



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>

Psalm 100

Theme: God as our influencer

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

Psalms

Our theme for this month is 'influencers' and Psalm 100 allows us to explore the theme from the both the point of view of the influencer and the influenced.

The psalmist (we don't know who wrote it) invites us to give thanks and praise to God – particularly when we enter the gates of God's temple: "Thank him as you go through the gates into his temple. Praise him as you stand in his temple yards." (The temple was a series of connected buildings on 4 sides – with a courtyard in the middle. Only priests and other temple officials were allowed to go into the temple building itself – which is why the psalmist invited us to 'stand in the temple yards (courtyard).

Being an influencer is now a full-time job for some people. For others it is something that comes about because of who they are or what they do (sports and entertainment stars, in particular). We must always remember that we, too, may have influence on others – our family and friends. But we are not always influenced by people, we may be influenced by the books we read, the television and YouTube programs we watch and many companies spend a great deal of money on advertising in order to influence us to buy their products.

Influence can be good or bad. We can choose whether or not to be influenced. If we don't have an element of choice, then we are not being influenced, we are being forced or directed.

The psalmist wants to influence us to praise God, to turn to God when making decisions and when needing guidance – the greatest influencer of all. We are given free will so that we can choose whether to be influenced by God or not. How does God's influence affect your life?

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

NoahDaBoa is a young man from within the life of the URC, he has quite a following on social media. Not all of his videos are from a Christian perspective, here is one of that is.

Only the brave by NoahDaBoa <https://youtu.be/RRH9qBTaXLk?si=vot9EuCF11z-v2F1>

- How does social media influence people's thoughts and decisions?
- How can Christians use social media to influence others about God and the messages in the Bible?

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:

Start by watching the modern parable together.

Then read the psalm and talk about how just like in the video clip the psalm is a series of post-it notes strung together into a letter. A letter to us describing how the writer is feeling about God. The video shows the sorts of things God says to us, but are we listening and taking notice of those things?

Imagine you have just read the psalm as a letter to you describing God, what would you put in a thank you letter addressed to God? What might you want God to know? Perhaps you have questions for God, perhaps you have wonderful things you want to say.

Before you start writing this may be a good time to discuss the questions in the modern parables section.

The psalm is laid out a sentence at a time, the reply letter could be structured to respond to each sentence. The letter could be decorated with pictures.

These letters are not to share with the group but are a letter between God and the writer. To symbolise giving it to God perhaps they could be put in an envelope, sealed and then placed somewhere which signifies prayer. You may have a prayer area, room or table in your building. You could create one with a cross and leave the letters there. Consider holding onto them after the session and giving them back at some point as a reminder of their feelings towards God.

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.

God is speaking by Joseph the dreamer

<https://youtu.be/qJARfWkQyH4?si=oknw25DT-jMIIDbk>

- Why do you think the man didn't see God's messages?
- How can we try to see and hear what God is trying to tell us?
- I wonder what your post it notes from God would say?

Talking together: Going deeper

- What is the difference between being influenced and being forced?
- Are we an influencer in our community?
- If God is a good influence why do we sometimes chose not follow God?

Conversation starters

- I wonder what influence God has on us?
- What did the writer of Psalm 100 want to influence us to do?

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.

Influencing God

We have so many choices to make

What to wear

What to eat

Who to be friends with

Who to listen to

You have given us the freedom to choose – and we know that sometimes we will get it wrong.

We also know that you will always forgive us and welcome us back into your flock.

You will continue to lead us like a good shepherd.

For this, and all things, we give you thanks. 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.

Jenga – Before playing ensure the blocks have names/ questions written on

Use a Jenga set to spark conversation about influencers in the world of today. The good and bad of those influencers, why they have an influence, how they influence and what they think those influencers could do for good.

Write a question or name of an influencer on each Jenga block. As the game is played and a block is taken out discuss the question or the name on the block.



This link may help with your discussions: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/top-influencers/>

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. **Who has had an influence on you?**
 - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://jpit.uk) Commitment for Life cforl.co.uk
 - Find out what charity your Church, or a charity you are interested in, is involved with and see how their influence impacts the lives they are helping.
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Thank you for exploring the **Psalm** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing children.youth@urc.org.uk or by sharing it on https://bit.ly/FACT_FB

