

## Welcome to Families on Faith Adventures @ Home!

*This resource has been put together for you by the United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Work team and the synod CYDOs and their equivalents.*

*We hope you will enjoy sharing a time of faith and fellowship together as a family through these stories, games, activities and prayers. They are designed as a 'pick and mix' of ways to experience God's message through the Bible, exploring what it means to you and express that in words and action. They are not linked to the lectionary but can be used in any order as we explore all the different parts of the Bible.*

*The Walking the Way challenges are one way of continuing our walk with Jesus throughout the week.*

*These ideas are designed to be intergenerational - maybe even to be shared with members of the family you can't see now except via the internet.*

*The resources are based on our non-uniformed children's groups, Friends on Faith Adventures and Pilots, but have been modified to make them suitable for all families at home.*

*These activities are planned to be used together as a family and under adult supervision. Please be aware of your family's ages and abilities as some activities may need more adult support than others. **Stay safe and have fun!***

### This week's Bible story is:

## Work in Progress Ezra and Nehemiah



*With many varieties of activities and things to do to help explore the theme. Look out for this 'hands on' symbol.*

## Get to know your Bible

The Bible is like a library made up of 66 books written by many different people over many years.

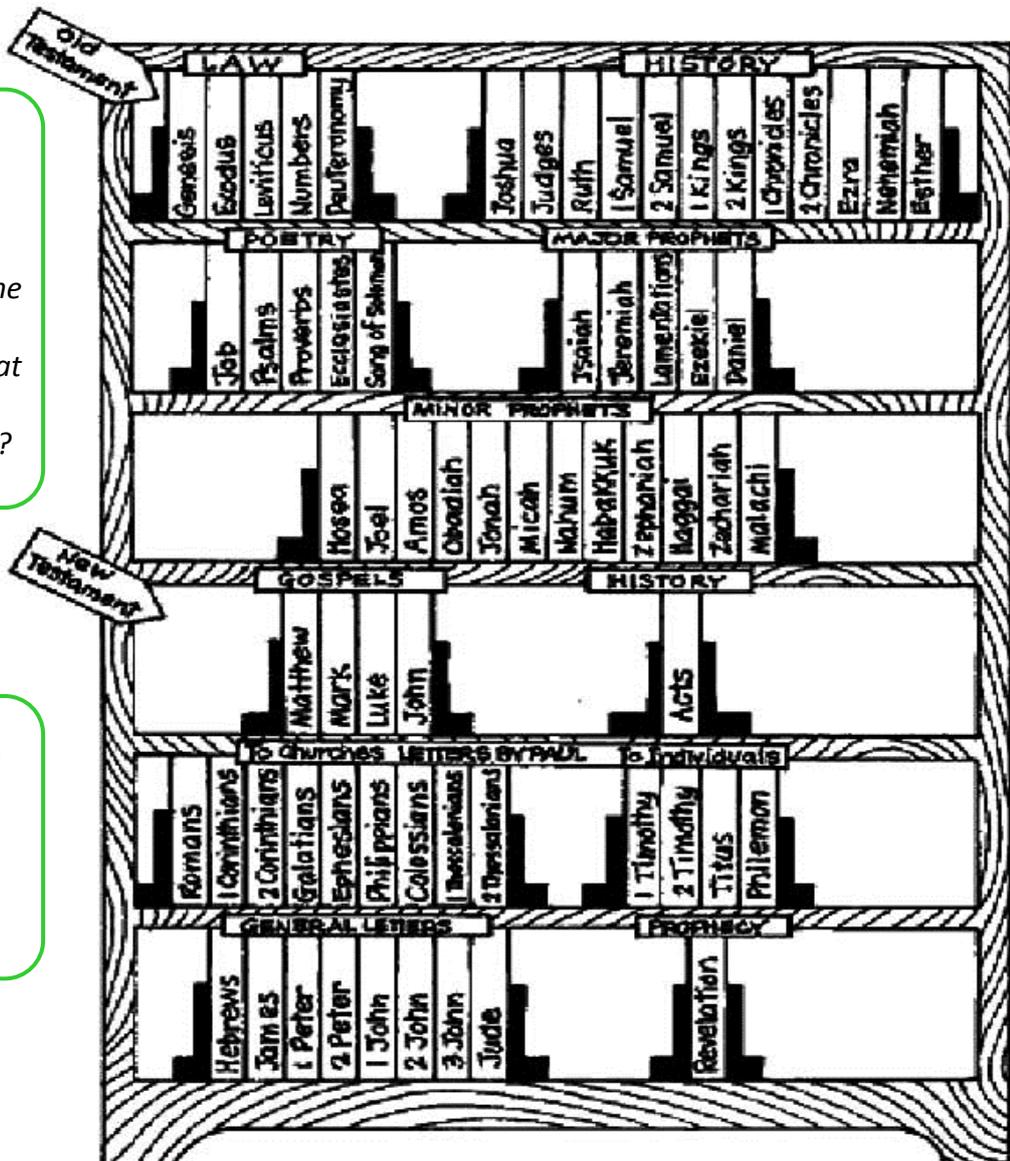
The Old Testament books were written before Jesus was born. They are the holy stories he would have grown up hearing and reading. There are 39 of these.

The New Testament tells us the stories of Jesus and his followers. There are 27 books in the New Testament.



Can you find and colour the book on the bookshelf that this week's story is from?

If you have a Bible, see if you can find the story in there.



You could print this out once and colour each new book on the bookshelf as you read stories from it.

### **Bible context – Exodus**

*The book of Ezra was written by the scholar and priest Ezra around 450 years BC. It tells the story of the rebuilding of Solomon's temple after the great Babylonian Exile. Ezra's enthusiasm encouraged over 2,000 men to rebuild the temple and have a strong relationship with God.*

*The book of Nehemiah was written by Nehemiah himself around 425 – 400 BC. It tells the story of how he led many men back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. It was a very long and difficult task but they built the walls strong.*

### **Online versions of the story**

#### **Watch and listen**

*Story told by Crossroads kids in drawings*

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

*Retold by children* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zC30R5Rlj5q>

*Lego version by CCV Kids* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AF72UeiP04>

#### **Dance and sing**

*Rend Collective Build your kingdom here* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbdJXKqVqtq>

*Kids Worship Waymaker* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wyotu9Twko>

*Nothing is impossible* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxq8lVT8U8E>

## **The Story – Retold by Ruth White from the book of Ezra and Nehemiah**

*Returning home and rebuilding, but not in the same way.*

*God's people had been in exile for 70 years. They had been taken away from their homes and their land by the Babylonians to work as slaves. But change was coming. The Persians conquered the Babylonians and took control of everything they owned, including God's people. The Persian King gave permission to the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they saw that the whole city was in ruins; the gates, the city walls and even the temple had been destroyed. The rebuilding began. Ezra was a priest at the time and encouraged the people in the task, telling them to rise up, have faith and do it.*

*The temple was finished and looked magnificent but the walls that protected the city were still in ruins. This was a much bigger job. This time God used a man called Nehemiah. He wasn't a priest - in fact he was a slave who had been born in exile and now worked as the cup bearer for the king in Persia. He heard about the city walls and knew something had to be done. He prayed to God and then asked the king for permission to return to Jerusalem to organise the rebuilding of the walls. God touched the king's heart, who not only agreed but also allowed Nehemiah to take lots of wood from his forests to rebuild the city gates. When Nehemiah got to Jerusalem and saw the size of the problem, he knew he needed a plan. He organized people into groups and gave each group a different part of the rebuilding work to complete. They set to work and began to rebuild the city walls and gates. It was long and hard work, made worse by enemies who didn't want the walls rebuilt. They made threats against Nehemiah and the workers, but this only made them work harder. The walls and gates were finished in 52 days, which was a miracle in itself.*

*Finally, after many, many years, God's people were back in Jerusalem and had rebuilt the temple, the city gates and the city walls. They had also rebuilt their relationship with God. They sang and prayed and celebrated all that had been done.*

### **Ideas to retell/explore the story**

#### **Jenga**

*A simple game of Jenga to explore the ideas of building and rebuilding continuously. (Could use a giant game). You could make it even more fun by writing consequences on a few bricks. When the brick is pulled out everyone must follow the instructions. Instructions can include things related to the story such as, In Exile - miss a go, knock the tower over and start the game again, have another go.*

#### **Then – Now – Soon revisited**

*If you completed the Then, Now, Soon activity from week 12*

*[https://urc.org.uk/images/Children-and-youth/Resources/Families\\_on\\_Faith\\_Adventures\\_-\\_Week\\_12\\_-\\_New\\_Heaven\\_New\\_Earth.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/Children-and-youth/Resources/Families_on_Faith_Adventures_-_Week_12_-_New_Heaven_New_Earth.pdf)*

*now might be a good time to revisit it. What did you write in the Soon box? What was it you were hoping to see as lockdown changes? This might be a good opportunity to write a simple plan and agree a way forward to making those things happen.*



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### **Retell the story and have some fun building, knocking down and rebuilding**

Gather the family around a pile of boxes or bricks (The bigger the better, or small bricks on a table). Ask everyone to help build a temple with a wall around it. Place some gold and silver coins inside and a few toys around to represent people.

*Stand back and admire your creation.*

*This is the temple in Jerusalem. It is God's house.*

*The place where God's people come to meet with him.*

*It is a holy place.*

*It was destroyed in a battle, (encourage everyone to knock the temple down) the gold and silver were stolen, (put the gold and silver in a bag) and God's people were sent away to live in exile in another country (move the people to the other end of the room/table).*

*God's people would often think about the temple in Jerusalem and long to go back and put things right.*

*70 years have passed.*

*A new King is on the throne – His name is Zerubbabel (Dress someone as the king).*

*He decides to set God's people free to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.*

*He gave them the gold and silver that had been stolen (give back the gold and silver).*

*Not everyone returned, but many of God's people went back (Move the people back to Jerusalem).*

*They began to rebuild the temple (Build the temple again).*

*It was not a quick job; it took many more years.*

*A prophet called Ezra was the man who encouraged God's people to never give up, but to do the thing that God had asked them to do, and to finish it.*

*He said, Rise up, have faith and do it (Write this on a flag that you place on the temple).*

*Many years later, another man named Nehemiah heard that the city walls were still in piles of rubble. He persuaded his boss to let him go back and rebuild the walls. (Begin to rebuild the walls)*

*Many people laughed at them and tried to stop the walls from being built (some of the family throw crumpled paper balls at the walls as they shout silly names).*

*But they persevered and continued to build until the walls were finished and stronger than before.*

*God had brought his people back home. Together they rebuilt the temple and the city walls; together they had made it work.*

*(celebrate your creation and don't forget to take lots of pictures)*

### **Dinner table Chat Activities**

#### **Sticks and Stones can.....**

*Last week we saw stones being used to hurt people in the story, this week we see stones as a positive as God's people use them to rebuild Jerusalem. This provides a great opportunity to talk about things in themselves not being good or bad, it's about how we as people use them. Consider, stones, words, actions, money and so on. Can you think of any other examples?*

## What's in the box?



What treasures can you find to put in the box for your little ones to explore?

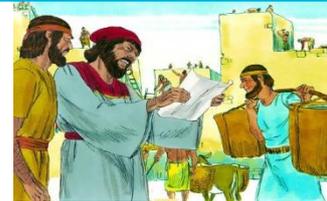
Perhaps older children could help find the things.



Use a box or a bag to hold the treasures and encourage any little ones to explore what's in the box/bag each week to go with the Bible story.

## This week's Bible story is:

Work in Progress  
Ezra and Nehemiah



Something to draw on and with

Some  
screwed  
up paper



Something with  
rainbow colours  
for God's promise



A sealed bag or purse with  
coins inside that jingle



Bricks or junk  
for building



A flag

## Pray Together

### Prayer Cairns (stone towers)

*In the Bible, people often set up stones as reminders of the things that God had done for them. Sometimes they used one very large stone as a landmark, other times they stacked smaller stones up to form a cairn, a kind of tower. They were reminders of how God had helped his people in the past to give them courage to see how God would help them today. Today people build cairns as way markers and guides.*



*Smooth pebbles work best, but do not worry if you cannot find stones, you can use objects from around the house to stack together or roll some paper into shapes. Find somewhere flat to build your tower - hard floor or ground is best as carpet makes it wobble.*

*Slowly build your tower. As you pick up each stone or object try to think of something that God has done for you. Try building quietly so you can pray. Think about how God is there for you in the difficult times and remember that God is always with you.*

*Building takes careful work, it takes patience. It's okay if it falls over, just try again!*

### Faith Wall

*Nehemiah depended on his faith in God to find the strength to take on the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. We too need to trust God in our daily lives.*



*Gather together some pictures of family, friends and things that are important to you, things that make you smile and help when you are worried or sad. Cut some brick shapes out of card and stick the pictures on to them. You can write words on the bricks that mean something to you.*

*Arrange the bricks to make a wall and hang up your wall of faith. You could join your bricks together as a family and make a family wall of faith.*

*Talk to God about things that you find difficult and remember, as God helped Nehemiah, God is there to help you make good choices and give you strength when things are difficult.*

## Pray Together

### Prayer Bricks

Using building bricks or blocks, write the words Bless, Sorry, Thank you and Help on the bricks, or write on stickers you can put on the bricks. This works with Jenga bricks too. Put the bricks in a bag and shake them up. Take it in turns to take out a brick. Pray a prayer for each of the different bricks that you take out:

Dear God Please bless...

Dear God I am sorry for...

Dear God thank you for...

Dear God please help...

Amen

As you pray each prayer, add your brick to those already used to make a prayer wall. The temple Ezra rebuilt is no longer standing but one wall remains and many people still go to that wall to pray.



## Can you help us?

**Families on Faith Adventures @ Home**

Let us know how many families our resources reach. This is an anonymous survey. If you wish to identify yourself, please email [lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk) instead.

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Do you use Families on Faith Adventures @ Home

Checkboxes

Yes, every week

No, I use other resources or make my own

Yes, I occasionally use it

I don't use it myself but send it on to others

I use it and pass it on to a friend or family member

Other...

Add option

How do you usually get your copy

I download it from URCL (https://moodle.urc.org.uk/course/view.php?id=30&section=1)

I download it from the website (https://urc.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth)

Someone emails it to me

Someone prints it and sends it to me

Other...

Do you have any other comments you would like to share with the writing group?

Long answer text

**We would love to know how many families use this resource.**

We know everything these days seems to come with a survey or evaluation attached, but we would love you to share with us and let us know if you use Families on Faith Adventures @ Home.

Perhaps you would follow this link and just tell us you're using the resource. The survey will only take seconds to complete and is completely anonymous.

<https://forms.gle/K35JMyQL1LbPJADT8>

or



or you could email us at [lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk)

*I wonder what is it that you need to do, that you are putting off or finding difficult?*

*I wonder why it was important to build a house for God?*

*I wonder whether there is a way to help you remember to talk to God about your plans?*



*I wonder what you can do to encourage others to not give up, and to finish what they have started?*

*I wonder who or what encourages you to rise up, have faith, and do what God is asking you to do?*



**TO DO TOGETHER...**

**Even Better If.... Messy Play**

**Food Buildings**

**You will need:**

Food which you are planning to eat.

**What you do:**

Start by trying to build a wall. Work out what works best. If you have lots of different shaped food, what can you do to make your building stronger and better?

Try to create a building from all the food on your plate. Now eat it!



We'd love to see your finished buildings on our Facebook page

**Lego houses**

**You will need:**

Lego blocks or wooden blocks

(If you don't have Lego or wood blocks, why not build a house from cardboard boxes?)

**What you do:**

Build your model together.

Then think about how it could be better still.

You could add an extension, maybe some outside features, or just make it bigger and better than it was.

If you are making a cardboard house, you can paint it or draw pictures on it.





**TO DO TOGETHER...**

*Sensory ways to explore*

**Den building**

**You will need:**

- Sheets or blankets
- Cushions
- Chairs
- Pegs
- String

**What you do:**

*Create a den, either inside or out, using sheets and cushions,*



*Make a simple one first and then work out how you can make it even better, and maybe bigger.*

*As you reconstruct it, think about how, when we redo something, it is never exactly the same as before. We can fix the things that didn't work and make the den magnificent.*





## TO DO TOGETHER...

## Games

### Game - Building Buddies

**You will need:** Two identical sets of Lego  
(or other construction toy) of various sizes and colours

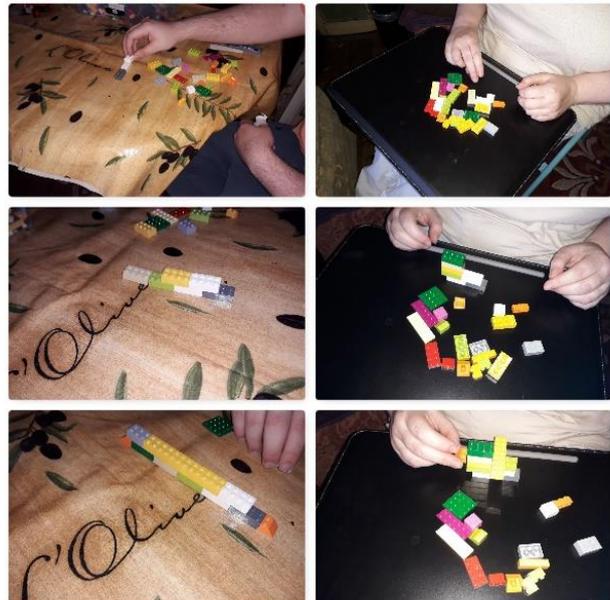
**What you do:**

Sit back to back with another member of the family.

Each person needs a surface to build on. One is the Master Builder, the other is the Apprentice.

The Master Builder uses their set of Lego to build a wall or some other construction. As they build (or after they have built it, if you want to make it a bit trickier), they describe what they are building as precisely as they can.

The Apprentice has to follow their instructions without asking questions and try to build an identical construction.



When you have both finished building, compare and see how good the instructions were and whether the Apprentice followed them correctly.

When we make plans, we need to think of others, and also listen carefully to what God is asking us to do.



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# Walking the Way

Living the life of Jesus today

**Our Walking the Way Challenge  
this time is...**

**At Home:**

*Find something small enough to fit in your pocket that will help you remember that God loves you and has great plans for you. Hold it in your hand whenever you are worried or nervous or sad. Find something small enough to fit in your pocket that will help you remember that God loves you and has great plans for you. Hold it in your hand whenever you are worried or nervous or sad.*

**Outside:**

*Get some ribbons and write encouraging words on each, like "Rise up, have faith, and do it". When you're out and about, find places where you could tie a ribbon for people to find.*

**For Others:**

*Who do you know who needs some encouragement? Ask God what you could do to cheer them on with something they are finding difficult right now or to build them up if they are feeling anxious or low. A text message, a card, a gift, a helping hand?*



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### **Adventurers Go!**

*You've shared together, now share with us!*

*Why not send photos of your crafts, your treasure boxes, your Walking the Way challenges - or dress up to make a tableau of the Big Story and take a photo to send in.*

Email your photos to: [lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk)  
with parental permission for them to be used in publicity and online URC social media.

Alternatively, share them on our Facebook page  
<https://www.facebook.com/URCchildren.and.youth/>

Remember you can find more resources on our website:  
<https://urc.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth>

*And if you've enjoyed these activities, why not see whether your local church runs Pilots or Friends on Faith Adventures (FOFA) when things get back to normal again.*

*Created for you by Nicola Grieves (Eastern Synod), Judy Harris (National Synod of Wales), Hannah Middleton (Northern Synod), Philip Ray (Wessex Synod, North), Lorraine Webb (Programme Officer for CYW), and Ruth White (Wessex Synod, South) on behalf of the CYDO+ and Children's and Youth Work team and Pilots.*



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