

Family devotions

For families all ages

Dear families and people of all ages and backgrounds,

Thank you for opening this document and for your willingness to share faith with the members of your family or other people you share life with. These family devotions are for you to use in your own home setting or in intergenerational small groups. You can use these devotions during the weekend of the International Day for Children and Youth as the material suggests, but feel free to also use it during any other moment that fits your situation.

We pray that you will be blessed, that your relationship with Christ and with each other will deepen and that God will open up your heart even further for the people around you.

Friday | Identity

Pause and pray

*Father, may your word be a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Spirit, may you breathe on us, so we may come to life and stand on our feet.
Jesus, may we follow in your footsteps in all we do and say.
Amen.*

Living word

'You are like a tree, planted by flowing, cool streams of water that never run dry. Your fruit ripens in its time; your leaves never fade or curl in the summer sun. No matter what you do, you prosper'

(Psalm 1:3 VOICE).

Devotion

As we write this devotion, the world is slowly moving away from a scary time, the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic restrictions required us to reduce our movements through social distancing, travel bans and lockdowns. This meant that we couldn't share the good news of salvation with each other in the ways that we knew. We were challenged to find new ways to make a mark in the lives of other people and to share the good news that brings salvation, peace and happiness to all humanity (Isaiah 52:7).

The Bible uses the metaphor of a tree that is planted by water to describe someone who is rooted in God's words. It is his or her focus – from dusk to dawn. He or she intentionally chooses to focus on God's words that bring life and light and they refuse to listen to people who are full of judgement, sarcasm and lies.

Here are some fun facts about a tree. Maybe you can find a few more yourself!

- A tree is a large plant that can live for many years.
- A tree has one stem.
- The stem supports the branches and leaves.
- The tree stands because of its roots which are hidden underground.
- The roots support the tree by transporting the water and nutrients that the tree needs to grow.

A tree depends on its roots for its strength and health. And by the fruit that the tree bears you can see how healthy and strong it is. It is the same with us. The strength and health of our relationship with Jesus is visible by what we do and what we say. That is our fruit.

When our relationship with Jesus is strong, we are not easily shaken, just like a tree with strong roots. The roots of our faith grow deep in Jesus, just like Paul says in his letter to the Colossians:

'Now that you have welcomed the Anointed One, Jesus the Lord, into your lives, continue to journey with him and allow him to shape your lives. Let your roots grow down deeply in him, and let him build you up on a firm foundation' (Colossians 2:6-7 VOICE).

Paul's advice to the people in Colossae is: make sure you create space for God, each and every day. You will flourish: your faith becomes stronger, your love increases and your joy grows. When we are in the presence of God, we do not fear. We will receive all that God has in store for us. The storms may come and go, but we will remain. The true character of God is revealed in us.

In John 15:5, Jesus says: 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' Jesus is saying that if we stay connected to him, we produce fruit.

The fruits we produce are our footprints; the difference we make in this world. Our fruit can make a positive impact in the lives of other people.

Activity and questions for a conversation

- Look at the tree on the next page.
- When do you feel close to God? Write your answers near the stem.
- How can you make a difference in your house, neighbourhood or city? Write your answers near the fruit.
- Have a conversation with each other about the answers.
- Pray for each other.

Make your mark, knowing Jesus will be there every step on your way!

Challenge to the family

As a family, you are challenged to plant a tree. The tree is to be taken care of by the family, making sure that it is watered and nourished regularly for it to grow. The tree is a reminder of your identity in Christ and the difference you can make in the world because you are rooted in his love.

Prayer

Father, most gracious and loving. We come before your throne of grace knowing that you love us, and that you promised to never leave nor forsake us.

Spirit, guide us through this journey of life, so we live a life that makes you proud of us as we leave our footprint on this earth.

Jesus, help us to proclaim your name and your teachings in all we do and say.

Amen.

Saturday | Direction

Pause and pray

Father, may your word be a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Spirit, may you breathe on us, so we may come to life and stand on our feet.

Jesus, may we follow in your footsteps in all we do and say.

Amen.

Living word

‘Commit your path to the Eternal; let him direct you. Put your confidence in him, and he will follow through with you’ (Psalm 37:5 VOICE).

Have you ever seen or used a compass? It is an instrument that has four main directions: north, south, east and west. It is used for direction and will help you find your way if you get lost. Have you ever followed a GPS only to end up at a dead-end? Perhaps you started on your journey without looking properly at the map.

God is much more reliable than a compass or Google Maps. If we type in an address and hit the road without asking him first, we might be left wishing we had checked the route to make sure it leads to the destination.

In the second book of Samuel, we see David anointed as the King of Judah. David had known he was going to be king prior to his anointing, and, with Saul’s recent death, it seemed like the perfect time to take the throne. He was ready. And he asked God what he should do next:

‘In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. “Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?” he asked. The Lord said, “Go up.” David asked, “Where shall I go?” “To Hebron,” the Lord answered’ (2 Samuel 2:1 NIV).

David had a pretty good idea of his direction, but was very aware of God and the need for God’s guidance. So he double checked with God, to see if going to one of the towns of Judah was a good idea. God confirmed this direction and even gave David a very detailed destination: Hebron.

Sometimes you might have a good idea of the choice you have to make. Where shall I go to college? To what group of friends do I want to belong? Just like David, involve God in every decision you make or every step you take. And remember: you are a child of God, loved by God and now living in God's presence. Look at what Paul wrote about this:

'The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true – these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it' (Ephesians 5:9-10 MSG).

When we stay connected to God we will – step by step – understand God's direction for our life. God's presence is like a light that shines on our path. Together with God we can rest assured that we are going the right way, even if it doesn't make sense to us.

God is so much greater than us. God alone sees the big picture of our life. When you walk with God, you can trust in his direction, even if it is beyond your understanding

Activity

Resources needed

- Fabric (old fabric will do) or paper
- String
- Scissors
- Markers/pens
- Glue/stapler/pegs
- A picture containing shape

Each person can create their own triangle of bunting. Write your favourite verse on one side and an answer to one of the questions below on the other side:

***Where do I believe God is leading me in my life?
What is my wish for the future?***

Find someone to combine all the bunting triangles with and hang them up in your home/church where others can pray over it.



Prayer

Father, most gracious and loving. We come before your throne of grace knowing that you love us, and that you promised to never leave nor forsake us.

Spirit, guide us through this journey of life, so we live a life that makes you proud of us as we leave our footprint on this earth.

Jesus, help us to proclaim your name and your teachings in all we do and say.

Amen.

Sunday | Journey

Pause and pray

Father, may your word be a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Spirit, may you breathe on us, so we may come to life and stand on our feet.

Jesus, may we follow in your footsteps in all we do and say.

Amen.

Living word

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them' (Luke 24:15 NIV).

Life can be like a journey filled with adventures. I remember my primary school trip when we visited the zoo. The fun part was getting a goodie bag and having fun on the bus with my friends.

There's a wonderful term that has been trending for a long time: 'greatest of all time'. One earns this title from not just being good at what they do, but being GREAT, surpassing everyone or anything else around them; from an athlete to an automobile. It is typically abbreviated as GOAT. 'Jesus Christ Superstar' is one of the greatest musicals of all time, Albert Einstein the greatest scientist, Lionel Messi the greatest football player and Nelson Mandela one of the greatest leaders of all time.

What makes someone the greatest of all time is simple. He or she needs to excel in their journey of life, especially in a talent or skill that God has given them. It's fair to say that the true greatest of all time (dating back 2,000 years ago) is Jesus Christ. We look at his journey in life: born in a manger, growing up to show the world the greatest love they could possibly ever find, and showing that we are all important in God's eyes.

Today, as we look at the Bible verse from Luke, we are also reminded of Jesus' desire to daily walk with us, whatever the road we are walking on looks like. You might feel insecure at this moment, because of some challenges that are ahead of you. You might be very excited about some events or adventure you are about to start.

Whatever your journey looks like: Jesus will be walking beside you. The greatest of all time, the one who is stronger than death, will keep you company. You are not alone!

This is July Ponce.

She is 19 years old. She is from Peru and is a member of the International Children and Youth Advisory Group (ICYAG).

She says the following about her relationship with Jesus:

'He has always been with me and has blessed me in the simplest and most beautiful ways. I see him when I come home from college late at night safe and sound, when I wake up and hear the birds singing, or when he gives me the opportunity to video call my family.'

My dream is to help other young people get closer to God and understand that having a relationship with God means having the best of the best friends by your side.'

JULY PONCE

Americas and Caribbean

South America West Territory

"I am happy to be part of this Advisory Group and really thankful to God for this opportunity."

My dream is to help other young people get closer to God and understand that having a relationship with God means having the best of the best friends by your side."



Talk it over

- ***When do you feel Jesus is with you?***
- ***Who helped you or reached out to you when you went through a difficult time? Write a card to him or her!***

Prayer

Father, most gracious and loving. We come before your throne of grace knowing that you love us, and that you promised to never leave nor forsake us.

Spirit, guide us through this journey of life, so we live a life that makes you proud of us as we leave our footprint on this earth.

Jesus, help us to proclaim your name and your teachings in all we do and say.

Amen.



Footprints: Be you, stand out!

Introduction to the lesson

This Sunday school lesson is very extensive. You might want to divide it into sections and use it in two or three Sunday school classes.

The aim of the lesson is that children understand the impact that Daniel had on the life of King Darius and that children think about the impact they can have on others.

The questions in bold are key in this lesson. Make sure you take time to listen to the children and acknowledge their answer. There are no 'wrong' answers. Children use their imagination and personal spirituality to understand what God is saying to them. We are just 'facilitators'.

Memory Verses: Daniel 6:26-27

'For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions'

Introduction to the theme 'footprints'

Footprint

noun

foot·print | \ 'füt-, print \

Definition of footprint: *An impression of the foot on a surface*

Ask the children and listen to their response.

Have you ever noticed your footprints in the sand?

When you step, you leave a mark which can last a long time after you have left. Footprints are the impressions or images left behind by a person walking or running.

Ask the children to have a look at their feet, the shape, size as well as other unique traits of it. Ask them if they perhaps have a 'beauty spot' on it.

Did you know?

After Daniel and his three buddies were taken as captives to Babylon, the king changed their names. He wanted to turn them into Babylonians (It didn't work)

Read Daniel 1:6-7 to see what their new names were



Lesson Activity

Do a little icebreaker or game that relates to the theme 'footprints'. Here are some suggestions¹:

1. **Toe skills:** All players or members of the team sit next to each other and try to pass on corks from neighbour to neighbour with their toes.
2. **Balancing balloons:** Only using the feet, one or more balloons must be kept up in the air without the balloon touching the ground. This can also be timed.
3. **Bare foot park:** Different materials must be identified while blindfolded using only the feet to feel the items.

Ask the children and listen to their response:

What do you think of when you think about your footprint?

Acknowledge the answers by repeating or rephrasing them.

Today we are looking at the story of Daniel which is found in the Old Testament. The Bible story of Daniel shows the confidence, commitment and courage of four young men in a very difficult time. They were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar. The Bible story shows how Daniel and his friends left a big footprint in the lives of others – and especially King Nebuchadnezzar and King Darius – by their dedication to God and service to others in very tough times.

The story of Daniel

Find a creative way to read the story of Daniel together with the children. Maybe you want to use a special children's Bible or a YouTube video. Be as creative as you can! In the lesson we will focus on chapter six.

Here are some suggestions for you:

1. Books:

- [*'Daniel in the Lions' Den'*](#), The Brick Bible for Kids by Brendan Powell Smith. The Brick Bible Book Store

2. Videos:

- [Daniel in the Lions' Den](#)
- [Daniel and the Lion's Den - Animated Scripture Lesson for Kids](#)
- [VeggieTales - Daniel and the Lions' Den](#)

¹ For more game suggestions, visit: <https://www.youthwork-practice.com/games/feets-toes-legs-games.html>

Ask the children and listen to their response: Can you describe yourself in three words? And what are those words?

Acknowledge their response by repeating or rephrasing it.

Maybe you describe yourself as 'humorous, intelligent and lazy', but it could also be 'polite, shy and helpful'. All these words describe your character. Our character has a huge impact on our lives and our relationships. If you are honest, people will trust you. If you are lazy, you will not be seen as a hard worker. In the story of Daniel we see how his character impacts the lives of people around him.

Darius became king when he and his armies overcame Belshazzar and entered Babylon under the walls. As the ruler of this new territory, Darius chose 120 satraps or governors to have authority over the people living in the different territories. The 120 satraps/governors were under the leadership of three vice presidents that the king chose.

Ask the children and listen to their response: What three words describe the character of Daniel?

Acknowledge their response by repeating or rephrasing it.

Background information about the story in Daniel chapter 6

Daniel had a very good reputation before King Darius, and because of his excellent reputation the king was planning to promote him and planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

The two other vice presidents did not like the idea that the king was planning to make Daniel ruler over the entire kingdom. They were jealous because the king thought Daniel was an excellent man with an exceptional reputation. They didn't want him promoted as ruler over the entire kingdom. They were looking hard for something wrong with Daniel instead of looking out for his best interest.

The only way they could keep Daniel from looking good in the eyes of the king was to look for something that Daniel was doing wrong in his work. Surely, they could find a time when he was dishonest in his job or took money that didn't belong to him. Maybe they could catch him taking a nap at his desk when he was supposed to be working. They searched and searched for something bad to say about Daniel but couldn't find anything wrong. In everything Daniel was trustworthy and faithful.

It frustrated the two vice presidents that they could not find anything wrong with Daniel's behaviour. They still wanted to make him look bad to the king so they thought about it and realised that the only way they could make Daniel look bad is if they made him break God's laws. They knew that Daniel was faithful to his God and the only way he could do something wrong was if he sinned against God.

The two vice presidents gathered many of the satraps that were serving in the kingdom and told them their plan to bring Daniel down. They wanted so desperately to get Daniel in trouble that they began to negatively influence the satraps as well. When they came up with their plan and got the crowd of people pumped up about their plan, they took it to King Darius.

Imagine being King Darius on the day his appointed leaders show up before him. They stood before him and spoke flattering words. They said, 'O King Darius, live forever! We have gotten together and have agreed that we think that you should make a law that for the next 30 days no one should pray to any other god except to you. If anyone breaks your law the punishment will be that they are thrown into the lions' den.'

Ask the children and listen to their response: How would King Darius respond, do you think?

Acknowledge the responses by repeating or rephrasing them and say: 'Let's have a look how King Darius responded.'

The king was flattered. Here was a group of his leaders suggesting that all the people only pray to him for the next 30 days. It sounded like a good idea to him because he was probably thinking how wonderful it would be to be praised by the people of his kingdom. He wrote out the law and signed and sealed the law making the law unchangeable. What was written must take place and no one could change the king's law.

Ask the children: Who do you think has a positive impact on King Darius? Daniel or the vice presidents? Why do you think so?

Acknowledge the responses by repeating or rephrasing.

The vice presidents left a negative impact on the satraps and the king: their aim was to hurt Daniel and sin against God. Daniel's impact was positive; he helped the king with his exceptional qualities.

When Daniel heard that the law was written and signed by the king he went home and did what he always did. He opened his window that was facing in the direction of Jerusalem, a place he lived with God's people many years before. He got on his knees and began to pray and asked God for help.

Daniel was faithful to God and did not let anything keep him from praying and talking to God.

As Daniel was praying with his window open, the administrators and satraps came to his house and found him praying to his God. They rushed back to King Darius and said, 'Daniel, who is one of the exiles (someone who was taken from their own land) from Judah pays no attention to you, O King, or to the law you put into writing. He still prays three times a day to his God.'

King Darius was very troubled. He knew Daniel was a faithful man with an excellent spirit. He tried very hard to keep Daniel from being punished because he broke this law. He worked hard until the day was over trying to rescue Daniel from his punishment.

Ask the children and listen to their responses: How do you feel about King Darius? Acknowledge the responses by repeating or rephrasing them.

Ask the children and listen to their responses: Have you ever felt like Darius, regretting an action because it hurts someone else? Acknowledge the responses by repeating or rephrasing them.

The administrators and satraps came to the king and reminded him that he could not break his own law and that Daniel was to be punished in the lions' den.

King Darius didn't use wisdom when he made his law. He was influenced by people who wanted to hurt Daniel. He might have thought the law would make him feel happy and loved. But eventually it made him feel sad. He knew he made a mistake. And because of that Daniel now was being placed in a dangerous situation. Knowing that he had no other choice, Darius ordered Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den. As Daniel was being taken to the den, the king said: 'May your God, whom you serve continually rescue you!'

As Daniel was thrown into the lions' den the king had a stone placed over the mouth of the den and sealed it with his signet ring. Darius returned to his palace and spent the entire night without eating or having any kind of entertainment.

Ask the children and listen to their responses: I wonder what else King Darius did that night and how he felt...

Look around to see who wants to respond and acknowledge each response by repeating or rephrasing it.

We don't know exactly what he did, but we know that it must have been a long night for Darius.

As soon as it was daylight Darius ran to the lions' den. When he got to the den he called out to Daniel in an anguished voice, 'Daniel servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?'

What a relief it was for Darius to hear Daniel say, 'O King, live forever! My God sent his angels and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O King.'

Daniel had been protected by God all the time! Continue to have confidence in God, to commit to his will and to be courageous in difficult times. God will protect you and help you in your difficulty. If you stay connected to God each day, by listening to him, praying and reading his Words, you will gain strength through his holy spirit, just like Daniel.

The king was overjoyed that Daniel was alive! He gave orders to lift Daniel up out of the den. They brought him out and there wasn't a bite mark or a scratch found on his body because of God's presence!

King Darius wrote a new law that said that everyone in his kingdom must honour and respect Daniel's God. King Darius saw God's power in Daniel's godly life and his protection from the hungry lions. Darius praised the living God before the people.

Ask the children and listen to their response: What footprint did Daniel leave on the life of King Darius? Or: What impact had Daniel's life on the life of King Darius?

Acknowledge the responses by repeating or rephrasing them.

Daniel's confidence, commitment and courage influenced those around him. Look at the impact that Daniel had on the life of King Darius!

Ask the children and listen to their responses: How can you leave your footprint/ can you have a positive impact on others with your character, talents, gifts and skills?

Acknowledge the responses by repeating or rephrasing them.

If you are trying to be a good influence it is important that you ask God to show you if you have any habits or attitudes that might not be a good example to those who are watching you.

If you have not accepted God's love for you and his forgiveness, then simply ask for that and ask for his Holy Spirit to help you.

Let us choose to live good lives among others so we can be a light for others and glorify God!

Lesson Review Questions

- What part of this story did you like the most?
- Who is Darius?
- How many satraps did Darius have in his kingdom?
- Why were the two vice presidents jealous of Daniel?
- Why were they looking for something that Daniel had done wrong in his life?
- How did they plan to get Daniel in trouble before the king?
- Why was Darius upset when they told him about Daniel praying?
- What did Darius do at night when Daniel was in the lions' den?
- How was Daniel protected in the den?
- Which person from this story would you like to be and why?
- What do you think is the most important part of this story?
- What can you do this week that will be a positive influence in another person's life?

These questions are based on ministry to children¹ and wonder questions from Godly Play²

¹ Ministry to youth - Daniel & the lions den (lesson activities)

² Godly Play UK – A Christian movement centered on childhood spirituality

Following in Daniel's example:

Keys to leaving your footprints where you are.

1

Love God

God's love is for you, his love is all around you. God gave his only son Jesus that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). If you are to make the impact where you are, God's love is all that you need. His love will enable you to love others and yourself. It is his love that will make you go the extra mile to see God's will fulfilled

2

The word of God and prayer

It's important to study the Bible because God's Word guides you in the right direction in life. It lights the way ahead of you so you can see clearly which way to go. Through every season of your life, you can be confident that God is always leading you through his Word (Psalm 119:11).

Studying the Bible gives you God's heart and mind for your life and for people around you. God delights to answer when you pray from this place of abiding in Christ and his Word. Daniel and his friends understood the role of God's Word and prayer in their lives and continued listening to God under every circumstance.

3

Be sold out to God – Obedience

People who really left a footprint like Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa have one thing in common: they focused on others and not themselves. If you want to leave eternal footprints, focus on Christ and others and care less about your position, status or reputation.

Daniel and his friends were totally sold out to God and lived in obedience to his will for their lives. Daniel loved God more than anything, so he wanted to stay connected to God, no matter what others said. It only takes one boy or girl who is willing to be obedient to be used by God to impact a family, community, school, city or even an entire nation. Simple obedience can lead to things you cannot imagine.

4

A man of the Spirit and power

Just like Daniel, you can be full of the Holy Spirit and power if you are to make indelible marks with infallible proofs.

5

Wisdom of God

Wisdom is the ability to discern and judge which aspects of that knowledge are true, right, lasting and applicable to your life. Knowing the difference between the two can sometimes be difficult. For you to leave your footprints wherever you are, you need wisdom too. Make sure you have wise and spiritual people around you that can help you making the right decisions.

6

Spiritual family

Just like Daniel, we need friends who journey with us, also in our journey of faith. Make sure you are surrounded by spiritual friends and a loving community of faith. They will support you in tough times and you will support them!

Every person can make a difference by changing his or her pattern of behaviour.
How can you?

Incorporate these suggestions to reduce your ecological footprint and make a positive impact!

1. **Consume consciously:** This is really important, sometimes we are not aware of the huge impact our consumerism and spending habits have on the environment... Try to think about the things you REALLY need to buy.
2. **Incorporate sustainable practices into your lifestyle:** There are many things we can do about it, but we don't have to do it all at once... Making lifestyle changes can be harder than it seems, so try to focus on the small steps you can take at home, at work or even at church.

Perhaps you can start by using public transport more often, taking your re-usable coffee mug to the coffee shop, cutting down on your meat consumption, and reducing your use of single use and disposable plastics.

3. **Support sustainable and socially responsible companies:** Look for trusted labels when shopping! This can be difficult at times, but try to look for fair trade, ethical trade and cruelty-free labels.
4. **Make your voice heard:** Tell others about what you are doing to reduce your ecological footprint and why they should join you too.
5. **And never stop praying.**

More resources

1. Visit <http://www.myfootprint.org> to accurately calculate your footprint.
2. If you want to know more about your carbon footprint and how to reduce it, visit <https://www.funkidslive.com/learn/what-is-a-carbon-footprint-and-what-can-we-do-to-reduce-it/>
3. Check out our [‘Faith talks’ card game](#).



Fun foot facts¹

1. During your lifetime, it's likely that you'll walk approximately 115,000 miles. That's like circling the globe on foot over four times.
2. There are 26 bones in a foot. That's one-quarter of all the bones found in your body. Each foot also has 33 joints, 107 ligaments and 19 tendons and muscles.
3. Your feet may just be the most ticklish part of your body.



¹ <https://www.nyfoothealth.com/blog/2021/8/18/did-you-know-fun-facts-about-feet>

Craft ideas for Sunday School

We have seen how Daniel's confidence, commitment and courage influenced those around him. And we have seen what impact Daniel had on the life of king Darius! He left a remarkable footprint for us to follow. It might not be a physical footprint, but it is an example that we all can follow. Have confidence in God, stay committed to God and have courage in all circumstances.

Would you like to leave a footprint like Daniel?

Let us join as we make some crafts that will be a reminder to each one of us to have confidence, stay committed and have courage so we can leave our footprint.

Craft Idea 1

Resources needed:

1. White sheet or cloth
2. Different colour paints
3. Markers



As a group, you may use the provided materials to make handprints or footprints on the white sheet or cloth using the provided paint. Once the prints have been made, allow them to dry.

Ask the children what kind of messages or keywords could be written next to the prints. (These could be 'Be You', 'Make Your Mark', 'Have confidence' and so on.) Those messages will be a reminder to everyone to leave a positive footprint in this world.

Craft Idea 2

Resources needed:

1. Hard paper/normal paper
2. Scissors
3. Markers/crayons/pens/pencils
4. String/yarn



With the provided paper, make a tracing of your hand or foot using a pencil. Once done; use the marker to bold the edges of your print. Draw significant marks that appear on your hand or foot as these will show your identity or journey that you have been through.

On the palm of your hand or foot; write your name, for example: 'Mary' or 'James'. Write down on each finger five prayers that will help you on your journey where you want a mark to be left. This could be excelling in your studies, sports or your dream job that you foresee in the future as you lean more on God every day. You may hang this in your class or home as your constant prayer and reminder.

For at home – how to leave a footprint in your neighbourhood

Invite the children and their families to leave a positive footprint in the lives of others by some of these mission ideas¹:

1. Smile at ten people today!
2. Write a card and send it to someone who needs some encouragement.
3. Climate change: think about a way you can save energy today.
4. Make some cakes or biscuits to share.
5. Offer a neighbour to help them today with some chores.
6. Invite someone over for dinner.



¹ These ideas are taken from [40acts.org](https://www.40acts.org)

Please visit the website for the full wallchart with many other mission ideas for families!

Prayer explosions

For teenagers & young people

Thank you for opening this document! By doing this you are expressing that prayer is important! We have created four guides to help you in your prayer time during the International Day of Children and Youth. You don't have to do these all at once. Take your time and let the Holy Spirit guide you as you open your Bible and start to pray.

Each session takes about 15 minutes and includes a Scripture reading, a short devotion and a prayer guide.

The topics are as follows:

1. In God
2. Be you
4. Stand out
7. Make your mark

These materials have been created for teenagers and young people. However, even if you are a bit older, please feel free to use these resources

Prayer Explosion 1 | In God

Direct my footsteps according to your word' (Psalm 119:133 NIV)

The theme of the International Day for Children and Youth 2023 is 'Footprints'. We look at the marks we leave behind, the influence God has in our lives and the influence God can have through our life or the lives of the people around us. We start these moments of prayer by reflecting and meditating on Psalm 119:133.

Let's take some time and reflect on different translations of this Bible verse. Each version gives us deeper insight into and appreciation for King David's original text. As we look at the different translations, I invite you to surrender to the Holy Spirit and give him the space to shine his light into your heart. Feel free to pause and make room for whatever the Spirit reveals to you.



Psalm 119:133a

King James Version	'Order my steps in thy word'
New King James Version	'Direct my steps by your word'
New American Standard Bible 2020	'Establish my footsteps in your word'
New International Version	'Direct my footsteps in the way of your word'
Amplified Bible	'Establish my footsteps in the way of your word'

The words ‘order’, ‘direct’ and ‘establish’ pop up again and again in different translations. Order, direct and establish. When you order a meal at a restaurant, you have a particular goal in mind. You may be looking for something light or something filling. Your decision could be based on how the meal looks, tastes, smells or how it will make you feel. Whatever it is, you order what your heart desires. God has a particular desire for his creation, and he orders our steps to fulfil his divine plan.

He directs and establishes our steps according to his will and purpose. The apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all part of the body of Christ with very specific roles to play. No one part of this body is more important than the other. When one part is not well, the whole body suffers. God established, ordered and directed us all at the point of our creation with particular functions in mind and we all work together for his glory.

You’re probably wondering what God ordered for your life. Which part of Christ’s body are you? There are many ways of establishing who God says you are. Let’s try the following exercise and see what comes up. Remember to make room for the Holy Spirit as he guides you.

Who am I?

Think of five people in your life. They could be family, friends, colleagues or school-mates. What would they say if you asked them to describe you in three words? Take some time and note down what they would say.

Name/ Picture	What would they say?

What do you think about what they've just said? Did they use any similar words to describe you? How does this make you feel?

If you look deeper into the words they used to describe you, a common theme will emerge. Words such as carer, strategist, creative, peacemaker etc. There's a divine reason why these themes exist. This is how we are perceived by the people around us and it reveals the role we play in the Body of Christ, as the Lord ordered. Just as an eye can't help but see and a nose can't help but smell, it is in our nature to live our lives according to our role in the body of Christ. Let's pause here and take this to God.

Pray

God, as I meditate on what you've ordered for and through my life, I'm discovering _____ about myself. Open my ears to hear how you want me to be in your world, as you have ordered. I tune into you now, Lord. Amen.

Open your heart, mind and spirit and receive wisdom as the Holy Spirit speaks to you. What is he saying? Who are you?

Bible
verse 1

'For we are God's handwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

Just as the sun rises not to warm itself and the river flows not to quench itself, God created us uniquely for a particular reason. He created us just as we are and directs us to where he desires us to live out his purpose. Where he establishes us, there is grace, provision and peace. Jesus reminds us that:

Bible
verse 2

'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing'

John 15:5 (NIV)

Our talents, time, resources, relationships, education, experience and positions are fuel for our lives. Sometimes these things can cause us to define ourselves outside of what God ordered. Let us choose today to abide in Christ and be who and what he says we are. Only then can we achieve the eternal goals we were created for.

I invite you to spend the next few minutes tuning into God and ask him to direct your footsteps as you continue to be you, in him.

Pray

Lord, thank you for seeking me out when I fall off the true vine. Help me abide in you as I endeavour to be who you made me to be. May I remain in you and you in me so I can bear much fruit. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Prayer Explosion 2 | Be you

'Direct my footprints according to your word'
(Psalm 119: 133 NIV)

Have you ever had thoughts about yourself like these?

- 'I am not smart enough.'
- 'I am not beautiful enough.'
- 'I am not strong enough.'



There is a lot of competition in this world.

There is healthy competition, like the fun television programme where people compete for a silly prize or a donation for a charity, or when you play sports or games with your friends. But there is also unhealthy competition; when you feel the pressure to excel in everything, at work, at school etc.

When I check Facebook or Instagram, I see people who have better haircuts, achieve more and have visited more exotic places than I. Seeing those posts, it is very tempting to compare myself with them: 'I wish I was in that place!'

Competition and comparison can lead to anxiety and stress. We tend to compete and compare ourselves with others who are faster, smarter or stronger than us. End result: we feel bad about ourselves and think: 'I am not enough.'

Today we celebrate you! There is only one of you, even if you are a twin. We are all 'wonderfully made', special and unique. Some people have blue eyes, some have brown eyes, some people can do this, some people can do that, some people are right-handed, some people are left-handed. And you know what? You are God's masterpiece!

'For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago' (Ephesians 2:10 NLT).

You are a masterpiece and God prepared good things for us to do. So, God has a plan for you! Paul tries to illustrate what it means when you are made new in Christ Jesus:

'So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it' (Colossians 3:12-14 MSG).

It is like God changed your wardrobe. From now on, you wear socks of compassion, shirts of kindness, trousers of humility, a belt of strength and a jacket of discipline. But most importantly: your basic (underwear!) is love, all the time! The same love that brought Jesus into this world, healed people and conquered death is now flowing through your veins as a child of God. Embrace this identity and you will become the best version of yourself!

'Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original' (Galatians 5:25-26 MSG).

Do not try to be someone else; be you! This does not mean that you cannot improve or grow. Growth is part of God's plan, and we can certainly learn from others and imitate excellent actions and attitudes. But be careful in comparing yourself to others. Be content with who you are. Each one of us is made perfect in his image for his purpose. By being who God intended us to be, we can make our mark!

Prayer thought

'I am what I am by the grace of God. I will be what God made me and fulfil his plan for me.'

Prayer Explosion 3 | Stand out

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will' (Romans 12:2 NIV).

One of the greatest compliments you can receive is to be told that you are different. This might seem a contradiction to the moments when you want to belong to a certain group of people and try to be exactly the same. Or when you want to be as smart, cool, intelligent, skilled and talented as others. Paul reminds us that as a child of God, we can rely on God's spirit to transform us from the inside out by renewing your thoughts. As a result, we will be able to discern what God's will is and what God finds good, pleasing and perfect.



Paul explains what this means:

'Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody' (Romans 12:13-16 MSG).

Do you see what makes you different? It is your thinking! It is not all about you, but others! God's spirit will grow a love in you that goes beyond your understanding. It will enable you to love yourself and love and serve others in a special way. That is how you stand out!

You also stand out because God created you to be unique. There is no other person in this world who is the same as you. You are one of a kind! Your uniqueness comes from God. Remember what Paul wrote about this in his letter to the Galatians:

'That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original' (Galatians 5:25-26 MSG).

Why is it important for you to stand out?

We want to challenge you to show your uniqueness. Don't be an imitation of someone else. Don't be a moody, selfish, arrogant person. Be the one that stands out because of your compassion and kindness!

By standing out, you amplify your uniqueness and you bring glory to God. You point others to Jesus. You point them to a life of hope, joy and deliverance from sins. Or to paraphrase the words of the musical duo Mary Mary, take the shackles off your feet so you can dance. Be the dancer that encourages others to join the dance. That's how God wants you to be you.

How can you stand out?

We can influence those around us in a positive way, not by being the centre of attention, but through consistent 'day-to-day fruit of the Spirit action'. By loving those around us, being joyful in whatever circumstances, and bringing peace. We are a beacon to those in darkness around us. We stand out. You'll also stand out from the crowd by consistently choosing to do ordinary things in an extraordinary and supernatural way with great excitement. Excitement and enthusiasm are contagious. People are drawn to you when you are excited about life.

How do you keep standing out?

Sometimes being part of a group means conforming with its values. And sometimes this means that your uniqueness is at stake. So, base your choices on the Word of God and the leading of his Spirit. Connect to your spiritual family and friends who you trust and who are reflecting God's goodness in their lives. Then for sure you will be you, in God, and stand out!

Prayer action

You will need:

- Paper
- Pen
- Bright coloured paint
- Paint brush
- Match sticks

Write down something that has hindered you from being the best version of yourself and led you to conform. It could be something you are carrying in your heart and spirit, a past event that changed the way you view life, or an experience that completely changed you and made your journey with God unbearable and difficult. Light it up (safely and supervised if you are not 18 yet) and pray that God carries it (Psalm 55:22).

Paint the matchstick with a colour that attracts you the most and keep it as a reminder that you have cast all your burdens to the Lord so that you may be able to continue your journey light and burden-free. Start again, this time with God as your navigation and aim to stand out in all that you do. Let the colour you choose remind you to stand out and remember:

'You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill'
(Matthew 5:14, MSG).

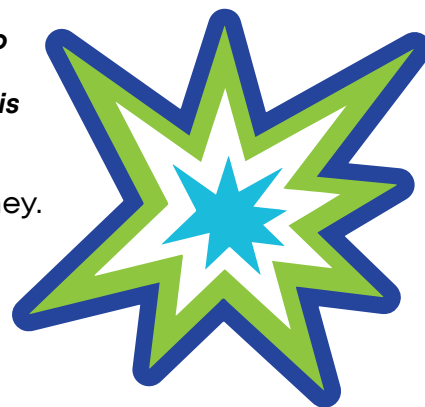
Challenge

You do not need to be a well-known person or hold a big position to stand out. Make your mark by having an impact on those around you. Let God continue to shape your character, as all your actions flow from it. Stay in God, be you and stand out.

Prayer Explosion 4 | Make your mark

'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other' (John 15:16-17 NIV).

Congratulations! You have made it this far on your journey. All of our journeys are different, so I cannot begin to understand what yours is like. Is it easy? Is it full of hardships? Today we will look at our journey and the way we can bear fruit. Or in other words: how we can make our mark.



When we look at the life of Jesus, we see that it was all about serving others. In three years he walked through Galilee and Judea, teaching disciples and crowds, performing miracles and rebuking church leaders. He certainly made his mark!

If you go to Israel today, you see people who retrace his steps. They are trying to imagine even more tangibly what it meant to follow Jesus in real life. And Jesus is not the only one who is followed and looked at so closely. The life of Nelson Mandela is also looked at quite closely. People visit the presidential palace or Robben Island where he was held in prison. And there are more. Just think about Anne Frank, President Lincoln or William and Catherine Booth. Did you know volunteers of The Salvation Army take people to the East End of London on a tour, retracing the steps of our founders and reliving the early days of The Salvation Army?

Imagine leaving such a strong mark in the world.

The word footprint can be used in many ways. In forensics a footprint can be evidence in a crime scene. In archaeology, footprints have been found preserved in fossils that document prehistoric life. In the digital world, we have a digital footprint that we usually unintentionally leave behind that could open us up to identity threats. And then there is our ecological or carbon footprint that helps us understand our impact on the environment and climate change.

We all leave a trail of footprints behind us wherever we go based on the way we live our lives. Just think about it for a minute. What trail do you leave behind? Is it a path that others should follow, retracing your footsteps? Or maybe it's a path with a 'danger' sign next to it because you've done things that were harmful to yourself or others. Whatever your footsteps were, every new footprint you leave behind can point others towards Jesus. Do you choose your footsteps on the basis of love?

It is this love that made Jesus lay down his life for others (John 15:9-10; 12-13). And are you willing to retrace his loving steps? It is this extravagant love that opens up our hearts to love not just the people that are easy to love, but everyone, your worst enemies included.

Don't worry! When you allow Jesus to lead you and when you allow him to be your source of inspiration, the journey ahead will have real impact. It will not always be easy, but it's going to be worth it. And you're not travelling alone!

Challenge

Let's think about our own footprints for a moment. If you use social media, do your comments, messages and pictures show the way to Jesus? What does your social media footprint look like? And in the 'real world'? What do you say to people around you? How do your actions reflect Jesus?

We have the chance to motivate, inspire and influence others to live Godly lives. We have the chance to change this world and advance the Kingdom of God.

Think about this:

- What has God laid in your heart?
- Where do you feel led to make your mark?

Walk in the footsteps set out in God's Word. Let the Spirit of God inspire and guide you.

Prayer thought

God, may you direct my steps. May I walk in a way that pleases you. Guard my heart to hear from you. Inspire my actions to make a mark that brings people to your Kingdom.

Sermon Outline 'Follow me'

Introduction and welcome

If you have this paper in your hands, it means that you are entrusted with a sermon for the International Day of Children and Youth. Congratulations!

In this outline you can find some background information and some pointers to make your own sermon. You are a unique person and God speaks to you in a unique way. So make this sermon your own by reading and listening carefully to what God is saying.

Enjoy this journey with God and be blessed by it and be a blessing to others!

How do I make a sermon?

1. Take time to read the Scripture verses prayerfully. Do it several times and use three different translations or versions. What strikes you? What questions do you have? What challenges you? What is God saying to you? Write those down.
2. Read the background information. How does this impact your understanding of the Bible verses? Add your thoughts to your notes.
3. Think about the people you are talking to. Who are they? What is their background? How old are they? What do they need? You can always send a group of children and young people a WhatsApp or Messenger message. Ask them to read the Bible verses and to let you know what questions they have and what challenges them. This information is always very helpful and it will definitely give you a good direction for your sermon.
4. What is the message you want people to take with them? Write it down in one sentence.
5. Try to focus on one to three points in your sermon. Feel free to choose your own, but here is an example:
 - a. Seeing – Focusing on what Jesus sees in the new disciples and what he sees in us.
 - b. Following – Focusing on what it meant for the disciples to leave everything behind and follow Jesus. What does it mean for us to follow Jesus?
 - c. Fishing – Focusing on the meaning of Jesus' words about fishing for people. What does that mean in our lives?
6. You can unwrap these three points with the information and questions you had yourself or from a group of young people.
7. End your sermon with some 'wondering' questions that challenge people:
 - a. I wonder what part of this story is about you?
 - b. I wonder what part of this story is most important?
 - c. I wonder what challenges you the most in this story?
8. Invite people to respond in their own way to what God is saying to them. Does God ask for a new commitment? Does God challenge people to do something? Explain the place of the mercy seat and invite people to use the mercy seat as a place for prayer, surrendering or renewal of their commitment.

Scripture – Matthew 4:18-22 (NIV)

'As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

'Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James; son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.'

Background information

(preferably not to be used in the sermon)

The bigger picture and Matthew

This must be an important story as it is mentioned in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 1:16-20), Luke (Luke 5:1-11) and slightly differently in the Gospel of John (John 1:35-44). All the writers of the gospels believed it was important to let the readers know how the adventure of the 12 disciples started, how they took their first footsteps with Jesus. And Matthew tells this story even before Jesus' first sermon, the famous Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5-7.

If you really go into the book of Matthew, you find that everything Jesus says and does points to God's new world; the Kingdom of God. You see it in the parables, the stories about the mustard seed, the leaven and the Sermon on the Mount itself. While Luke is focusing on a mainly Greek audience, Matthew focuses on the Jewish community and tells them that freedom is for everyone. You don't have to go through all kinds of rituals and follow all kinds of rules. It is available like water in a river (Matthew 3). In Matthew, but not just in Matthew, Jesus turns the world upside down. And we all can be part of that upside down Kingdom.

About the disciples

So, can anyone become a follower of Jesus? Jesus shows us the answer to this question by being very specific in who he calls. It's not random. I realise this sounds contradictory, but in fact it isn't. Let me explain why.

It wasn't uncommon in the Jewish tradition that rabbis invited pupils to follow in their footsteps. It was considered a huge honour if one of your sons was elected to follow a rabbi and learn what it means to be a Jewish scholar or teacher. In Jesus' society it was one of the highest honours only given to very gifted and upper-class boys.

So, it's not very strange that the disciples followed Jesus immediately when they were asked to follow him. It was a great honour to follow a rabbi! The remarkable thing was that these were men, not boys. The older you get, the more difficult it gets to learn, so it's an odd choice of Jesus that he picks 'older' men.

The second odd thing is that Jesus chooses men with an occupation. They were fishermen. Their path was set. They were destined to follow in the footsteps of their fathers'. Once a fisherman, always a fisherman.

Could it be that Jesus wanted the world to know that anyone can follow in his footsteps? Your footprints are not set in a fixed way. You can choose to follow Jesus anytime, any place, whatever your background, upbringing or race. This is for everyone, even those lowly fishermen.

As soon as the fishermen started to follow Jesus, their identity changed. They were no longer fishermen, but 'disciples. So, what is a disciple? We turn to the Oxford Learners Dictionary for the answer:

'One of the people who followed Jesus Christ and his teachings when he was living on earth, especially one of the twelve'

From that moment on, they would listen to Jesus' teaching, witness his wonders, eat with him, walk with him and talk with him. They would learn how to love God, our Father and how to love others. The disciples literally followed Jesus' footsteps to a wedding, a mountain, a lake and to many cities, houses and people.

What does it mean for us to follow Jesus' footsteps? We cannot do that like the disciples almost 2,000 years ago. But we can learn from his teachings and live the life of a child of God, just like him. The Bible shows us many of Jesus' teachings and fellow disciples (Christians) can share stories about how they follow Jesus. Have you ever noticed that Jesus chose 12 disciples in the beginning? And that this group of followers became bigger and bigger? Apparently, Jesus wants us to journey together with other followers. So, stay close to those who show you how to follow Jesus. And stay close to Jesus himself through prayer and times of solitude. If you really want to see where Jesus wants to lead you, you need to stay close!

Questions

There are a few questions in this story. Maybe you could leave the congregation with a few questions they can think about:

- I wonder what you would do if you were one of these fishermen?
- I wonder if Jesus ever asked you to follow him?
- I wonder how you responded to that question?
- I wonder what it is like to follow Jesus' footsteps in your situation?
- I wonder if you can follow Jesus without other followers or disciples?

Feel free to choose some of these questions, but maybe you also received questions from the young people around you or you have some of your own.

I pray that you will be blessed during your preparation and will feel the freedom to share Jesus' message freely.

Captain Marc Potters
International Youth and Children's Officer

Song A



Footprint

[Verse 1]

We have come so far
From being on the sideline
to setting the bar
Our voices heard abroad and from afar
Hand in hand we'll see better days
Making the mark, our footprint conveys
We need not speak, the Lord has spoken
We need not fear, the chains are broken

[Chorus]

Blessed are
The ones who follow
God's directions on the way
May our steps
Always be guided
By the words God speaks each day.

[Verse 2]

Now the time has come
Moving on, standing strong,
Choosing right, avoiding wrong
We leave our footprint, day and night
Lord, you're always by our side
Your holy power helps us fight
We just need trust, the Lord is guiding
We just need faith, the Lord's providing

Song B



Footprint

[Verse 1]

You are God
You are God
All praise to you

You alone
Are the truth
The way, the life

[Chorus]

You direct us
You who mend us
LORD WE PRAISE YOU
LORD WE PRAISE YOU O GOD

[HOOK]

We sing hallelujah
We sing hallelujah
And follow your footprints
Through Jesus the Son of Man

[Bridge]

Lead us, O Lord
In your way to shy away from sin
Redeem us from oppression
So we obey