



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>

Ezekiel 37: 1-14 Valley of dry bones

Theme: The hope of the Holy Spirit as an influence in our lives.

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

So far in this month’s series, we have explored how we are all influencers, God as an influence and Jesus as an influence. In this episode we explore how the Holy Spirit is an influence especially in the dry areas of our lives.

In this passage we see the prophet Ezekial telling us of the time God gave him a vision. Ezekial was living amongst the Jewish exiles in Babylon, giving them words of warning and hope from God. He lived and prophesied with them for around 22 years speaking God’s words into their situation. The prophesy in this chapter was giving hope about the future of God’s people, how they would be brought back together as a nation.

We will use this prophesy as a way of exploring what other dry areas of life need God’s Holy Spirit to breathe life and hope again.

This is released in September at the start of a new school term inviting children to consider where the dry patches are and where do they need God to move and breathe life and hope into.

Be aware of the children in your group and the potential areas that they might want to discuss in response to the story and theme, ensuring we provide an appropriate and safe space for sharing.

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 game - Taps

Sit round a table.

Everyone is to place their hands on the table.

Each hand needs to cross over or under the hand of the person next to them (this needs to be done on both sides). Sharon's right hand should cross over or under Lorraine's left hand. Sharon's left hand should cross over or under Duncan's right hand, etc.

One person begins by tapping their hand on the table. This "tap" is passed clockwise around the circle.

Explain then that anybody who chooses to can tap twice. This changes the direction the tap travels in (i.e. it goes back to the person it just came from).

When someone claps three times the clap misses a person.

Try to build up speed without making mistakes! If you do, they have to remove a hand if this happens twice, then they are out of the game and the game continues until there is one or two people left.

You could make up your own rules for this game with the group.



Other alternative games

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: What is the Holy Spirit by Christian questions -
<https://youtu.be/YF0ovoQW4C0?si=sqMa7uZD8jI5NAMS>

Questions for discussion



Watch the YouTube video

- Is that your experience of the Holy Spirit or what you know of it?
- How would you describe what the Holy Spirit is to someone else?
- The clip says the Holy Spirit is given to those who promise to serve God, only then does God give us the Holy Spirit. What are your thoughts on that statement? What does it mean to serve God?

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.

This passage is a great opportunity to have a go at some puppetry work. It is VERY simple to make and work this Paper Boy Puppet, even under fives can get involved in the making and working of the puppet boy.

Here is a video of one of our writer's churches nativity based on a puppet boy – to give you an idea of what you can do with them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJozozqFUgU>

Explain that just as Ezekiel saw the bones comes to life, rise up and walk; we are going to have fun making this pile of paper become a walking 'person'.

Start by making the puppet, one puppet for each group of three children.

You will need two long bits of paper and some seltape.

Measure the strips of paper to be about the length of a trestle table. Thin lining paper works best.

Next work along the strip of paper crunching it in your hands to make a long crumpled roll. Repeat with the second paper.

Then fold the paper roll in half and tape about 20-30cm to make a circle at the top. This will become your head / tummy. Repeat with the second roll.

Take the circle of one roll and place it up between the long 'legs' of the first roll. You will see that the top roll will make the head and arms shape with the bottom roll making the tummy and legs. Tape in place where the shoulders would be.

Now you are ready to bring your puppet person to life.

Slightly bend where the wrists, ankles and elbows would be to allow the puppet to move freely.

It takes three people to bring the puppet to life. One works the head (from the neck area) and one arm/hand, The second works the waist and other arm/hand and the third works the arms and feet by placing their hands on the feet area.

Practice making your puppet do simple movements, sit down, stand up, wave, begin to walk, try jumping and dancing and so on as you get better.

You will be surprised how easy it is to move them.

Here is a simple three minute video of how to make and move the paper puppet.

<https://youtu.be/pFEnZfS5IXQ?si=bLu6-EYpvt9Jm9vt>

Once you have found your confidence (the children will not want to stop playing with their puppet), you could use them to bring the story to life.

After puppet time is finished you could ask the group to consider how they 'influenced' the puppet when moving it, the difference they made to the roll of paper.

I wonder how the Holy Spirit influences our lives in similar ways?

Just as it took three of us to work our puppets, we have talked about how God is an influence, how Jesus is an influence and the Holy Spirit is an influence and the fact that all three work as an influence in different ways in our lives.

Older young people will LOVE making and moving this puppet, they could even see if they could make one move on their own, by attaching the puppet to their body using elastic bands on the wrists and feet.

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.

Watch Night at the Museum

In this clip, a museum mummy is released. He turns out not to be the dry skeleton the security guard was expecting.

https://youtu.be/WEfH_w4XmoQ?si=NRRnzCCNpOZKcfGO

- What surprised you about the clip from Night at the Museum?
- What surprised you about this week's bible story?
- What do you think surprised Ezekiel about the vision God showed him?



Talking together: Going deeper

- What situations seem really hopeless and seem hard to imagine could change? How might they be influenced by God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?
- If we have God and Jesus why do we need the Holy Spirit too?

Conversation starters

- I wonder if you've felt or seen God's spirit work in your life?
- What difference has the Holy Spirit made in this story?
- What other examples of the Holy Spirit working in the Bible are there?

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.

Holy Spirit, wind of heaven,
blow mightily through our lives.

Get rid of the clutter and cobwebs that stop us being close to you.

Help us to hear your voice and be filled with your spirit.

May we know that you are working in our lives.

May all things that come from you live and grow in our lives. 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.

Exploding Ice-Lolly Sticks – see what an influence each stick has on another.

You will need:

- Lots of lolly sticks (available from Pound land)

What you do:

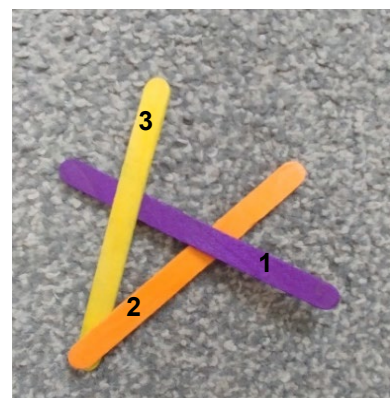
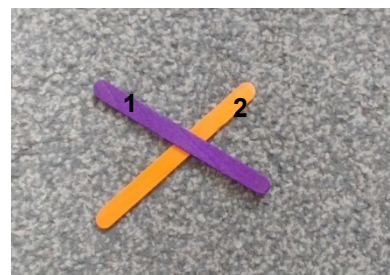
(This works best on a carpet)

Cross two sticks into an "X" shape.

The stick on top will be stick 1 and the stick on the bottom will be stick 2 (see picture).

Add stick 3 by tucking one end under the end of stick 2.

The new stick should go over stick 1.



Add another stick by tucking its end under stick 2 and letting the rest lay over stick 3.

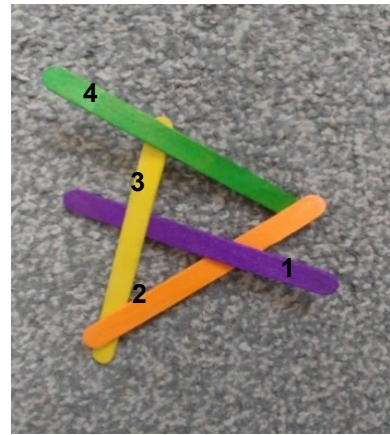
Continue adding sticks one at a time to each side in this way to create a chain.

You may need to hold the sticks in place as you join them to

stop the explosion happening before you are ready!

A few extra pairs of hands are always helpful at this point!

As soon as you think you have made the chain of lolly sticks long enough, let go and step back quickly. You can see our version on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/EhaikwyJ5fA>



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:

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- 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. **Have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in your life?**
 - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://www.jpit.uk) Commitment for Life [cforl.co.uk](https://www.cforl.co.uk)
 - Perhaps you could make something for the garden that will move when the wind catches it, then each time that happens you could ask for the Holy Spirit to influence your life.
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Thank you for exploring the **Ezekiel** 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