

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: Ezekiel 36: 25–26

Theme: The promises we all make.

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

The Book of Ezekiel is estimated to have been written between 593 and 565 B.C., during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.

Ezekiel ministered to his generation who were both sinful and without hope. Using his prophetic ministry, he attempted to bring them to immediate repentance (saying sorry) and to confidence in the distant future (hope). He taught that: God works through human messengers; even in defeat and despair, God's people need to recognise God's sovereignty; God's Word never fails; God is present and can be worshipped anywhere; people must obey God if they expect to receive blessings; and God's kingdom will come.

The passage we are looking at ties in beautifully with the overriding theme of baptism. Here we see the promise of a new beginning, being clean and a starting over. How many times do we want a second chance at things? The theme of baptism also recognises the importance of promises, not just by the "cleansed" baptised but by the wider Church family, friends, family and Jesus.

The subject of baptism reaches far and wide and could often veer off in different directions. For instance, why do we baptise? Why do people choose to be baptised? Does every church baptise?

These are questions you may want to explore further. Maybe it is something you are considering individually. Either way, baptism is a wonderful subject to learn about, talk about and investigate.

Be aware of those who are not baptised and those whose church do not do baptisms.

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.

Active game – Water

Below is a list of games using water. Use whichever ones suit your group and context.

Water pistol game. Give each person a loaded water pistol. Everyone then tries to hit the others with water as they run around – no re-fills.

Pass the bucket over your head. Have everyone sat in a line, behind each other. Give the person sat at the front a full bucket/vessel of water. They must pass it over their head to the person behind them, all the way to the back. The last person then brings the bucket to the front. The game continues until everyone is back in their place or there is no water left in the bucket.

Paper hole. This could be a timed challenge or a race against another team(s). Hold a piece of paper in front or to the side of you. Another person then uses a water pistol to shoot water at the paper until it creates a hole.

Catch the water balloon. A group game. Add water to one or two balloons. Everyone stands in a circle and tosses the water balloon at each other. The players need to catch the balloon without bursting it and thus getting wet. The game ends when the balloons have burst or time is called.

Relay race flowerpot. An outside game.

You will need:

- four buckets
- water
- flowerpots

Split your group into two teams. The idea of the game is to transfer as much water from bucket A into bucket B using the flowerpots. Hopefully the teams will work out quite quickly that it will take more than one person to transport the water, as the leaky holes will need to be plugged. The game ends after the set time limit. The winners are the team with most water in Bucket B.

Quieter game – Drip, drop, don't stop

This is a simple game that your group will get hooked on playing. It's simply a game using water.

You will need a glass of water on a table and a bottle of water.

One by one the children must add some water to the glass. The object of the game is NOT to be the one who causes the water to overflow.

A steady hand is needed and the group will find themselves adding literally a drop as time goes on.

You will be surprised at how much water you can put in a glass before it overflows.

Here's a video of the game being played

https://youtu.be/wDXNcKfVx2U?si=Pn71D_WVMxqdCLN1

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

This link takes you to Ezekiel 36: 25–26 in International Children's Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2036%3A%2025%20-%2026&version=ICB>

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

²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and your idols. ²⁶ Also, I will teach you to respect me completely. I will put a new way to think inside you. I will take out the stubborn heart like stone from your bodies. And I will give you an obedient heart of flesh.

The Holy Bible, International Children's Bible® Copyright© 1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission.

Listen to:

'Beneath the waters I will rise' (Brooke and Scott Ligertwood), by Hillsong Worship

<https://youtu.be/8TXs9jrkZnA?si=HkgjwcYlwYx8qD1V>

Promises (feat. Joe L Barnes and Naomi Raine), by Maverick City Music

<https://youtu.be/q5m09rqOoxE?si=lgmmKkcvL3I07G73>

Question for discussion

- What does it mean to be a new creation, and what is God's promise to us?

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.

To explore the theme, use props to re-enact a baptism. You can do an infant baptism as well as a full immersion. Try to keep it brief and fun, but get the children fully involved, especially using the promises.

- Ask the group what they noticed about each baptism - What were the similarities and differences?
- How was water used in each one. What did the water symbolise?
- Why do you think everyone made promises and how did the promises differ?
- What would they say baptism is about, now they have explored one?

Part of the Service is about making promises.

You will need strips of paper or large speech bubbles with the separate promises written on them. Also strips of paper with people's names on. (See below for a child friendly version)

Ask the group to work together to place the promise with the correct person who makes that promise in the baptism. Then use the questions below to chat about them.

- Which is the most important promise? (You could ask the group to order them by moving the papers around.)
- Are there any promises missing? Which one would you add?

| Person | promise |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Baby | No promise made (have a blank card which can be used to ask more about this) |
| Baptised | I promise to love God and live my life for God. |

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Church | We promise to welcome you and your family and to share with them the gift of God's love, shown in Christ. |
| Parents of Baby | We promise to teach them the love of God and bring them up in the life and worship of the church. |
| Godparents | We promise to pray for you and your family and to support them as we are able and surround them with love. |
| God | I promise to always be with you, even to the end of time and to give you my spirit. |

There are further questions in this session to use if needed.

If you would prefer to show a Godly Play story about Baptism we recommend you use one from the Godly Play foundation YouTube site.

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 this clip from *Jingle all the way*. The dad has made a promise to his son to get him a Turbo Man doll for Christmas, and also be at the Christmas parade. But in trying to find the doll he is going to miss the parade.



Jingle all the way – Broken promises, by Our favourite films
<https://youtu.be/keOovmeC0cY?si=cpPUT7CMvAonZF2U>

- Have you experienced a promise being made and not kept?
- How difficult is it to keep your baptism promises, when life is full of making other promises too?

Group discussion

- Before Jesus came, who was John the Baptist baptising people in the name of?
- What happened to the people who were not baptised before Jesus came?

Personal reflection

- What difference has baptism make to you?
- If you haven't been baptised, would you consider it?
- Do you have to be baptised to be a Christian?
- Does baptism have to be done in church?
- What is the difference between a baptism and a christening?

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 prayer

Dear God, you make us new, for which we are humbled. You give us a fresh start, for which we are not worthy. If nothing else feels certain, we know, Lord, that we can trust in you. Fill our lives with your Spirit, to aid us to walk in faith and not fear, guiding our steps, our words and our decisions. Amen

Prayerful activity Wiping Away Prayers

You will need:

- a tray with some sand (if you do not have sand, you could use flour)

Feel the sand with your fingers. Write or draw in the sand or flour something you'd like to tell God you are sorry for. God wants to forgive you. Baptism is like being washed. Saying sorry is like starting again with God. We can talk to God and he will take away the things we want to say sorry for.

When you have spoken to God, smooth the sand over so the picture or word disappears, imagine God taking it away.



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.

Promise Cake

You will need:

- some pre-cooked cup cakes
- icing
- edible decorations

What you do:

Decorate the cupcake in any way you wish, to make it extra special.

The Bible mentions cakes in different contexts. Cakes in the Bible, specifically in the Old Testament, represent the covenant/promises between God and people. We love to have cake as part of special occasions, so let's share our cupcakes with someone we know who has been baptised to remind them of the special promises that were made at their baptism.

Research

Research different traditions/ways of baptising. Which one would you prefer to receive and be part 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 and insights together. **What promise do you want to make to God?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT Resources (jpit.uk) or *Commitment for Life* (cforl.co.uk)
- When you wash each day, remember the promise you want to make to God and speak it out loud



Thank you for exploring the **Ezekiel** 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

 
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

