



Theme: we have layers that make up our identity but God knows and loves the inner us.

Contents:

[Introduction](#) 1
[Together](#) 2
[Experience](#) 2
[Explore](#) 3
[Express](#) 5
[Handouts](#) 8

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

Psalm 139



Explore the idea that our identity is formed through several layers – things like race and gender, for example, are individual layers, together with character, environment, likes and dislikes, etc. But God is the only one who knows who we are when all those layers are peeled away – our soul, the actual 'us'. We all have a spiritual core which is of God.

Almost all children and young people, and most adults too, will have something about them that they wish was different, but each one of us has a value to God just as we are.

There is a saying that God doesn't make mistakes. How do you see God's positive in things that others might see as negative? Society tries to drum out of children characteristics like being gobby, anti-authority etc (and the church can be particularly guilty of this) but these could prove to be positives in the things God may ask them to do later such as speaking out against injustice etc. Can you help each other discern what God particularly loves about them?

Together

Let's start our time with God and each other well

If used in a mixed-age group, then young people can support younger ones in using the gathering prayer in Faith Adventures: Children Together. If used in a youth group, you could use this opening prayer or encourage young people to open the session with a prayer of their own.

All mighty God,

Alternative game

See this week's Faith Adventures : Children Together for an alternative game of Human Guess Who

Experience

Research different versions of this reading on <https://www.biblegateway.com/> Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

The Message: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A+13-16&version=MSG>

Watch: Psalm 139 Lego version by CodeCUK
<https://youtu.be/7eQ7D-A00Bw?si=9gVurFyiXjEK7H1n>

Listen: Far too Wonderful by Shane and Shane
<https://youtu.be/GmsgYY-INf8?si=UUkclayJmnOjs2os>

Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme

There are many layers to who we are, some of those layers are put on to protect us, some are taken off as we allow ourselves to be vulnerable in front of others. Some layers are put on to fit in with those we are with. But who are we when all the layers have been stripped away? God sees past all of the layers.

Have a selection of pictures representing different things people can put on and take off to explore the idea of layers.

Warm coats, light coats, umbrellas, face masks, sun hat, sunglasses, scarves, things for your hair, bright tops, different hats, blankets.

As you look at these things, how might you use them? Think about what other, more metaphorical, ways we "put on" a layer – might we assume a different 'identity' in different settings (e.g. are we different with our parents than we are with our friends?), might there be times when we choose to 'mask' the real us to make ourselves feel less vulnerable?

Use different mediums to create 'the real you' - design the person however you wish and include words which would help to describe your personality and character rather than just physical attributes. Discuss "God's book" – like a photograph album or yearbook with everyone in it. What do you think your page might look like?

Modern parables

This section includes references to TV programmes, films, books, TED talks, TikTok etc aimed at this age group that will have been widely seen, or where a clip is available to use as a stimulus for discussion. You may also enjoy the picture book recommended for Faith Adventures: Children Together and explore the relevance of the story to the theme of the session in more depth – young people and adults are often well tuned in to the deeper meanings in materials aimed at younger people and the authors are often very aware of the adults reading the books to or with younger ones.



Watch: NWTCTube – Butterfly Circus

<https://youtu.be/cnzElqbBVK0?si=n3vrjdVqqbJOXCFm>

Questions for discussion

How do you feel watching this?

Where do you see God in this clip?

What does this film teach us about how we should view others?

Does this film raise any questions about how we view identity in another?

Talking together: Going deeper

Does this Psalm work for people who are not comfortable with the way they developed in the womb? Are they also fearfully and wonderfully made?

What does identity actually mean? Wh

