

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: Luke 23: 39 - 43

Theme: 100% confidence in God's promise

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

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As we continue exploring the promises of God, this week's session takes us to one of the most powerful moments in Scripture - Jesus on the cross, speaking words of hope to a criminal beside Him. It's a passage that reminds us that God's promises are not just ancient words written long ago - they are alive, personal, and available to each of us, even in our darkest moments.

Last week, we laid the foundation by looking at the promises God makes throughout the Bible. This week, we zoom in on one promise in particular: the assurance of salvation. In Luke 23: 39 -43, we witness Jesus offering a promise to a man who had nothing to offer in return - no good deeds, no time left to change his life - just a simple, heartfelt plea: "Jesus, remember me." And Jesus responds with a promise: "Today you will be with me in paradise".



As you prepare to lead this session, take a moment to reflect on the radical grace and certainty of God's promises. This story is not just about a man on a cross - it's about every child and young person in your group who may wonder if God's promises are really for them. Through this passage, we'll help them see that God's promises are not earned - they're received. And they are always trustworthy.

Consider how trust works in our everyday relationships. We tend to believe someone's words when we know them well - when we've seen their character, consistency, and care. The same is true with God. The more we understand who God is, the easier it is to trust. Unlike human promises, which can be broken due to changing circumstances, emotions, or limitations, God's promises are anchored in God's eternal nature. God doesn't forget, or fail to follow through promises made - no matter what.

As you prepare, consider these themes that may resonate deeply with your group:

- Empty Promises: Many children and young people have experienced broken promises from friends, family, or even authority figures. These can lead to disappointment, mistrust, and a sense of being let down. Be sensitive to this as you talk about God's promises. God's words are different - they're never empty.
- Punishment and Grace: Some may associate wrongdoing with punishment and rejection. This passage flips that expectation. Instead of condemnation, Jesus offers grace. Help your group see that God's justice is real, but God's mercy is greater. The criminal received paradise, not because he deserved it, but because Jesus offered it.
- Conditional Love vs. Unconditional Promise: Many young people wrestle with the idea that love must be earned. This story shows that God's promises are not transactional - they're relational. They flow from God's grace is, not what we do.

This week, help your group explore the idea that trust in God grows through relationship. Encourage them to ask questions, express doubts, and discover that God welcomes all of it. The criminal on the cross didn't have a lifetime of faith - he had a moment of trust. And that was enough. Help those in your group to understand the unshakable truth that God's promises are for them, now and forever.

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 widget prayer found in the Faith Adventures: Children together or else the Lord's prayer found at the end of this session.

Active game - Relay

You will need:

slips of paper with different promises written on them (mix of simple, fun, and kind ones, e.g. I promise to do five star jumps, I promise to give someone a compliment, I promise to tell a joke, I promise to share a smile). Have double the amount of promises for the people playing

space for an obstacle course (chairs to go around, cones to weave through, a mat to hop across, etc)

What to do:

Split into two teams (or play as one big team if numbers are small).

The first person in each line sets off around the obstacle course.

At the end of the course, they choose one of the "promise slips".

They must complete the promise written on the slip straight away.

Once they have kept their promise, they run back and join the end of their team's line.

The next person then sets off to complete the course and pick a new promise.

Continue until everyone has had at least one turn.

In this game we tried to keep small promises, and sometimes that was easy and sometimes it was hard. Unlike us, Jesus never breaks his promises, and we can trust him with our whole lives.

Quieter game – Make it stand

You will need:

- marshmallows (mini size)
- uncooked spaghetti
- mobile phone

What you do:

Can you build a rest out of the mini marshmallows and spaghetti to take the weight off your phone?

Allow time to think through some ideas as a group.

Either as individuals or small groups, using only the marshmallows and spaghetti, they build phone rest.



Once the building challenge is complete, place phones onto the rest. Celebrate every attempt - whether it holds, wobbles or collapses!

This activity helps us reflect on God's promises. Can we trust what God says? We trust things every day - chairs, bridges, phone stands - but only when we believe they'll hold up. God's promises never fail. They're not fragile or temporary. They're strong, steady, and unbreakable.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to Luke 23: 39 – 43 in the New Living Translation

https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2023%3A%2039-43&version=NLT

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

³⁹ One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!"

⁴⁰ But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? ⁴¹ We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

⁴³ And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.

Listen: Oceans by Hillsong https://youtu.be/6GGFb6LcX3U?si=podrBONmQV5G6oY-

Questions for discussion

- What promises/assurances from God do you hear in this song?
- Which one resonates with you most?

Watch: What about the thief on the cross by Bible Pure and Simple https://youtu.be/zU3JcO3pbN8?si=IO dv3QjK zIWdBh

Questions for discussion

After watching the Bible story, what questions does it leave you with? What does it say to you about being 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.

Egg promise challenge

You will need:

- one raw egg for each young person (have a few spares ready in case of accidents)
- felt-tip pens or markers (to write on the eggs)
- materials for creating a "safe landing" (cardboard, straws, paper, bubble wrap, tape, plastic bags, string, etc.)
- a safe space to drop the eggs from a height (e.g. a chair, balcony, or ladder ensure it's safe and supervised)

What you do:

Give each young person an egg and a marker pen. Ask them to think of a promise they could make this week, something realistic and kind, and write it carefully on their egg. This egg now represents their promise.

Provide the group with the building materials. Their task is to design and create a soft landing or protective container for their egg so that it survives a drop.

When ready, test each promise egg by dropping it.

- If the egg survives: celebrate that the promise was kept safe.
- If the egg breaks: talk about how fragile promises can be, and how it feels when they are broken.

Gather together afterwards to reflect.

How did you feel when your egg survived? How did you feel if it broke?

Why do you think promises are sometimes fragile?

What helps us keep promises to each other?

Why does it matter that we can rely on God's promises?

Our eggs reminded us that promises can be fragile and sometimes hard to keep safe. When the criminal asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus gave a promise that could not be broken: "Today you will be with me in paradise." Unlike us, Jesus' promises never fail, they are strong and certain, even when everything else feels fragile.

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.





The wizard gives gifts by Don Tuttle.

https://youtu.be/RUvrtAUscR4?si=NcESnxYm6BmE1DyH

Dorothy and her friends confront the wizard accusing him of not giving them what he's promised.

After watching the clip what would you say about the promises the wizard made?

How does the wizard's promises differ from God's promises?

I wonder why they put their trust in the wizard.

Group discussion

- What is the difference between assurance and a promise?
- Were both criminals going to be with Jesus or just the one the promise was given to?

Personal reflection

- What helps you to see God's promises?
- How does it feel to know that even if you are faithless, God will keep His promises?
- I wonder what it means to build your life on Gods promises?
- I wonder what Jesus meant when he says "I will see you in paradise"?

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

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.

Prayer Chatter box

You will need: one square piece of paper (preferably A4 trimmed to a square) pens or markers scissors (if trimming paper)

What you do: https://youtu.be/dtm0WlsVMt0

Fold the square diagonally both ways, then unfold.

Fold each corner into the centre.

Flip it over and again fold each corner into the centre.

Fold the square in half horizontally and vertically.

Flip it over and slide your fingers under the flaps and push together to form the chatterbox shape.

Now write on your chatterbox.

On the outside flaps you could have four pictures

Rainbow

Heart

Cross

Star

or 4 letters PRAY

On the inside flaps add these (or other) Bible verses.

Genesis 9:13–15 - God promises never to flood the whole earth again.

Romans 8:38–39 - Nothing can separate us from God's love.

John 3:16 - God promises eternal life to those who believe in Jesus.

Jeremiah 29:11- God has good plans for our future.

Isaiah 41:10 - God promises to be with us and strengthen us.

Deuteronomy 31:6 - God will never leave or forsake us.

Philippians 4:6–7 - God promises peace when we pray instead of worry.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - God makes us new when we follow Him.

Under each flap add prayer promises, below are some suggestions:

Thank you, God, for always loving me - even when I mess up.

I trust you, God, because your promises never fail.

Help me remember that I can be assured of your promises.

Thank you for forgiving me and giving me a fresh start.

I believe you have good plans for my life.

Even when I feel scared, your promise can give me peace.

Thank you for sending Jesus to show me your love.

I know I can talk to you any time, and you'll listen.

Discuss: Was it fun guessing what promise you'd get? Just like we trusted the chatterbox to give us something good, we can trust God's promises even more. They're not random they're always true, always loving, and always for us.

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.

Resolutions

Research the youth resolutions taken to Youth Assembly from the last decade (Click on the title to find a document with them all on. Which ones can be celebrated as we still see them at work in the URC? Are there any that haven't been kept or have been forgotten? Are they important? Is there something you think the URC should be promising to do/be? You could bring a resolution suggestion to Youth Assembly in 2026 or to your own synod meeting.

Friendship bracelets

You will need:

- embroidery thread
- some tape or a circle of card

What you do:

The simplest way to make a friendship bracelet is to use a simple loom. This is a circle of card with a hole in the middle and eight slits cut evenly around the outside of the circle. Cut seven different coloured threads 30 cm long and knot the ends together.

Take the knotted end of your threads and push them through the hole. Take each colour and place each one into each slit on your template.

There will always be one empty space while you are braiding.

With the empty slot facing you, count to your left and grab the third thread on the left and pull it out and place it into the empty space.

Rotate the circle so that empty slot is facing you again and do the same. Keep moving the third thread on the left into the empty space and rotating it so the empty space is always facing you. Once it is the right length, remove each thread from the loom, and pull the whole bracelet through the bottom. Knot the ends together, then put it on their wrist as a reminder about how we keep God's promise with us.

Here is a video of different friendship bracelets you could make https://youtu.be/u5knLsLjlaE?si=rA1O91jvJaHia2l8

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. What's the worst promise you could break?
- Research something suggested by JPIT, Resources (jpit.uk) Commitment for Life cforl.co.uk
- I wonder if you know of any songs that talk about promises? What are the lyrics like? There is a Christian song called Way maker which names God as a promise keeper. When you feel unsure of things why not listen to this song to remind yourself that God never leaves you - that's a promise! https://youtu.be/0wyotu9Twko?si=gkGEYfHNk9CuMnN



Thank you for exploring the **Luke** 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







