

# 4

# You Are Not Alone

JOHN 14:15-23



## GOAL

By feeling connected to God and others, even when apart, children learn they are not alone.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Holy One, there is nothing in life or death that can separate us from your love. Help me be present with these children with the confidence of this assurance. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

Every child knows the tension that leads up to a parent or caretaker leaving for some reason. Some children have experienced the death of a grandparent, a pet, or family friends. This session focuses on the ways that leaving happens in the lives of young children. It aims to help you and the children give spiritual language to all these big transitions.

## THE BIBLE STORY

This conversation between Jesus and his disciples is great for reading with children because it shows such a caring Jesus. This Jesus models the kinds of things that young children need from the adults. Jesus reassures the disciples (v. 18: “I won’t leave you as orphans”). Jesus tells them the plan, (vv. 15–16), lays out clear expectations, and tells them when he’s going home (v. 23). This is a comforting passage for young children just learning how to go through the complex comings and goings in our lives.

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Without an adult concept of time, a parent or caretaker leaving for a few hours might as well be forever to a young child. Young children know when someone they love is leaving even before they can articulate it. So while a young child might not be able to fully grasp a community experiencing departure, they know the intensity of how it feels. Every departure feels like it changes everything to them. We can help them navigate these leavings by paying attention to their unique needs as children and helping them to understand the faith it takes to trust that a departure is not the end of connection or love.

Impermanence can be a newer concept for young children, so they may want to talk about it, which helps them make sense of it. Try not to give platitudes. “I don’t know is an honest answer. Be mindful of the significant departures in your life and the associated grief so you won’t be caught off guard, but you may speak about your feelings if the need arises.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- “Singing Together” (p. 38): Obtain the lyrics to “O Look and Wonder” written on newsprint from session 1.
- “Bummer! Yay! OK!” (p. 39): Use Resource Page 3 to make three signs on card stock or cardboard. Attach a craft stick to each sign for a handle.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Apart but Connected” (p. 40): Obtain *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst or use the YouTube video “The Invisible String” ([bit.ly/FMInvisibleString](https://bit.ly/FMInvisibleString), 5:26). Death is discussed directly in *The Invisible String* book/video. Think about how you might respond to the children’s questions or stories about death.



## GETTING STARTED

- Copies of Resource Page 1
- Crayons, colored pencils, markers
- Glue sticks, glue
- Decorative items, such as feathers, buttons, stickers, sequins, and so forth
- Small circles of aluminum foil

- Prepared newsprint with lyrics to the song “O Look and Wonder” from session 1
- Internet-connected device (optional)

### AWARD RIBBONS

A

Hand out copies of Resource Page 1 and provide coloring and decorating supplies. Tell the children that they are making achievement awards to use later in the session. When they are done decorating, give them a circle of aluminum foil as an “official seal” to add to their award. Set aside for “We Did It!” (p. 41).

### SINGING TOGETHER

M T X

Display newsprint with the lyrics to the song “O Look and Wonder.” Talk through the words to the song, then listen to the tune. If the whole song seems too ambitious, just sing the refrain, and perhaps the first verse in this session. Repeat it several times, especially the refrain.

To hear the tune, go to [bit.ly/FMOLookTune](https://bit.ly/FMOLookTune) (0:21). To sing along in Spanish (words not provided on the video), show the YouTube video “*Miren que Bueno* (O Look and Wonder)” ([bit.ly/FMMiren](https://bit.ly/FMMiren), 1:52). Try to sing the refrain in English and Spanish.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

### WHEREVER YOU GO

A C G

Invite the children to sit in a line on the floor facing you. Tell them that today’s session is about supporting one another when someone, maybe one of you or someone else, has to leave the community. Talk together about when and why people leave. Some ideas might be when we leave church or a friend’s house after playing together, a parent goes to work, a child goes to school, a friend moves away, or a pet or loved one dies. Wonder how leaving makes us feel.

Practice a good way to depart. Choose two or three children to stand in front of the group. Have the group repeat after you:

Wherever you go, /  
 God goes with you. /  
 And your community /  
 loves and supports you. /

Then have the group close their eyes while the two or three children go hide in your space. After they are hidden, have the group open their eyes and say, “You are not alone!” and the hidden children reply, “We are not alone!” Then have the hidden children rejoin the group. Repeat with the rest of the children getting a chance to hide.



As an alternative to the children rejoining the group right away, choose one child from the group to go find the hidden children after they say, “We are not alone!”



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### BUMMER! YAY! OK!



Gather the children in a circle and show them the three signs. Invite them to say each one in an exaggerated way when you hold up the signs. Explain that, when you read the Bible story, you will hold up a sign at different times, and they are to respond by saying the word as you just practiced.

Read the adapted Bible story from John 14:15–23. Each time you see one of the three words in brackets in the text, hold up that sign and have the children say their response. Then reflect on the story together, remembering what parts responded with a “Bummer!” or sad feeling and what parts responded with a “Yay!” or happy feeling.

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- Resource Page 2
  - Prepared “Bummer!” “Yay!” and “OK!” signs with craft-stick handles from Resource Page 3



## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

### WHAT LEAVING FEELS LIKE



Recall the types of leaving you talked about in “Wherever You Go” (p. 38). Write these on a sheet of newsprint. Invite the children to think of more types of leaving and add them to the list. A few more suggestions might be:

- Taking grandparents or a favorite friend to the airport after a visit
- Leaving the playground before you're ready
- Leaving for a fun vacation
- Leaving the house in a hurry
- Leaving the house way too early

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- Newsprint
  - Markers
  - Resource Page 4

Once you have your list, show the children the emotions chart on Resource Page 4. Read the list again, one by one, and invite the children to decide which emotion(s) might go with that leaving. Recognize that children may choose different emotions for the same event. Point that out as it happens and affirm all responses. As children respond, invite them to draw the emotion face by the type of leaving. Wonder together how people help them feel supported when they are leaving and how they help others leave.



If the children have a hard time naming emotions, even with the emotion chart, suggest two or three options to choose from.

### WOULD YOU RATHER?



Use the following scenarios to get the children thinking about different kinds of leaving, how they are supported, and how they can support others in their leaving. Begin each choice with “Would you rather . . .” then point to one side of the room for one option and the other side of the room for the other option. Emphasize that there are no right answers. Have the children move back into the middle of the room after each round. Add scenarios of your own, if you choose.

“Would you rather . . .”

- Rush out the door quickly—OR—Take your time getting ready before leaving?
- Leave without your parents or caretaker telling you where you’re going—OR—Talk about the plan ahead of time?
- Go by yourself—OR—Go with a friend?
- Leave to go to a new place far away—OR—Leave to go some place close and familiar?
- Go to help someone else out—OR—Go to have fun with your family?
- Go to a big amusement park once—OR—Go to the local ice cream shop a bunch of times?
- Leave home—OR—Go home?
- Leave for a walk—OR—Leave for a car ride?



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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- Ball of yarn
  - The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018) or internet-connected device

### APART BUT CONNECTED

G AM T

Have the children sit on the floor in a circle. Tell them that they are going to make some connections with everyone. Give one child a big ball of yarn. Have that child hold onto the end of the yarn, say another child’s name, and roll the yarn ball to them. The next child catches the yarn ball, holds onto the yarn, calls another child’s name, and rolls the rest of the yarn ball to them. Keep the play going until each child is holding onto the string and you have a web crisscrossing the circle. Point out how the children are all connected to one another by the yarn. Comment that it would be nice to feel like we were connected with our family and friends like this, with a piece of yarn holding us close together. Tell them that there is something better called “the invisible string.”

Roll up the yarn and read *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst or show the YouTube video “The Invisible String” ([bit.ly/FMInvisibleString](https://bit.ly/FMInvisibleString), 5:26). Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- When have you felt the tug of the invisible string?
- Who do you feel connected to even when you are apart?
- What are some ways you can connect with people you love when you are apart from them?

Have the children sit in their circle facing outward. Tell them that you are handing one person a ball of invisible yarn. Hand a child the invisible ball of yarn. Have them pretend to toss the invisible ball of yarn to someone who isn’t there in the room and tell the group who it is. Then, as you pretend to toss the ball to another child say, “(Name), it comes back to you. Who are you connected to?” Keep the play going until everyone has had a turn.

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- Internet-connected device

### YOU ARE NOT ALONE

M T QC

Invite the children to dance and listen to the words of the song as you play the YouTube video “You Are Not Alone” ([bit.ly/FMNotAlone](https://bit.ly/FMNotAlone), 3:57). When the song is done, ask the children how the song made them feel. Wonder what words stuck in their head. Highlight a few of your favorite lyrics and say why they stuck with you to model this for the children. Ask the children how they might have heard God’s Spirit speaking through the song.

Suggest that this song would be good to share with someone who is going to be away from them for a long time. Play the song again and let the children dance some more.



Children can express a lot that they don't have words for with their bodies. Encourage them to really feel the music in their bodies while they dance.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### WE DID IT!

Get the achievement ribbons that the children made in “Award Ribbons” (p. 38). Make a stage out of anything you have that’s slightly elevated. It could be as simple as a big book. Have the children sit in front of the stage. Invite each child up to stand on stage, one at a time. Give them their award ribbon and commission them to go out into the world as you bless them:

(*Name*), wherever you go,  
you are not alone.  
God is with you.  
And, we are connected to you.  
Feel the tug of the invisible string between us.  
Be faithful wherever you go.  
Amen.

Award ribbons from “Award Ribbons” (p. 38)

### A PLACE IN THE CHOIR



Lead the children in singing or saying the chorus to the song “All God’s Creatures.”

Show the children the YouTube video “A Place in the Choir Lyric Video” ([bit.ly/FMAIICreatures](https://bit.ly/FMAIICreatures), 2:52) and invite them to sing along with the chorus as it becomes familiar.

Or, have the children repeat your words and actions to the chorus of the song. You may want to incorporate this with the singing of the chorus as the children become more familiar with the tune and pace of the song. To begin, invite the children to choose an animal and make a movement or sound like it. Explain that will be what they do to respond to the first line. (If you are using the motions with the song, this will go very fast!)

All God’s creatures (*make animal actions and/or noises*) /  
got a place in the choir. (*move hand out from mouth and sing*  
“Laaaa!”) /  
Some sing low (*crouch down low*) /  
and some sing higher. (*stand on tiptoes*) /  
Some sing out loud (*move arms open wide*) /  
on a telephone wire. (*move hands from center outward as if holding*  
*a thin wire*) /  
Some just clap their hands, (*clap hands*) /  
or paws, (*clap hands*) /  
or anything they’ve got now. (*clap hands on each beat*) /<sup>1</sup>

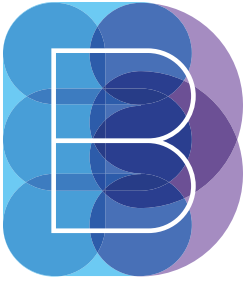
Internet-connected device (optional)

After the song, close with the following blessing:

You are not creatures, but beloved children of God.  
May you always take your place in God’s family choir  
gathered to sing out grace, hope, peace, and love.

1. “All God’s Creatures,” © Bill Staines. All rights reserved.





## BIBLE STORY

### BASED ON JOHN 14:15–23

“If you love me,” Jesus said, “you will try to live as I have lived. **[OK!]** I’ll ask God, my dad, to send another friend like me. One who will be with you forever. **[YAY!]** This Forever Friend will always be true. **[YAY!]** But the rest of the world won’t understand or really see this forever friend of truth. **[Bummer!]** You’ll know this True Friend, though, is always with you.” **[OK!]**

“I won’t ever leave you alone. I’ll come back. **[OK!]** Soon the rest of the world won’t really see me, like with their eyes, **[Bummer!]** but you will see me. **[YAY!]** You’ll see things differently and live differently because I am alive in all of this. **[OK!]** Someday soon you’ll know for sure all that I have been saying about how my dad, God, and I are one and, because of that, you and I are connected forever. **[YAY!]** So try to live as I have lived and love as I have loved, like my Father is love, and you’ll really see me.” **[OK!]**

When Jesus finished saying this, one of the disciples asked, “Teacher, why are you letting only us really see you and not everybody else?” **[Bummer!]**

Jesus answered, “My word has always been LOVE so focus on love. **[OK!]** Focus on love and God will focus love on you. **[OK!]** Focus on love, make it your home, and my dad and I will come live in love with you.” **[YAY!]**











excited



frightened



lonely



surprised



angry



sad



happy



ho-hum



grieving

