



Attentive and Discerning

Learning objectives:

- Describe what is meant by the Catholic virtues **attentive** and **discerning**
- Explain how we might practise these virtues
- Identify how others in our Archdiocese are being **attentive** and **discerning**

Attentive: We are attentive when we listen to our calling from God to love and serve one another in all that we do. We are attentive to our experiences and can see where they will take us in our future vocations.

Discerning: We are discerning when we decide to do the right thing in the interest of the needs of others because we know the positive impact that will have on their lives.

Key stage 1: How can we be discerning?

Why is making the right decisions so important?

Example answers: Sometimes we decide to use our time to help others who are in need. We discern that this is the right choice as we are using our gifts and talents to help those who are in a less fortunate position than ourselves.

Write a prayer asking God to help us to discern the decisions that we have to make in our lives.

A Prayer for Attentiveness

Lord God,

Give us a spirit of attentiveness to turn our attention to those who we can help with the gifts and talents you have given us. Show us how, with your assistance, we can learn to draw them closer to you, day by day, through kind acts of service.

Amen



Children from St John Bosco Roman Catholic Primary School, West Bromwich, are seen here donating toys to Brushstrokes Community Project in Sandwell. Brushstrokes is a partnership project of Father Hudson's Care, supporting families who have arrived in the United Kingdom as refugees or asylum seekers.



Key stage 1: Circle time

Who knows what being **attentive** means?

Talk about the idea of listening to the needs and concerns of those around us and knowing what we can do to help them.

Why is being attentive so important?

Often people who really need our help won't come and ask for it. We have to be attentive to people so we can work out what they might need from what they tell us. Being attentive is a bit like being a detective; we listen to people and then find the best ways to show that we love and care about them.

One of the projects that Father Hudson's Care supports is 'North Staffs LinkLine' in Newcastle-under-Lyme. Linkline was set up to help elderly people who are lonely.

They run a telephone befriending service, meaning that once every week an elderly person receives a phone call from someone at LinkLine that they have come to know and trust, and who they can have a chat with.

In that way, Linkline is attentive to the needs of the people they call by giving their time, patience and a listening ear to help tackle loneliness in the elderly.

How could you use your gifts to be attentive to others?

Example: Be a good listener; help a friend who may be struggling; give time or money to charity.

What does the Bible say about being attentive? Read the story of Samuel below and see where the Lord called Samuel to be attentive to him.

God Calls Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-10.)

The boy Samuel was Eli's helper and served the Lord with him. At that time the Lord did not speak directly to people very often. There were very few visions.

Eli's eyes were getting so weak that he was almost blind. One night he went to his room to go to bed. The special lamp in the Lord's temple was still burning, so Samuel lay down in the temple near where the Holy Box was. The Lord called Samuel, and Samuel answered, "Here I am." Samuel thought Eli was calling him, so he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." But Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." So Samuel went back to bed. Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" Again Samuel ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." Samuel did not yet know the Lord because the Lord had not spoken directly to him before. The Lord called Samuel the third time. Again Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." Finally, Eli understood that the Lord was calling the boy. Eli told Samuel, "Go to bed. If he calls you again, say, 'Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.

The Lord came and stood there. He called as he did before, saying, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel said, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

Key stage 2: activity 1

"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!" (Psalm 107:1)

Why is **discernment** important?

Discernment allows us to make well informed decisions. It is often used when discussing the topic of vocation and making decisions based on the path we think that our life will take. In the process of discernment, we ask the Lord to help us to take the path in life which he has planned for us, leading a life which follows the universal call to holiness.

Individually, write a prayer asking the Lord for courage and openness in discerning the path of your life. You could particularly ask the Lord for help with working out issues you are finding difficult to discern at the moment.



Key stage 2: activity 2

For some, discerning their future can come with added challenges. Father Hudson's Care offers a service called domiciliary care. Domiciliary care helps people who may struggle to live on their own to live independently, but to still have access to help and care when they may require it.



The flats at St. Vincent's in Coleshill allow people to live out an independent life with hobbies and interests and possibly jobs, all within a safe and supportive environment where there is help on-site should they require it.

How does this show discernment?

The flats at St. Vincent's allow people to live out the lives they have discerned with the extra help and support they require to do so. The people who work at St Vincent's also discern how best they can help and support those who live in the flats and discern what the right care is that they require.

Individually, write a five-point plan of things to consider when discerning our vocation in life. *Examples: Will I enjoy my chosen path? Does my path help others? What do I need to achieve to reach my goal? What barriers might I need to overcome?*

Now, answer your questions to try to help you come up with a guide to helping discern your future path.

Key stage 2: activity 3

Read: 'The Great Commission' (Matthew 28:16-20)

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Great Commission – Discernment, though exciting, can be scary. If people are **attentive** to our needs and we **attend** to the needs of others through our thoughts and actions, the process can run much more smoothly and we can feel confident in the choices we make.

What is Jesus asking the disciples to do in the Great Commission? How do you think the disciples felt being asked to undertake this huge task?

Example: Jesus is asking his eleven remaining disciples to spread his teachings to all the nations of the world. The disciples may have felt daunted by the challenge, but also honoured to have been asked to do such an important job. They may have felt encouraged, knowing the Lord would be with them, attending to their needs and helping them discern the right path.

Biblical inspiration:

Proverbs 1:5	"Let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance."
John 10:27	"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."
Proverbs 8:33	"Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it."
1 Samuel 3: 9-10	"Eli told Samuel, 'Go to bed. If he calls you again, say, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."' So Samuel went back to bed. The Lord came and stood there. He called as he did before, saying, 'Samuel, Samuel!' Samuel said, 'Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.'"

Prayer (*St Ignatius Loyola*):

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous;
Teach me to serve you as you deserve,
To give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labour and not to seek reward,
Except that of knowing that I do your will.

Amen.



Finding Christ, Finding Life. Elizabeth Wang. © Radiant Light

Father Hudson's Care is your local Catholic charity, supporting people in need across the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Father Hudson's staff and volunteers give their time and skills to help older people, disabled people, homeless people, refugees, people who are lonely, and children and young people who are experiencing difficulties. Father Hudson's Care is grateful to everyone who supports them, because it means they can reach out and help more people in need.

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and let the discerning get guidance.
Proverbs 1:5



Margot of Father Hudson's Care delivers an assembly to students at St Anne's Primary School.