

Junior Soldiers

Preparation Lesson 1



Let's Get Started

PURPOSE : For children to understand God's overall plan for us including the gospel message. During this lesson, children will be given the opportunity to make a decision about being a follower of God.

I KNOW THAT JESUS IS MY SAVIOUR FROM SIN.

I HAVE ASKED HIM TO FORGIVE MY SINS, AND I WILL TRUST HIM TO KEEP ME GOOD.

(promise focus)

Consider & Prepare

This lesson is a really important foundation for the children as they embark on this journey of preparation for becoming a Junior Soldier in The Salvation Army. This is an essential part of their process as they explore and begin to understand the plan that God has for us to be in relationship with Him. They will explore who God is, who we are, what happened in our relationship with God, how we can fix this and what that means for them now. It is important that sometime during this lesson the children are given the opportunity to make a decision about being a follower of God.

- Take or collect photos of a cross section of people in your church.
- Obtain playdough, paper magiclay or a modeling agent.
- Purchase pre-made people chains.
- Permanent markers for writing on sticky-tape.
- Sticky-tape (magictape works well).
- Games for connecting activity.
- Supplies for creating activity.
- Photoboard – corkboard, large piece of cardboard or butchers paper.
- Origami patterns and paper and examples prepared.
- Journals for each of the children.
- Bibles.

Connecting In

'Guess Who' game

- Play a game of 'Guess Who' together, taking it in turns, play in teams or provide a number of 'Guess Who' games so that more than two people can play at a time.
- **Link** : Before moving into the 'Main Thing' make the link between playing a game of 'Guess Who' (we have been thinking about attributes of people in order to play the game) and that during the lesson they will be looking at who God is and who we are in relation to God.



Game choice

- Have a range of games available for the children to choose from as a fun way to begin the lesson.
- Make a choice about which game you will play with someone else in the group, or you could play as a whole group dividing into teams.
- **Link** : Before moving into the 'Main Thing' make a link between the children making a choice about which game they would play and that there are many choices that we make each day. 'Today we are going to explore how some of those choices we make are sometimes good and sometime not so good'.

Creating for a purpose

- Provide the children with some resources, a time limit and a challenge to create something for a specific purpose. The children might like to work on their own or as a group.
- Resources: pipecleaners, playdough, match sticks, sticky tape, cardboard boxes, feathers, bottle lids, paper, etc.
- Challenge : to create something for a specific purpose
- **Link** : 'Today you have created something for a specific purpose and had lots of fun doing that; we too were created for a specific purpose. Can anyone tell me what that is? We were created by God to be in relationship with Him, to be friends of God, and we are going to explore that a bit more today throughout the lesson.'



The Main Thing

Scripture : John 3:16

"God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die."

God's story stations

These stations today will help to show God's overall story of His plan and love for us and what He is willing to do to stay connected with us. Each station will tell a different part of the story in a tactile way that will help to create a picture for the kids as they explore it with you.

- **If you've got one child** – one leader goes through the process with them.
- **If more than one child** – go as small groups or have one leader (or perhaps Prayer Pal) walk through stations with them. If you are doing a boot camp style, then don't have any more than four children in each small group.

1. WHO IS GOD?

God is the Creator/Father/maker of everything good.

- Set this station up with some playdough, paper magiclay, salt dough or some modeling agent.
- You might like to have some books about creation or magazines that show some great images of God's creation, e.g. *National Geographic*.
- Get the kids to make something to add to the creation table, for example something from the world they live in. 'If you were a creator what would our animals look like?' Have a few things made already on the table as examples to start the creative process.
- Take a photo of the creations that the children have made so they can put them into their journals.
- 'God is the Creator, the Father and maker of everything good. What things do you see around you that God has created?'
- Another option for this station is going for a walk and looking at God's creation – taking the camera and taking photos along the way. You could also take your playdough/paper magiclay and use the twigs, bark, leaves, etc. to make something to add to God's creation.
- Or you could use origami to create some paper animals and then these could be added straight into their journals.



2. WHO ARE WE?

God made us and we are good – He made us to be friends with Him and with each other.

- At this station provide some premade 'people chains' (these can be purchased from most craft supply stores or you can make your own template for the kids to cut out).
- Draw, colour and decorate all the people on the chain, making sure to include God, yourself and some friends.
- Take your chain with you to the next station.
- Or you can make a paper chain (e.g. Christmas chain style) and write/draw names and staple them together.

3. WHAT HAPPENED?

As humans we have choice and some of the choices that we make are not so good, often called sin. These choices can be harmful to ourselves and our friends and also harm our relationship with God.

- At this station we are going to look at some of the bad choices, choices that are not wise (e.g. that hurt people, relationships etc.) that we make and what they do to our relationships with God and others.
- Talk together about what this might look like, sharing examples from your own life and then encouraging the kids to share, e.g. breaking a promise that you have made to a child, letting someone down, using unkind words to friends and strangers, bullying at home and in the school ground, etc.
- After each example make a little tear on the people chain, but make sure not to tear right through at this stage.
- These choices begin to break the links we have with our friends but most importantly it breaks the link between us and God it damages the relationship.
- 'Do you think that was a bad choice? Yes....tear your chain a little. I made a bad choice by lying and that damaged my relationship with that person that I lied to as well as my relationship with God.'
- (Make sure when you are tearing the chain that at the end of this illustration the chain is broken between us and God.)
- Take the chain with you to the next station.

4. HOW CAN WE FIX IT?

Jesus' life shows us how to make good choices. When Jesus died he took our punishment so that we could be re-connected to God.

- Talk about Jesus/what he did so that this could be fixed – taking our punishment so that we could be connected back to God.
- Jesus' life shows us how to make good choices
- We don't want our relationships to be torn apart like our little paper chain people. How are we going to fix our people? (Glue, sticky-tape...take the kids suggestions.)
- They are all great suggestions; today we are going to use sticky-tape.
- Who do you think can help us put those relationships back together?
- Who do you think is like the sticky-tape to help us put our relationships back together? (Jesus, with his death He took the punishment so we can be friends with God)
- Sticky-tape back together the people chain and use a permanent marker to write 'Jesus' on the sticky-tape because he is the one that has helped us to connect back to God. You might even like to point out that you can still see the scars through the sticky-tape.
- How do we know that it was God's plan to stick us back together? Let's look together at John 3:16.
- When we identify that the choices we have made have hurt others, it is important that we say sorry. SORRY to God – (write sorry on the back of 'God' on the people chain).
- SORRY to those you hurt – (write sorry on the back of friends and yourself on the paper chain).
- Prayer: pray together with the kids and give all leaders and children the opportunity to say 'sorry' and also 'thank you' for what Jesus did to connect us back to God.



5. WHAT NOW?

Our relationship with God has been fixed and we can choose if we want to stay connected and follow Him.

- This station is where we decide if we want to stay connected with God and follow Him.
- How do we do that?
- The Holy Spirit helps us to keep our relationship with God and make good choices in what we think, what we say and what we do. (Think good, say good, do good).
- Set up a photo board for this station. This can include people from the church in a board of people that represents God's family. (In preparation for this session, take photos of people in the church so that you can make up the family portrait. Depending on the size of the corps this might just be a cross-section of people).
- God's family portrait.
- Provide a space on the photo board for the children to add their photo. Making sure there is enough spaces for all the children involved in the process, it would be good for this to be closer to the centre of the photo rather than on the outside.
- If the children want to stay connected with God and be a part of His family, they can add themselves to the family portrait. (They can either draw themselves into the family portrait or add a photo to this picture).
- Pray together with the children as they make this choice to be a part of God's family.

Tying In

Introduce the children to the idea of the journal and how it will be used throughout the preparation lessons.

Reflecting

- The Lesson 1 section in the journal will have a space for a photo or drawing in response to the first creation station. It will also have five spaces for the children to reflect on the five stations that they have just walked through with their leader. There will also be a space for the children to stick/tape their people chain into their journal.
- Encourage the children to think about the five stations that they have just explored and what was important about each one in relation to God's story.
- In the five spaces provided, encourage the children to write or draw what was the key point from each of the stations. (It is important that this is in their words, indicating their understanding of the stations that they have been through. Remember that some children may not want to write, have difficulty writing, etc. It might be at this stage that they tell you what they think and you help by writing it for them.)



Home & Beyond

The 'Home and Beyond' section will be outlined in the journal for the kids but it is important that we make them aware of what it means and even challenge them about what they will do in response to this section.

- Talk about your people chain with your family/Prayer Pal/grown up or other significant adults in your life. Share with them the key points from each of the stations that they went to.
- Have you had the same experience of Jesus restoring your relationships?

(Encourage or give suggestions for who the children might like to speak to about this. Consider the home situations of children in your group, don't necessarily shy away from this but you need to make sure that they connect with at least one significant adult that will share their faith journey. Alert the Prayer Pal that this will be the challenge for the kids this week, so be prepared for this conversation.)

