



# 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](http://www.bit.ly/How-To-FAYR)

## Title: Matthew 7: 15–16a

Theme: “Frienemies” (Be careful choosing new friends)

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### Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

#### Fantastic Beasts Introduction

The Bible is full of a fascinating variety of stories: family dramas and heroes overcoming unlikely odds; songs and poetry; historical sagas – not to mention some surprisingly ordinary situations described in Jesus' parables! But not all of these fabulous tales are about humans and their relationship with the God who created them – sometimes humans don't get a look in! The Bible is full of stories and songs which delight in the created world – and the animals that are a part of it. We are often reminded not to underestimate animals, or the wonderful world that we share with them.

A new school year is an exciting time. There may be new classes, new activities, and lots of opportunities to make new friends. Having good friends can help us grow in confidence, feel supported, and enjoy life together. But not everyone who seems friendly always has our best interests at heart.

In Matthew 7:15-16, Jesus warns us to be careful: *"Watch out for false prophets... By their fruit you will recognise them."* Jesus teaches us that what people say is important, but what they do is even more important. Their actions, kindness, honesty, and the way they treat others reveal what is truly in their hearts.

As you meet new people this year, think about the qualities you value in a friend. Do they encourage you to do what is right? Are they honest and kind? Or do they pressure others, spread rumours, stir up arguments, or say one thing while doing another?

This doesn't mean we should judge people quickly or refuse to befriend those who are different from us. Instead, Jesus encourages us to be wise. Good friends help us grow, show respect, and bring out the best in us. We should be careful of friendships that lead us away from kindness, honesty, and God's ways.

Leader's Note: This topic may raise experiences of lying, betrayal, bullying, or hurtful relationships. Encourage respectful discussion and remind the group that everyone deserves friendships built on kindness, honesty, and respect.

## 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.

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### Active game

The games encourage teams to be observant and to notice small differences. They also help to raise questions about whether it is always easy to notice when people are trying to trick you – or disguise themselves!

### Dressing up show-down

Split your group into two teams. Each team will need a basket or box of dressing up clothes – try to make the contents of the boxes as similar as possible. Position the teams in a line behind the dressing up box.

Each turn, the player at the front of the line has 30 seconds to choose items from the box that make the best outfit for the job title read from a pre-prepared list by the leader. (For example, for 'spy' they may choose a hat and glasses; for 'PE teacher', they may choose a whistle and hoodie). The leader decides which team has chosen the best outfit and awards one point. The player goes to the back of the line, and the next person in the team steps forward.

The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

*If you don't have access to lots of dressing up clothes, you could play charades instead – use the pre-prepared list and each member of the team takes a turn at acting out the job they have been given. When the other team members guess correctly, someone else can step up and try the next job on the list!*

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### Quieter game – Circle swap!

Sit your group in a circle and choose one player to step out of the room. While the chosen player is out of the room, two members of the circle swap an item of clothing – perhaps a shoe or a cardigan. When the chosen player is invited back in, they must guess who has made the swap.

If you have a small group, you could choose someone to be a leader instead. Everyone in the circle starts doing the same action (tapping their knee, clapping or clicking their fingers). The leader must change the action and the rest of the circle must follow them, but without the returning player guessing who is the leader.

## Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to Matthew 7: 15 – 16a in the Contemporary English version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%207%3A%2015%20-%2016a&version=CEV>

You may wish to research different versions of this reading on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)  
Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

<sup>15</sup> Watch out for false prophets! They dress up like sheep, but inside they are wolves who have come to attack you. <sup>16</sup> You can tell what they are by what they do.

Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society For more information about CEV, visit [www.bibles.com](http://www.bibles.com) and [www.cev.bible](http://www.cev.bible).

**Watch:** Listen to this song by CityAlight called "He calls me friend".

[https://youtu.be/2PpiezP6xRM?si=\\_WslofmKrW8RA3C9](https://youtu.be/2PpiezP6xRM?si=_WslofmKrW8RA3C9)

## Questions for discussion

- What does it mean to you be Jesus' friend? How do the friends you have chosen help you to be a Christian?

## 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.

### 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.



*Zootopia: Bellwether is the bad guy*

<https://youtu.be/BX6S4qOCYcU?si=ck4icbsQla-U1LFq>

In *Zootopia*, the assistant mayor (Bellwether) is a sheep who epitomises the term "a wolf in sheep's clothing": on the surface, she appears to be a sweet and finicky, albeit overworked, sheep doing all she can to help the city, but inside, she hides a ruthless and embittered mind.

- I wonder who you trust as a friend?

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### Group discussion

- What was Jesus trying to help us think about with this parable? Why did he choose sheep and wolves as his illustration? What else could he have chosen?
- The passage talks about wolves disguised as sheep, attacking you. What might that look or feel like for us?
- This passage tells us that we are in control of our own choices. How can we choose friends well?
- How and why do friends become "frenemies"?

### Personal reflection

- How do we make sure we are looking after ourselves in our relationships as well as supporting friends when they need it?

- What type of friend are you, have you ever been a “frenemy”?

## 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.

### Spoken prayers

Lord God, thank you for your word and thank you for your wisdom. We ask that you help us to discern between friends and “frenemies” in our own lives. Guide us to choose the right friends and keep us safe from those who would be wolves in sheep’s clothing for us. Help us notice these wolves in the wider world, within the news and our social media interaction, so that we may guard ourselves against their attacks. 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. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

### Wolves in sheep’s clothing

This passage uses sheep as Christians and wolves as false prophets. But are sheep always a positive metaphor in the Bible?

Take some time to research how the Bible uses sheep and other animal metaphors and how/why. Some examples are the parable of the sheep and goats; the good shepherd and the wolves.

### Disguised Biscuits

Using a fun selection of biscuit cutters, set your group the challenge of disguising their chosen biscuit. If you don’t have time to make biscuits in your session, you could bring pre-made biscuits or buy shaped biscuits to decorate.

Offer the group a selection of sweets, sprinkles and coloured icing to disguise their biscuits. Perhaps your snowman will become a smiley face, or your unicorn a horse! Could you disguise your crocodile to look like a rainbow? Or your dinosaur to be a moustache?



For the biscuit dough:

225g plain flour

100g baking margarine

100g caster sugar

Vanilla essence or flavouring of your choice



Method (makes 15-20 biscuits – depending on the size of your cutters):

- Mix together the margarine and sugar, then add vanilla essence
- Slowly add flour until the mixture comes together into a ball of dough
- Cool the dough
- Roll out the dough evenly and cut shapes
- Bake at 180c or gas mark 4 until golden (10-15 mins depending on the size and shape)
- Cool on a rack before decorating

## 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 and insights together. **How are your new classmates shaping up? Who might you choose to be friends with?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT Resources ([jpit.uk](http://jpit.uk)) or *Commitment for Life* ([cforl.co.uk](http://cforl.co.uk))
- Could you go fruit picking and only pick the good fruit?

Thank you for exploring the **Matthew** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing [sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk](mailto:sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk) or by sharing it on [www.bit.ly/FACT\\_FB](http://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

For ever and ever . Amen

