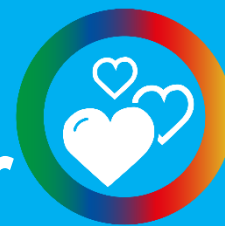




Faith Adventures for Children Together



*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>

1 Samuel 18:1-4 and 20:42 – David and Jonathan

Theme: Best friends grounded in a God connection

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

We are created to be in relationship with God and with others.

This story is the tale of two friends, soul mates, best friends who had an immediate connection with God as the common ground. They cared for each other deeply and in verse 3 we see that they had made a covenant agreement, or promise to care for each other.

Jonathan handed over his worldly possessions to David as a sign that he would stay with him always. In verse 42 we see a blessing given to each other, similar to the Old Testament Hebrew Mizpah blessing; it states that even when they are separated, God is the glue holding their friendship together, watching between the friends whilst they are apart.

This begins our exploration of friendships this month. It is an opportunity to consider who our friends are and what keeps our friendship strong, as well as a chance to celebrate our best friends.

Do be aware of children who may feel isolated within the group or generally, or who lack some of the social skills necessary to form lasting friendships. Do not assume that all children have a best friend or know how to be one. Some pastoral sensitivity may be needed.



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

Groups of three!

- Firstly, ask your group to move safely around your room. (You can specify types of movement – hopping/jumping/star-jumping – if you want to.)
- When you shout a number group, everyone must stop travelling and get into groups of that number. You can count down from five to zero, to make the task more challenging.
- Repeat, with different sized group.

To add challenge for older groups, those who don't find a group within the given time will be asked to sit out. The winners are the final group of two to form.



Alternative game

Find your match!

- Cut postcards into two-piece jigsaws with zigzags, wavy lines or shaped lines. Make sure you have enough halves for each member of the group.
- Hand out the halves so each member of the group has one.
- Players must find the person who has their matching jigsaw piece. You could play music in the background or use a timer to add tension.
- When players have found their pair, they must stick together until the end of the game.

Players could decorate their jigsaw pieces afterwards, with their partner.

Experience

For this story we recommend using The Message version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+18%3A1-4%2C+20%3A42+&version=MSG>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Slapstick Theatre <https://youtu.be/pZ2hRq-ei0U?si=rehubGB9AfnqAyF7>

Over fives: Storytellers from Crossroad Kids

<https://youtu.be/iNA3cumhJww?si=soYYnvtya4cHW6JG>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Jesus wants to be my friend forever <https://youtu.be/qv5NB-ib0uk?si=f7VemiVRqneLaK7q>

Five to elevens: We'll be friends forever <https://youtu.be/Z5tidqxOV-Y?si=9BaCpcrGOegLLmqW>



Explore

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

Friendship plaits

Gather some thick threads, possibly thick chunky wool of different bright colours. Ask each child to choose two. One is to represent themselves, one is to represent their best friend or someone they feel close to.

Encourage the group to take it in turns to show each thread and explain why they chose that thread for themselves and their friend. It would be good to hear a little about their friend and why they are a best friend.

Now encourage the group to plait their thread and their friend's thread together. As they do, they could be thinking about their friendship and what it means to them. You might like to provide space for them to share any thoughts about their friendship.

Once they have finished, explain that when both friends have something in common it adds a thread to their friendship, something else that ties them together. The story showed us that for Jonathan and David this was God.

Invite the children to choose a third thread, untie their original plait and re-plait the three threads, adding God into their friendships. Ask what difference it might make to a friendship?

This activity could provide an opportunity to talk about whether we have friends who don't go to church, or friends from other faiths and none. Be reminded that God wants us to make friends with others, to share God's love with others, not just stick to people who are the same as us. I wonder what these friendships would have in common.

They might want to take their plaits away with them or even make a second to give to their best friend.

Extra display activity – Friendship wall

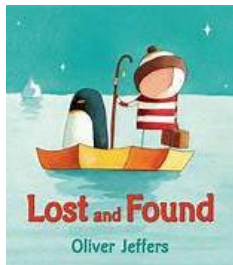
If you are exploring friendship following all this month's materials, you might like to add some continuity by creating a friendship wall that can be added to each week. You may have a space that the group use to display or a noticeboard in the room that could be used. Encourage the group to help set it up so that they feel some ownership of the activity. Give it a colourful background and add a large title – Friendship is.....

Each week after exploring the Bible story, you could ask 'what does this story say to us about friendship' inviting the group to add answers and responses as the weeks go on. They could also bring in pictures of their friends, or images that are about friendship. Anything can be added over the weeks on the theme of friendship. We would love to see the photos of your friendship wall and see how it develops. Perhaps you could post them to our Facebook group.



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.



'Lost and Found' by Oliver Jeffers

<https://youtu.be/cRAAQ8EWzig?si=oFA6NvuDoUrt9KaH>

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

- David and Jonathan both enjoyed music. What do you enjoy doing with your friends?
- Do you have a best friend, or a friend, with a God connection too?
- What's the difference between best friends with and without a God connection?
- How many friends is the perfect number?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if you've ever met someone and made friends straight away?
- I wonder what makes you a good best friend?
- I wonder why God gives us friends?

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:

Paper crown: Take turns to wear the paper crown. Do you think Jonathan liked being in the royal family?

Simple 2-piece jigsaws: David and Jonathan were a perfect, friendship match. What other things go together perfectly?

Children's picture Bible: Share the story and look at pictures together.

Wrapped gift box: David was given presents by Jonathan. Take it turns to pretend to give someone else in the group a present. Ask what they would choose to give?

Small world play figures

Heart shaped objects (such as; a stone, a paper shape or a bead): Talk about people in their lives that they love.

Use play people or natural objects to allow the group to retell the story in their own way.



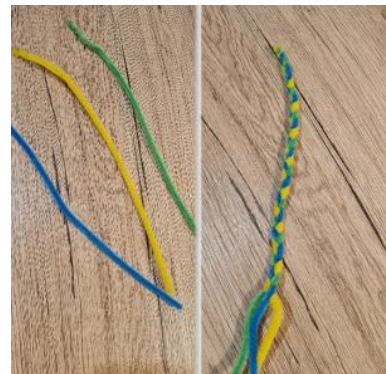
Express

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

Plaited prayers

Take three strands of wool or thread in different colours. Join the three strands together with a knot. Plait the three strands together, remembering the friendship that David and Jonathan shared and the love of God that bound them together. As you make the plait, think about your friends and what makes them special. Say a prayer to God to say thank you for your friends.

Make your plait into a bracelet and, when you wear it, it will be a reminder to continue to pray for your friends.



Spoken prayer – Pass it on prayer circle

Stand in a circle and each person in turn shakes the hand of the person next to them, or they can touch the shoulder of the person next to them, and say, “Thank you God for... (name).” When you have been round the circle, reverse the direction and go around the circle again but this time pass on God’s blessing by saying, “Dear God, please bless... (name).”

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.

Magnetic socks

You will need:

- Socks (four per person – all one colour works best)
- Spare soft fabric (T shirt material is best)
- Magnets (small and strong, £2.50 for 12 on Amazon)
- Needle and thread
- Fabric pens or spare white and black fabric for eyes

What you do: Make a pair of eyes for the socks and sew them onto the front of the sock. Make four arms (a tube of fabric the size of an adult forefinger).



Place a magnet at the bottom of each arm, making sure you have tested that they are the right way to attract each other. Sew them in place at the base of the arm.

Sew the arms onto each side of the sock, making sure you have the right way to attract each other.

Job done. Whenever they are near to each other, the arms will reach out to hold hands.

Keep one pair and give one to your best friend.



People Sandwich biscuits

David and Jonathan were good friends and it was their love of God that brought them together. In this activity you can join two biscuits together with a filling of your choice and be reminded of the story. As you decorate and fill the biscuits, talk about how God was central to their friendship just like the filling holds the biscuits together.

For this you will need:

- Some precooked gingerbread men (or plain biscuits) or as part of the activity you could make your own gingerbread men. (two per person)
- Writing Icing
- Filling to sandwich the biscuits together e.g. Buttercream, Jam, chocolate spread

A simple gingerbread recipe

220g Unsalted Butter cold and cut into small cubes
 550g cups Dark Brown Sugar or light brown sugar for a milder flavour
 2 Large Eggs (cold)
 ½ teaspoon Salt
 1 tablespoon Ground Ginger
 2 teaspoons Ground Cinnamon
 500g Plain Flour



Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 180C
2. Cut the butter into very small pieces and mix it with the brown sugar until the two are well combined.
3. Mix in the egg and the ginger and cinnamon.
4. Mix in the flour. The dough is going to be very thick. Mix until all the flour is absorbed but try not to overmix as it makes the cookies too dry.
5. Tip the dough out onto a well-floured board and roll to about 5mm thick. Use a cutter, dipped in flour to stop it sticking, to make your people shapes.
6. Bake in the oven for approx 7-10mins, cool on a wire rack until firm and cool enough to decorate.

Spread one of the biscuits with your filling and then sandwich the two biscuits together. Using writing icing give the cookies a face.

Have fun eating the sandwich biscuits or make one to give to a friend!



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:

- Does your best friend know about Jesus? Perhaps you could invite them to come to the church with you or to share a Bible story together.
 - Watch out at school or other clubs this week for anyone who seems a bit left out or lonely and needs a good friend. Could you chat with them or play with them?
-

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of David and Jonathan 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 **Paul's friendship with Timothy**

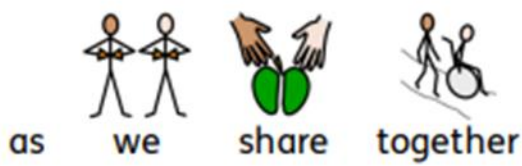




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



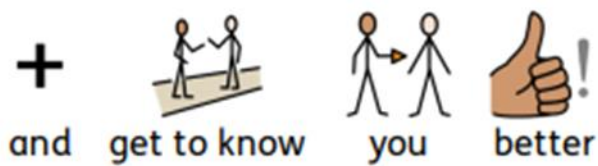
as we share together



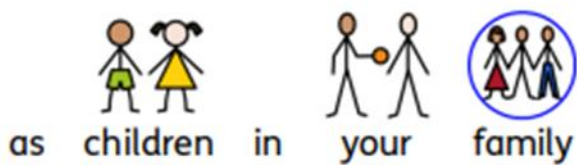
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen

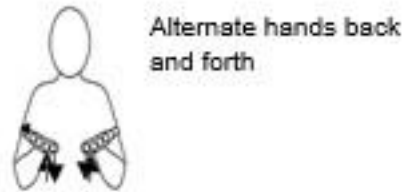




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