



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: Psalm 121: 1–8

Theme: God provides... help and protection

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning? Please use this section as a reference and information guide for leaders only – we don't expect it to be read out to the children.

The book of Psalms is a collection of sacred songs and poems written over many years by different authors. Although many people contributed to the Psalms, King David – once a shepherd boy chosen by God to be king – wrote over half of them. Psalm 121 is one of these much-loved psalms.

For the Israelites, Psalm 121 was more than just a song. It was sung by pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem to worship God at the temple during important festivals. Imagine hundreds of travellers walking together along dusty roads, singing these words as they climbed towards the city. They sang to encourage one another and to remind themselves that God was with them on every part of their journey.

As they travelled, the pilgrims faced many dangers – steep hills, rough paths, changing weather, wild animals, and the threat of robbers. The pilgrims' confidence was not in the hills, the road, or

even in their own strength. Their help came from the Lord – the creator of heaven and earth. The rest of the psalm describes God as the one who watches over people. God never sleeps, never looks away, and never leaves God's children unprotected. God is their constant keeper, guarding them wherever they go.

This message is especially reassuring at a time of year when Halloween can encourage people to focus on fear, darkness, or the unknown. Psalm 121 reminds us that, as Christians, our attention need not be on what frightens us but on the God who watches over us. Our security is found in God. We do not need to live in fear because God is our helper, our protector, and our refuge.

As we explore Psalm 121 together, we will discover that God's promise is not that life will always be easy, but that God will always be with us. God's care covers every part of our lives, and we can trust God to watch over us wherever we go.

Triggers: There may be children or young people in your group who do not feel safe or protected. In addition, children may disclose issues in this session as you discuss who or what they might need protection from. N.B. There are many ideas included in this session; please don't feel you need to include them all in your session.

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 – Dodge ball variation: Protection, with places to hide

You will need:

soft balls
bean bags or scrunched up paper

Ask your group to stand in a circle, with two people in the middle. One of the people in the middle is the person to be protected; the other person is the shield. Those standing in the circle try to hit the person in the middle while the bodyguard attempts to block the attack. If the person being protected gets hit at any point the bodyguard returns to the circle,



the person who was being protected becomes the bodyguard, and a new person to be protected is chosen from the circle.

Cat & Mouse – an active tag game with ‘safe spaces’

You will need:

tails for each mouse (lengths of ribbon, T-towels etc.)

Designate an area of play – ensuring the area is safe and free from clutter. Within this space allocate a mouse hole (safe space). Select one or two cats depending on your group size and give everyone else a tail. The tails can be tucked into the back or side of waistbands or held in a hand. The mice run around the area, avoiding the cats who are trying to get their tails. Once a mouse has lost its tail, they become a cat and join the chase. The mouse hole can be entered into by a mouse where they will be protected from any cat.

The bomb

This is a simple game that needs no resources and plays with the Psalms' imagery of God offering shade and protection.

Ask the group to stand in a space in the room.

Then ask them to look around the room and choose one other person who will be their bomb. Now choose a second person who will be their shield.

When you blow a whistle, the group all move around the room.

The aim of the game is to keep the shield between you and the bomb.

After some time, shout freeze. Everybody stops.

If your shield is not between you and your bomb you are out. (Just you, not your bomb or shield.) This will affect others. For example, if you were someone's shield then they now need to choose another shield before game can commence.

Trigger warning: If you are concerned about the word “bomb”, then you can say “glitter bomb”, or “water bomb”. Or you can say “the sun”, with the shield giving shade.

Quieter game – Storytime

This is a simple but fun storytelling game.

Gather the group to sit together and explain that we are going to tell some silly two-sentence stories.

Leader starts by showing what to do.

A “storyteller” says, “You’ll never guess what happened to me the other day.” They then say something awful and disastrous but humorous, e.g. “A giant bird flew overhead and pooped on me.”

Someone else needs to come to the rescue by saying “But...” They then give an explanation that makes everything OK again, e.g. “I pressed the magic button on my jacket and initiated my full body bubble wrap protection bubble.”

Then someone else has a go at being the storyteller.

Keep the game fast and silly. Your group will want to play this game again and again. If you think your group might need some help, you could prepare some storyteller sentences to place in the centre so that anyone can pick one if they need an idea.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to Psalm 121 Contemporary English version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm%20121&version=CEV>

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 Lord will protect his people

¹ I look to the hills!

Where will I find help?

² It will come from the Lord,

who created heaven and earth.

³ The Lord is your protector,

and he won't go to sleep

or let you stumble.

⁴ The protector of Israel

doesn't doze

or ever get drowsy.

⁵ The Lord is your protector,

there at your right side

to shade you from the sun.

⁶ You won't be harmed

by the sun during the day

or by the moon at night.

⁷ The Lord will protect you

and keep you safe

from all dangers.

⁸ The Lord will protect you

now and always

wherever you go.

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visit www.bibles.com and www.cev.bible.

Watch: Firm Foundation (He Won't), by Cody Carnes
https://youtu.be/x9ndiD0_qNk?si=Y5mkP8tPtNLJCJvZ

Questions for discussion

- I wonder when you last felt shaken.
- How do you ensure that Christ is your firm foundation?
- One of the lyrics says that “he will never let me down”. I wonder if that's your experience of God.

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.

News articles

Every day, on the news, we see disasters and tragedies and bad news stories. However, within them, we often see some good news parts. There was a terrible earthquake in Venezuela just recently. A lot of people did lose their lives. However, the news reported people being rescued, saved days after the earthquake had taken place. Some stories showed mothers and other adults putting the children who they were with first, and ensuring they were protected.



Life sometimes feels unfair, with some people seemingly be fortunate and protected while other people in the world do not seem to be protected.

In 2018, 12 teenage boys got trapped in a cave in Thailand and couldn't escape. The young boys had a teacher with them who helped to protect them and who looked after them and tried to keep their spirits up as much as possible while a team of people came to help rescue them. Look up the story and find out the miraculous way that those leading the rescue managed to free the young boys from the tunnel. It was the kind of protection that took a lot of trust in the rescuers from those who were rescued. How does this reflect God's protection? I wonder what kind of protection God gives us and where we might need to trust God in the difficult situations we find ourselves.

You may want to have some newspapers to scan through to find stories and to discuss where the protection is within a particular situation – who helped protect, and where is God in the story?

I wonder if you know of any other good news stories that you may have seen.

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.

To keep us safe when travelling on an aeroplane the staff always remind the passengers of the safety rules and what to do in an emergency. The things described are there to protect and help.



Cathay Pacific safety video, by Cathaypacific

<https://youtu.be/7Iz4tSWM8RI?si=eSSNURIVDWUxL6K0>

- How many different types of protection can you see on this video?
- If you were to create a little safety video to show how God protects, what would you include?

Group discussion

- When are the times when you feel most vulnerable/exposed?
- Is it possible to not have God's protection?

Personal reflection

- I wonder why the psalmist felt protection was needed from the sun and the moon
- Is there a difference between being wise and protecting ourselves, and God's protection of us?
- Is it more important to protect yourself or to protect others?
- Where are the safe places in your church?
- Where and who is your safe place?

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.

Protection Prayer Stations

You will need: items that provide protection and keep us safe

- pop-up tent
- umbrella, raincoat
- cooking apron, oven gloves
- blanket



- boots, safety shoes
- sun hat, hard hat, woolly hat
- face mask, medical gloves

Words of items we need protection from: cold, weather, rain, mud, sun, germs, dirt, heat, falling objects...

What you do: Children move round the objects and say what they are and what they protect us from, while thanking God for the protection provided to us.

Dear God, as the (*object you hold*) protects us from the ..., we thank you for always looking after us. Amen.

Spoken prayer

This prayer is a paraphrase of the longer prayer known as St Patrick's breastplate

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me and before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.

Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

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.

Rights of the children and young person



Did you know that there is a United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child Treaty, signed by 196 countries? It lists 54 different rights that a child and young person should have access to or the right to. Read over the list of them <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/> and decide whether you agree with all 54. Are there any rights missing? Should some of them be made clearer? Are there some you feel shouldn't be there, or perhaps some that could merge to make one?

Now think about whether your church does safeguarding. I wonder if you can have access to the safeguarding policy. How does it reflect and mirror the 54 named rights on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Treaty? I wonder if there's anything you would change about the safeguarding policy which might be outlined within your own church.

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. **I wonder when you last experienced Gods protection?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT Resources (jpit.uk) or *Commitment for Life* (cforl.co.uk)
- Look for the safe places in your school, church and community?

Thank you for exploring the **Psalm** 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

Forever and ever . Amen

