

Junior Soldiers

Unit 12 : Lesson 7



Inclusive Children!

PURPOSE : For the children to explore and understand God's heart for those who are often left out, and to think about how we can include these people in our life and in the life of the church.

'You must not give the best seat to the one in fancy clothes and tell the one who is poor to stand at the side or sit on the floor. That is the same as saying that some people are better than others, and you would be acting like a crooked judge.'

James 2:3-4

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Luke 4:17-19

James 2:1-4

Justice is about standing up for others whom we may or may not know personally. Inclusion is about welcoming others into our lives and our corps. Standing up for and acknowledging those that are disadvantaged is good, but the next step is to personally engage with them.

Special thanks to Armen Gakavian for this insight into social inclusion:

'Inclusion is the mandate to "preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in his name without discrimination". Inclusion means welcoming, accepting, integrating and involving all people in our expressions. Inclusion also means celebrating the involvement of people irrespective of their cultural background, language, religion, political views, values, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation and so on. Inclusion means empowering individuals and communities through healing relationships, active participation, access to resources and conversion and Christ-centred transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit.'

- I wonder what questions or challenges this statement raises for you.
- How do you think inclusion, as outlined above, is different or similar to other concepts such as social justice, welcome, salvation, love, etc?
- How does inclusion, as described by Gakavian, line up with your understanding of inclusion from the Bible?

In today's world, the excluded in our society are generally those who suffer from one or more of the following types of disadvantage: financial poverty; social isolation; homelessness; single parenthood; ageing; migration (voluntary or involuntary); exclusion on grounds of sexual orientation; mental illness; intellectual or physical disability; addiction to, or recovery from, substance abuse; negative spiritual (demonic) influences; and/or physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

At different stages in our lives, we may experience some form of oppression or exclusion. We each have the same desire to have our needs met, whether they be tangible ones—food, shelter and good health—or intangible ones like relationship, belonging, recognition/identity and contribution/significance. Experiencing these things is unpleasant and not something God wants for any of us. It is important for us to think about others who may be experiencing exclusion for a variety of reasons and how, as a community of Christ followers, we can make an impact in a positive way.



Spend some time praying about what this means for the people, church and community you are involved with.

This is an important topic to cover with the children in your group; we want all our young disciples to be people who love and include others. It is also important though that we help the children see how they can do this in appropriate ways and under the guidance and support of their parents, leaders and Big Buds. We need to help them think through possible situations and make wise choices to show others love but also to care for and protect themselves.

If you have time during the following lesson, you may also want to read *Jemima's Lullaby*, a new children's book from Salvo Publishing (enquire with Salvation Army Supplies) that tells a story about jungle animals with a theme of exclusion/inclusion and which contains notes and project ideas for parents and teachers.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Tape, hula hoops or small circle mats
- Armbands or coloured stickers etc.
- A sheet of paper with a circle drawn on it
- A heap of blocks in two colours, e.g. red and blue etc.

For 'The Main Thing'

- Bibles
- Decide whether you will do Option 1 or Option 2 or both
- Option 1 – a copy of the role play scenarios
- Option 2 – copies of the instructions for narrative writing, paper and pens or pencils

For 'Tying In'

- Butchers paper (one sheet per small group)
- Textas, pens, pencils etc.
- Bibles

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards for each child.

Connecting In

Tolerance or inclusion...

'Today we are going to explore how we relate to people who are "different" to us. I wonder how you might act towards children who are quiet, or who don't look like you, or who behave in ways that you don't like or possibly understand. I wonder how you might feel about them and how you might treat or ignore them.'

- I wonder if you can think of some things that might cause children to be excluded or left out. (*Explore this with the children, e.g. wearing glasses, speaking with a lisp or an accent, smelling bad, wearing unstylish clothes, behaving badly in class, a physical disability etc.*)

‘Sometimes when someone is different to us we only tolerate them or, you might say, we put up with them. Jesus asks us to do more than tolerate someone, he wants us to love and include them. We are going to play a game that might help us to understand this difference between being tolerated by someone or being included.’



Option 1 – game

For this game you will need some circles marked out on the floor with tape, or hula hoops or some circle mats that you might use for small group time. You will also need to let the children know if they are going to be a person who is ‘tolerated’ or a person who is ‘included’ for the activity; you might like to identify them in some way, e.g. armbands or coloured stickers etc. (You might want to think about this carefully when choosing children who are going to be ‘tolerated’ for the game, it would be good for this to not be the children that are too sensitive or might have experienced exclusion.)

Let the children know if they are going to be ‘tolerated’ or ‘included’ for this game.

- On the floor you will notice that there are some circles. When I give the signal, everyone is going to run around the room and then when I say stop, each person must try to get into a circle.
- If you are a person who is ‘included’ then you can touch, lean on or hold onto other people in your circle.
- If you are a person who is ‘tolerated’ then you are not allowed to touch, lean on or hold anyone else.
- If you can’t stay completely in a circle following the rules above then you will be out.
- No one can push you out but when the circle starts to get crowded you might find it tough to stay in without touching anyone else.
- Ready, set, go!

Link...

- Okay, tell me what you thought about the game we played today.
- Did you like it or not? Do you think it was fair? Why/ why not?
- If you were the person who was only ‘tolerated’ instead of ‘included’, how did you feel?
- Did it make a difference for those who were ‘included’? Why?
- I wonder if you might be able to think of a time or situation when similar has happened at your school, home or church (*Allow some time for the children to share.*)

‘It doesn’t feel great when you are not included in a group or activity with others around you. It can feel pretty horrible when you come into a space and others don’t include you or talk to you. I am sure everyone has felt this at some time. God doesn’t want any of us to feel this way. So today we are going to explore a bit further what we might be able to do about how we think about others and how we can include and welcome others.’

Option 2 – for smaller groups

You might like to do the activity above and just create a smaller circle and use leaders as well as children, or you might like to use the activity below.

You will need to draw a circle on a piece of paper. You will also need a bunch of blocks in two colours, e.g. red and blue etc.

- Okay, your challenge today is: in the time allocated you need to put as many blocks as you can into the circle on the paper. You need to include blocks of both colours, at least three of each.
- The red blocks are allowed to touch each other.
- The blue blocks are not allowed to touch each other or the red blocks.
- Ready set go! (*Time this activity, e.g. 1 or 2 minutes, you might even like to do it a couple of times to see if you can get a different outcome.*)
- Count how many blocks you were able to fit in the circle on each turn.



Link... 'Today, when we think about our activity, the red blocks represent people who are "included". These people stick together, lean on each other and connect. They interact with each other's lives and help each other too. The blue blocks represent people who are "tolerated" but not included. They are allowed into the circle, they are not kept out, but they are not included and have to stick to themselves.

- I wonder if you can think of a time when you have felt you were only 'tolerated' instead of 'included'.
- Perhaps you have seen this happen to someone else either at school, home or church. Share.
- What difference does it make when you are 'included'?

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The Main Thing

'For thousands of years, people have been excluded by other people because they are different. God, however, loves all of us always, no matter what! In fact, he created us to be different from each other: how boring if we were all the same? Think about your fingerprints...every single person has a different set of fingerprints, every person has a different voice pattern and every person has their very own DNA (the cells and all the special bits that make up who you are). God wants us to be different because being different makes every one of us special.'

Scripture Search...

'Let's have a look to see what the following Bible verses tell us about how God feels when people are excluded. (*You might like to give each child one or two verses to look up or get them to work in pairs or small groups.*)

- Defender of the fatherless and widows (Deuteronomy 10:17–18)
 - Protector of the poor (Psalm 12:5)
 - Rescuer of the poor (I Samuel 2:8)
 - Provider of the poor (Isaiah 41:17)
 - Saviour of the poor (Psalm 109:31)
 - Refuge of the poor (Isaiah 25:4)
- What does your verse tell us about how God feels when people are excluded?
 - Share what you have found out with the others in your group.

Read the following verses (as you did with the verses above).

- Acts 2:45
- Acts 3:1–6
- Acts 6:1–6
- Acts 9:36
- Galatians 3:28
- James 1:27
- James 2:1–9
 - What does your verse tell you about how the early church treated those who were excluded in their communities?
 - Share what you have found out with the others in your group.



God loves every person and doesn't like people to feel excluded or ignored.

He created the things that are different about us and this makes us unique and special but, unfortunately, sometimes people are not always happy about the differences of others.

Below are a couple of options for the rest of the 'Main Thing'—you might like to choose **Option 1** and divide the children into groups to do some role plays (pick as many scenarios as you need for the size of your group) OR choose **Option 2** and encourage each of the children to write a short narrative.

Option 1 – Role Plays...

Scenario 1 (3 or more children)

Imagine a situation where a teacher appears to have a favorite student in their class. This student always gets chosen to do special things and never seems to get in trouble, even when they have done something to deserve being told off. There is also another student in the class who the teacher appears to not like.

- Create a short play that shows how the teacher might treat these two children differently.

Scenario 2 (4 or more children)

Imagine a family member who is different to the rest of the family. This could be an eccentric uncle or an aunt who might speak or behave oddly. Think about what would happen and how people in the family would respond if they came to your family Christmas party.

- Create a short play to show how they might be treated by different people attending the party.

Scenario 3 (4 or more children)

Imagine a group of children at school who are all popular and stick together.

- Create a short play to show how they might treat a kid outside of their group who wants to join in.

Scenario 4 (5 or more children)

Imagine that a family who is very poor came into your church. At present they live in their car so they haven't had a chance to wash their clothes or have a shower. They look dirty and they don't smell great.

- Create a short play about how you and some other people in your church might react.

Allow the children some time to share and act out their scenarios and allow some time for the group to respond after each performance.

Option 2 – Write/Draw a Narrative...

- Think about someone you may know or who you have seen be excluded. This might be someone you have seen when you have been out or about, walked past in the street, seen on TV or bumped into in your church.
- Change the person's name or, if you don't know the person's name, give them a creative name.
- Imagine what it might be like to live in their world for a day and do and experience all the things that might happen for them in a day. Try to look at the world through their eyes.
- Write a narrative, a story that describes what you experience as you think about their day or draw some pictures to illustrate this.

As you do so, you might want to think about the following questions:

- How do you feel?
- What are you thinking?
- What happens?
- What is it like to interact with other people, especially people who are not including you in what is going on?
- How do other people look at you?
- How do other people treat you?

Allow time for the children to share their narrative by either reading their story or sharing their pictures they have drawn to communicate their story.



Tying In

Small Groups...

For the 'Tying In' section today it would be great to divide into your regular small groups to explore the topic further with some discussion. Give each group a sheet of butchers paper, some textas and Bibles.

- Think about a time when you have felt excluded by others. Why do you think you were excluded?
- Share how you felt and how you responded.
- I wonder if anyone in the situation tried to include you. What did they do?
- How did it feel when they tried to include you? How did you respond? Why?

Reflect on Luke 4:17–19 and/or James 2:1–4

- What is something you will change about your own attitude or behaviour?

Prayer...

- Ask the children to place their hands on their heads (brain).
 - ✓ 'I wonder how we need to think in order to include others.'
- Ask the children to place their hands over their mouths.
 - ✓ 'I wonder what we can say that will help to include others.'
- Ask the children to cup their hands in front of them (like offering something).
 - ✓ 'I wonder what we can do that might help to include others.'
- Pray together: 'God, please help us to include others with the way we think, the words we say and the way we behave. Amen.'

Home & Beyond

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

Inclusion challenge...

None of us like to be excluded or ignored, so this week we are going to set you a couple of challenges.

- Be on the lookout for those who might be being excluded or tolerated.
 - ✓ Think about how that person might be feeling.
 - ✓ Why do you think that this is happening to them, what is their situation?
- How are you going to include someone this week?
 - ✓ I wonder what that might look like.
 - ✓ I wonder who that might be. Will it be someone at school, at home or church?

'Treat others just as you want to be treated' Luke 6:31

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