

YOUTH
11-14s

GROWING UP

God's
Good
Story



SESSION 6

We live what we believe

Philippians 2:14-16

faith  kids

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Growing Up - God's Good Story 11-14s

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"All for the glory of God alone" (1 Corinthians 10:31)



SESSION 6

We live what we believe

Philippians 2:14-16



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Truth that changes me:

We live differently because we know that we are children of God.

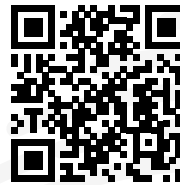


Faith in Youth looks like:

Young people living differently with God as the biggest influence on their thoughts and actions.

Preparation

As you prepare this session, we recommend watching the series introductory video if you haven't seen it.



Notes

Pray and read the Bible passage. Read **Where are we going**, **The world our young people live in** and **Look at the passage** to give you a better understanding of how to apply the truth.



Where are we going?

This lesson aims to inspire young people to 'go for it' as they live out their faith seven days a week. We want them to listen to God's voice and to be confident in the truth and goodness of his word. We'll prepare them for the reality of living in a culture that rejects Christ and his call to live differently.



The world our young people live in

Affirming the messages of culture feels essential for young people - gender is a choice, love can't be wrong, 'you be you'. Even when they know the right thing to do or say, many young people follow the crowd because the consequences of not doing so feel huge. They are afraid of rejection or being "cancelled" - being pushed out of every friendship group and left isolated.

Recent surveys (such as [Youthscape's Talking Jesus research](#)) suggest that the actual story is not so bleak. More than half of young people in the UK describe themselves as 'non-practising Christians' - not regularly praying, reading the Bible or going to church but nevertheless identifying as Christians. More than half of young people describe those Christians they know as 'friendly' and 'caring' with negative descriptions only offered by a tiny number. Perhaps our young people do not need to be so afraid of rejection?



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We have a better story that our young people need to hear. God offers us truth to cling to - he does not shift with trends or change his mind, he calls us to trust and follow him and offers an eternally secure place to belong. We'd love our young people to have a hope-filled, confident and realistic vision of their future walk with God.



Look at the passage

Who We Are

I *"So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God."* PHILIPPIANS 2:15

This verse is rich in identity language, children of God is **who we are**, not where we go on Sundays, or how we behave, but our identity. As we understand whose we are, we know where to go to find out how to live; our Heavenly Father tells us. As his children, our future is hope-filled, we are on an upward trajectory to **become** blameless and pure. One day, truth will win, we will be home, our struggles will be behind us and we will live out our identity perfectly.

Where We Live

I *"Children of God in a warped and crooked generation."* PHILIPPIANS 2:15

We don't need to pretend, or sugar coat it for our group - we live in a crooked world with people who reject the things of God and it's wise to prepare our young people to be rejected for living differently. We don't do this with arrogant superiority but with compassion - Paul quotes Deuteronomy, a description used by God to Moses about his own rebellious people. We live differently whilst remembering that we were just as warped and crooked until God stepped in.

How We Live

I *"Then you will shine among them like the stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life."* PHILIPPIANS 2:15

What an image! We're shining stars declaring God's glory across the universe - WOW! Looking up at the night sky it's the stars we admire - they take our breath away, shining out from the dark backdrop. Like stars that burn bright in the dark sky, God's Spirit, growing God's goodness in us, burns bright in the godless darkness. Moses told the Israelites back in Deuteronomy 32:47, to command their children to carefully obey all God's words because, "These are not just idle words for you - they are your life." So Paul echoes and we teach - no matter what others may do or say - we will let God's word shape our lives.



Win my heart first

When did you last feel like an outsider or feel excluded from a group? What door was shut to you? When did you miss out on the invite, or feel weird because you're a Christian? The Bible is realistic and honest, it's not hidden in the small print or T's and C's; as Christians living in a world that rejects God we can expect to stand out and face rejection and suffering,

For your heart, before you prepare the lesson.

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So why bother? Because children of God is who we are, who we were made to be! Trying to be anything else is like a star wrapping itself in a blanket to be more like the night. When we stand out as Christians, we are holding on to something better, we can know joy and flourishing as we live what we believe until the day that every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

- Where in your life are you most tempted to roll over, to compromise as a Christian and to fit in?
- Who has inspired you as a Christian with a life that shines out the beauty of knowing Jesus?



5 minutes to focus on your group

As you think about the young people in your group, what is your prayer for them? Do you think their friends at school know they go to church? Would they want to be known as Christians? Do you think they want to live distinctive lives for Jesus or is it hard enough just being known as a Christian? Do your young people see the beauty of the Christian life or do they see it as a life of dull limitations? If you could help them write a vision for their future – what would it say? Would it sound as awesome as Philippians 2:15?

What do the young people in your group need?

- Pray for them:*
- to grasp the truth
 - to live it out
 - to rely on the Spirit



In case you're feeling nervous...

- The young people you teach will be at different stages on their journey of faith. As you explain the difference it makes being a Christian, be sure to present the Christian life positively and invitationally. Explain that this is *their* story if they are trusting in Jesus. This might be an opportunity to tell young people how to become a Christian.
- In these years, the gap between the Christian life and their peer group is getting wider. It's tempting to minimise the differences. This series has highlighted the gap. It is a work of the Spirit when a young person chooses to shine like a star.
- Keep the application focused on the topics covered in this series - bodies, feelings and relationships.
- Encourage the young people to think about how Christians can live distinctively whilst showing love and compassion to those who think differently.

We understand this might feel daunting. The intention is to start a conversation, not to complete it.



Series overview visual

The series overview visual (see p. 10) helps to explain the foundation of this series. Because God created us, he knows us better than anyone else. He gets to tell us who we are.

The visual shows a person hearing messages from themselves - these are thoughts and feelings (represented by the thought clouds); messages from others - including other people and the media (represented by speech bubbles); and messages from God - what he has written in the Bible. The crown shows that God's messages are the most important - we only let other messages stick if they say the same things as God says. God made us and loves us more than anyone, great delight comes from listening to him.



11-14s Session Plan




Get going

Who Are You?

Give the young people in your group a piece of paper where they have to write down two facts and a lie about themselves. Encourage them to include information that others in the group might not know about them.

Collect the pieces of paper in and read them out one at a time.

Give everyone a sheet of paper for them to write their guess as to who this person is and what is true about them.

 **Link:** We live in a world where we'll hear lies about who we are and how we should live - Christians live what they believe and hold onto the truth God gives us.



Teaching time

Who We Are

"Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.' Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life." PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16

Ask the young people to name a famous family, where they can name the parent as well as their child, for instance Prince William and Prince George, Mufasa and Simba from the Lion King, or some members of the Kardashians.

We can describe someone as the child of X and Y e.g. Prince George is the child of Prince William and Princess Catherine, Simba is the child of Mufasa. If you were explaining who the child of the famous person was, what other one or two facts would you use to describe them?

Look at the verses together

- How are Christians described? *Firstly, how are we relationally described. Secondly, what other one or two facts are given to describe Christians?*

Being a Christian is more than just a name, it's an identity. Our relationship to God defines who a Christian is. We know we are people created by God, who make

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Notes

You will need: Paper - two sheets per young person and pens.

You will need: Bibles / verses printed out, pens and paper, dark backdrop, shiny foil star, series overview visual (see p. 10), list of the titles of each week's lessons / topics covered.

no sense without him, but we have lived like he didn't exist. God paid the price through Jesus to bring us back into his family. Christians know that they belong to God and understand how much he loves us, so they want to live trusting and listening to him.



Where We Live

"Children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." PHILIPPIANS 2:15

To discuss:

- How does this verse describe the world we live in?
- Is this description a surprise?

During this series, we have heard lots of big truths: Can anyone remember anything we have learnt over the series? *Have a large sheet of paper ready to scribble some headlines for each of the sessions. If you get silence or blank faces, you can summarise as below.*

- Session 1: 'I am who God says I am'- Who do we listen to above others? How do we decide who we are? *God's voice in the Bible is our authority. We need to weigh all messages against what he says. He knows us best, his way is living our best life!*
- Session 2: 'I am male or female'- How do we decide our sex? What is our comfort when we don't like our bodies? *God has given us a male or female body. Our body tells us which we are. We can't change our sex. God is our good creator and our bodies are a good gift from him.*
- Session 3: 'I have a valuable body'- How do we treat our own bodies? How do we treat other people's? *Bodies are a good gift from God and should be treated with respect. We look after our bodies and respect other people's.*
- Session 4: 'I know God's plan for marriage'- What is God's plan for marriage? How does marriage help us understand heaven? *Marriage is one man and one woman for life. The Bible uses marriage as a picture of heaven - Christ forever intimately loving his church.*
- Session 5: 'I have strong feelings'- What do we do with our strongest feelings? *Feelings are a good gift from God but they are not supposed to control us. They point us to heaven where all our longings are met.*

Where do you see the greatest difference between what God is saying and the other messages you hear? Do they notice a difference between what the Bible teaches and how others live in these areas? *Can they come up with an example for each session of a headline that this 'warped and crooked generation' would have for the same topic?*

So we can clearly see the difference between what the world around us says most loudly and what God says to us through his Word.

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How We Live

"Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life." PHILIPPIANS 2:15-16

How are Christians described here? *Stars shining in the sky.*

You could use a dark sheet of paper/blanket and a foil star - these verses have described the times we live in as twisted, crooked and dark.

It would be crazy for a star to try and hide its light because it wanted to be like the darkness around it. In the same way, as God's children we need to be who we are and not change to fit in.

The secret to keeping going as a Christian is in these verses - we need to hold firmly to the word of life. God's word that first brought life into the world and that brings new life as we understand what Jesus has done for us - God's word keeps us going.

If we live listening to God and holding firmly to his truth, then we will shine in the world like a star in the night sky.

[Referring back to the headlines you have scribbled for each session]

Does one of these topics stand out for you as something that you believe as a Christian, that you see is the better story, that you prefer to what others believe and that you want to live out to shine like a star? *Let's help the young people to see that what we believe is BETTER than this 'warped and crooked generation' - life goes better if we live this better story, though it will make us stand out, and that will be hard.*



It is only Christians who can shine like stars. This is a good opportunity to explain to the young people how they can become a Christian if this isn't them yet.




Brain break

Beauty in the mess

Prepare in advance by hiding some jelly babies in a mound of flour, a bowl of custard or a bowl of baked beans. The challenge is to find the jelly baby in the mess using only your mouth. Who wants to volunteer? Repeat the game until you run out of volunteers

For a clean version: Turn out a plastic bowl full of flour onto a plate, removing the bowl. Place a jelly baby carefully on top of the neat mound of flour. Give each young person a knife. In turn they have to slice part of the flour away with one cut each. The loser is the one who causes the jelly baby to fall from the top.

 **Link:** The jelly baby is beautiful. We all want it! None of us want to eat what it is hiding in. We have seen that when Christians live for Jesus, we will shine beautifully like stars in the dark sky.

You will need: A bag of jelly babies and something unpleasant to hide them in - flour, baked beans or custard. Cleaning materials!

Warning: Check for food allergies in your group



Heart & hands



Did you spot it?

- How is the Christian described?
- How is the world around us described?
- What is "the word of life"?
- What will be the result of Christians living differently?

Work it out

- Talk to a neighbour - would you like this verse to be how people describe you? (*Read out the key phrases "doesn't grumble or argue", "blameless and pure", "shines like a star."*) What other phrases would you like people to use to describe you?
- Which of the Christian beliefs in the series do you think is hardest to hold as a Christian today?
- Which of these Christian beliefs is most encouraging and beautiful?
- Who could you ask to encourage you and help you know what God says when you feel it hardest to be different?

Live it out

Look at Case Study Picture A (see p. 11) with the girl sitting at a table in her school classroom. She is looking thoughtfully at the white board as the school gets ready for Pride week - there are rainbow flags (LGBTQ+) up around the classroom and the board shows a heart saying 'Love is Love'.

- This girl hears messages at school, at home and at church about relationships. What differences might she hear or notice? *Encourage young people to recall what we have heard in God's word in other weeks.*
- What different choices does she have about how to respond?
- Who could she talk to to help her work it all out? What do you think God would say to her?

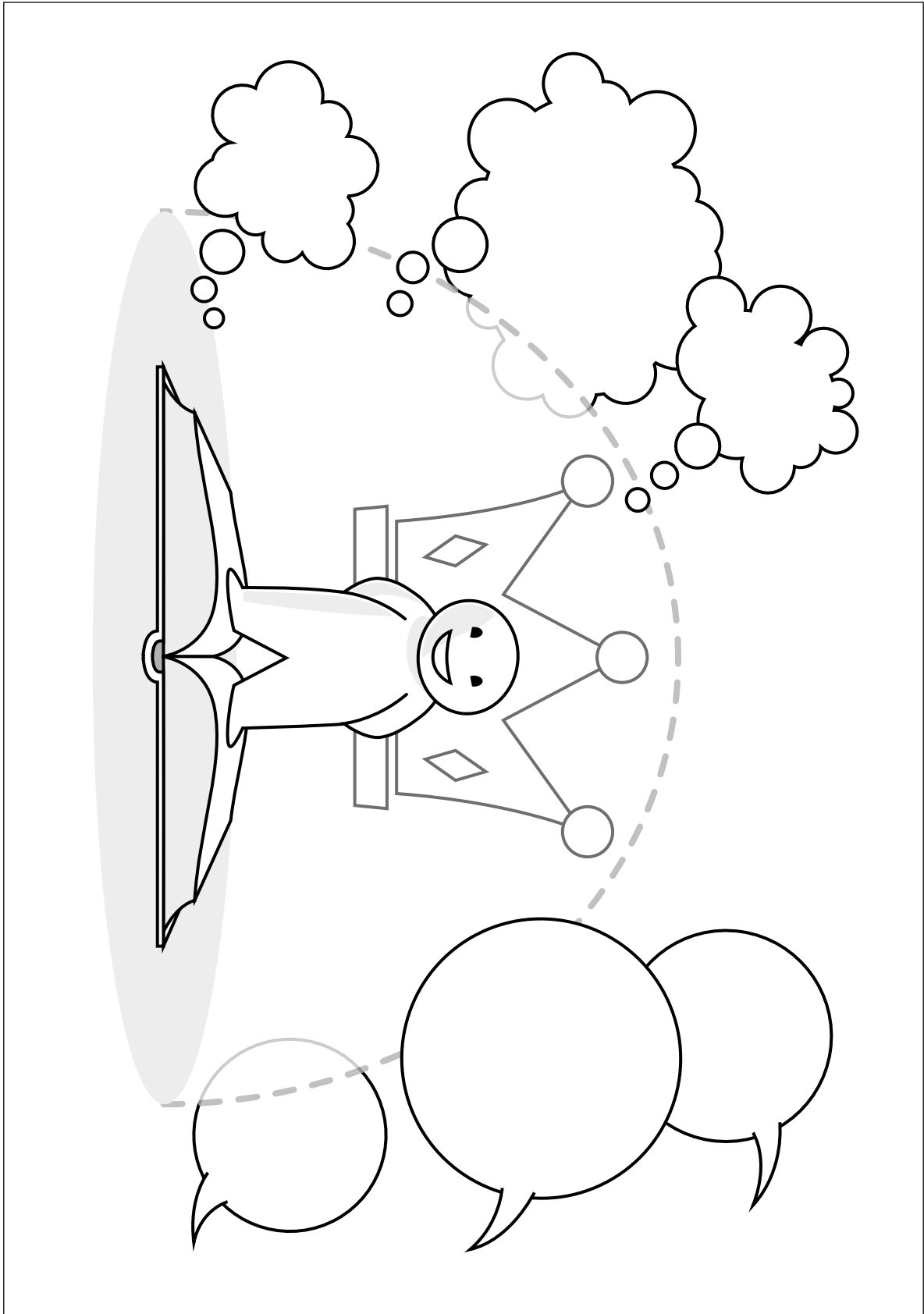
Look at Case Study Picture B (see p. 12) where a boy is walking into church with his dad alongside others from the congregation. A friend from his class walks past with his dad on his way to play football. He's wondering - why can't I be like everyone else?

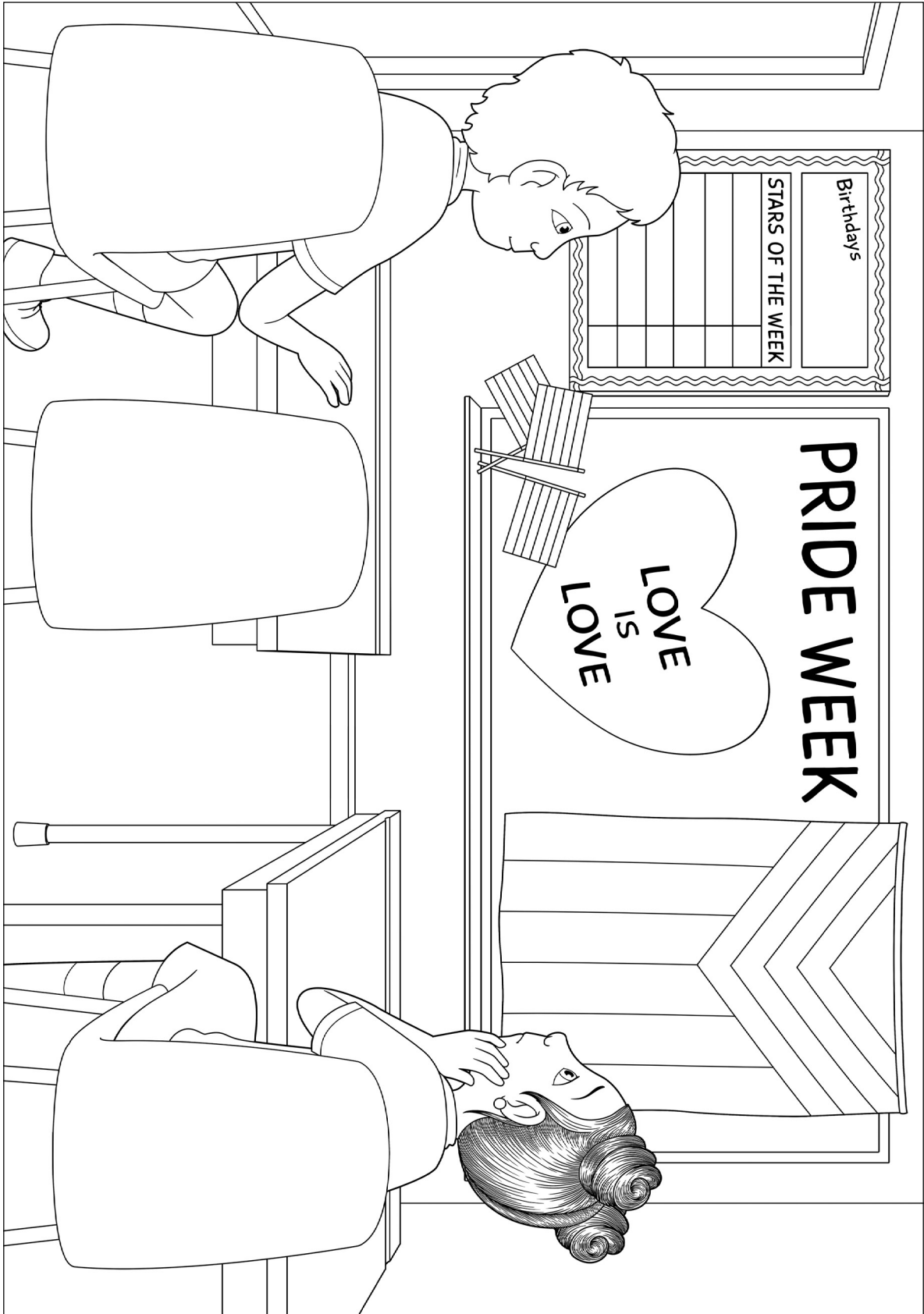
- How is his life different as a Christian? What might others notice? *This could go in different directions - that is great - but draw out that others will particularly notice that he goes to church.*
- What might be hard about being different? *Young people often long to fit in more than adults and can be reluctant to stand out. Explore why this might be - afraid to lose friends, be teased, not be cool, etc.*
- What have you heard today that would encourage you that it is worth standing out?

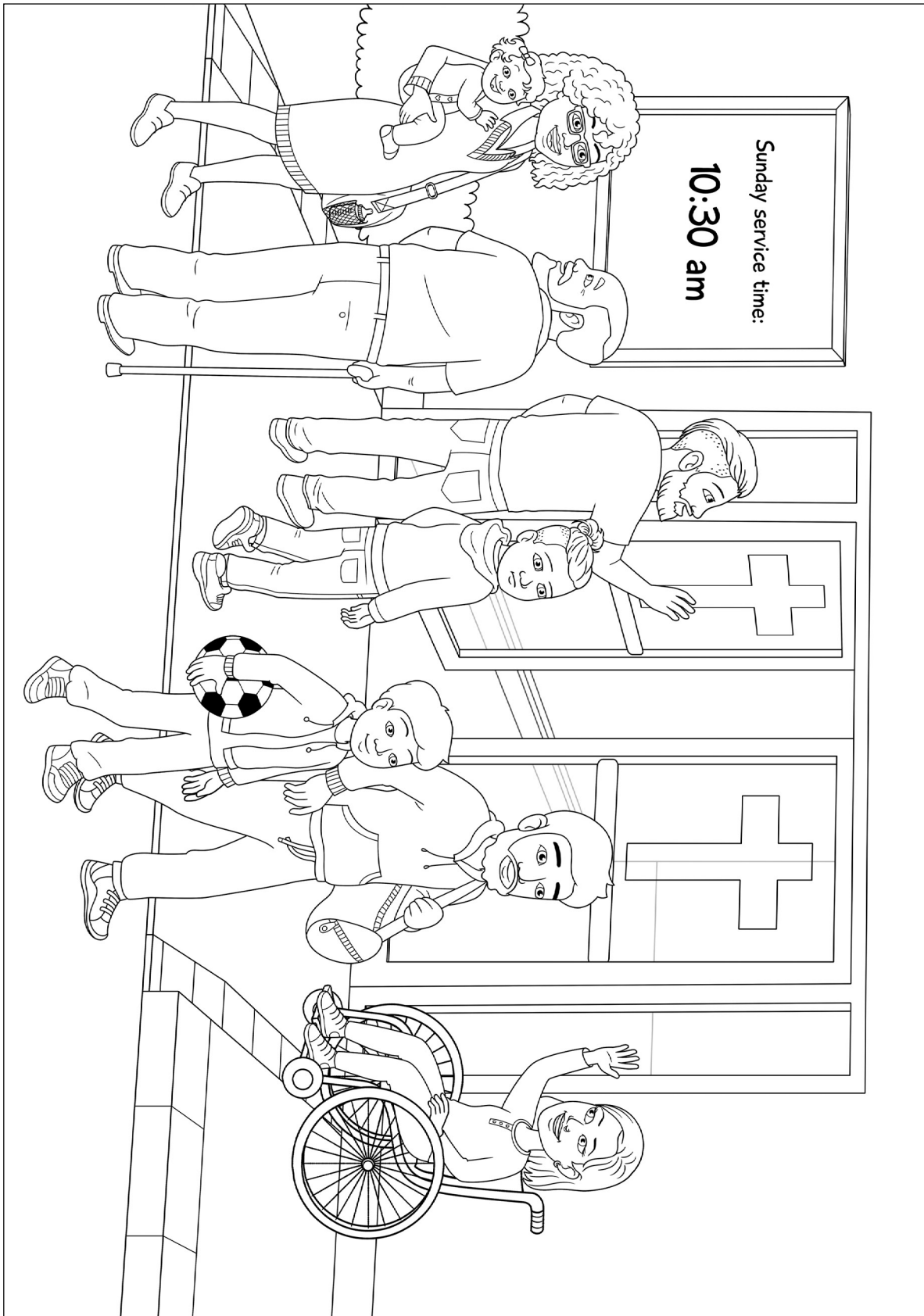
Prayer

Thank God for the way he describes you and ask him to help you live listening to him - thinking over the different topics we have covered - ask him to help you shine brightly in the darkness of the world and hold onto the truth.

We have found that this is where young people make the most progress relating the Bible to their everyday lives. Please leave enough time for this section.









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