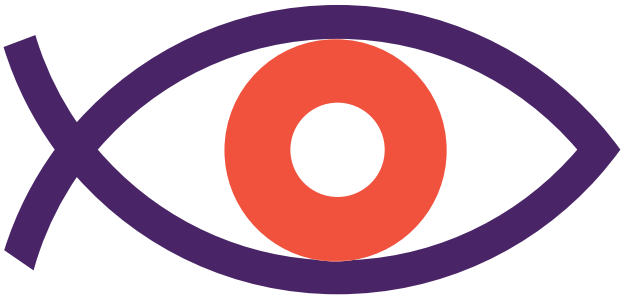

SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

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SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

Calling us back to the central focus of our Christian faith: The Risen and Living Jesus!

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SESSION AUTHOR:
Harrison Litzell

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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 1
MISSING JESUS

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 14:27-28

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
We must keep our eyes focused on Jesus which helps us to follow Him more closely.

GATHERING TIME

Memory Verse: Matthew 14:27-28 (NRSV)
But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

Set up three stations/activities and allow students to choose where they want to engage as they enter.

1. Have several Bibles available along with pieces of paper that have the memory reference on it. Have students find the memory verse and read it.
2. Have a computer or other device connected to the internet to the URL ***blueletterbible.org***. Have students look up the memory verse and explore the tools available. They can read it in a variety of versions or look at the Greek text and explore individual words.
3. Before class, print out the memory verse in large text (size 72 at least) and cut out each word individually. Hide these around the classroom and have students find them and arrange them in the proper order. When they are finished, they can re-hide the words and work to find and arrange them more quickly than in their first attempt.

QUESTION CONVERSATION

Begin by asking children what they had for breakfast. (This question will lower the threshold of students' first contribution to a conversation and allow for a light conversation to begin.*)

Your next question can be: "Have you ever been lost?" Allow students to tell stories or experiences. Ask about feelings, memories or associations.

At the end of this conversation, transition to the story by revealing that something that is typically in the room is now missing. (If you are in a room that is not recognizable to the students, take this time to have everyone close their eyes as you remove an item that had been visible in the room). Have the students figure out what is missing; play multiple times, if you wish.

After playing, read the story from Luke 2:41-52. You can either read the whole story or have the students take turns reading verses. (If a student chooses not to read, permit them to pass.) After you read the story, ask the students the following questions to help with comprehension and retention:

- Who are the characters in the story?
- Where are they?
- What happens to Jesus?
- How long was he gone?
- Where was he?
- How do you think he felt?
- How did Mary and Joseph feel?

This next part of the lesson is optional, but connects the lessons to what the other age groups are working on. To make the transition, offer the students the opportunity to talk about what the adults are discussing. You can present it either as an opportunity for further conversation that day or later that week with their family members; or, you can present it as quasi-illicit information as it is in the "adult lesson." If one week your class is not in a place to move beyond the story, this section can be omitted and you can spend more time on the activities.

These questions are meant to inspire curiosity and wonder. Allow students to collaborate and talk through their thoughts. There are not necessarily right or wrong answers, just an opportunity to discuss:

- What does it mean to be Christian?
- What do Christians do or believe?
- How would that be different if there were no Jesus?
- How would your life be different if you didn't believe in Jesus?

***Note:** If this practice becomes a regular habit, it can also work to inform you of details about your students. If a student regularly does not have breakfast it may inform you of potential food insecurity. If a child typically does have breakfast, but does not one week, it may create a difference in the attention and/or behavior.*

ACTIVITIES/STATIONS

1. Create a station for children to act out the story of Luke 2. If you have costumes, lay them out and allow students to take charge of the story-telling. Use the device from earlier (laptop, phone, tablet) as a camera and allow students to film their stories.
2. Have a number of spot-the-difference puzzles available for students to work on.
3. Have two stations (depending on class size) with miscellaneous items spread out on a table. Students will break into two teams and take turns closing their eyes while the other team hides one of the items. Students must then open their eyes and name the missing item. The item is then replaced and the game continues. After playing for a while, you can scramble the items to reset a little.
4. The following activity will continue for the first four weeks of the unit. The memory verse comes from the story in Matthew 14 of Jesus walking on the water and Peter taking his eyes off him before beginning to sink.

   Students will have the opportunity to build a shoebox diorama of this scene using a variety of materials. Provide all materials each week and let students work at their own pace. If possible, you can allow students to request supplies that could be supplied the following week. (potential supplies: shoeboxes, paint, markers, crayons, cotton balls, construction paper, glue, scissors, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, tissue paper, etc.)

CLOSING

At the end of the session, before students leave, offer a blessing (see below). If all students leave at the same time, gather together five minutes before leaving. If students leave one-at-a-time, have them pause at their stations and offer the blessing before allowing them to work until they are picked up.

God took time to make you of the earth
Jesus came to show how God loves you
and how you can love others
Now, you have the Spirit of God
through the stories of our faith
Among our community
And within you
Go, and love others just as God loves you.

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Harrison Litzell

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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 2
JESUS IS LORD

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 14:27-28

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
Christ calls us to be a part of the church and to keep our eyes focused on Him.

GATHERING TIME

Memory Verse: Matthew 14:27-28 (NRSV)
But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

Set up three stations/activities and allow students to choose where they want to engage as they enter.

1. Write (or have an early-arriving student write) the memory verse on a white board. Have a student(s) read it aloud and then erase one word. Have them read it again, trying to remember the missing word. Continue to erase words one or two at a time attempting to remember what was erased.
2. Using the words that were hidden around the room last week, have students unscramble the 34 words to create the Bible verse. They can start by using the Bible as reference, and then see if they can do it without assistance.
3. Have a Bible open to the passage on one side of the room and either a partner or a piece of paper on the other side. Students should start by the Bible, reading the verse and trying to remember parts of it. They can then cross the room and recite to a partner or write down as much as they can remember. They keep traveling back and forth until they remember the verses in their entirety. To make it a game, you can time students.

QUESTION CONVERSATION

Begin by asking children what they had for breakfast. (This lowers the threshold of students' first contribution to a conversation, allowing for a light conversation to begin.)

As you begin the lesson, play a round of 20 questions. Choose a person (fictional or real) and have the students ask yes or no questions to try and determine who it is.

Play the game again and have the correct answer be Jesus. Ask students how they would describe Jesus. Encourage answers about physical traits and character traits.

Say, "In our story for today, Jesus asks his closest friends, the disciples, to describe him."

Read Matthew 16:3-20 together.

Ask:

- What were the disciples' answers to Jesus' questions?
- Why do you think Jesus asked?
- How do you think he felt when the disciples struggled to answer?
- How do you think Jesus felt about Peter's answer?
- And how did Peter feel?

Say: "The grown-ups are talking today about who Jesus is. Last week, we talked about how Jesus was missing and what it means to be a Christian. Today, we are trying to remember who Jesus is so we can make sure he is a part of our faith—the foundation of our faith."

Ask:

- What is a foundation?
- What do you think it means for Jesus to be the foundation of the faith?
- What things about Christianity seem to reflect Jesus well?
- What parts of Christianity don't reflect Jesus well?

ACTIVITIES/ROTATIONS

1. Create a yoga-type station in an area that is out of the way and a little quieter if possible. Provide images of some simple yoga poses (tree, warrior one and two, child, butterfly). Post a copy of the breath prayer:
   Inhale, saying "Jesus Christ" and exhale saying, "Son of God."
   Encourage students to try to say the prayer five times in a pose.
2. Based on Jesus' saying that he would build the church on the rock, have a place for students to build a tower on different foundations. Have some materials that are solid and some that are shaky (books, a pillow, wobble board, box of sand, table top, etc.), allowing students to create different structures.
3. Students can continue playing 20 questions or the board game *Guess Who*, if you have access to it. Place a volunteer at this station to play 20 questions, or allow students to play on their own.
4. The following activity will continue for the first four weeks of the unit: The memory verse comes from the story in Matthew 14 of Jesus walking on the water and Peter taking his eyes off him before beginning to sink. Students will have the opportunity to build a shoebox diorama of this scene using a variety of materials. Provide all materials each week and let students work at their own pace. If possible, you can allow students to request supplies that could be supplied the following week. (potential supplies: shoeboxes, paint, markers, crayons, cotton balls, construction paper, glue, scissors, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, tissue paper, etc.)

CLOSING

Before students leave, offer a blessing. If all students leave at the same time, gather together five minutes before leaving and offer it. If students leave one-at-a-time, have them pause at their stations as you offer the blessing before allowing them to work until pick-up.

God took time to make you of the earth
Jesus came to show how God loves you
and how you can love others
Now, you have the Spirit of God
through the stories of our faith
Among our community
And within you
Go, and love others just as God loves you.

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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 3
REALLY SEEING

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 14:27-28

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
We need not be afraid when we keep our eyes focused on Jesus.

GATHERING TIME

Memory Verse: Matthew 14:27-28 (NRSV)
But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

For these activities, it may be easier to choose one or to offer them consecutively rather than the typical concurrent format.

1. Have students read the larger story (Matthew 14:22-33) around the memory verse and act it out. If the students do not want to fully act it out, use figures or Lego pieces as the characters and have them recreate the scene on a smaller scale.
2. Write the memory verse in a clearly visible spot and have students select one word as their charade word. The student will then act out that word and have their classmates guess what it is. When the word is guessed correctly, cross it out and keep going until all reasonable words are used.

QUESTION CONVERSATION

Before reading the passage for the day, ask students if they have ever heard someone say that Jesus lives in them or in their heart. Ask what they think that means. Allow for uncertainty and questions. Ask, "Are you comfortable or happy with that saying 'Jesus lives in my heart?'"

Read Galatians 2:19-20 together. Have each student (who is willing) read it aloud. After everyone has read, ask these questions:

- How can we say these verses in our own words?
- What does it mean to "die to the law"?
- What do you remember or know about the crucifixion of Jesus?
- What does it mean for Christ to live in you?
- What is faith?

These questions are "stretch" questions that may not garner many answers from the students. Allow their curiosity and knowledge to guide the conversation. Remember that wonder, curiosity and questions are the goal here. The central question for the lesson is "who is Jesus to me?" Ask that question as a way to conclude this portion of the lesson. See if students can name how their lives might be different if they didn't know anything about Jesus.

ACTIVITIES/ROTATIONS

1. Set up a journaling station with lined and blank paper. Supply pencils/pens and something to draw with. Have students write or draw on the prompt, "How is my life different because of Jesus?"
2. Balance activity. Based on the Matthew 14 story, have students try a balancing challenge. Use a stopwatch to see who can balance the longest on one foot with their eyes closed. Mark a spot on the floor with tape and have the student pick up one foot with their eyes open. Once they are stable, have them close their eyes.
3. WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) case study skit: Have students act out a scenario based on the question "what would Jesus do?" Supply one or several of the following prompts, or have students come up with their own!
    a. A student at school has no food for lunch.
    b. Your friend says something that is mean about someone who is not in the room and everyone laughs.
    c. You see someone sitting by themselves and they look sad. You don't know them, but you have seen them around before.
    d. There is someone new at church and they don't know where to go.
4. The following activity will continue for the first four weeks of the unit: The memory verse comes from the story in Matthew 14 of Jesus walking on the water and Peter taking his eyes off him before beginning to sink. Students will have the opportunity to build a shoebox diorama of this scene using a variety of materials. Provide all materials each week and let students work at their own pace. If possible, you can allow students to request supplies that could be supplied the following week. (potential supplies: shoeboxes, paint, markers, crayons, cotton balls, construction paper, glue, scissors, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, tissue paper etc.) Provide all materials each week and let students work at their own pace. If possible, you can allow students to request supplies that could be supplied the following week.

CLOSING

Before students leave, offer a blessing. If all students leave at the same time, gather together five minutes before leaving and offer it. If students leave one-at-a-time, have them pause at their stations as you offer the blessing before allowing them to work until pick-up.

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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 4

THE DANGER OF DISTRACTION

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 14:27-28

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
Jesus reminds us to stay close to Him and to love others.

GATHERING TIME

Memory Verse: Matthew 14:27-28 (NRSV)

But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."

These activities attempt to give the students a mastery of the verses. The goal is not for them to be able to recite it, but for them to learn the lesson of the verses.

1. Print the main words of the verses on small slips of paper and place them in a bowl or basket. Have a student draw a word from the bowl or basket and have the other students guess it. They cannot act it out or say the word printed on the paper. They must describe the word or use other phrases to direct students to the correct answer. Other students can call out answers as they think of them. (Think "Taboo" rules.)
2. Provide students with paper, pencils/pens, and something to draw with. Allow them to express the images or ideas of the passage in their own way.
3. Have a station with a few chairs where students can gather and talk with one another. (If possible, have a volunteer at this station.) Ask students to think of a different story that teaches the same thing as this story (i.e. A bird learning to fly for the first time and trusting their parents that their wings will work or Abraham having to move to a new country, trusting that God would take care of his family) What is the meaning of these verses, and what is another way they can express it?

QUESTION CONVERSATION

Begin by asking students what they had for breakfast. You can also take a moment to ask about highs and lows for the week or other ways to foster conversation among those in the class.

As you transition to the story, show students pictures of a variety of fruits (apples, citrus, pears, berries, melons, tomatoes, grapes, kiwi, etc.) and have them divide into groups by whether or not they think these items grow on trees, vines or bushes. If students are unsure of how a fruit grows, help them look it up in resource books from the local library or research it on an internet- enabled device.

At the end of the activity, read John 15:1-11 together. Use the following questions to guide your conversation:

- What does a vine look like?
- If something bad happens to one part of the vine what do you think happens to the rest?
- What happens to the vine if you pull up the roots?
- Why do you think Jesus says he is the vine?
- What does it mean for us to be the branches?
- How do you feel about being connected together through Jesus?

Remind students that the adults are talking about the same story today. Ask them if they are ready for the adult question. (If they are not, or if you think the class would benefit from sitting with the story longer or moving on, you can skip this part.)

The adult question is: What does Jesus mean for us? How would our community be the same or different if there were no Jesus?

ACTIVITIES/ROTATIONS

1. Have students weave vines and branches out of pipe-cleaners. For an extra challenge, see if they can create vines that are strong enough to hold up increasingly heavy objects.
2. Have a computer set up with the YouTube video: ***www.cbf.net/thegrapevine*** And have students learn to do the Grapevine!
3. Have a variety of vine-grown fruits laid out for tasting! Make sure to give families a heads-up in the event of allergies. For extra fun, include a chart where students can rank or rate how they liked each one.
4. Time to finish up those dioramas! The memory verse comes from the story in Matthew 14 of Jesus walking on the water and Peter taking his eyes off him before beginning to sink. Students should have been building shoebox dioramas of this scene using a variety of materials.

CLOSING

Before students leave, offer a blessing. If all students leave at the same time, gather together five minutes before leaving and offer it. If students leave one-at-a-time, have them pause at their stations as you offer the blessing before allowing them to work until pick-up.

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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 5

SEEING LIKE JESUS

SCRIPTURE:
Mark 8:22-26

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
When we try to see people through the eyes of Jesus, we use our hearts to see them, not just our eyes.

EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

As children arrive, tell them to draw three things on three different sheets of paper: a person, a place and a thing. It can be any person, place or thing they would like. Encourage them to draw things their friends might not be able to guess. These drawings will be used for a game in the gathering time. If you do not have many early arrivers, have children do this activity for the first five minutes, so that you have at least 10 pictures to work with later.

GATHERING TIME

Begin your Gathering Time by asking for "highs and lows." This simply means that each person should share one high from their week that made them happy, and one low from their week that made them sad/hurt/angry. Explain that we share our highs and lows with one another so that we can better care for one another, celebrate each other's successes, and know how to pray for each other.

After sharing highs and lows, have a short time to take prayer requests. Explain that a prayer request can be a celebration or a sadness, because we can bring everything in our lives to God and to our friends. Encourage children to voice prayer requests for one another based on the highs and lows that were just shared.

Invite someone to pray for the group. If children are hesitant, remind them that there is no right or wrong way to pray. They do not have to list every prayer request mentioned, as God has already heard them all before we even spoke them aloud. If no one volunteers, an adult can pray for the group.

It is now time to use the drawings. Shuffle them all up and tell children that if a picture they drew comes up, they are not allowed to guess or tell anyone what it is. Hold up each photo and allow children to guess what they are looking at. Tell them that each picture is either a person, place or thing drawn by one of their friends. Play this for about five minutes, getting through as many of the pictures as you can. When you finish playing, ask a few of these questions:

- Were some of the pictures harder to guess than others?
- What made a picture easier or harder to guess correctly?
- Was there a picture where you could not guess correctly because you did not know the person/place/thing that was pictured?

The following is written in a script-like form, but does NOT have to be used as such. In fact, try your best not to use it as a script. Instead, take the general idea and tailor it to your group. This will make it seem more like a conversation the children are a part of rather than strictly a lesson they are receiving

Today, we are talking about what it means to see people through the eyes of Jesus. Although we all have eyes, we might all see some things differently because of who we are. For example, in our game, if I drew my mom on a piece of paper, you and I could both see her with our eyes, but you might not know who she is and I would! If (insert child's name) drew his/her house, you might not be able to guess correctly if you've never been to their house, but they would know it.

Our story in the Bible today is about Jesus healing a blind man. Jesus helps this man to be able to see things for the very first time. Maybe each of us here has better or worse eyesight. Some of us might need glasses or contacts to see really well. But when we're talking about seeing the world through the eyes of Jesus, here's the secret: We're actually talking about seeing people with our hearts instead of our eyes!

(Before you explain what you mean by this, ask children what they think you mean. Their creativity and intelligence may surprise you!)

Seeing people with our hearts means that when we see them, we aren't judging them based on their appearance. We have to get to know them with our hearts. That means we see them as a child of God and getting to know them. (We are all children of God!)

We are now going to break into small groups and rotate through our different stations.

Use your best judgment to decide how to break children into small groups for rotations based on your age range and number of children. I recommend groups of six to eight. You will need one adult to facilitate each rotation which may determine how many groups you will have rotating at a time.

ACTIVITIES/ROTATIONS

1: Bible Explorers

We are going to begin with a Bible skills game. Divide children into groups of two or three, depending on your numbers. Give them a series of letters, and see which team can find a book of the Bible beginning with that letter the fastest.

Then, ask them how they decided to find an answer the fastest. Did they use the table of contents, or did they automatically think of a book when you said certain letters? Have someone read Mark 8: 22-26. It is a shorter passage; so if multiple children volunteer, allow a few to read it aloud. Facilitate conversation around the following "I wonder..." questions:

- I wonder how the people in this community treated the blind man.
- I wonder if Jesus saw the blind man differently than he saw a person who could see.
- What would I think of someone who was blind when I saw them?
- What would it mean to see the man in our story today with our hearts instead of just with our eyes?

2: The Limits of our Eyes

Materials: Pictures of different types of people, either from your community or from the internet.

This rotation is meant to help children understand that when we judge only with our eyes, we miss out on a lot!

Gather five to 10 pictures of different types of people. These can be random photos from a Google search, or people that the children know from your community. As you hold up each photo, ask them what they can know about the person in the picture JUST by looking at their photo. If you are using a photo of someone they know, they may have a hard time differentiating between what they already know about the person and what they can tell only from looking at the picture. Below are examples of things you could observe by looking at a photo versus things you can observe by actually knowing a person.

Things you can know by what your eyes can see:

- Skin color/eye color/hair color
- What kind of clothes they are wearing
- Whether they are tall or short

Things you can't see with just your eyes:

- Someone's personality
- If they are a mom, dad, sister or brother
- Their favorite color or favorite food

After you do this with a few of the photos, discuss the differences between what you can see with your eyes versus what you can see when you get to know someone. That's why Jesus wanted to be friends with everyone, even people who looked dirty or that no one else wanted to be around. He knew that every person has a story and that when we get to know someone, we can see them with our hearts—not just our eyes.

3: Believing without Seeing

Materials: a large bag, enough small random objects to have one item per child

Gather some random objects and place them in a large bag so that children can't see what's inside. Here are some suggestions for what might go in the bag, but feel free to include whatever you have on hand. Make sure to have enough items for each child to play.

- A key
- Toothbrush
- Sponge
- Umbrella
- Sunglasses
- Small "baby" Bible
- Flashlight
- Lego
- Quarter
- Whisk
- Bottle of soda
- Kid-size candy bar

Have each child close his or her eyes and remove one item from the bag. Without opening their eyes, have them feel the item and try to guess what it is.

After all items have been removed from the bag and identified, talk about which items were easy to identify and which were more difficult.

In our Scripture today, Jesus heals a blind man who could not see. While our world calls this a disability, people who are blind can also notice things that we can't because we rely on our eyes so much, while they rely on other senses! Sometimes our eyes cause us to make quick judgements about people because of how they look, when God wants us to see people for who they are, not what they look like.

CLOSING

Bring children back together in the same space you had your Gathering Time. Ask them a few questions to help them process together:

- What have you learned today about the limits of your eyes? What can they see? What can they not see?
- What do you think Jesus sees when he looks at a person?
- How can we try to see more with our hearts?

Ask someone to close your time in prayer before parents arrive. If children are reluctant to pray, write this simple prayer on a dry erase board and say it aloud together:

God, thank you for this time together with our church family and friends. Help us to practice all that we learned about being your followers. Amen.

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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 6

THE GREATEST INVITATION

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 28: 16-20

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
We have received a party invitation from Jesus and we are called to invite others to the party, too!

EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

Ask children what they think is needed to have a good birthday party. You might get them started by suggesting something like cake. Then ask them whom they would invite, and how they would decide whom to invite. Have them start to make a list of whom they would invite if they were throwing a party.

GATHERING TIME

Share Highs and Lows (See Session 5 for explanation.)
Take prayer requests (See Session 5 for explanation.)

Group Prayer: Today everyone will participate in the prayer time. Sit or stand in a circle and ask everyone to say one thing they would like to pray for. It can be a celebration or a sadness, a hope or a dream.

The following is written in a script-like form, but does NOT have to be used as such. In fact, try your best not to use it as a script, but to take the general idea and tailor it to your group. This will make it seem more like a conversation the children are a part of rather than strictly a lesson they are receiving.

Have you ever received an invitation? This could be either a literal invitation in the mail to a party, or someone inviting you over to play after church. Allow children to share a time when they have been invited to something.
Facilitate conversation around the following questions:

- How does it feel to receive an invitation?
- Have you ever not been invited to something? How did that feel?
- Did you know that as followers of Jesus, it is our job to be inviters?

In the Scripture we're going to read today, Jesus is giving us an invitation. But it's a little different than an ordinary invitation. It's an invitation to be an inviter! Jesus is about to leave Earth to be with God, and he is telling his disciples what they should do when he's gone. They are to go out and make disciples, teaching everyone about Jesus and inviting them to be followers too. That is a big job!

We are now going to break into small groups and rotate through our different stations to learn more about what it means to invite people to follow Jesus.

Use your best judgment to decide how to divide children into small groups for rotations based on your age range and number of children. I recommend groups of six to eight children. You will need one adult to facilitate each rotation, so this may determine how many groups you will have rotating at a time.

ACTIVITIES/ROTATIONS

1: Bible Explorers

Materials: Several different biblical translations of Matthew 28:16-20

Provide the group with several different printed translations of the Scripture: the NRSV, the International Children's Bible, The Message and the NIV. Feel free to add other translations as well. Before beginning, have a brief discussion about how the Bible was written in Greek and Hebrew and every English version that we have is called a translation. All the translations are slightly different from one another. This is a very neat thing, because it means we might notice different parts of the story based on which translation we are reading. Ask them to pay attention to the differences in the translations. After everyone has read their translation aloud, you might even have them compare them side-by-side. This is a great opportunity for them to learn about the richness and complexity of the Bible. Ask children what their favorite translation was and why.

After all the translations have been read and compared, facilitate discussion around these questions:

- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus gave them these instructions to go and make disciples?
- How do you feel knowing that you are also given this same invitation?
- What does it mean to be a disciple?
- What does it mean to make a disciple?

Imagine that you are inviting someone to come to church with you. What would you say about church and what you do at church?

2: You're Invited!

Materials: construction paper, markers/crayons, stickers, other card-decorating materials

At this station, children are invited to make an invitation to a friend to invite them to a "Jesus Jam" party. Have them set up the invitation similar to a birthday party invitation, where they can make up the time and place to meet. On the inside of the invitation, have them list three to five reasons that their friends should want to come to this party to get to know Jesus.

As they work, ask some of these questions:

- If you were introducing one of your friends to Jesus, what are the top three things you would say about him?
- What do you think Jesus would want us to do at a party meant to celebrate him?
- Will there be cake at the party? What flavor?
- If you were bringing Jesus a gift, what would you get him?

CLOSING

Bring children back together in the same space you had your Gathering Time. Ask them a few questions to help them process together:

- When we are inviting someone to follow Jesus, what kinds of things are we inviting them to do?
- How might they be different if they accept the invitation to get to know Jesus?
- When is it hard to invite people to know Jesus? How can we make it easier?

Ask someone to close your time in prayer before parents arrive. If children are reluctant to pray, write this simple prayer on a dry erase board and say it aloud together:

> *God, thank you for this time together with our church family and friends. Help us to practice all that we learned about being your followers. Amen.*

SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

Calling us back to the central focus of our Christian faith: The Risen and Living Jesus!

SESSION AUTHOR:
Kristen Pope

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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 7
TRANSFORMED

SCRIPTURE:
Romans 12:2 and Galatians 5:22-23

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
When we know Jesus, we are changed, not just in the way that we think, but also in the way that we think and feel.

EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

Materials: Index cards

Write down each fruit of the Spirit on a separate index card and hide them around the room before children arrive.

As they arrive, let them try to find all the cards hidden around the room. You will use these index cards later for one of the rotations.

GATHERING TIME

Share Highs and Lows (See Session 5 for explanation.)
Take prayer requests (See Session 5 for explanation.)

Prayer: Ask for a volunteer to pray. If no one is willing, an adult can pray.

The following is written in a script format, but you are encouraged to make it your own and to avoid reading directly from the lesson.

Let's make a list of important people in our lives. ***(Make this list on a whiteboard if you have one available, so that all the children can see it.)***

Now I want you to think about this: Did any of these people help make you who you are? Another way of thinking about this is, if you didn't have these people in your life, do you think you would be any different? Why or why not?

Today, we are going to talk about how knowing Jesus should change us. Just like having our mom or grandpa or best friend in our lives has shaped who we are, knowing Jesus should shape us even more!

You might think this is especially difficult, because Jesus isn't walking and talking and living life with you every day in the same way that some of these people that we listed are. BUT, that's where our work as Christians comes in. That's why we have to make time to spend with Jesus daily. What are some ways that we can spend time with Jesus each day?

Suggestions: Reading your Bible; doing a devotional; coming to church; praying; talking about our faith with friends and family.

The more time we with spend with Jesus, the more we will be changed by our relationship with him. The people you listed as important in your life have been able to shape who you are because you let them influence your life. One of the wonderful things about Jesus is that he doesn't force us to do anything. Like we talked about last week, we are invited to be part of his kingdom and we get to invite others. We get to choose whether to accept the invitation.

Before we break into small groups, we are going to read a short passage of Scripture together. Can someone look up Romans 12:2 and read it for us? ***(Read verse aloud.)***

I want us to think for a moment about the first part of the verse: Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (NIV). What do you think this verse is talking about?

Always ask children what they think about something before you introduce your own interpretation. This encourages them to know that they can come up with their own important answers, and allows their creativity and imaginations to help them form answers before they are given an answer.

I think part of what this verse is saying is that when we are transformed by knowing Jesus, we might think, feel or act differently than other people. For example, there were a lot of times in the Bible that people made fun of Jesus or didn't understand him when he wanted to hang out with the poor, the sick and the outcasts. We can choose to let the world tell us whom to love, or we can look to Jesus and whom he tells us to love. (Hint: It's everyone!)

We are now going to break into small groups and rotate through our different stations.

Use your best judgment to decide how to divide children into small groups for rotations based on your age range and number of children. I recommend groups of six to eight. You will need one adult to facilitate each rotation, so this may determine how many groups you will have rotating at a time.

ACTIVITIES/ROTATIONS

1: Bible Explorers

Today we are going to do something called Lectio Divina. It is a special way to listen to and learn from the Bible. Our Scripture today is Galatians 5: 22-23. In these verses, Paul the apostle is talking about the fruits of the spirit. These are qualities that will grow in people who follow Jesus and who are led by the Holy Spirit!

I am going to read our Scripture passage three different times. The first time I read it, I just want you to listen normally. The second time, I want you to pay attention to the different fruits of the spirit that are listed. Which one stands out to you? Which one do you think you are best at?

The third and final time I read it, I want you to listen again to what the fruits of the spirit are and consider which one you may need to work on, with God's help.

After completing Lectio Divina, ask the following conversations starters:

- Which fruit of the Spirit do you think you're good at?
- Which fruit of the Spirit do you think you need to work on?
- Why do you think Paul thought each of these words were important to be included as a fruit of the Spirit?

2: The Heart of Jesus

Materials: Air-dry clay, sequins, glitter, plastic gems, washable paint, paintbrushes

Give each child a piece of air-dry clay. ***(The following is written as a script, but you are encouraged to adapt it appropriately.)***

No matter how hard we try, we can never love like Jesus loves. His love is so big and touches every single person in the world! However, as followers of Jesus we can try our hardest to love as big as he does, and for our love to touch as many people as possible, too! Our hearts are changed as we continue to try to love like Jesus.

You have a piece of clay in your hands that I want you to shape into a heart. And then you can transform it to make it even more beautiful. I have sequins, glitter and gems that you can press into the clay heart. You may also paint your heart. Next week, when the hearts are all dry, you can take yours home and put it somewhere in your house where you can see it every day, and be reminded of our calling to let our hearts be changed by knowing Jesus. If you finish early, you can make another to give to a friend or family member.

3: Fruit Salad

Materials: Nine different types of fruit; nine large bowls; one small bowl for each child; tongs; paper label for each bowl.

Choose nine different fruits for children to make their fruit salads. My suggestions are fruits that can be easily separated such as: blueberries, strawberries, mango chunks, mandarin oranges, apple slices, sliced bananas, watermelon chunks, raspberries, pineapple chunks. These will need to be pre-sliced and placed in nine large bowls. You will also need tongs for each bowl. Label each bowl with an index card from the ones you used in the Early Arriver activity that tells which fruit of the Spirit that fruit is representing. Set the bowls in a different area if possible, as opposed to all being on one table. That way, children can more clearly see which bowl to go to each time throughout the activity.

The following is written as a script, but you are encouraged to adapt it appropriately.

There are nine fruits of the Spirit and we are going to make a "fruits of the Spirit" salad! Each of the nine fruits represents one of our fruits of the Spirit. You are going to build a fruit salad in your bowl. But each person is going to add their fruits in a different order. First, pick the fruits you think you're the BEST at to the fruits you think you need the most work on.

Have children choose their fruits one a time. First, have them go to the bowl of the fruit of the spirit they think they are the best at. Observe which ones the children choose and ask some to share examples of when they show that particular trait. If there is more than one child at a particular bowl, have them make a line behind that bowl and observe which traits people seem to most identify with.

Continue this pattern until everyone has all the fruits. They do not have to add fruits they don't like, but do have them still stand by that bowl as you discuss. When you are nearing the end of the activity and they are choosing the fruits they need to work on, ask them why they think those are hard for them, and how they might improve upon them.

CLOSING

Bring children back together in the same space you had your Gathering Time. Play this short game to help them remember the Fruits of the Spirit:

Write all nine Fruits of the Spirit on a dry erase board and give children 60 seconds to study the list. Say the list aloud together several times. Then instruct children to close their eyes as you erase one from the list. Have children open their eyes and try to remember the one that was erased. Continue this pattern until you have erased all the Fruits of the Spirit, and see if they can name all nine.

Before parents arrive, ask someone to close your time in prayer. If children are reluctant to pray, write this simple prayer on a dry erase board and say it aloud together:

> *God, thank you for this time together with our church family and friends. Help us to practice all that we learned about being your followers. Amen.*

SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF JESUS

Calling us back to the central focus of our Christian faith: The Risen and Living Jesus!

SESSION AUTHOR:
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CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

SESSION 8

BEING PART OF THE BODY

SCRIPTURE:
1 Corinthians 12:12-27

CENTRAL MESSAGE:
We should think of the Church as a body with many parts. The fact that we are all so different makes us stronger because we all serve different purposes in the body but are united in Christ.

EARLY ARRIVER ACTIVITY

Materials: Heavy paper, card stock or poster board; Ziploc bags

In preparation for this lesson, write the words of 1 Corinthians 12:12 on several sheets of paper and cut each sheet into various puzzle shapes. Put each puzzle in a different Ziploc bag. Give children the bags to put together the puzzle as they arrive.

GATHERING TIME

Share Highs and Lows (See Session 5 for explanation.)
Take prayer requests (See Session 5 for explanation.)

Prayer: Today, we are going to do our prayer a little differently. I am going to give each of you the name of someone in our church to pray for. Today, we are talking about what it means to be part of the body of Christ. A big part of that is knowing that everyone in our church has a role to play.

Give each child the name of someone to pray for, and let them pray silently for 20-30 seconds.

The following is written as a script but you are encouraged to adapt it appropriately.

We are going to play a game called "Give It Up." I am going to name two body parts. You then must choose which of those body parts you would give up if you had to. I will tell you which side of the room to stand on to indicate your choice. As each pair is read and children make their choices, ask a few of them to share why they made the decision that they did.

- Nose or ears
- Hair or pinky toe
- One eye or all the fingers on one hand
- One arm or one foot
- Tongue or teeth
- All your eyelashes or one front tooth
- All your teeth or all your fingers
- Your big toes or your thumbs

If children are enjoying the game and you have time, ask them to make up a few of their own.

Say: We played this game because in today's Scripture, the Apostle Paul talks about how each of us is part of the body of Christ. We will learn more about this in our small groups, but one of the important points he makes is that we are all different on purpose, because we all have different jobs as part of the body. This means that it is very important that we all work together because any body or church needs each part of the body for it to work

We are now going to break up into small groups and rotate through our different stations.

Use your best judgment to decide how to divide children into small groups for rotations based on your age range and number of children. I recommend groups of six-to-eight children. You will need one adult to facilitate each rotation, so this may determine how many groups you will have rotating at a time.

ACTIVITIES/ROTATIONS

1: Bible Explorers

Have all children locate 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 in their Bibles. To incorporate Bible skills into this time, ask children to share how they locate a particular book or verse in the Bible. Do they look to the table of contents? Do they run through all the books in their head? Do they just flip through until they think they see it? Encourage them to help each other locate the verses.

If you have several children willing to read, let each child read two or three verses aloud.

Ask them the following questions:

- What would the world be like if everyone were exactly the same?
- Why is it sometimes difficult that everyone is so different?
- What gift or skill do you think you bring to the body of Christ?
- Can you think of an example of a time when you had a task you could not do by yourself, but needed others to help you accomplish it?

God's Kingdom is like that. It isn't something any single person could ever accomplish by themselves; it was meant to be a group project!

Have you ever done a group project at school? What's good about a group project? What can be difficult?

Examples: A good thing about working as a group is that if you work together, the load is lighter; each person brings their unique gifts to the table; each person brings their own good ideas and problem-solving. A hard thing about working as a group is that one person might do all the work and someone gets left out; people have different ideas of how to get things done; someone has a bad attitude.

Those are some of the same reasons that seeing God's Kingdom as a group project is both easier and more difficult!

2: This Body Can Do...

Materials: A large sheet of butcher paper for each child; markers

Have children trace one another's bodies on large sheets of butcher paper. The following is written as a script but can be adapted as needed.

Today's Scripture told us we are all part of the same body of Christ, but we all have different purposes, just like every part of our body has a different purpose. On the outline of your body, write down what each part helps you do. For example, your hands help you write, your feet help you walk, your brain helps you think, etc.

Allow children to do this for as many parts of the body as they can think of.

Next, we are going to look at those same parts of the body and think of how we can use them to do the work of Jesus in the world. I'll give you a few examples to get you started, but I want you to think creatively!

- Use your hands to give hugs or do service projects
- Use your mouth to speak kind words or stand up for someone
- Use your feet to take food to the hungry
- Use your ears to listen to people when they are sad

When children are through writing on their body outlines, ask them to share some of their ideas.

CLOSING

Bring children back together in the same space you had your Gathering.

Since today's Scripture is all about the body, let's see what those bodies can do! We are going to play *Jesus Says*, which is just like *Simon Says*, if you have played that. I will go first, giving you several instructions to follow, but you follow them only if I start the sentence with "Jesus says..." If I don't say that and you still do what I tell you to, you're out and you have to sit down.

Examples of things to say:

- Hop on one foot
- Close one eye
- Touch your left ear
- Spin in a circle

Allow children to take turns being the leader.

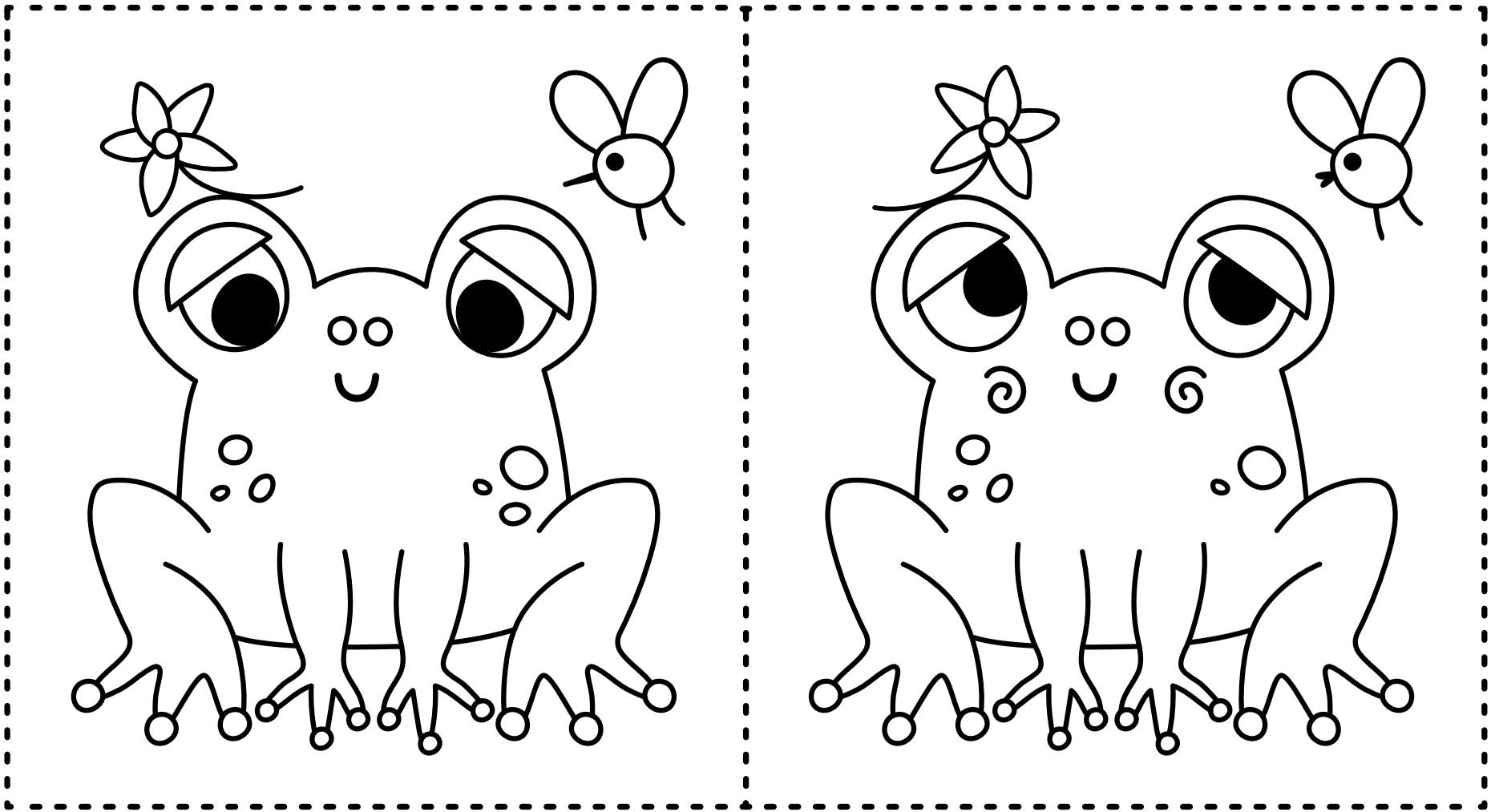
Ask someone to close your time in prayer before parents arrive. If children are reluctant to pray, write this simple prayer on a dry erase board and say it aloud together:

God, thank you for this time together with our church family and friends. Help us to practice all that we learned about being your followers. Amen.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

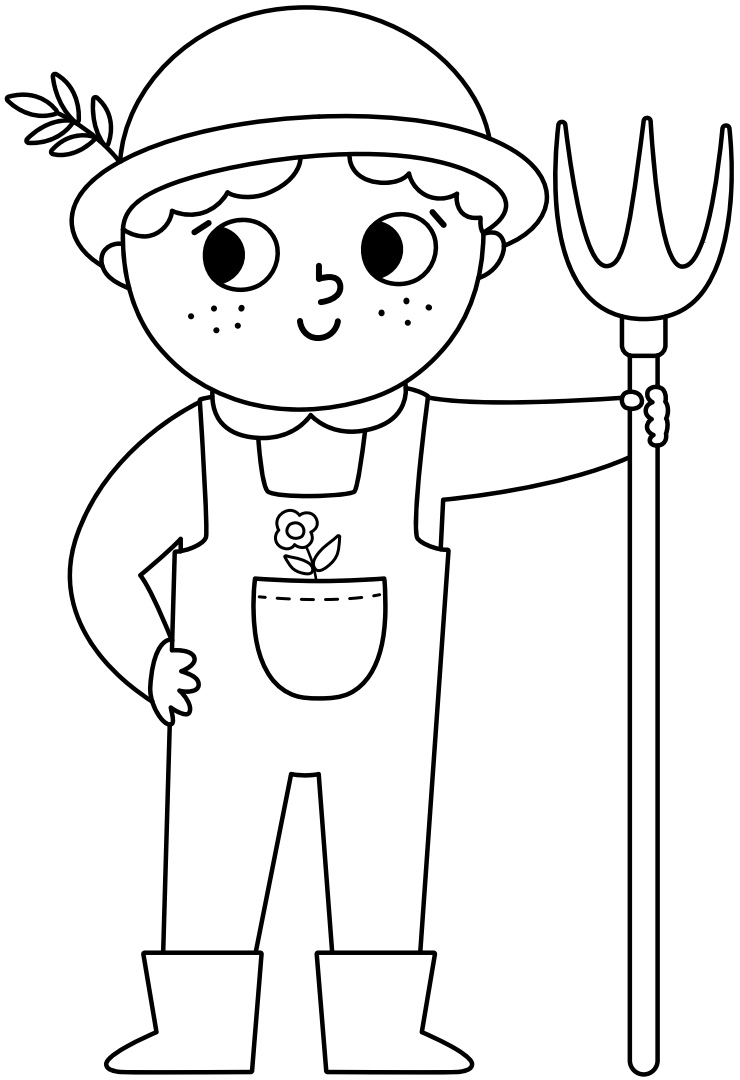
PUZZLE TIME

Spot 5 differences



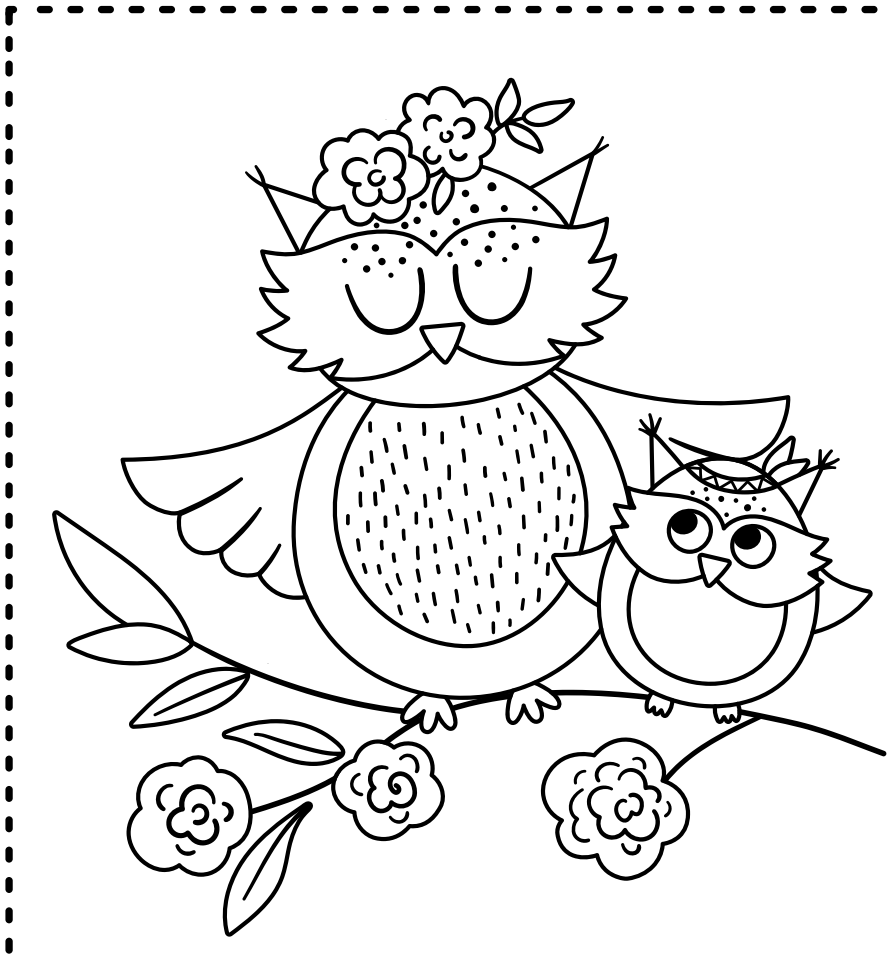
PUZZLE TIME

Spot 5 differences



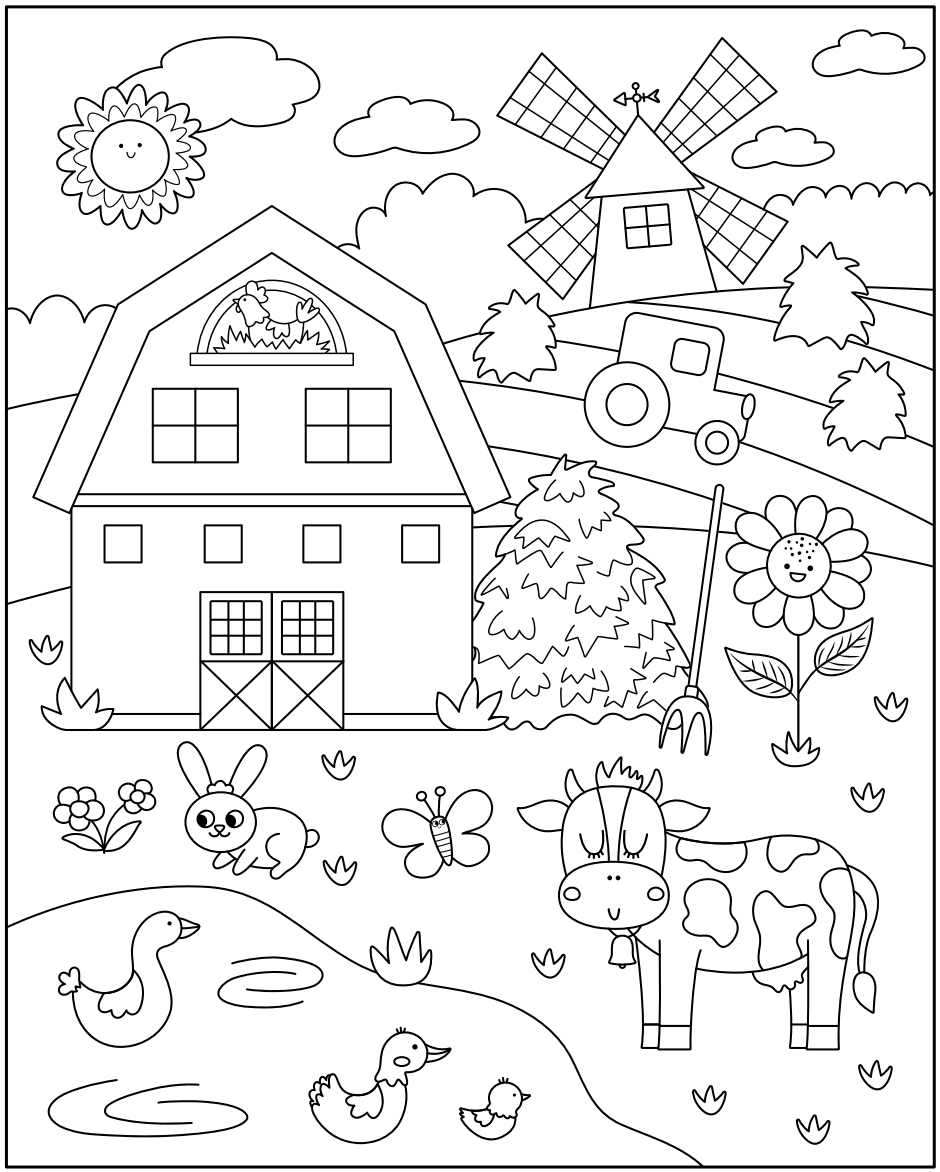
PUZZLE TIME

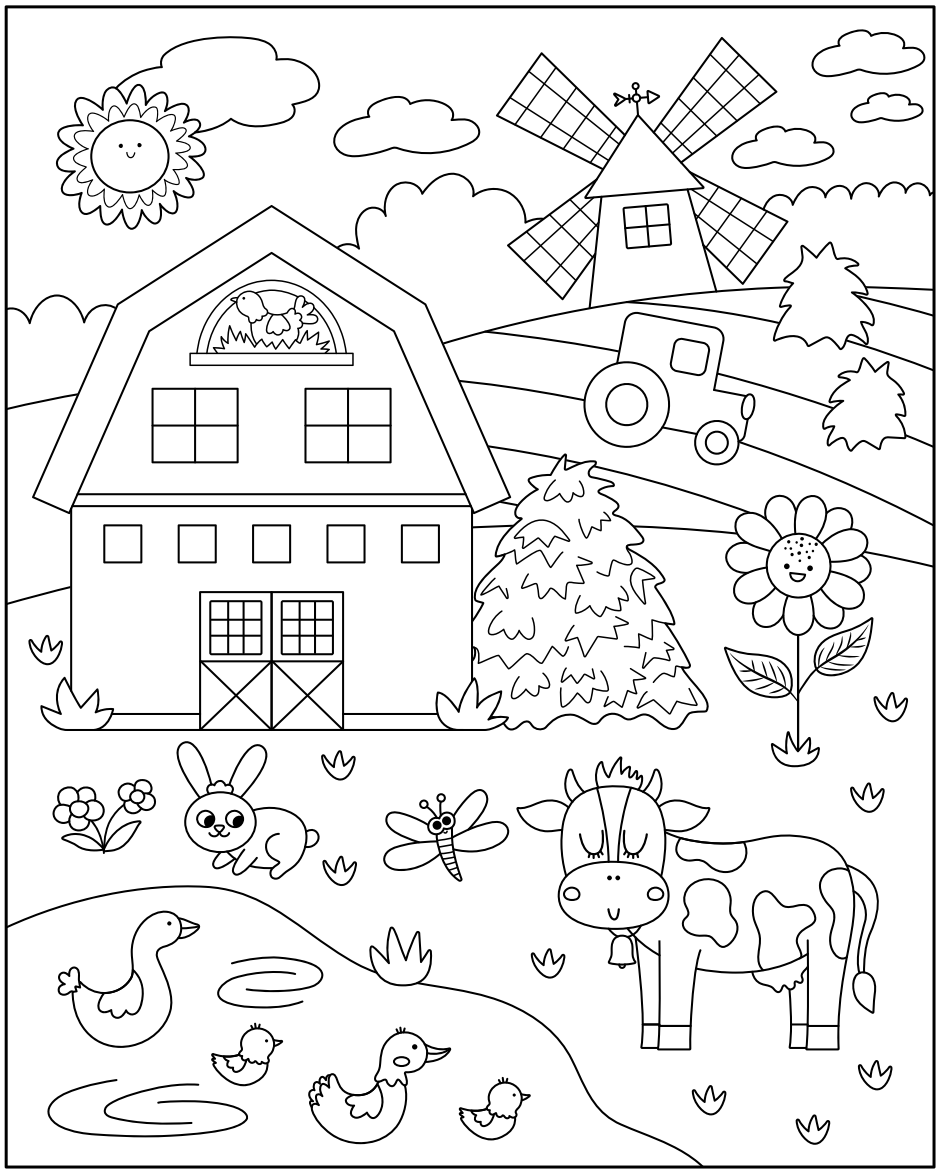
Spot 10 differences

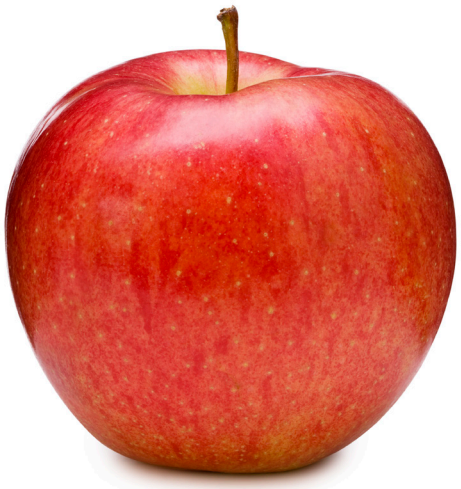


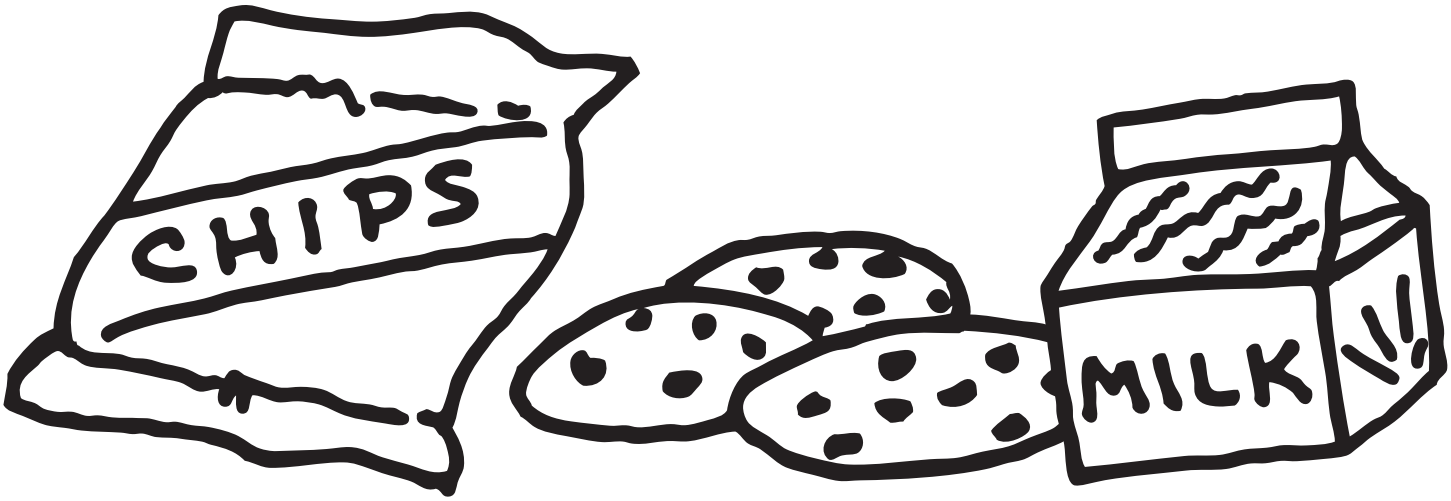
PUZZLE TIME

Spot 10 differences









Allergy Alert

If your child is allergic to these items, please inform your child's leader