

Even If - Footsteps

EG07

Bible Verses: Psalm 23, Psalm 71:1-6

To look at two psalms and to see how the writers expressed their trust in God and then to relate that to the young people's own lives.

Leader's notes

Today's world seems short on trust. Relationships break down quickly, all sorts of promises are made in advertisements and by politicians only to be discredited shortly afterwards and the soaps on TV thrive on deception and characters trusting totally the wrong person. Yet as we read through Psalms 23 and Psalm 71 there is a sense of calm and a security in hearing that God is 100% dependable and trustworthy.

In Psalm 71 the writer says that he has always trusted God, from the moment that he was born. He says that God is his place of safety, that God is his rock and his hope. Neither Psalm 71 or Psalm 23 contain the promise that no harm will befall someone who puts their trust in God, these psalms don't promise a charmed and constantly cheerful life, but what they do contain is the assurance that God is totally dependable, always there, always loving His people.

Psalm 23 contains the picture of the writer being totally surrounded by enemies, pressed in on all sides and yet God doesn't wipe the enemies out with a swipe of His hand, but instead prepares a great feast which the writer can enjoy in God's company. This picture pushes aside our natural inclination in times of trouble to pray for the circumstances of our discomfort to be taken away, instead David is saying that God's presence can be experienced and enjoyed right in the middle of the circumstances. This gives an entirely different perspective on the way that a Christian can view his troubles – instead of the troubles being at the centre of his life, God is at the centre.

So one of the messages that we want the young people to go away with at the end of the session is that God can be trusted to be with them whatever they are going through or having to deal with.

God's trustworthiness does not ebb and flow but is a constant. We can trust Him in the ordinary things of life – like the pasture and water the shepherd provides daily for his sheep; as well as in the extraordinary things of life – like the really dark valleys we may have to travel through.

It would also be good to reassure the young people that trust grows with time and getting to know someone better, so as they go on with their Christian walk their trust in God will also grow.

Why? Because!

Warming Up

15 mins

Activity

Give everyone 2 pieces of paper. On one piece of paper they have to write a question beginning with the word 'why' e.g. why is the grass green? On the other piece they need to write an answer beginning with the word 'because' (it doesn't necessarily have to relate to the question they have already written).

Ask everyone to fold up their pieces of paper. Collect all the 'why' questions in one container and all the 'because' statements in another container.

Now, in turn, each young person takes a piece of paper from each container. They read the question and then the answer. Hopefully some of the questions and answers will amuse everyone.

The Point: Just for fun

Equipment

Small pieces of paper and pens, 2 containers.

Trust Charades

Getting Started

15 mins

 Game

Ask the young people to get into groups of about 4 or 5. A leader holds a list of people whom we might well have to trust from time to time.

A volunteer from each group comes to the leader and is told the first person on the list. The volunteer goes back to their group and mimes out the role. Whoever guesses correctly the occupation of the person they are miming comes and gets the next person on the list from the leader.

Fire fighter
Lifeguard
Paramedic
Airline pilot
Surgeon
Mountaineering partner
Bus driver
Banker
Dentist
Hairdresser

As they play the game you may need to remind the groups that there should be no talking and also to quietly suggest possible answers so that the other groups don't hear.

At the end of the game congratulate the winning team.

Ask the young people to continue working in their groups. Give each group a copy of the list of occupations you have just used. Ask them to rank them in order of who they think would require the most trust i.e. if they think that a bus driver requires the most trust then rank that as number 1.

After a few minutes compare lists. Reassure them that there are definitely no right orders – who we choose to trust or not trust depends very much on circumstances, our personal experience and how much we

know about the person.

Explain that in this session they will be thinking about trusting God and seeing how the Psalm writers put their trust in God.

The Point: To introduce the theme of trusting God.

Equipment

List of occupations.

Trust Him

Digging In

20 mins

 Craft Ideas

Ask the young people to work in small groups. Give each group the following list of situations. Their task is to choose a different celebrity for each situation – they are to choose them because they think they will be able to trust them to be helpful and supportive.

Stranded on a desert island

Lost in New York

Stuck half way up a cliff

Stuck in a lift

Trapped in a burning building

Ask each group to report back on their trusted celebrity for each situation. They need to say who their celebrity is and why they would trust them in that situation.

When David wrote Psalm 23 he really wanted to express His trust in God. God had been with him in all sorts of circumstances and he knew that he could trust God no matter what the situation.

Read Psalm 23 together. Go through the Psalm briefly discussing any of the verses the young people are not sure they understand. Then ask the young people to choose one of the phrases or verses from the Psalm and draw a picture to illustrate it.

Once their picture is completed they need to write on it 'I will trust God because ...' e.g. He provides for me, He will always be with me, He helps me in tough times etc.

Share the pictures together and then if possible display them. If some of the young people have chosen to use pastels or charcoal it would be advisable to use a fixative spray on them.

The Point: To encourage the young people to think about Psalm 23 and why David put his trust in God.

Equipment

Bibles, different sizes of paper and pens, pastels, pencils, charcoals etc.

Trust Him Alone

Response

15 mins

 Prayer

Display the pictures from 'Trust Him' section around the room. Spread them out as much as possible.

Explain that as you play Stuart Townend's song 'The Lord's my shepherd' the young people can go round the room looking at each other's drawings.

Ask them to pause and pray quietly at some of them, thanking God that they can trust Him. For example if someone has drawn the dark valley then they might like to stop and pray near that picture about a difficult situation they are facing and thank God that they can trust Him to be with them in that situation.

The Point: A prayerful response to Psalm 23.


Equipment

Pictures from Digging In 'Trust Him', song 'The Lord's my shepherd' by Stuart Townend and means to play it.

Even If

Response

10 mins

 Memory Verse

"Even if I walk through a very dark valley, I will not be afraid, because you are with me. Your rod and your shepherd's staff comfort me."

Psalm 23:4

Stand together. Read through the memory verse once.

Now ask for suggestions for actions for each phrase e.g.

Even if I walk

Through a very dark valley

I will not be afraid

Because you are with me

Your rod and your shepherd's staff comfort me

Psalm 23:4

Go through the verse a couple more times with the actions.

The Point: To learn a verse of scripture that will encourage the young people when things are tough.

Equipment

Memory verse displayed.
