

Faith Adventures Youth Resource

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: Psalm 34: 17-18

Theme: You are never alone

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

Psalm 34:17-18 Lexham English Bible

"They cry out and Yahweh hears and delivers them from all *of* their troubles. Yahweh is near to those who are heartbroken and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

You may need to expand on two terms used within this passage:

Yahweh – name for the God of the Israelites, representing the biblical pronunciation of "YHWH," the Hebrew name revealed to Moses in the book of Exodus.

Crushed in spirit - which could be explained as a way of describing those deep, heavy feelings when everything seems too much.

It is still September, I wonder if any of your group were or still are anxious about a new school year? Or maybe they are anxious about something that might happen.



It is important to remember that anxiety isn't always bad. It can be a helpful signal when something's not right or when we're in danger. But it can also feel overwhelming - especially when we're worrying about things that are out of our control. Past experiences, big changes, or even just the unknown can make those feelings stronger. Sometimes, anxiety becomes something bigger, like an anxiety disorder, and that's something that needs care, support, and sometimes help from trusted adults or professionals.

This verse reminds us that no matter how we're feeling – even when we are crushed in spirit – we are never alone, even in those moments. God is close, God hears, God cares.

Triggers: Those who may identify with having an anxiety disorder. These four sessions stir up emotions, it's important to be mindful of this and to ensure that the session ends on a positive note.

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 - Musical Chairs

Musical chairs is a game where tension grows. With each round, the probability of successfully sitting on a chair reduces. Some may feel excited; others will feel increasingly anxious.

Set out chairs in the center of the room – with one less chair than there are people playing the game. You could place the chairs back-to-back, or alternate the direction they face.

Whilst music is playing, participants must circle the chairs – without touching them. When the music stops, everyone must sit on a chair. If you don't have a chair, you are out.

Repeat the game, removing an extra chair each time, until there is only one chair left. The player who successfully sits on the final chair is the winner!

Quiet game - What is it?

Participants must take part, not knowing what they will face. It could be something really nice, or something really unpleasant.....

Make an opening in one side of a cardboard box – big enough for a hand to easily fit in. For each round, place an item inside the box and loosely close the top of the box. Participants must place their hand in the side of the box – without looking – to touch the item inside.

They must then answer the question - 'What is it?'

Choose items with a range of textures: mashed fruit; squishy toys; shaving foam or dried leaves. Make sure you are aware of any allergies or dietary requirements before including food items and only use sensitive toiletries.

Taste test alternative – you could create a blind-folded taste test game instead, where participants must try a spoonful of mystery food and guess what it is. Choose foods with extreme tastes or textures, such as; fruit jelly, peeled grapes, cold porridge or toast with yeast extract. Make sure you are aware of any dietary requirements, or allergies in your group before preparing the game.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to a Lexham Bible version of Psalm 34: 17-19 https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2034%3A17-18&version=LEB

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

They[a] cry out and Yahweh hears and delivers them from all of their troubles. ¹⁸ Yahweh *is* near to *those who are* heartbroken and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

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Watch: Don't worry by lifekids https://youtu.be/XgAVWKqcyMU?si=kLect2KI-06r9NXw

Todays Psalm comes from the Old Testament and talks about God being close when we are struggling or sad and how we are never alone. In this video Jesus, whose live is told in the new testament is telling his friends why we do not need to have anxieties and worries.

Questions for discussion

- What about people who are anxious about where their next meal will come from? Or someone who is homeless?
- The video ends by saying 'God's got this' what has 'God got' do you think? Listen to this song as you reflect on how God is always with us. Christ is my firm foundation by Cody Carnes

https://youtu.be/x9ndiD0_qNk?si=Rl9pOvG7U142Q33f

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.

Footprints poem. Read the footprints poem – several people claim to have written this poem but Mary Stevenson is often accredited for me.

You could then go deeper by either:

Asking those gathered to map their own life (this could be limited to the last week, month) of times where God has carried them.

Can those gathered discover why Mary Stevenson wrote the poem as well as looking at why Margaret Fishback Power is also attributed to writing the poem?

The Footprints Prayer

One night I had a dream...

I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and

Across the sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; One belonged to me, and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of my life flashed before us, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that many times along the path of my life, There was only one set of footprints.

I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in my life, This really bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, You would walk with me all the way; But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, There is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why in times when I needed you the most, you should leave me.

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child. I love you, and I would never, never leave you during your times of trial and suffering. When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you.

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.



Percy Jackson and the Olympians

2023: Disney

Echidnas terrifying first appearance by Scene Clips

https://youtu.be/FNzYK8t-J7Y?si=JSR-Pxm6MO IFWwW

The three friends meet a terrifying new monster, who they know they will have to fight – but the Mother of Monsters wants them to be scared before they even get started.

- Do children always feel scared when they are alone?
- What sorts of things in this clip help to build the tension and scare factor?

Group discussion

- Is God with you only when you are crushed in spirit or anxious?
- What sort of things create anxiety in people?

Personal reflection

- I wonder what crushed in spirit means?
- I wonder why some people find some things cause them anxiety but for others it doesn't?

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.

Prayerful activity - Bubble prayers

If you do not have bubble mixture you can make your own:

Pour ½ cup of washing up liquid into a bowl.

Add 1 ½ cups of water. Measure 2 teaspoons of sugar and add to the water/soapy mixture.

Gently stir and you're ready to blow bubbles.





With each bubble that you blow, think about the anxieties you or others you know are facing. Say thank you to God for helping to release these anxities. As each bubble floats away and pops, think of it is giving your anxiety to God in prayer.

Spoken Prayers

God.

Sometimes life feels overwhelming.

Anxiety creeps in, and we don't always understand why we feel the way we do. But your Bible words remind us that you hear us — every cry, every unspoken worry. You are close when we feel broken, and you stay near when everything feels too much.

Help us to trust that we don't have to be strong all the time. It's okay to not be okay — because you are strong for us. When we're uncomfortable, anxious, or unsure of ourselves, give us the courage to turn to you instead of hiding how we feel.

Remind us that there are others to whom we can talk, too.

Surround us with your peace, remind us that we're never alone, and teach us to lean on your love — even when things don't make sense.

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. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

Balloon Skewer

In this experiment you will demonstrate that you can pierce a balloon with a stick without it popping.

You will need:

- balloon
- skewer (eg wooden kebab stick)
- vegetable oil (optional)

Blow up and tie off the balloon.

Take the skewer and push the sharp point through the end of the balloon next to the knot. Keep pushing the skewer through the balloon until it exits at the end opposite the knot. (You may find it helpful to coat the skewer in some vegetable oil before piercing the balloon.)

Video: Balloon Skewer – Sick Science https://youtu.be/PNXbW22Lat8?si=WmX8A6VIkevQ gGb

Discussion questions:

What did think would happen when piercing the balloon with the stick?

- How did you feel right before poking the balloon?
- How did your feelings change after?
- Can you think of a time when you were worried, but everything turned out ok?
- What helped you feel brave enough to try the activity?

What is anxiety?

Use the websites below to find out more about anxiety and the different supports available for young people experiencing anxiety. Try to answer the questions below using the information on the sites. Split into small groups to complete research and then come together to share your findings.

- Young minds https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/mental-healthconditions/anxiety/
- Hub of Hope https://hubofhope.co.uk/ (search by postcode to find local support)

Questions to explore:

- What is anxiety?
- What are some of the symptoms of anxiety?
- Where can you get help and support for anxiety?

Grounding Techniques

This is a simple way to help your brain feel calm when you're feeling anxious, scared, or overwhelmed. It helps you focus on what's around you, right now, using your five senses.

Look – Find 5 things you can see

Look around and name five things you can see right now. It could be a chair, a tree, your shoes, or a picture on the wall.

Touch – Find 4 things you can feel

Notice how your clothes feel, the chair you're sitting on, or something nearby you can touch (like a toy or a pencil).

Listen – Notice 3 things you can hear

Can you hear birds, voices, footsteps, or even your own breathing?

Smell – Find 2 things you can smell

Can you smell your lunch, your jumper, the room you're in, or something nearby?

Taste – Notice 1 thing you can taste

Maybe you've just eaten something, or you can still taste toothpaste, or just notice what your mouth feels like.

Practice completing this grounding exercise together as a group. Invite participants to share and demonstrate any other grounding techniques they are aware of.

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. When have you felt the closest to God?
- Research something suggested by JPIT, Resources (ipit.uk) Commitment for Life cforl.co.uk
- Perhaps make an anxiety jar for your household. Each time an anxiety occurs write it on a piece of paper and pop it into the jar. You could say a prayer when you do it. At the end of the week look again at what those anxieties were and reflect on what helped you through them. Ask yourself the question, was it how you thought it would be?

Thank you for exploring the **Psalm** 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



















