

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>

Isaiah 58:5-8 Fasting

Theme: Stand out for God

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

Isaiah

The book of Isaiah which can be found in the Old Testament is considered a prophetic book, verses are often cited in reference to Jesus' birth and him being the saviour of the world. The book does focus on sinful ways but also includes the message of forgiveness and hope.

This month we will be focusing on food and fasting. It is important to bear in mind that fasting does not always mean giving up food. In fact, this should be discouraged in children and young people who are still growing. Instead this session focuses on letting go of what we no longer need and instead shifting our focus back onto God and the needs of others. Almost like a spiritual detox. When we do this we are letting God's light in and giving it an opportunity to shine through us, and be seen by others.

Talking about food, fasting and denying ourselves may be a trigger for some – especially those who have challenges or/and a food related diagnosis.

It is worth understanding what sackcloth and ashes means, this website gives a very concise explanation. <https://www.gotquestions.org/sackcloth-and-ashes.html>

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 and online game

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

Experience

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

You may choose to have a candle lit for all to focus on while listening to this song.

Listen: Light a Candle in the Darkness, Garth Hewitt

<https://youtu.be/B0agQyxTVwY?si=tarBQDbPc8MalfaL>

Questions for discussion

- Candles stand out in the darkness, how can we stand out for God?
- How did Jesus stand out for God?

Explore

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

A new way to explore the theme

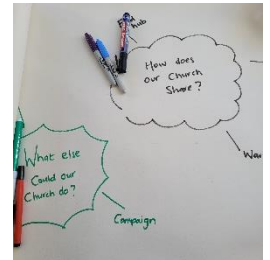
You may wish to use the explore section from this week's Faith Adventures: Children Together to guide your exploration of the theme this week.

Alternatively:

This week's passage from Isaiah, talks about the fact that religious practices such as fasting aren't enough on their own – we can't forget about justice. Taking care of others and making sure that things are fair, is incredibly important. Whilst exploring together, there is the opportunity for the group to think about things that are already happening in their church and identify areas where more could be done to share what the church has.

Sit together as a group, sharing food or snacks together (food such as tear and share bread, or a plate of snacks in the middle of the gathering, will encourage the group to consider whether the snack has been shared with everyone). On large pieces of paper, or a roll of paper, encourage the group to think about two questions:

- **How does our church share?** Are there ways that the church is using its building, time or money to help share with others – making sure they have enough? Are there groups that happen in the church building which support church members to share food together or share skills? Are there groups that help members of the community share food or time together - such as a community meal or a warm space?
- **What more could we do?** Is there more that the church could be doing? Are there activities that the group think would really help the community? For older groups, you could use the JPIT steps *How to Change the World*. They will help with recognising problems and concerns, as well as thinking through what could be done to resolve them.



[Youth Resources – Joint Public Issues Team](#)

Creative communication

After answering the questions as a group, think about who you will share the information with. Is there a church leader or volunteer who would be able to help you to think about what to do next?

The JPIT page offers advice for getting in touch with your local MP, about issues that your group are concerned about, perhaps talking about a food bank at your church or coffee morning have prompted you to think more generally about food poverty in your area – or social isolation. The page also suggests creative ways to communicate, so that your message is noticed.

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: Blindsight – thanksgiving clip

<https://youtu.be/agidYAqGOI8?si=Iro-8c9wiWrZ1Ru4>

- I wonder what you are thankful for?
- I wonder what conversations you share over a mealtime?
- I wonder why it was so important for the man in the video to sit at the table to eat?
- I wonder why the mum decided to move everyone to the table?
- I wonder if you are changed by the actions of someone else?

Talking together: Going deeper

- Should we be fasting?
- Is it easier or harder to give up something individually or as a group?

Conversation starters

- What helps you to feel like you are part of a community?
- What about fasting and other faiths?

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.

You will need :

- Ashes (made from burning strips of paper in a bowl and then mixing them with a little oil)
- or Charcoal

Dip your finger in the ash and make a cross on the palm of your hand.

Say the prayer together or a leader or member of the group could say the first line and everyone joins in each time with the 'Lord we are sorry'

We have not loved you or others as much as we could

Lord, we are sorry

We have not helped others as Jesus helped us

Lord, we are sorry

We have been impatient

Lord, we are sorry

We have been angry

Lord, we are sorry

We have been jealous of others

Lord, we are sorry

We have told lies

Lord, we are sorry

We have forgotten to pray

Lord, we are sorry

Thank you Lord that you love us and hear us when we pray.

We are sorry for things we have done that have hurt you and others.

Help us to stand out for you.

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.

Poster



Choose an event or activity that currently takes place at your church, which is a good example of the type of sharing discussed in this week's passage, and make a poster to advertise it. You could use an online design tool, such as Canva – or design a poster using any art and craft supplies you have available.



Alternatively, you could design a poster to raise awareness of an issue discussed during your time Exploring Together.

Start Sharing - Herman cake

You will need:

- (Starter Ingredients)
- 460g plain white flour
- 500ml warm milk
- 230g sugar
- 90ml warm water
- 2 tbsp easy bake yeast



What you do:

This is called a Herman cake is it a special cake to make and share with others over and over again. You are starting it in your group.

Mix all the ingredients together in a large bowl, cover loosely with a clean tea towel (it will need the wild yeasts in the air to stay alive), and place in a warm place. It looks like goop when it is starting to grow.

You need to look after your cake over the next 10 days.

It may be that you organise for group members to look after it, stirring love into the starter mix. Maybe they can pass it on to each other, meeting together on day 10 to make it together.

Day one

Make sure Herman is in a large bowl, loosely covered with a clean cloth and in a warm place.

Day two and three

Give Herman a good stir with a wooden spoon

Day four

Herman needs feeding. You will need to add in:



- 120g plain flour
- 225g caster sugar
- 225ml milk

Stir Herman well and cover again with his cloth.

Day five, six, seven and eight

Each day give Herman a good stir with a wooden spoon.

Day nine

Herman needs to be fed again so repeat the ingredients from day four and give him a good stir. Divide the mixture into four portions, save one portion for making the cake on Day 10, give three portions away to friends.

Day 10 - Now you need to make your cake.

You will need to add:

- 225g caster sugar
- 240g plain flour
- 2 eggs
- 150ml cooking oil
- 2 heaped tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cooking apples, peeled, cored and chopped

Then you can add any of the following:

- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 2 tsp mixed spice
- 40g chopped nuts
- 150g raisins or sultanas
- 60g cherries, or anything else that takes your fancy, (e.g. chocolate chips)

Mix everything together well, pour into a large, greased cake tin that measures 26cm x 26cm.

Sprinkle 80g melted butter and 3 tbsp soft brown sugar over the top of the cake and place in a preheated oven at 180°C, gas mark 4 for 35-45 mins until it feels springy to the touch.

Leave to cool in the tin for ten minutes and then turn out onto a wire rack. Taste the love in every bite.

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. **Have you ever experienced someone else standing out for Jesus? What did that look like?**

- Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://resources.jpit.uk) Commitment for Life cforl.co.uk
 - Today's session looked at things you may need to let go of, you may have identified something and will spend this week trying to put this into practice. Keep a video journal expressing how you feel each day as you strive to do this.
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Thank you for exploring the **Isaiah** 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