



# 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>

## John 15: 5 - I am the vine

Theme: How to stay connected to God while growing in faith.

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

#### John 15

Today we begin a new theme for the month of October: growing. This opening session focusses on a single verse in the Good News according to John – it’s an important verse because it opens up the idea of the benefits of growing in our faith of God while being connected to God – and hints at what may be missed out on if we aren’t.

Vines are an important feature of the agriculture of Israel and Palestine, just as they were in Jesus’ time – local people couldn’t always rely on Jesus turning water into wine for them as he did at Cana – so they grew vines to make their own wine. Battir (a valley region a few miles south west of Jerusalem - you can find it on a map between Hebron and Nablus) has been recognised by UNESCO as an Area of Outstanding Universal Value for its terraced hillsides covered in vineyards.

You can read the verses around verse 5 to help you gain context (the chapter starts with Jesus telling his followers he is the True Vine and that his Father is the gardener – pruning when necessary) but be careful about allowing the session to be sidetracked, stay focused on verse 5.

It is important to stay connected to (joined with) God because God will help us to grow and be productive. God sees our potential and will help us to develop that potential in ways that will benefit us and those we meet. Without that connection, we will struggle to meet our potential.

In the Gospel of John there are seven “I Am” statements by Jesus, “I am the True Vine” is the last of these. All of these saying give us an insight into what Jesus, and God, are like. The others are: I Am The Bread Of Life ([John 6:35](#)), I Am The Light Of The World ([John 8:12](#)), I Am The Gate For The Sheep ([John 10:7](#)), I Am The Good Shepherd ([John 10:11](#)), I Am The Resurrection And The Life ([John 11:25](#)), I Am The Way The Truth And The Life ([John 14:6](#)).

When we talk about ‘being connected’ we need to be mindful of those children/young people who feel that they are isolated or only connected to a small number of people. They may feel that the idea of ‘connection’ is out of reach or unrealistic. We hope that this session, and the weeks following, will help to show that God enables us to grow but in the first place we need to be connected to God and, through God, be connected with others.

## 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 Alternative game**

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

#### **Connect 4 (run around game)**

The theme is an excuse to play connect 4.

You could play it the traditional way with a Connect 4 board game, or if there are more than 2 people playing, you could play it as a run around game.

You will need:

Masking tape, 8 paper plates in 2 colours (4 of each)

Mark out a playing grid of squares at least 5 by 5 in a grid.

Two teams stand at the other end of the hall with their coloured paper plates.

When the game begins, one person from each team takes a paper plate and runs to the grid where they place the plate in a square and run back to their team. The next person takes the second paper plate, runs and places it. This continues until all four paper plates

have been placed. Then the runners run to the grid and move one of the plates already placed to a different square. Game continues with the teams racing each other to the grid, moving plates, until one team gets 4 in a row.

## 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: 2023 Community Project Award Winner - St Johns URC Causeway Community Garden, Warrington - YouTube**

### Questions for discussion

- How does the garden help the church to link into their community?
- What other ways can you think of, to help relationships between church and community grow?
- Why do you think people might like visiting the garden?
- Is there a garden, or park, that you like to visit with friends or family? Why do you like going there?



## 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:

### People we connect with

Work as a group to create a fictional young person. Draw an image of this young person and give them a name and age. Place this drawing on the floor in the centre of the room.

Now reflect on the different groups/individuals that this young person might connect with in different areas of their life. (Eg family, school, friends, church, clubs, online)

Write each of these people/groups on separate pieces of paper and place them on the floor around the young person. Cut pieces of string and run them from the young person to each of the people/groups listed, demonstrating the young person's web of connections.

Read out some of the statements below and ask participants to stand next to the connection they think is most relevant. Invite participants to explain their reasoning.

- Someone they would choose to spend their free time with.
- Someone they see as a role model.
- Someone who they can trust.
- Someone who they might go to for support.

- Someone who might help them to grow in their faith.
- Someone who they could offer help/support to.

Encourage participants to think about their own connections. Which connections are helpful in their faith development? Which connections could they offer a positive witness to through their own faith and actions?

### 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.

### Talking together: Going deeper

- What do you lose if you are disconnected with God?
- How do you stay connected to your friends?
- How do we grow in our faith?
- What does it mean to grow in faith?

### Conversation starters

- I wonder what it means to stay connected to God?
- I wonder what fruit Jesus is talking about?

## 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.

Could be said in the style of a rap:

When you are in our lives  
 we flourish, we grow,  
 we blossom, we bud,  
 we thrive and we show.....  
 your love Jesus and your message to others,  
 give us courage, integrity, strength to be  
 the people you made us,  
 the people you know we can be.

Amen

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## 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.

### Grafting plants

When Jesus talked about the vine, said that God is the gardener, and we are grafted onto Jesus as the vine. This is an opportunity to do some simple gardening together and perhaps learn about 'grafting' processes from a gardener.

If you have a gardener in your church/community, consider inviting them along to the session to help show how things grow and show how gardeners graft onto plants. Ensure that the gardener provides the opportunity for children to get involved and not simply watch.

Perhaps experimenting with different plants.

This is also an opportunity to do some potting and gardening together. Do you have a piece of ground outside the church that you could plant up to make a lovely mini garden? If you don't have any area to plant, the group could paint and plant some pots to go outside the church.

You may have time for each person to make a smaller potted plant to take home and continue caring for over the coming weeks.

### 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. **What does it mean to you to stay connected to God?**
  - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://resources.jpit.uk) Commitment for Life [cforl.co.uk](https://cforl.co.uk)
  - Use whichever medium you would like to express how you have grown as a person in general or in faith. Maybe there is a place you could share this.
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Thank you for exploring the **John 15** 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)