



Faith Adventures for Children Together



*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church 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/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Psalm 119 : 1-4,9-10 – God’s people

Theme: Which way are you going to go?

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

Psalm 119 is a long psalm – 176 verses in all. It comprises 22 stanzas – each one starting with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet from Alesh through to Tav – that explains its length! This week we are dealing with a very small part of the psalm, just 7 verses.

The psalmist sets out what we must do to live a good or ‘pure’ life and be blessed by God (different translations use different words). The bar is set very high! We must follow God’s rules, do no wrong, obey God’s instructions and live according to God’s word.

That is probably an impossible ideal – are we being set up to fail? Does it matter when we do, as long as we try our best?

Jesus sets the perfect example – and none of us can be as good as Jesus, right? But does that mean we shouldn’t strive to be the best we can be?

The psalmist says that, if we do these things, we will be blessed by God. What does that blessing look like? How will we know if we’ve been blessed?

The Bible can be (and often is) used to argue many different, contradictory viewpoints and sometimes it can be difficult to know what is the ‘right path’ to take – especially when, as a young person, you are beginning to explore your identity, your faith and beliefs and are more susceptible to peer and societal pressure. From where, or who, do we develop our view of right and wrong?

God doesn’t want us to feel guilty for failing, but God does want us to try to do what’s right.

This session invites us to explore how we make those choices.



Together

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,

Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.

Amen

In-person game – Simon Says

Psalm 119.4 "Lord, you gave us your instructions and told us to always obey them."

Play a game of 'Simon Says' to show that it's not always easy to follow instructions – but remember to remind participants that God forgives us when we get things wrong.

Alternative game – Consequences

You will need: One sheet of paper and a pencil/crayon for each participant

What you do: Each person draws a head (as detailed as they want) at the top of the piece of paper. Then they fold the piece of paper over so that the next person can't see it and pass it on to the next person. The next person draws a body and arms. They then fold the piece of paper over so that the next person can't see what has been drawn and passes it on. The last person draws legs and feet.

When the paper is unfolded, the full drawing is revealed – does it look like they thought it would?



Experience

For this story we recommend using the Easy to Read version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+119%3A+1-4%2C+9-10&version=ERV>

Where can I find the story online?

Over fives: Memory motions by Compass Kids (This uses more complex language for the memory verse – perhaps watch it then try to make up your own motions for the version from the ERV which is more meaningful for children)

<https://youtu.be/4SIKHxT9BAw?si=DFiJO4qV6BrfSV8J>

Over fives: An introduction to the book of Psalms – God's Story by Crossroads Kids' Club

<https://youtu.be/QwQ5FCJKWz4?si=3SMNyw2G6Hr3Bjjw>

PursueGodKids – How to live as a Christian kid

https://youtu.be/UglrMffGHI0?si=j_0DUIKI6E6La118

Songs to support the story

Under fives: I will trust you God by Allstars Kids Club

<https://youtu.be/bb3PuNF6BN8?si=mwQW6Z4Sdy4iL-I6>

Five to elevens: Psalm 119: 9,10,11 by CEF Greenville

<https://youtu.be/iSWyz33fC4w?si=rfuW1-IZd6HQAWLK>

Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the story

Talk together about the rules you follow within the group and why the rules are there. Are they rules that you created together as a group or which rules were put in place by the adults? Are any of the rules unnecessary? Do any of those rules have consequences for if you follow or if you break them? Some consequences may be natural consequences (e.g. if you juggle with the communion glasses they may break) and some may be imposed by others (e.g. if you juggle with the communion glasses then you will not have a biscuit at snack time).

Split into smaller groups of three or four children (unless your group is already small!). Each group should come up with five "most important rules to live by" – rules that would make things fair, build strong relationships, make everyone a decent human being (a 'good egg'). Share together the rules you've come up with and then see if you can combine them to make just one set of five rules that everyone agrees on. Try to frame these rules in positive ways (e.g. 'you must' rather than 'you must not') and design a poster together that could be displayed to share them.

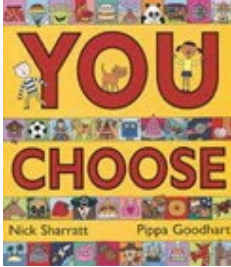
How would life be if everyone in the world followed these rules? Would the world be any different? Would school be any different? What about if nobody followed these rules?

You could also discuss whether it's ever right to break a rule.



Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.



'You choose' by Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt

<https://youtu.be/tUca8bkXwjl?si=XaXfH54YoXEPWafJ>

Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- I wonder what rules you have to follow in life? Are there any you can't understand? What about the consequences? Do you think they're fair?
- I wonder what God's blessing looks like?
- I wonder what you think God's rules are and whether they are easy or difficult to follow?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if you have ever felt blessed?
- I wonder if you find it easy or difficult to follow the rules?
- I wonder what's the most important rule to follow?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- A small toy – hide it in one hand behind your back, and ask the children to choose which hand. Remind the children that in the Psalm today we are encouraged to make good choices
- A maze – which direction will we take, Jesus wants us to follow the path to him
- An image of balancing scales or a set of balancing scales – talk to the children about if rules are sometime unfair (No playing on the grass, no running etc)
- A doll – as you take the doll out of the bag lay your hand on its head to bless it, talk to the children about blessings, and how we might feel to be blessed by God
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc)



Express

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Maze prayers

Create a big maze for the group or a make small individual finger mazes.

Follow the maze with your finger, stopping and praying when you come to a junction. You could say sorry for when you make the wrong choices in life and don't follow God's way, or you can ask God's help to make the right choices in life and to choose to do what God would have you do.

Just like on the maze, you can choose which direction you go in life, but one choice will lead you to the wrong path and the right choice will lead you through the maze of life, straight to God.



If you want to do this prayer with very young children you could use the simple path example on the template to the left, stopping at points on the path and praying together:

- Ask God to help you make the right choices
- Ask God for help to stay on the right path
- Ask God to be with you on the journey
- Ask God to bless you in everything you do and everywhere you go.

Spoken prayer

You will need: a piece of paper with the following choices (and a pen to highlight what is chosen)

This prayer is made up of different lines – each line has 3 choices. Participants are invited to decide which line they would like to use in the final prayer.

Line 1

1. Loving God
2. Father God
3. Parent God

Line 2

1. Thank you for helping us make the right choices
2. Thank you for sending your son to show us what we should do
3. Thank you for all that you have given us

Line 3

1. Help us to follow your laws
2. Forgive us when we don't follow your laws
3. We promise to try and follow your rules

AMEN



Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond. <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>.

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Acrostic poem

The verses today come from a much longer psalm that follows Hebrew alphabet – Create/ write your own acrostic poem that is a song to God using the letters from the words BLESS or BLESSING, *here is an example.*

Be with us

Loving us

Every day

Step by step

Side by side

Write your poem in middle of a piece of A4 paper and decorate all around it. For younger children, an adult may need to write the poem down. Remember to use lower case and printed letters rather than all capital letters or joined up writing, to ensure that children can recognise the letters as the words they said to you.

Muffins

- Combine dry ingredients - 255g of self-raising flour and 140g of sugar in a bowl, then 90ml of sunflower oil, 240ml of milk (remember to check for any allergies; non-dairy milk works equally well), an egg and vanilla extract (optional) in a separate bowl.
- Keep wet and dry ingredients separate until you are ready to mix everything together.
- Provide a variety of ingredients that will help each group make their muffins more personal such as: dried fruit, chocolate chunks, fresh or frozen fruit.
- After combining the dry and wet ingredients to form a pouring batter, allow the groups to choose from the range of additional ingredients, stir in and spoon the mixture into muffin cases – allowing space to rise whilst cooking.
- Place in a pre-heated oven at 190-200 C or Gas mark 5-6. (Ensure an adult is responsible for placing the muffins in, and taking them out of, the oven.)
- Bake for 25-30 minutes, until they are light brown and springy.
- Allow muffins to cool before serving.



If you do not have access to an oven or the time to make the muffins during your session, you could plan to decorate pre-made muffins or biscuits instead. Offer your group a range of baking decorations, allowing them to make choices to personalise their baking in a similar way.



Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Psalm 119 reminds us that God gives us rules to live by. We do our best to live by them, but sometimes it is difficult, and we get it wrong. God is always waiting to forgive when we say sorry. Write a short prayer you could use each day to say sorry to God for when you have not got things quite right and asking for help to follow in God's way.
- Keep a record of some of the choices you have to make each day and highlight the ones where you think the choice you made was the one God would choose for you.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Psalm 119** with us.

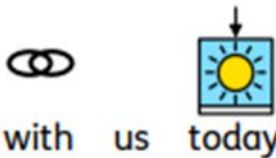
Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Moses in the bullrushes**

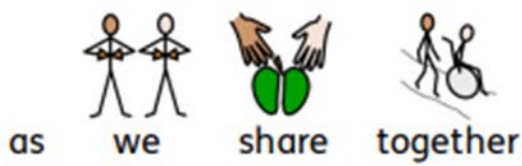




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



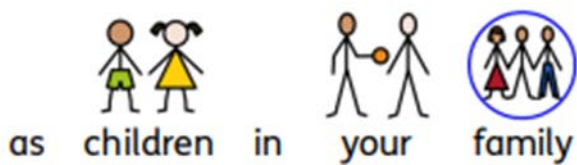
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



Alternate hands back and forth



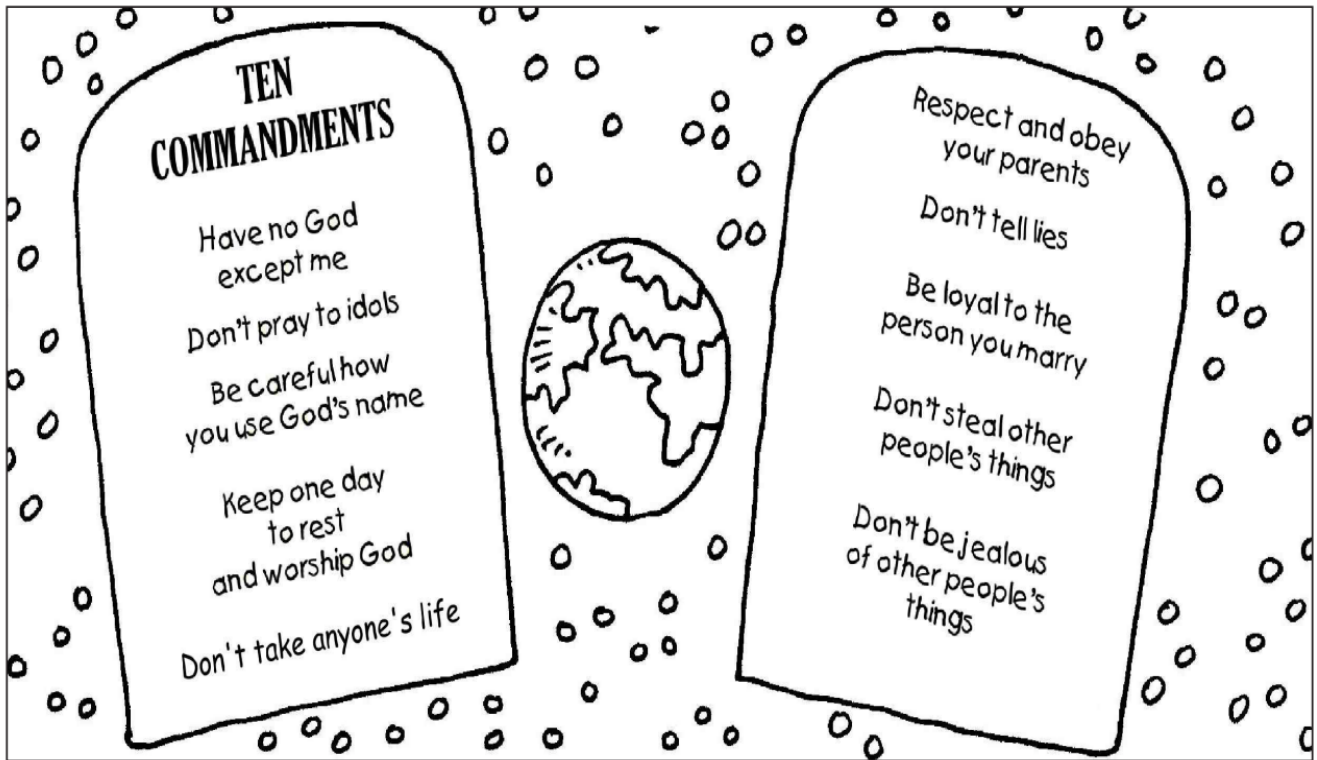


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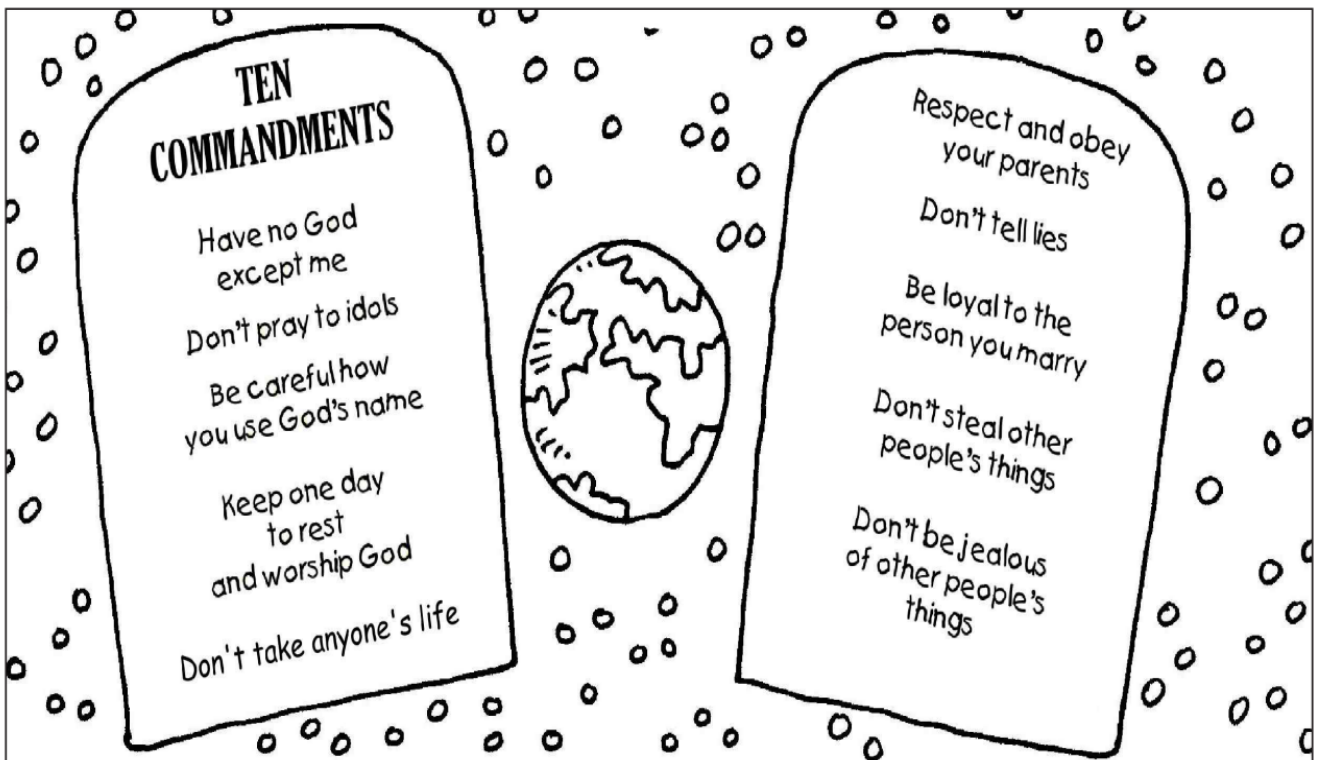




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