? Surely, he just needs a staff.
- I wonder if you feel as though God is with you?

Conversation starters

- What is God telling us in this Psalm?
- Psalms are one creative way of sharing your feelings and emotions – how would you share your emotions and feelings?
- Is the Psalm something which is relevant for today's world?



Express

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

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.

Spoken prayer

Shepherding God,

Sometimes I need direction. Sometimes I need to be shown where and how to relax and feel safe. Sometimes I need to know that, even though I am scared, you are at my side and you will never leave me.

Sometimes I forget that.

The world I live in is not always a nice place. I can feel lost. I can feel alone. I can feel scared. In those times, Lord, let me feel your presence and protection.

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. 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.

“you welcome me as an honoured guest and fill my cup to the brim.”

Some Bible translations have this verse as “My Cup Overflows” – the aim of this activity is to not be the one that makes the cup overflow. Leaders can take part in this activity, too.

You will need:

- a paper napkin/paper towel/blotting paper (anything that will show up when it gets wet)
- an empty glass
- cups of water (one for each participant)



What you do:

Place the empty glass on the paper napkin in the centre of the table. Fill it half full with water (or leave it empty if you want the game to last longer).

Participants take it in turns to add a little water from their own cup to the glass – without making the glass so full that it spills onto the paper napkin.

The activity ends when someone fills the glass to ‘overflowing’.

You can watch a video of the activity here: https://youtu.be/_kn-LGRVcyE?si=ixhGiUD6xqOQrwbN



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:

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- 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. **When have you felt God was with you?**
 - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](http://Resources(jpit.uk)) Commitment For Life cforl.co.uk
 - Could you create a video or podcast focusing on Psalm 23? Perhaps it could be used in a service or future group session?
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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 or by sharing it on https://bit.ly/FACT_FB

