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

Psalm 56

Theme: If God is for us, who can be against us?

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

This is one of the psalms of David and we know that it was written at a time when the psalmist was definitely under threat – King Saul is looking for David and intends to kill him or have him killed. And yet David is confident that the Lord will protect him and watch over him, he need not be afraid of anyone. This is the man who was a shepherd boy, who protected the sheep from lions and wolves, and who fought the giant Goliath using only a slingshot and stones. But now he is on the run.

Later in the psalm he asks God to punish those who are threatening him. We know, through Jesus, that this is not how God works, but David has never heard the teachings of Jesus and is speaking from his own emotions and experiences. We also know from experience that, even when we trust in God, sometimes our feelings and our bodies can be hurt by other people. But God can fill us with strength and courage and helps us not to be afraid (while not taking foolish risks, however, as we have discussed previously). Nobody can break that bond with God – apart from us – and God will always take care of us, even taking us to be with God in heaven. So individually we are weak but if we trust in God we will be strong.

Trigger warning – if you have refugees or people who have experienced abuse or violence in your group, they may have firsthand experience of threat from others and fear (or actual experience) or being hurt. Be prepared to listen to teach other's stories without interrupting or judging and provide a safe place to seek comfort and support if needed, making sure relevant trusted adults

are alerted to this. Leaders should refer to and follow the church's safeguarding policy and procedures in case of disclosures.

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 and alternative game

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
Psalm 56:3-4 - When I Am Afraid by Nathan Clarkson ft. Joel Clarkson
https://youtu.be/y655_hyA6F4?si=lWf-POQkOB0Ologc
I Will Fear No More by The Afters
https://youtu.be/wMmmbJlWhtk?si=8LX4AvmgOyywl_gX
The Power of Trust – 2014 Bled Strategic Forum Short Film
https://youtu.be/BOdaqOTmFjg?si=4-O33KFCUKtVJfWO

In the song "When I am afraid", the singer uses the words "mere mortals", which you can also find in some Bible versions. What do you think it means?

The song "I will fear no more" focuses on our state of mind and the things that worry us or make us anxious rather than things that frighten us. How does it compare to the words of the Psalm?

In the short film "The Power of Trust", how much do you agree with, and how could you apply this to what happens when you trust God? Can you spot the Ernest Hemmingway quote? Do you think he's got it right?

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.

Alternatively:

Trade Unions

Spend some time researching the history of trade unions and how they were formed. You may find some of these links helpful:

https://youtu.be/gPPeDO4dMRA?si=4Ywwqf8WnjKr02ga

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zgxpfrd/revision/11

Discuss:
What's the difference between:

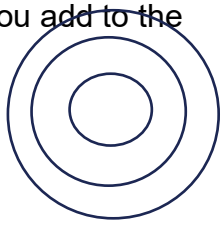
- A revolution and a mob?
- A group and a gang?
- Where do ethics come in?
- Where do you see courage within the trade union structure?

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.

Circle of trust

Watch this clip from the movie meet the parents:
https://youtu.be/GZzLBBddJkw?si=9zNVQjleHh0iVIBG

Think about your own circle of trust. Draw a small circle in the centre of a piece of paper. Think about those who you trust the most and you would include in your inner circle of trust and write them down. Now begin to add additional larger circles. Who would you add to the outer circles? What characteristics do you think make someone trustworthy?



Talking together: Going deeper

- Does having God on our side give us superpowers?
- The Psalmist says that people can't hurt us, but we know that they can. What do you think David meant?
- How can this reading help us in our daily lives?

Conversation starters

- Is trust and respect earned or should it automatically be given until it is lost?
- What would you say to others who are feeling nervous or worried or anxious about something?
- If God is on our side, does that mean God is not on the side of the other person?

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.

The creative prayer in FACT involves eating doughnuts. You may wish to look at that !

Courage prayer

Invite the group to think of people who show, or have shown, courage in the face of danger.

Almighty God

We thank you for those people who put themselves in danger to help others (*pause*).

We thank you for lifeboat crews, police officers, school crossing patrol wardens;

We thank you for those people who put themselves in danger to make the world a better place by speaking out (*pause*);

We thank you for Martin Luther King, Greta Thunberg, peaceful protesters.

We ask you to help us be as courageous as these people when we see someone else who is in trouble, or when we see something happening that is not right or fair.
We know that, when we show courage to help others, we are doing what you would want us to do and you will be with us.

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.

We have spent time thinking about people who took risks to make things better for other people. Can we think of some others? E.g. Greta Thunberg, Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, maybe someone in your community?

What if WE were the people to take risks?

What could we courageously do, either individually or as a group, to make things better in our world, our community, our church or our home?

Choose something and write a plan of action about how you are going to achieve it. Remember to include praying to God for courage as part of your plan.

Now that you've planned it – what is stopping you doing it?

Go, with the strength of the Lord at your side to support and encourage you.

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. **Where does your courage come from?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT Resources (jpit.uk) or Commitment For Life cforl.co.uk
- Find out about Harriet Trubman. There is a film about her you might like to watch with your family or just watch the trailer **https://youtu.be/GqoEs4cG6Uw**

Thank you for exploring **Psalm 56** 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