



# 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>

## Jeremiah 17: 7-8 Like a tree with roots

**Theme:** Trust in God and grow healthy roots

### Contents:

<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	1
<a href="#">Together</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Experience</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Explore</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Express</a> .....	4

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

This is our last session looking at the theme of 'Growing'. Today we will be exploring how strong roots can give us the stable platform for growth, using the passage from Jeremiah "They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water."

Roots are, usually, unseen but it's through the roots that plants get many of the nutrients they need to grow. It tends to be true that the bigger the plant, the larger the root system. A strong root system gives stability and strength allowing plants and trees to grow to their full potential (as long as they remain cared for and protected when necessary).

The Tap Root is the large central root from which all the other roots spread laterally. The tap root is thick and sturdy. Your group will be looking to see if the tap root in their tree of faith is God – and will be exploring where, or who our roots are (e.g. family, friends, church, wider URC connections, etc.), and what nutrients we get from these roots to feed our faith.

When you need to transplant something (perhaps moving it to a bigger pot to allow it to grow more – similar to leaving junior school to move to secondary school) you usually need to transplant the roots, too. If you're a plant's system is wide and healthy then being transplanted isn't a problem – it will continue to grow in its new surroundings. Is it the same for us?

Sometimes, to help something new grow, we take a cutting from a healthy plant and either plant that somewhere new or graft it on to an existing plant. What might that say about our faith?

Be aware that there might be people in your group who are fearful about being 'transplanted' – going to a new school, moving house, etc. Don't minimise these concerns but affirm that there will

always be support and help – that you, their friends, the church community and God are part of their root system.

## 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.

## 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:** Jubilant Arts Bible Journalling <https://youtu.be/0bFqjastUs0?si=4eeFftzw5TilK6Fv>  
Watch from 1:44 minutes in to hear the reading, fast forward through the painting to see it develop, then watch from 12:22 to the end.

### Questions for discussion

- How has the reading from Jeremiah influenced the artist in her painting?
- What do you think might be a benefit of journalling like this?
- How does the artist interpret what she has read? Do you read it the same way or does the passage say something different to you?

**Listen:** Like a tree by Graham Kendrick <https://youtu.be/eWejtin2ovY?si=9cvL1c7LAXIVxRlx>

### Questions for discussion

- This song is based on Psalm 1 but shares some images with our passage this week. Can you spot the similarities?
- What do you think the songwriter is saying about faith and trusting in God?

- Can you think of any other ways you might illustrate the way your faith grows other than like a tree?

**Watch:** The tree God intends us to be <https://youtu.be/qbEths0oz9Y?si=wPsDPBKdKml5CQ9->

### Questions for discussion

- This devotional looks at the trees growing in the landscape where Jeremiah will have lived. It also starts with an earlier bit of the reading than just the part we are thinking about today. Does it help your understanding? What do you think the two different lifestyles might look like?

## Explore

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

### A new way to explore the theme

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

Expand on the activity by considering different types of plant with different root systems. Research plants such as bonsai, moss, tumbleweed. Can you extend the analogy of our faith being rooted in God and nurtured to bear fruit like a tree is to these different types of plant? Consider, too, the fact that there is such variety in the plant world – what can this tell us about our faith and the fruits we bear?

Have you heard about the way trees communicate through their root systems? Look at the video from the modern parable or research a bit more about how this works. What difference does it make to the way that trees grow? Could this teach us anything about our faith too?

### 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.

How trees secretly talk to each other - BBC News:

<https://youtu.be/yWOqeyPIVRo?si=XbUz7NV1ED9UfBRx>  
(1:47)



### Talking together: Going deeper

- Where do you feel most rooted?
- How can you move to a new place and still remain rooted in God?
- If roots are so important, how do you explain tumbleweed? How do you equate that to faith?
- Does being blessed by God mean you never have anything to worry about?
- How do we keep our roots healthy?
- Which do you think is the most important root for our faith?

## Conversation starters

- I wonder how God blesses people who trust God?
- Who or what helps you grow a healthy faith? Who are your roots?

# 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

Creator God.

We think of all those people who don't have a healthy and strong root system.

They may look strong but it doesn't take much to hurt and damage them.

Help us to be part of their root system, offering care and support so that they can grow as you intended.

Help us to recognise those who are part of our root system. We thank you for their love and support in feeding us, keeping us strong and helping us to grow.

You are our tap root, God, without you the other roots could not develop. Be with us as we grow and bear fruit. 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 could develop the Tree of Life activity from FACT by collecting and using natural materials.



### ***You will need:***

- Pebbles
- Rope or twigs
- Moss or leaves
- A round base
- Soil

### ***What you do:***

Use rope or twigs to form the trunk, roots and branches of a tree, by separating the top and bottom and arranging them to create a tree-like shape. Try to ensure that, just as in real life, the spread of the roots reflects the height of the tree. Look at some photographs of a tree's root system and try and recreate something similar with your design.

Arrange the natural objects into a tree of life, using the pebbles to anchor the rope, and moss or leaves to create the canopy.

Consider where your roots are grounded and what are the fruits of growth in your life.

### Research – Trees in the Bible

The image of a tree is one that would be familiar to people almost anywhere in the world, with a few exceptions. Do some research – what sort of trees would have grown in Bible lands and what would they have looked like? Perhaps you could print out some different photographs to create a collage.

Can you find any other references to trees in the Bible, other than in Jeremiah? How is the image of the tree used?

Think about the benefits of trees to our environment and the effects of deforestation. Perhaps you could arrange to plant a tree somewhere as a group, or maybe collect and plant some acorns in plant pots and nurture them until they are strong enough to be planted out somewhere. (Remember not to plant them too close to houses – the root system grows out as wide as the tree grows tall and the roots are very strong – they can undermine bricks and concrete!)

### 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: **Tell me about a time when strong roots of faith have helped you in difficult situations.**
  - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](http://Resources(jpit.uk)) Commitment for Life [cforl.co.uk](http://cforl.co.uk)
  - Take time to do some of the things that best help your faith to grow strong – maybe listen to a Bible podcast, spend some time in nature talking and listening to God, do some Bible journalling – whatever works for you.
- 

Thank you for exploring the Psalm and Luke 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)