



CANDIDATES SUNDAY CHILDREN

Scripture Passage:

- Colossians 3:1-2 (*The Message*)

‘So if you’re serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don’t shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up and be alert to what is going on around Christ - that’s where the action is. See things from his perspective.’

INTRODUCTION

The resource includes different ideas that can help children focus on the theme in a fun, creative and engaging way. It can be adapted for midweek children’s activities or as part of Sunday worship.

An approach could be: *Warm-Up (10 mins), Tell the Story and Reflect (25 mins), Explore/Apply (20 mins), Prayer (10 mins), Response (5 mins), Take Home (5 mins)*. (*Some recommended songs are suggested to support your time of worship.*)

Candidates Sunday is an opportunity to encourage people to consider God’s direction for their life and to say yes to him. For some this will be to respond to a call to officership or territorial envoyship. For others this may be about personal decisions to be made which will be worked out locally. This is not exclusive to adults - it’s as true for children.

We live in a world full of distractions. Sundays are no longer a day where the shops are closed, the television is turned off, the phone doesn’t ring, the attractions are closed and where families go to church and worship together. Church has become just one option among many things to do.

It is hard for children today to avoid distractions and live in ways in which Jesus wants them to. It’s our responsibility to support them to go deeper in their relationship with him, providing space for discussion, prayer and mutual support with their friends and leaders, not just in the session but ongoing.

For some, the pressures of living in the 21st century will mean they are constantly ‘looking down’, shuffling along and not always able to see the beauty of what is around them and of what God is doing, and can do for them. But they can look for and learn from the positives in their world - their home, school, friendships, clubs and churches. Imagine if all children kept their lives focused on the ways Christ was working and were open to experiencing this too!



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It will be important to be sensitive to the fact that some children may not feel God's love and presence. Their experiences will be varied. Consider what it means to a child to be told 'You need to look up or you'll miss out!'

As you plan for your ministry with the children, consider your own response to the question: How can you make sure you are not just shuffling along only seeing the things under your nose, but that you lift your head, open your eyes and see everything going on around you - just like God does?

SESSION AIM

- To encourage children not to 'walk around with their heads down', distracted by material things or situations that drag them down so that they miss out on the beauty that God has placed around them.
- To encourage the children to 'look up', so that they have the best possible opportunity of seeing more of Jesus in their lives and in other people.
- To remind the children that they can be so blinded by things that are insignificant or overwhelming that they don't see the obvious - what is right in front of them.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2019 the Candidates Unit and Youth and Children's Ministries Unit launched DFL for Children. This is a day run by the division that seeks to help people discover God's design for their life. DFL for Children is for those aged 7-12 years.



Everyone is called by God to be salt and light in the world. Discovering what this means for each person can start from an early age. DFL for Children is designed to provide a safe space for children to explore who they are, who they are becoming and what their calling is as part of their discipleship journey.

Contact your divisional headquarters or regional children's specialist if you want to know more.



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WARM-UP IDEAS

Below are some ways to introduce the aims of today's learning. Choose ways which best fit the profile of your group.

- **Look up, look down**

Ask the children to form a circle, standing a foot or two apart from each other, all facing inwards and looking down to the floor. When the leader calls 'Look up!' the children have to immediately look up at another person in the circle, fixing their eyes on them.

If the person they are looking at also looks at them, they are out. The remaining players must continue to stare at the person they have been looking at until the leader says 'Look down!' The leader continues to call 'Look up' and 'Look down' until there are no more than two to three players left in the circle.

Discuss: How did you feel when you were looking down? Could you see what was going on? How did you feel when you looked up? What else could you see?

- **Stuck in the mud**

Choose one or two people to be 'it'. The other children have to try and escape them - but if a person who is 'it' touches someone else's shoulder, that person has to freeze. When they freeze, they stand legs astride and can only be released when someone else who is free crawls through their legs.

The children have to look everywhere to see where the two people who are 'it' are. The game finishes when everyone is 'frozen', or after a certain time limit.

Discuss: How easy or hard was it to stay alert and see where everyone was? Was it harder when you could only look forward?

- **Where's Wally**

You will need Google images of 'Where's Wally' and 'Where's Jesus' to print out.

Place the images from the *Where's Wally/Where's Jesus* series around the room. Give the children a set amount of time to see if they can find Wally and Jesus in the different pictures.

Discuss: What made it difficult to find Wally/Jesus? Did it get easier as you looked at more pictures?



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- **How alert are you?**

Choose one person from the group to leave the room and make one change to what they are wearing. They are then invited back into the room and the children have to guess what is different.

Discuss: Was it easy to see what changes had been made? What made some of the changes harder to see?

- **Blind Numbers**

(Source: The Best Big Ideas for Youth Groups by Patrick Angier and Nick Aiken)

You will need instructions from Appendix A and a blindfold.

Divide the children into small teams. Give each team a copy of the instructions and a few minutes to plan how they are going to achieve the task. Then put blindfolds on each child, give them each a number according to the size of their group and disorientate them out around the room. They cannot start until the leader says 'Go'!

TELL THE STORY

The story chosen explores further the instruction from the passage in Colossians to 'be alert to what is going on around Christ'.

The story from John 9 (NLT) of the blind man receiving his sight can also be used to illustrate being blind and not recognising or seeing what is going on around. It challenges us to see that there is more than one blind person in the story, and when we look deeper more is revealed to us.

Read the passage, or share the story using the following clip [Jesus heals a man born blind](#) - from Saddleback Kids.

- *Discussion:* What do you first see from the story?

The story is a simple and probably well-known miracle of Jesus. Encourage the children to look deeper, to open their eyes to learn about who else was blind in the story.

- *Discussion:* I wonder - is there anyone else who is blind in this story?

The children will probably say no at this point, so you can build a sense of mystery about what you may say next.



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This story is about different types of blindness experienced by everyone in the story, and Jesus has come to bring sight to all (v39):

1. The disciples (vv2,3)

The disciples saw the man born blind, they didn't see someone in need of compassion and they didn't wonder what they should do in love to help him. They got caught up asking questions about who was to blame for this man's problem.

- *Discussion:* Do you ever blame people for something that seems wrong so that you miss the priority of love and don't see God at work? Ask the children to share some examples of when they have blamed someone for their mistakes.

2. The neighbours (vv8-14)

The neighbours are so locked in their own limitations they cannot see what is really happening outside of them. They cannot see the work of God amongst them even though it is such an amazing miracle. They think that what they have seen cannot possibly be true.

- *Discussion:* Do you sometimes get so worried about what you can and can't do that you don't even notice other amazing things that are happening around you?

3. The Pharisees (vv14-34)

These were the religious leaders of the day. The Pharisees were so caught up in protecting their own view and their own favourite places in the religious system that they refused to consider that God could be doing something different and greater.

- *Discussion:* Can you think of a time when there has been someone who thought they were doing a really great job and wouldn't believe that God could do even better?

4. The parents (vv20-23)

The parents of the blind man know what they have seen but are too scared to say so because they fear what others might say and do. They knew the Pharisees were putting people out of the synagogue because they believed in Jesus. They didn't want to be excluded, so they chose to stay silent instead of being honest and enjoying the loving power of God.



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- *Discussion:* Have you been scared to speak out because you haven't wanted to be different or lose your friends?

In conclusion it is suggested you link Candidates Sunday to the story. You can do this by explaining that Candidates Sunday is a day when we are asked to particularly think about God's direction for us.

- *Discussion:* How do you think God would feel if we were blind to what he wanted for us? God may call us to be a Salvation Army officer or to do something specific in our corps locally or in our school - so it's important to know what he wants for us. How can we do this?

EXPLORE

Below are some ways to explore and apply the aims of today's learning.

- **Binoculars**

You will need a pair of binoculars.

Allow the children to look at different pictures or objects in the room with the binoculars. They can describe the different things they see. Can those without binoculars see the same thing? Do the binoculars help them see things they wouldn't normally see? How do the binoculars help them see more?

Remind them that we need to see things the way God wants us to see things and live the life God wants us to live. We need to look up to see beauty all around us. We need to look up and see what God is calling us to be or do.

- **Memory Game (Kim's Game)**

You will need ten small items, a tray, a tea towel, pens and paper.

Place the ten random items on a tray and give the children a few seconds to look and try and remember them all. When the time is up, cover the tray and ask the children to write down as many of the items as they can remember.

Share how we can all look at the same things but we each remember and see things differently. Some will not see certain items whilst some will remember some detail but maybe not the colour or the size. To win the game, we have to be alert to everything on the tray!



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- **Invisible Quick draw**

You will need invisible quick draw cards, paper, pencils and a timer.

Prepare a set of small cards each with the name of something invisible on them like wind, air, radio waves, sound, atoms, love, strength, God...

Take it in turns for a child to draw something that will help the rest of the group guess what it is. No words, letters or talking are allowed, except to say yes or no.

Explain that if we keep our heads down we can miss out on what is happening around us. Things will be invisible because we are not looking and listening for the things God has placed around us.

- **Charades**

Write on small cards the names of the different roles in the corps and different jobs that need to be done. In turn, ask a child to take a card and act it out for everyone to guess.

Examples may include: corps officer, corps sergeant-major, singing company leader, treasurer, welcome sergeant, cleaner, person on the tea rota, who helps in the food bank, who takes up the collection...

Encourage conversation about what the children might like to do in the corps and how that may be able to become a reality.

PRAYER

Below are some ways to pray about the aims of today's learning.

- **Continue the prayer**

You will need prayer cards (Appendix B) for each child and pens.

Ask the children to add their own words to the end of each sentence to make it their personal prayer. Once they have finished, take turns in reading them out.

- **Masking Tape Prayers**

You will need masking tape

In pairs or threes ask the children to take a roll of masking tape and mark on the floor the shape of the things they want to pray about. Once they have finished, gather the group, walk round and ask each group to share what they have prayed for.



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- **Floating flowers**

You will need flower shapes cut out of paper (Appendix C), pens and a bowl of water.

Ask the children to think about people or things they would like to ask God to help with - things that are maybe stopping them from looking up and seeing God's beauty.

Write these different names or things on each petal of the flower template. Fold the sides or petals into the middle so it looks closed, and carefully place the folded flower on top of the water. Watch as the petals gradually open out. It's as if the prayers are being opened to God!

- **Jigsaw prayer**

You will need a piece of jigsaw puzzle for each child.

Ask the children to hold a jigsaw piece in their hand and pray for themselves: ask God to help them and thank him for the good things in their life; ask him to help them see the big picture of the plan he has for them.

Then ask them to look at the parts of the piece that *reach outwards* ('tabs' or 'outies') and pray for people who reach out and help and show love to others. Thank God for the people who help and show love to you.

Look at the parts of the piece that have *spaces waiting to be filled* ('innies?'). Pray for people who have lost something or someone or who feel that they have something missing in their lives. For people who are looking down, ask God to help them to know that they are loved by him.

Try to *fit your piece into the piece* of the person next to you (it probably won't fit!). Pray for people who find it hard to fit in, people who have moved to a new place, people who feel they have no friends, people who cannot see what God is doing in their life. Pray that they will find peace, friends and see God's beauty.

Hold your piece and think of someone from your community, your friends or family, that you would like to pray for. Thank God for the beauty of that person and ask God to bless and help them.



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SONGS

- [‘Open my eyes’](#) Kids Worship Song by Ken Blount
- [‘God can do anything’](#) Doug Horley
- [‘Help me be your eyes, Lord Jesus’](#) Doug Horley
- [‘I’m alive, alert, awake, enthusiastic’](#) Ultimate camp resource

RESPONSE

- **Scratch Art**

You will need to purchase square scratch art doodle sheets in various shapes (<https://www.bakerross.co.uk>)

Allow the children to draw any design they like, and as they draw they will see that behind the dark, colour appears. You can use this as a parallel to darkness being like the blindness where you cannot see anything, and then as the colour appears it is like being able to see. The more they scratch the sheet, the more is revealed.

- **Apple illustration**

You will need two sweet apples (or something else the children will love to taste).

Show the children an apple saying how delicious it looks and how juicy it will be.

As you bite it, say how amazing it tastes, how delicious, so juicy, so green/red - ‘Words just fail me, I can’t fully describe how lovely this apple is tasting! I wish I could really tell you how absolutely delicious it is. But perhaps there is a way.’

Ask a volunteer if they would like the other apple. Say that now you both know how great these apples taste. It’s only when you experience the apple that you know how good it is.

‘It’s the same with Jesus. I can talk as long as I like about Jesus but I’ll never really convince you until you have your own encounter. As leaders we can tell you not to shuffle along looking down but to look up and see Jesus, but you need to do it for yourself - you need to experience how wonderful God is as you look up to him.’



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- **Blind to seeing**

You will need thin black card, a hole puncher and pipe cleaners.

Have the children cut out of thin black card the shape of a letter 'B' that will also be a blindfold ([see image example](#)). The letter can signify the word 'blind' or 'Bartimaeus' (the blind man).

Make two holes at one end so that the pipe cleaners can be pulled through to make them wearable.

When the children put on their blindfolds they can't see a thing. Ask them to feel an item in a bag and try and guess what it is, or point to something in the room and say what they are pointing at.

Remind them that Jesus made the blind man see, and how we have learnt about being alert and seeing things and people the way that Jesus does. Ask them to take the blindfold off and cut out the inside circles so they become like glasses, still in the shape of the letter 'B'. The children can use their glasses throughout the week to remind them to be alert!

TAKE HOME

Give each child a Take Home Card (Appendix D).

This week, as a family, challenge each other to look up and not miss out on seeing Jesus in everyday things.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Instructions

Instructions:

1. Your task is to line yourselves up in numerical order.
2. You must do this without talking.
3. Every team member will be blindfolded and moved around the room.
4. Each member will get a number.
5. The numbers will be the number of people you have in your team.
6. You have two minutes of planning time before you are blindfolded.
7. The team who does it in the shortest time are the winners.
8. When you think you have lined up in numerical order, call the leader, who will say yes or no.

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APPENDIX B - Prayer cards

Dear _____

You are _____

And my _____

You gave me a passion for _____

Thank you for _____

Help me with the things that make me sad and look down, like

And things that distract me, like

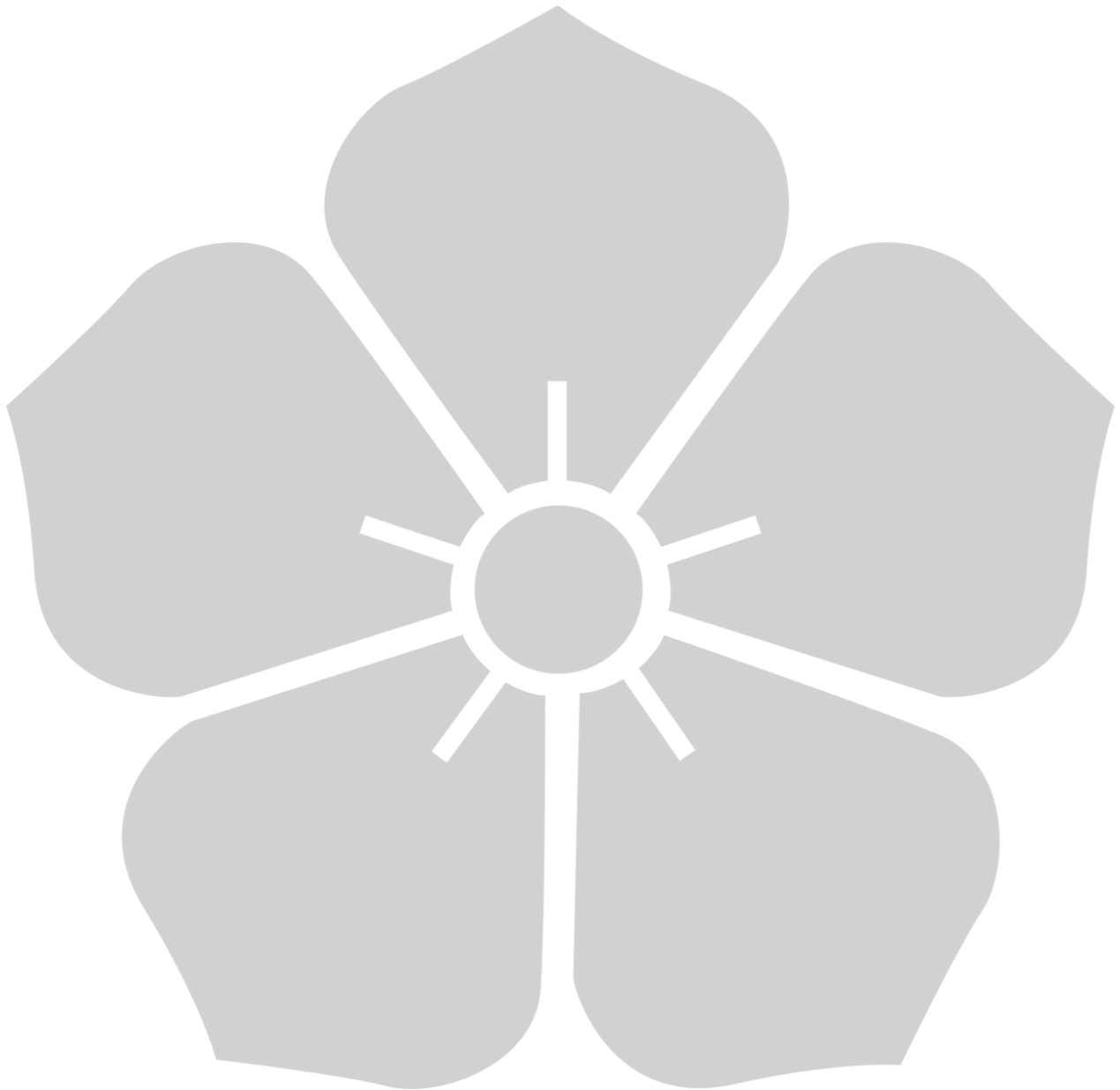
Help me to look up and see

Amen



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APPENDIX C - Floating flower template





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APPENDIX D - Take Home card

MONDAY	Look in your garden or a local park and think of wonderful things God has created.
TUESDAY	Look at your family and think about the ways God has blessed them.
WEDNESDAY	Look for something that surprises you and think about the times God has surprised you.
THURSDAY	Look for something in your school you haven't seen before and think about the ways God is moving there and in your community.
FRIDAY	Look at something on the news together and pray for situations around the world.
SATURDAY	Look at something in your street or your town that worries you. Pray and ask how can we see and serve God more as a family.
SUNDAY	Look for something that seems insignificant yet is important, and ask God for help to keep him central in your life.