

Junior Soldiers

Unit 4 : Lesson 5



Actions speak louder than words!

PURPOSE : For the children to understand that what they do is sometimes more important than what they say—especially if the two don't match up; and to learn that what they do can be seen by others. Are they doing what God wants them to be doing?

'God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Christ to make us what we are.' (CEV)

Ephesians 2:10

Consider & Prepare

Read:

The Junior Soldier promise

Ephesians 2:4–10

James 1:14–24

This lesson is part of a three-lesson focus on the section of the Junior Soldier promise that says 'to lead a life that is clean in thought, word and deed'. Unit 2, Lesson 1 focuses on the tongue and the words that we use, and Unit 3, Lesson 6 is about our thoughts and what we allow to impact them, and how this shows in our behaviour and attitudes. Today's lesson is about the things we do and how they reflect Jesus in our daily lives.

Actions speak louder than words: practice what you preach

Paul taught Timothy not merely with words, but with his example. If you really want to know what someone believes, all you need to do is observe how they live. Actions speak louder than words! Paul did not merely teach the truth; he lived it! You could see his teaching in his life, in his actions, in his behaviour.

Reactions speak louder than actions

Paul's example didn't stop there. It is said that you can learn more about a person from their REACTIONS than from their ACTIONS. In a controlled situation anyone can live according to his stated ideas and standards, but if you really want to know what a person is made of, look at how they REACT to circumstances. Look at how they react when things are less than ideal. Look at how they handle the difficulties life throws their way.

It has been said that 10% of life is determined by our circumstances, but 90% of life comes from how we RESPOND to those circumstances.

So, not only were Paul's teaching and actions involved, but so was his conduct in various circumstances. 'You observed my conduct,' he says. That means that when he was confronted with danger, persecution, and stress, he reacted in line with his teaching; he practiced what he preached. Paul controlled his temper, mastered his passions, conquered his fears, and forgave his enemies. He worked with his hands in order to not be a burden to others, he prayed for his friends, he kept himself growing and walking in his relationship with God.

He RESPONDED to life as a living example of everything he taught! It doesn't mean he was perfect. In fact he admitted many times that he was far from it. His writings show his struggles as well as his victories! But that was why his example was so powerful. He was real! He was honest! In his life we can see ourselves and take hope, courage, and confidence from his example!

Charles M Sheldon wrote a book *In His Steps* in which the whole town began to ask the question, 'What would Jesus do?' and examined the results if we would make that simple question determine our actions. That same question has become a movement today with bracelets, necklaces and a myriad of other items reflecting the question: WWJD.

Your life and your teaching are inseparable

Paul spoke to Timothy often of his teaching and his example. For him they were inseparable.

- 'What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.' (1 Timothy 1:13)
- 'And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.' (2 Timothy 2:2)
- 'But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.' (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

So next time, don't just focus on the lesson plan you intend to teach, but also focus on the life that you live, the example that you set, so that you can also say as Paul said, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ!"

In this lesson we want the children to see and understand that what they do is sometimes more important than what they say, especially if the two don't match up.



What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Coloured foam
- Pattern for door hanger
- Glue
- Scissors

For 'The Main Thing'

- Sandwich board with 'I love Jesus' on it
- A collection of soft, stuffed animal toys

For 'Tying In'

- WWJD beads (beads with letters on them)
- Cord or elastic for bracelets/wristbands
- Some examples of purchased bracelets or wrist bands (WWJD) that people might wear

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home and Beyond cards for each child



Connecting In

WWJD Door Hanger...

If I said WWJD to you today, what would you think, can anyone tell me what the letters stand for?(What would Jesus do?). So what does that mean and why would we want to remember and ask ourselves that question?

We are going to start today by making a door hanger with those letters on it to remind us of that question everyday, to help us to think about how Jesus might respond or want us to respond in certain circumstances.

For this activity you need:

- Pattern (*attached to the lesson*)
- Foam in assorted colours
- Glue
- Scissors
- You can also purchase door hangers already cut and bulk foam letters if you would prefer to not cut them out from the pattern.

Instructions:

- Print pattern, cut out all the bits and arrange on door hanger.
- Glue pieces to foam door hangers using picture above as a guide. Add foam hands and feet around the question mark.
- While making these, talk with the children about how what we do can have a major impact on others' lives. Get them to talk about things that they can get dragged into through peer pressure and what they think their response should be.

Link: 'Today we have made a doorhanger to help remind us to ask the question about how Jesus might respond if He was in a certain situation and to think about our response and actions in these situations as well. It helps us to think about our choices and if they match up to how Jesus would want us to live and respond.'

The Main Thing

Just because I may say it or wear it, if I'm not living it, it really doesn't matter!

Make a large sandwich sign for you to wear for this activity (you could use some big pieces of cardboard for this sign), a heart on the front and back. On each heart print 'I love Jesus!'. You will also need some stuffed animal toys for this activity.

- Wear this sign while telling the children how much you love Jesus. Explain that you must love Him if you say it, and you are going to wear a sign that says it also.
- Take one of the stuffed animals and ask:
 - 'How many of you have a stuffed animal that you love lots?' (*Give the children an opportunity to share about the toys they love.*)
- After their responses, take your stuffed animal and jump on it, throw it up in the air, and then as a final act, kick it across the room. (*Hopefully the children will be stunned.*)
- Then ask the children,
 - 'How many of you paid attention to my sign (*which you should continue to wear*) or remembered my words now that I've done that?' (*Get a response from them, if this is done correctly they will answer that your actions were much stronger.*)
- Talk with the children about how at times our actions can speak louder than the words we say.



At the end of this part of the talk, have the children follow the instructions that you are going to give them (*you will also be doing the instructions*):

1. Hold your hand in the air.
2. Wiggle all five fingers.
3. Make a circle by connecting your thumb to your index finger.
4. Wiggle your other three fingers.
5. Tell the children to place the circle on their chin, but you place your circle on your cheek.

(*Most of the children will place the circle on their cheek because they are following what you doing and not what you're saying. It helps to show the power of actions and the confusion that arises when word and actions contradict each other.*)

Remind the children that we can say lots of things, but our actions will tell the true story!

'Imagine if Jesus spoke to people about being kind to others and caring for people and forgiving people if they apologise and respecting people—but then he treated people badly, got grumpy with everyone, never forgave people and was just plain rude to everyone. Why would that be confusing for people?' (*Because of the inconsistency; our actions should correspond with our words.*)

'In the Bible, in the book written by Jesus' brother James, it says: 'Faith that doesn't lead us to do good deeds is all alone and dead!' (2:17). James says to imagine someone coming to you who is hungry and needs new clothing: if you just said, 'See you later, I hope you keep warm and well fed', how does that help them? The words themselves—without actions/doing something—are useless.'

'Maybe you've heard adults say that someone can 'Talk the talk but they can't walk the walk', this is a way of saying, 'They talk a lot about doing something but they don't ever do it!'. Jesus taught us to 'walk the talk', that is, to do what we say we will do.'



Tying In

Tie it on your wrist...

For this activity you will need beads, cord/elastic for each child, some examples of purchased bracelets or wristbands and a Bible.

We talked earlier about the letters WWJD, what they stand for and how they might be able to help us.

WWJD bracelets became very trendy for Christians a few years ago and many people started wearing them and still wear them today (*show some examples of bracelets and wristbands that people can wear with these letters on them*). They are helpful to remind someone who might be tempted in a certain situation and times when the choice you are thinking about might not be the wisest. Having the bracelet or wristband can help people to stop and ask, 'What would Jesus do?' and think about what the wise choice would be for them in this situation.

In the book of Deuteronomy (6:4–9), Moses told the Israelites that they should love God so much that they should write the commandments down, talk about them and even 'tie them on your hands and foreheads'. Traditional Jews, even children, still tie these 'tefillin' (*boxes containing Scripture verses*) to their heads and arms during special religious observances.

Just because someone is wearing this, does not mean that they will always make the wise choice. I must say, I have seen some people making some not-so-wise choices while wearing their WWJD bracelets!

Take some time to explore the following questions with the children, you might even like to give them the opportunity to reflect and respond in their journal.



- How might this be something that could help you?
- What sorts of choices might this help you with at school, at home, with your friends, at church, playing sport, etc.?
- How do your actions show others that you are a follower of Jesus? How do your actions show others the love of God? Do these actions match with what you believe and say about God?
- Are there certain areas where you find it hard to make the wise choice, situations that you struggle in?

Finish this time of reflection by reinforcing with the children that God can help us every day with our struggles. We need to remember that we can talk to God about them and ask Him for his strength and wisdom as we live day by day, doing as Jesus would have done.

Make a WWJD bracelet/wristband together. When the children are finished, encourage them to spend some time quietly praying about their choices in the coming week, to pray about their actions and responses: will they be showing that they are a follower of Jesus? It would be good for a leader to finish this time by praying for all the children.

Home & Beyond

Print off the Home & Beyond cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journal or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

WWJD if he lived at your house?

Before the children go home, provide them with some cards and an envelope. Ask the children to think about all the things that they do at home, their relationships, their responsibilities, looking after their belongings, the words they say and how they interact and react to others in their home. Encourage them to write down some ways that they want to reflect Jesus in their behaviour, language and actions at home this week.

- Keep the envelope somewhere special during the week and reflect on it. Have a look at the cards and see how you are going in relation to your actions and the way that you wanted to reflect Jesus. Pray about this and take some time to ask God for His strength and wisdom in all situations.
- You might like to share some of the challenges you have set for yourself (and why) with members of your family or your Big Bud.

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