

God is
INFINITELY MORE
than we could ever imagine...



INFINITELY MORE

Key Passages: Ephesians 3:14-21 and Colossians 3:1-3

This year's Vision and Commitment material seeks to encourage people to grasp more clearly Christ's limitless love and commitment to us and how we can encounter him afresh, seeking him in the places, people or circumstances that we perhaps never imagined.

With this in mind there are a range of resources for children's leaders to choose and adapt ideas from to help inspire, challenge and set the scene. We encourage you to reflect on the theme for this year and plan according to how God is leading you in your ministry with young people.

An approach could be: *Warm-Ups* (10 mins), *Tell the Story and Wonder* (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.

In addition, a read-and-deliver, one-hour session is provided (Appendix 1).

Session Aims:

1. To help children know, love and enjoy God
2. To help children explore where Jesus is at work in our lives and our community
3. To encourage the children to be open to seeing more of Jesus in their lives and in the lives of others

Background / Leader's Reflection:

To encounter God we need to know who he is, his nature and his qualities. He is committed to us and his love is unwavering. When we are able to 'see Christ



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everywhere and in one's self' (Richard Rohr) we have the capacity to seek and be open to his limitless presence.

At the time of Paul writing to the Church in Colossae, it was being diverted from the gospel. Religious teachers were giving a flawed view and Paul wrote so that people would know of God's greatness and wonder and that Jesus is divine. He wrote, too, to give guidance on living a life focused on Jesus and his perspective.

Read Colossians 3:1-3. Reflect on these verses and consider what they mean for you. Where are you in your relationship with Jesus? Are you trying to see things from Christ's perspective, or overwhelmed by some struggles in life? Are you energised by your life with Christ, or pursuing things which are not honouring of God?

In Colossians 3:1 (NIV), Paul writes about how our relationship with Christ begins with a **change of desires**: 'Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above.' This leads to a **change in thoughts** (Colossians 3:2): 'Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.' The result of this is a **change in actions**, how we see and how we serve, as set out in the rest of chapter 3.

In our ministry with children, they may talk of the desires and thoughts they have in their lives, being pulled away by distractions which make it harder for them to live in ways which Jesus wants them to. How can we support them to go deeper in their relationship with Jesus, providing space for discussion, prayer and mutual support with their friends and leaders, not just in the session but ongoing?

In our discussions with children, they may be positive about the ways Jesus is doing great things in their relationships, communities and experiences, or it may be they



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struggle to see things from Jesus' point of view. Children may wonder how God is moving in their community or moving in their own lives.

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!

It will be important to be sensitive to the fact that some children may not feel God's love and presence. Their experiences of love will be varied. Consider what it means to a child to be told 'God loves you!'

As you plan for your ministry with the children, consider your responses to the questions:

- What is your understanding of who God is, his nature and his qualities?
- Where do you see him moving in your community? In your family? In you?
- How can you open your eyes, mind and heart to explore what new revelation Christ is waiting for you to experience?
- How can *you* seek more of God's infinite power?



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WARM-UPS

Choose from a range of different introductory activities to help introduce the theme according to your group.

40 Seconds

You will need a large space, a sponge ball and a timer.

Ask the children to find a space around the room and touch the wall with one hand. Select one child to stand on the other side of the room. The group of children touching the wall must pass the ball between themselves (they can only take their hand off the wall to retrieve the ball) and aim to hit the selected child, who in turn should avoid being hit by the ball for 40 seconds. If the ball touches them, they are out. Swap around, move positions along the wall and play again.

To make it more challenging, adjust the amount of time, space and number of children selected.

Discuss: How easy or hard was it to stay alert? Could you predict where the ball was going to go? Did it get easier with practice?

Puzzle Relay

You will need two cut-out copies of the puzzle in Appendix 2 and two dice.

Split the group into two teams at one end of the room. Give each team their shuffled jigsaw pieces face down. The children should take turns rolling the die until they get a six. They can then take a puzzle piece and place it at the other end of the room. As the number of pieces increases, the children need to fit them together to complete the overall image.



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Discuss: How easy was it to work out the big picture with only a few pieces of the puzzle? As you had more pieces to fit together, was it easier or harder? Why?

Communication Challenge

You will need the list of actions and emotions in Appendix 3.

Take it in turns for each child to pick an action and an adverb from the list to create fun combinations. As they act it out creatively (without speaking!), the other children must try to guess what is happening, focusing on both parts, eg 'mow the grass, proudly' or 'sing a song, sleepily'.

Discuss: For the children guessing, how easy was it to see things from the acting person's point of view?

A Change of Perspective

You will need optical illusions in Appendix 4.

Show the children the selection of images and ask them what they see. How did it make them feel when they were able to notice both images? What made it difficult to see the different images within one context?

Where's Wally

You will need enlarged images from the Where's Wally series (or similar).

Place the Where's Wally images around the room. Give children time to look for Wally in the different pictures.



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

Treasure Hunt

You will need to write a range of clues on pieces of paper and a prize.

Place the clues in different places before the children arrive. Encourage them to look for pieces of paper that will lead them to a final prize. Another alternative can be to simply play a game of hide and seek.

Discuss: Did you enjoy searching for the treasure? Were there times when you didn't know where to look?



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TELL THE STORY

Choose from a range of different learning activities to help share the aims of the theme according to your group.

Aim 1: To help children know, love and enjoy God

God's love never stops¹

You will need a torch, kettle, wind-up car, copy of memory verse Ephesians 3:18 or Bibles.

Show children the different props (turn the kettle on, wind up the car and push the button on the torch to start it...). Ask the children:

- Once I have started them, how do they stop?
- Can you think of some other items/objects that start and stop?
- What about something like God's love... I wonder how you could get that to stop?

Allow time for the children to suggest how they might be able to get God to stop loving them. Is it possible? Try and memorise together Ephesians 3:18 (NLT): 'And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.'

Explain that even when we thought about how we might get God to stop loving us, the truth is that **nothing** can separate us from God's love. *(It would be important to add that that doesn't give us permission to purposely go and do wrong things.)*

¹ Adapted from Australian Territory Junior Soldier session

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What is God like? ²

You will need the logo quiz (Appendix 5), paper and pens.

Show the children ten famous brand logos (Appendix 5). Can they identify each brand? How does a symbol enable this?

Give each child a piece of paper and ask them to sketch in three minutes their own symbol to represent their understanding of God.

Ask them to share their idea. Other children could guess what they think the symbol represents.

God is... ³

You will need Bible references (Appendix 6), a large piece of paper with the words 'God is' in the middle and Bibles.

Ask any younger children to discuss words from different Bible stories they have looked at, and older children Bible verses to read (see Appendix 6), that reveal qualities and characteristics of God. After they have written these words on the 'God is' piece of paper, explain that we can know and understand more of God through his creation and his dealing with people throughout history, but we most clearly see his character demonstrated in and through the life of Jesus.

Aim 2: To help children explore where Jesus is at work in our lives and our community

² Adapted from <https://insight.typepad.co.uk/insight/2008/10/what-is-god-like.html>

³ Adapted from <https://insight.typepad.co.uk/insight/2008/10/what-is-god-like.html>



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Let's Celebrate⁴

You will need photos of happy times in your own life.

Show the children your photos. Explain why they were happy times for you and how you believe Jesus was present. Ask them to discuss: what was your happiest moment last year? Were there difficult times for you last year? How do you think Jesus helped you? What did you learn about God? (You may want to pray as a group for these things.)

Explain to children that every year we learn more about God. Use some of the children's ideas to explain how each other's experiences may be different. Ask the children: I wonder what you want to learn about God this year? How can we learn more about God?

What do you see?

You will need 'God's love in action' images (Appendix 7).

Show each image in turn to the children, which reflect an area of ministry The Salvation Army has been involved with this year. Ask them: what do you see? What could be the story behind this picture? How can you see God's love shown through people's actions? If you want to explore further, show scenes of difficulty/injustice which prompt deeper discussion about God in these situations.

Aim 3: To encourage the children to be open to seeing more of Jesus in their lives and in the lives of others

⁴ Adapted from Urban Saints Energize - There's always more to see



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What's the Word?

You will need paper, Post-it Notes, pens, Bibles.

Ask the children to turn to Colossians 3:1-3. Consider tricky words in the text, such as resurrection/presides/absorbed/perspective:

'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.' (Colossians 3:1-2 MSG)

Explain that Paul, a preacher of the message of Jesus, was writing to a group of people, about 30 years after Jesus died, who had begun a church in Colossae. However, the people of this church were struggling to keep their focus on Jesus. Ask the children how would they know that someone was struggling to keep their focus on Jesus. Why do they think people struggle to keep their focus on Jesus?

The questions which follow could form part of a discussion. The children could work in small groups to record their thoughts on large paper and Post-it Notes. Consider how children will feel most comfortable sharing their thoughts.

I wonder:

- What is Paul concerned that people are doing?
- What instructions does Paul give in these verses?
- What do you think he means?
- Whose perspective should we see things from?
- What does it mean to see things from Christ's perspective?
- What do you think the people of Colossae did in response to Paul's letter?



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Idea 2: All Eyes on Jesus

You will need blindfolds and resources for an obstacle course.

Note: Be sensitive to any children in your group with physical disabilities. Focus on the things their bodies can do.

Blindfold each child and guide them with simple instructions through an obstacle course - for example, under a chair, around a bin, over a rope. Ask them how they felt completing the task blindfolded. Give them the opportunity to complete the course again, without the blindfold, and feed back how different they found it.

Explain that we are blessed to have eyes which enable us to see the beauty in each other and the world. Jesus wants us to see him changing the lives of people in our homes, church and communities. There are ways we will have never experienced God's power. In the Bible, Paul, an early leader of the Church, wrote to some people who were struggling to follow what Jesus had said in Colossians 3:1-2 (MSG).

I wonder:

- How easy do you find it to stay focused on something you need to do?
- What might distract you from spending time with Jesus this week?
- How do you think Jesus wants to work through you this week?
- How can you be open to Jesus guiding you?
- How can you seek to learn more about Jesus through the places you go and the people you meet?



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EXPLORE AND APPLY

Choose from a range of different activities to explore and apply the aims of today's learning according to your group.

They Said!

You will need recording equipment such as a tablet, video camera, voice recorder or mobile phone and pens and paper.

(While this is a recording project it can also be done as a live interview.)

This activity will involve members of the congregation that are open to sharing with the children personally or about any community work they are involved in.

Ask the children to think about what they would like to ask a member of the congregation regarding how God has been at work in their life or in a community project - some questions may include those used in previous activities. Help the children to invite and schedule a set time and date with their interviewees to create their recording. With permission, give the children the opportunity to share their recording(s) with others in worship.

Explain that Jesus has placed many people in our lives that we can learn from and who are living out Christ's calling in their life. It is important we recognise the many ways Jesus is at work and look for ways we can help too.



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Standing Out

You will need paper, pens and access to <https://www.handimania.com/diy/3d-handprint.html>.

Follow the instructions in the link to create a 3D artwork effect. The children can add the verse from Colossians 3:2 to their design and discuss how we are told to see things from Christ's perspective.

Explain that from day to day we meet people who do not believe God is working in their life. The children can keep this image as a reminder that Jesus is at work in them, helping them stand out and be an example to others.

Remembering

You will need paper and colouring pencils.

Ask the children to share and then draw a picture of good and happy times they have been part of. What made it a happy time? Was God at work? If they are comfortable, encourage them to share their drawing with others in their family, friends or congregations.

Explain that God has blessed us in many ways. Remind children that the difficult times will help them see Jesus more and more, knowing that he has been and is with you. Display the children's images as a reminder for when they pray to thank God for his love for them and others.

Who God is?

You will need A3 paper and art resources.



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If you did the 'Who God is?' activity in the *Tell the story* section, ask the children to take their sketch and create a poster to display at home as a reminder of who God is to them. They can add to it each time they learn something new about God. They can use a range of media to present their artwork.

Explain that we live in a world surrounded by symbols and logos which try to get us to buy things and spend time with things. As Christians, we believe Jesus is all around us, moving in ways we may not even understand. Encourage the children to show their symbol to a friend, explaining what they know about Jesus.

There's always more to see...

You will need large sheets of paper, photographs of events or newspaper / clip art images, scissors, pens and glue.

Collages are a great way to share lots of memories in one place. Ask children to create a collage (from the range of images and personal drawings) of things they are looking forward to in their own lives, such as times with family and friends, opportunities at school, new people to meet. Ask the children to consider how God would want to use them in these situations.

Getting Practical!

Plan in advance an idea that the children can be involved in, whether it's making cakes to donate to a local need, a litter-pick of the local area (or just around the corps building) or the creation of a gift to leave as a thank you for someone.

Explain that our understanding of Jesus becomes deeper when we put Jesus' teaching into practice and demonstrate God's love in practical ways. What



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additional ideas do children have for putting God's love into action? (These could be ideas you take forward and use in your corps.)



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PRAYER TIME

Choose from a range of different prayer activities to help explore ways to pray about the aims of today's learning according to your group.

Happy Me

You will need a tray of sand

Allow the children to run the sand through their fingers. Discuss the calming effect this can have. What words would they use to describe the positive things about themselves? Ask them to draw or write the different words in the sand. After each word, they can clear the sand and do the next one. Pray together that God will help them remember all the special things about themselves so that they can see him at work in their lives.

Stars

You will need pre-cut stars or provide paper and scissors for children to make their own.

Ask children to describe stars (they shine bright high in the sky and can remind us to look up...). Invite each child to write a prayer or draw a picture in their star reminding them to keep their focus on the things Jesus would want them to.

Going Forward

You will need a large map of the local area

There is always more to discover about God. He is at work through our community. We don't always know where God is at work, and there are still difficulties which people in our community face (rip up the map).



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Give each person in the group a piece of the map. Ask the children where they've seen God at work in their life. What choices have they made recently? Did they ask someone for help? Did they ask God for help? What happened?

Explain that each of us can support one another. Piece the map together and pray that they will be open to seeing the things God has planned for them.

Building Up⁵

You will need Lego/Duplo bricks - at least one per child.

Guide the children through this prayer activity saying:

1. *Hold your brick.* Pray for yourself. Thank God for the things he has given you. Ask him to bless you and help you to bless others.
2. *Count the bumps on your brick.* For each bump on your brick, pray for a different person you meet in this building. Ask God to bless them this week.
3. *Swap your brick for one with a different colour.* Thank God for making each person special. Thank him for the things that are different but special about other people. Pray that we will learn how to celebrate and understand people who are different from us.
4. *Add your brick to the building of the church.* Thank God for the church and the communities we live in. Pray that he will help us to include others and to help people know that they are loved and valued. Ask God to help you see more of Jesus in your life.

⁵ Idea from <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2015/03/lego-or-duplo-prayers.html>

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SONG SUGGESTIONS

- 'Ask, seek, knock' by Hillsong Kids
- 'God can do anything' by Doug Horley
- 'God's love is big' by Pulse
- 'God you're good to me' by Vineyard UK Kids Worship
- 'I want to do what my Father's doing' by Vineyard UK Kids Worship
- 'Nothing's too big, big, big' by Doug Horley
- 'Open my eyes' by Ken Blount

RESPONSE

I Commit

You will need the Vision and Commitment cards for children, battery-operated candles, pens.

Light the candles to encourage a reflective mood. Play some worship music quietly and give each child one of the Vision and Commitment children's card for this year.

Explain that we have been thinking about who God is, how God has been moving in our lives and how can we be open to seeing more of him. Ask the children to think about the different places they will go this week and this year: home, school, shops, church, clubs... Think about the different people they will meet: friends, family, leaders, teachers, strangers...

Read through the words with the children. Give them time to think about the question 'How will you seek more of God?' and share if desired. Then simply sign the commitment in agreement with the words. Finish by praying together about the commitments the children have made and the thoughts shared.



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Take Home⁶

You will need the cards from Appendix 8.

Give each child a card to take home (Appendix 8). Challenge them, with their family, to set their minds on the things of Jesus. Make a commitment as a family to be careful with the things they think about. Choose a different focus each day.

⁶ Adapted from Seeds Family Worship



APPENDIX 1: READ, RESOURCE AND DELIVER, ONE-HOUR SESSION

WARM-UPS

Communication Challenge

You will need the list of actions and emotions in Appendix 3.

Take it in turns for each child to pick an action and an adverb from the list to create fun combinations. As they act it out creatively (without speaking!), the other children must try to guess what is happening, focusing on both parts, eg 'mow the grass, proudly' or 'sing a song, sleepily'.

Discuss: For the children guessing, how easy was it to see things from the acting person's point of view?

TELL THE STORY

Aim 1: To help children know, love and enjoy God

God's love never stops ⁷

You will need a torch, kettle, wind-up car, copy of memory verse Ephesians 3:18 or Bibles.

Show children the different props (turn the kettle on, wind up the car and push the button on the torch to start it...). Ask the children:

- Once I have started them, how do they stop?
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Allow time for the children to suggest how they might be able to get God to stop loving them. Is it possible? Try and memorise together Ephesians 3:18 (NLT): ‘And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.’

Explain that even when we thought about how we might get God to stop loving us, the truth is that **nothing** can separate us from God’s love. *(It would be important to add that that doesn’t give us permission to purposely go and do wrong things.)*

Aim 2: To help children explore where Jesus is at work in our lives and our community

Let’s Celebrate⁸

You will need photos of happy times in your own life.

Show the children your photos. Explain why they were happy times for you and how you believe Jesus was present. Ask them to discuss: what was your happiest moment last year? Were there difficult times for you last year? How do you think Jesus helped you? What did you learn about God? (You may want to pray as a group for these things.)

Explain to children that every year we learn more about God. Use some of the children’s ideas to explain how each other’s experiences may be different. Ask the children: I wonder what you want to learn about God this year? How can we learn more about God?

⁸ Adapted from Urban Saints Energize - There’s always more to see

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Aim 3: To encourage the children to be open to seeing more of Jesus in their lives and in the lives of others

Idea 2: All Eyes on Jesus

You will need blindfolds and resources for an obstacle course.

Note: Be sensitive to any children in your group with physical disabilities. Focus on the things their bodies can do.

Blindfold each child and guide them with simple instructions through an obstacle course - for example, under a chair, around a bin, over a rope. Ask them how they felt completing the task blindfolded. Give them the opportunity to complete the course again, without the blindfold, and feed back how different they found it.

Explain that we are blessed to have eyes which enable us to see the beauty in each other and the world. Jesus wants us to see him changing the lives of people in our homes, church and communities. There are ways we will have never experienced God's power. In the Bible, Paul, an early leader of the Church, wrote to some people who were struggling to follow what Jesus had said in Colossians 3:1-2 (MSG).

I wonder:

- How easy do you find it to stay focused on something you need to do?
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PRAYER TIME

Happy Me

You will need a tray of sand

Allow the children to run the sand through their fingers. Discuss the calming effect this can have. What words would they use to describe the positive things about themselves? Ask them to draw or write the different words in the sand. After each word, they can clear the sand and do the next one. Pray together that God will help them remember all the special things about themselves so that they can see him at work in their lives.



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RESPONSE

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Explain that we have been thinking about who God is, how God has been moving in our lives and how can we be open to seeing more of him. Ask the children to think about the different places they will go this week and this year: home, school, shops, church, clubs... Think about the different people they will meet: friends, family, leaders, teachers, strangers...

Read through the words with the children. Give them time to personalise the card by writing or drawing ways in which they want to experience more of Jesus in their life, or just simply to sign the commitment in agreement with the words. Finish by praying together about the commitments and thoughts the children have made.

Take Home⁹

You will need the cards from Appendix 8.

Give each child a card to take home (Appendix 8). Challenge them, with their family, to set their minds on the things of Jesus. Make a commitment as a family to be careful with the things they think about. Choose a different focus each day.

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APPENDIX 2 - PUZZLE RELAY IMAGE

(Print as large as you would like)



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APPENDIX 3 - COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE

Blow your nose	Make a phone call	Stroke a cat
Eat an apple	Watch TV	Eat noodles
Wash your face	Brush your teeth	Read a book
Do a dance	Carry your school bag	Climb into bed
Run a race	Have a bath	Put on your shoes
Ride your bike	Dig the weeds	Drink a glass of water

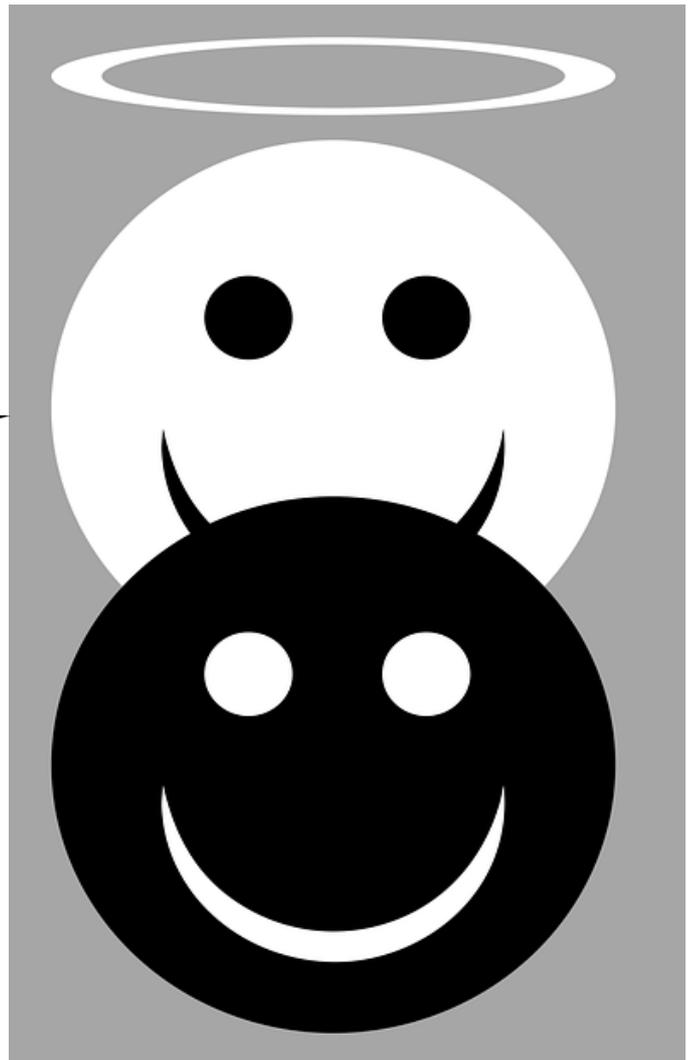
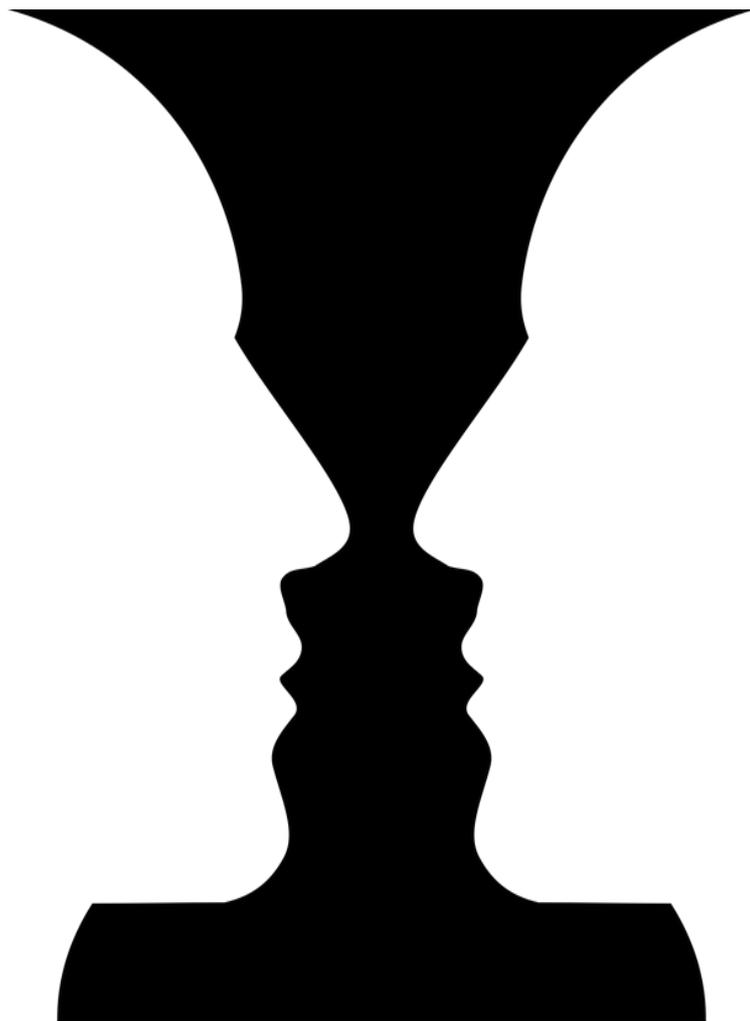
Gently	Happily	Sadly
Confidently	Sleepily	Energetically
Proudly	Shyly	Nervously
Angrily	Carefully	Slowly
Quickly	Lovingly	Quietly
Noisily	Calmly	Wildly



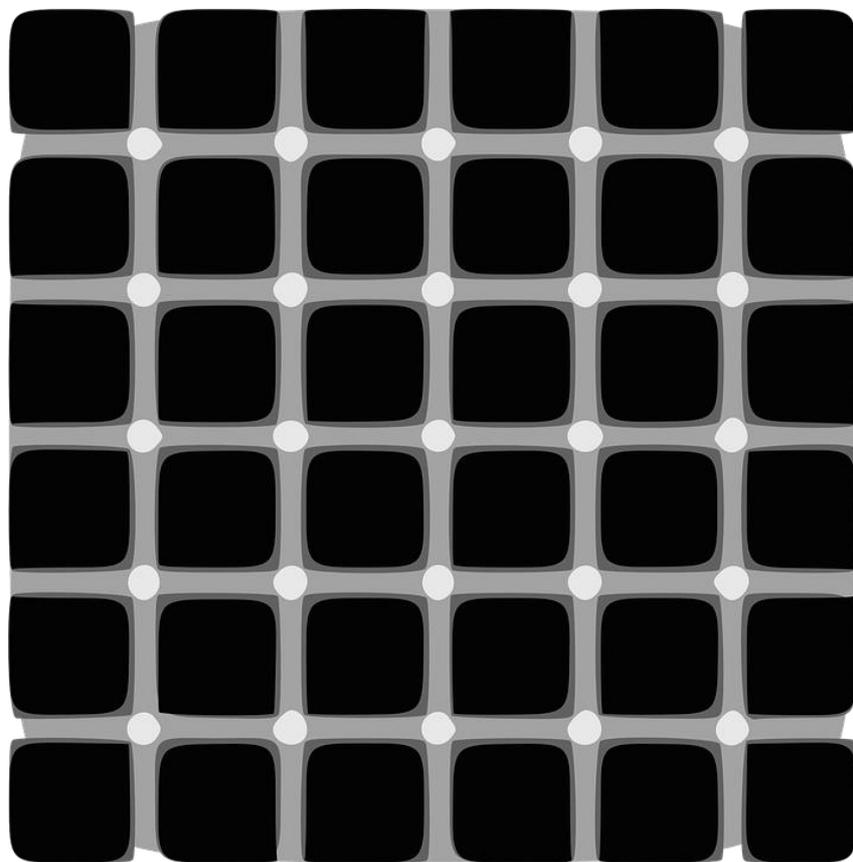
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APPENDIX 4 - A CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE



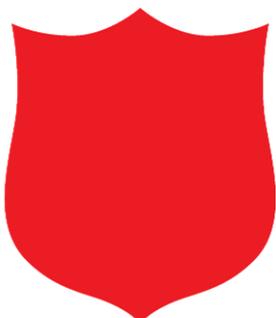
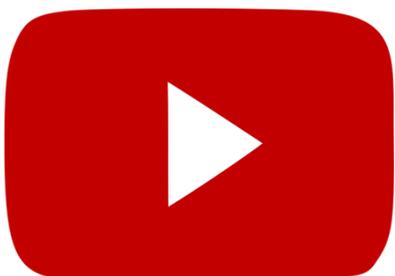
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APPENDIX 5 - LOGOS QUIZ



Answers (horizontal order):
Minecraft, Apple, Google, Nike, McDonalds, Fairtrade,
YouTube, Pepsi, Facebook, The Salvation Army



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APPENDIX 6 - 'GOD IS' BIBLE REFERENCE

1 John 4:8	1 John 1:5
Exodus 34:6	Deuteronomy 4:31
Deuteronomy 10:17	2 Peter 3:9
1 Corinthians 10:13	Genesis 1:1
Psalms 50:6	Hebrews 4:12
Romans 6:23	Psalms 18:30



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APPENDIX 7 - WHAT DO YOU SEE?



The Salvation Army provides scores of meals for families in need over the school holidays in Lowestoft.



The Salvation Army currently provides 464 beds in its 12 care homes for older people, including two homes in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland. It's thanks to the generosity of the public, that people like Vera in Coventry can live a full, abundant, love-filled life that also cares for her spiritual needs.



God is
INFINITELY MORE
than we could ever imagine...



Summer (school) loving: finding my place in God's family



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than we could ever imagine...



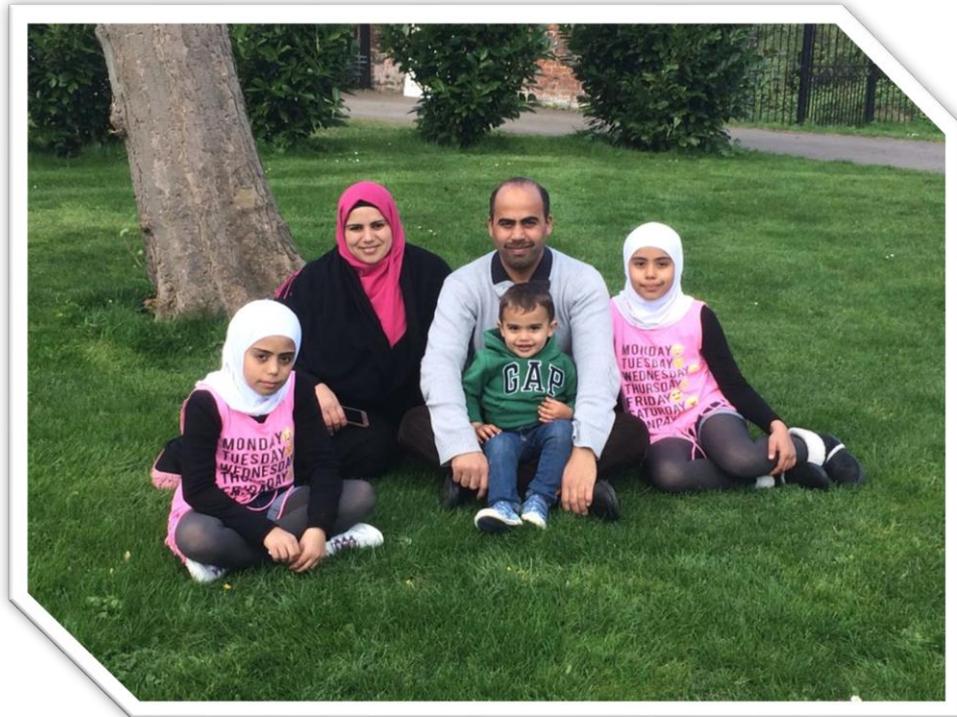
Saving souls by saving goals at the Homeless World Cup



VISION AND COMMITMENT 2020

Children

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There are a growing number of Salvation Army churches becoming Community Sponsors, led by tireless volunteers building teams to resettle vulnerable Syrian refugees from the most desperate of circumstances.



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Salvation Army praises volunteers for vital role they play supporting communities across country.



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West Ham youngsters swap boots for bears to help Salvation Army present appeal



God is

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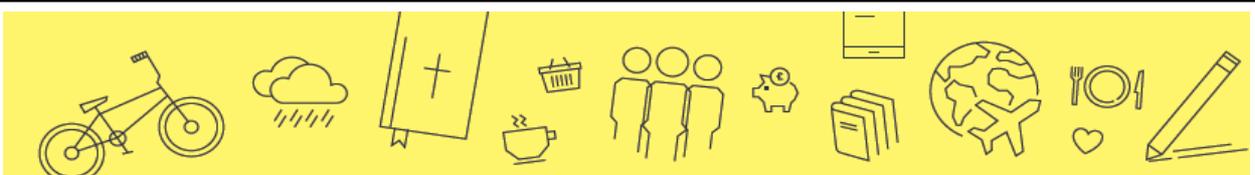
APPENDIX 8 - TAKE HOME CARD



This week, as a family, challenge each other to set your minds on the things of Jesus. Make a commitment to be careful with your thoughts.

Could you begin the day with a conversation at breakfast to remind each other?
Or reflect on if you have been able to focus on Jesus in a chat in the car or at dinner.

- **Monday** - think of wonderful things God has created
- **Tuesday** - think of the ways God has blessed your family
- **Wednesday** - think of the times God has surprised you
- **Thursday** - think of the ways God is moving in your school and community
- **Friday** - watch the news together and pray for situations around the world
- **Saturday** - how can we see and serve God more as a family?
- **Sunday** - how will we prioritise God today so he can reveal more of himself to us?



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