



Junior Soldier Renewal 2023

– Leader’s Notes

THEME:

God’s big story and me – a truth story

KEY SCRIPTURE:

John 8:31-32 (CEV): “Jesus told the people who had faith in him, ‘If you keep on obeying what I have said, you truly are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”





CONSIDER

Read over the notes in this section as you prepare for your Junior Soldier Renewal Day.

What is Junior Soldier Renewal Day?

Junior Soldier Renewal Day is an annual event that creates a space for all people in your faith community, and Junior Soldiers in particular, to reflect on and renew their commitment to living life as a disciple of Jesus. Invite your Junior Soldiers to be involved in planning, preparing and leading this meeting. This is a fantastic opportunity for intergenerational connection. Choose participants of all ages and abilities to take part and encourage everyone to explore the content together and learn from each other.

Renewal Day pack

You can order Junior Soldier Renewal packs [here](#). Packs include certificates and an anchor-shaped keyring, featuring the words 'God's truth is my anchor' and the Bible reference, John 8:31-32. Additional keyrings can be ordered for other children who may take part.

2023 theme

In 2023, the National Children's Team continues to explore the theme, 'God's big story and me'. Through a variety of events and resources, children will explore and understand God's amazing story and plan for all of creation.

On Junior Soldier Renewal Sunday 2023, we will explore 'God's big story and me – a truth story'. Together, we will learn that we can find truth by looking to Jesus and the Bible. We will also look at how God's truth **anchors us, guides us and sets us free**.

Teaching summary

Introduction – Jesus, the Bible and the Holy Spirit help us to understand God's truth

Part 1 – God's truth holds us firm, like an anchor

Part 2 – God's truth guides us like a bright light

Part 3 – God's truth sets me free to make good choices

Part 4 – Renewal segment

Part 5 – Prayer

Optional inclusions

Please do not feel you need to do every activity in the leader's notes. Lots of options have been provided. Please choose the elements that best fit your timeframe and context.





Song ideas

- **Cornerstone** – Hillsong CCLI6158927 <https://songselect.ccli.com/songs/6158927>
- **He Will Hold Me Fast** – Selah CCLI 7016161 <https://songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7016161/he-will-hold-me-fast>
- **I Am Free** – Jon Egan CCLI 4220974 <https://songselect.ccli.com/Songs/4220974/i-am-free>

Testimonies

If you have time and capacity, you could invite three people (Junior Soldiers or others) to prepare a very brief testimony about a time when God's truth has: i) held them firm, ii) guided them, or iii) set them free.

Invite one person to share on each topic. Testimonies should be two to three minutes long, which is approximately 300 words. We recommend you ask those testifying to submit their testimonies for review and feedback before Junior Soldier Renewal Day.

PREPARE

- Ask Junior Soldiers (and/or others) to:
 - » Organise, lead and participate in the activities
 - » Learn today's memory verse — John 8:31-32 (CEV) — before the Renewal Day meeting
 - » Assist with decorating and setting up your space
 - » Read the Scripture readings: Colossians 2:6-7, Hebrews 6:18-19, Psalm 119:105, John 8:31-32
 - » Pray
- Consider decorating your space with large pictures or symbols that tie in with today's message, e.g., anchor, light, plant with deep roots. You could create large pictures on cardboard, make them from papier mâché or display real items.
- Ensure all Junior Soldiers have a designated person to pray for them. This may be a Big Bud/Prayer Pal or another member of the church family.
- Download the Junior Soldier Renewal Day PowerPoint pack and customise as needed (e.g., delete slides for activities you will not be including).
- Set up the activities that you have chosen to include.





MEETING PLAN

Introduction

You will need:

- PowerPoint slides for your chosen activities (you will find these in the pack provided). NB: If you plan to do Activity 1 (optional), you will need to add in the responses from your chosen participants before the meeting.

Choose **ONE** of the following activities to do as an introduction.

Activity 1 (optional): Two truths and a lie

We are going to play a game called 'two truths and a lie' and I am going to ask some special volunteers to come up and participate.

Invite the pre-selected volunteers to come up to the platform.

Invite each volunteer to have a turn at sharing three statements about themselves – two that are true and one that is plausible but untrue.

(The adults will read the statements from the screen, where they will appear in a random order.)

Ask for a volunteer from the congregation to guess which one is the lie. (If possible, organise for a runner to take a cordless microphone to congregation members.) Alternatively, you could ask the congregation to raise their hand to vote for the one they think is a lie.

Examples:

- I am 33 years old
- I once lived in Brazil
- My favourite colour is green
- I can speak six languages
- My mum was a famous artist

Closing statement in introduction:

In our lives it can be hard to know the truth, but God has given us **the Bible**, **Jesus** and the **Holy Spirit** and they all work together to show us what the truth is.

During this meeting, we are going to discover three reasons why we need God's truth in our lives.

First **[insert name of Junior Soldier]** is going to lead us in prayer.

Activity 2 (optional): Do you believe it, or not?!

We are going to look at some incredible statements on the screen. They will probably all seem a bit hard to believe, but some are true.

After we show the statement, it is your job to vote on whether you think the statement is true or false. If you think the statement is true, place your hands on your head. If you think it is false, put your hands on your hips.

Read the hard-to-believe statements as they appear on the screens and allow time for members of the congregation to 'vote' before moving to the next slide.





Part 1: God's truth is my anchor

You will need:

- Activity 3 (optional): A rope (standard skipping rope length will work well)
- Anchor prop/picture if available

First, we need God's truth because it anchors us.

Activity 3 (optional): Rope pull

[Insert name of strong adult] is going to come and hold this piece of rope. [Insert name of young child], I want you to see if you can make this strong adult move by pulling on the rope.

Before the child begins, ask them: "Do you think you will be able to move him from his spot?" Ask the congregation, collectively: "Do you think [insert name of child] will be able to do it?"

The child could not move the adult because they had a strong and firm grounding.

Colossians 2:6-7 (NLT) says, "And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught."

In this Bible verse we are being encouraged to be firmly planted in Jesus. Have you ever tried to pull up a weed that has really deep roots? The deeper the roots, the harder it is to pull up! When we have deep roots in Jesus and have built our lives in his truth, we will be able to stay strong and not lose track of the truth, even when we are being pulled in other directions!

Anchor in the storm

[Display the anchor picture on the screen or hold up an anchor prop.]

I've put a picture on the screen of an item that you probably don't see every day. Can anyone tell me what it is?

Allow for responses.

I wonder if anyone knows what it does? **Allow for responses.**

That's right! It's an anchor, which is a really heavy object that is attached to a boat or ship by a chain or rope. During a storm, the anchor is dropped over the side of a ship and hooks into the seabed to hold the ship steady.

Huge waves might rock the ship and everyone on the ship might get really wet! But the anchor holds the ship steady and helps keep those who are on board safe.

I wonder if you have ever gone through a time that felt like a storm? (Pause to allow for reflection.) It can be very scary. When things are changing, when we are having a hard time, or when people are trying to lead us into doing the wrong thing, the Bible says that God's truth can be like an anchor in our lives.



Hebrew 6:18-19 (CEV) says, “God cannot tell lies! And so his promises and vows are two things that can never be changed.

“We have run to God for safety. Now his promises should greatly encourage us to take hold of the hope that is right in front of us. This hope is like a firm and steady anchor for our souls.”

In scary times, or when people try to lead us astray, God’s truth is our anchor. It holds us steady, keeping us safe and on the right track.



Part 2: God’s truth is my guide

The second reason we need God’s truth is because it guides us.

Imagine being in a completely dark forest, with no idea how to get home. No iPhone torch or phone to light your footsteps, no glow from cars or buildings off in the distance. Completely black. How do you think you would feel?

Allow for responses.

How would you feel if a trusted adult showed up with a big, strong torch and showed you the way to safety?

Allow for responses.

No matter how old we are, sometimes in life we feel a bit lost, and we don’t know what we are supposed to do. Have you ever felt like that? Sometimes we know we have gone down the wrong path and we are not sure how to get back on track.

Psalm 119:105 (CEV) says, “Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk.”

When we are not sure which way to go or we feel like we are in the dark, God’s truth, discovered through the Bible, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, can be like a bright lamp that helps us see the way clearly.

Part 3: God’s truth sets me free

You will need:

Enough small boxes — with items to go inside — for each child to open one. To make your boxes, print the provided template onto coloured cardboard. You will need a variety of colours, for example, six red, six blue, six yellow, six pink. Once you have printed the boxes, cut them to size. Before sealing your boxes, put a small chocolate in all red boxes and an empty chocolate wrapper in all other coloured boxes. Place the boxes on a table in a random order, ready to be unveiled for the congregation at the appropriate time.

NB: For allergy or other reasons, you may prefer to avoid providing chocolates. In this instance, you could provide a small toy or sticker for the ‘good’ boxes and a small toy poo, some dirt, etc. for the ‘bad’ boxes.



The third reason we need God’s truth is because God’s truth sets us free!



Activity 4: Pick-a-box

Unveil the table covered with coloured boxes.

I am looking for three volunteers to help me open some boxes from this table. Each box contains a surprise. Would anyone like to volunteer?

Choose three volunteers to select boxes. Before the meeting, speak with one of them about this activity and let them know that they should only choose the red boxes, because only the red boxes contain good things.

Allow the volunteers to take turns choosing a box, opening it and reporting to the congregation what was inside. Allow each volunteer to have two or three turns.

What did you notice about that activity? **Allow for responses.**

In the beginning, it might have been difficult to know which box to choose, because you had no idea what was in them!

Then reveal that one volunteer had been given a clue — ‘the red boxes contain good things’.

This volunteer was free to choose any box. But they knew that if they chose a red box, it would be a good choice.

God’s truth is a little like this. It helps us to know when something is a good choice. As long as we make choices that line up with God’s truth, we know that they will be good choices.

We no longer need to worry about whether we might make the wrong decision — God’s truth sets us free to make good choices.

For example, God’s truth says that we should always be kind to others.

Imagine that someone has said something mean to you.

You could:

- A. Explain to them that they have really hurt you
- B. Ask them to stop being mean
- C. Tell them that it is not okay for them to be unkind to you, but you still want to be friends
- D. Shout at them and say something mean back

A, B, or C would all be kind. Any of these choices would be in line with God’s truth.

Let’s hear from **John 8:31-32 (CEV)**: [Junior Soldier to read.]

“Jesus told the people who had faith in him, ‘If you keep on obeying what I have said, you truly are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

By following God’s truth, we can feel free!

Free to live for eternity with Jesus, free to talk to Jesus every day and free to make good choices in our lives each day!





Part 4: Junior Soldier Renewal

You will need

- Junior Soldier Renewal cards
- Pens for each child and Big Bud/Prayer Pal

Invite the Junior Soldiers and their Big Buds/Prayer Pals to come to the front of your space.

Our Junior Soldiers have been practicing today's memory verse and they are going to share that with us again now:

“Jesus told the people who had faith in him, “If you keep on obeying what I have said, you truly are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32, CEV).

Today we have been learning that following Jesus means living according to God's truth. Each Junior Soldier has made a promise that talks about doing this, day by day.

Ask the Junior Soldiers to read their promise together.



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. By his help, I will be his loving and obedient child, and will help others to follow him. I promise to pray, to read my Bible, and to lead a life that is clean in thought, word and deed. I will not use anything that may injure my body or my mind, including harmful drugs, alcohol and tobacco.



Today our Junior Soldiers will sign their promise again, to remind themselves of the commitment that they have made. The Junior Soldiers will take home a renewal certificate today as a reminder of their promise.

Each one of us can use this time to renew our promises to live life guided and anchored in God's truth.

If you have not made a commitment to God before, you could take that first step today.

Make space for the Junior Soldiers to sign their Renewal Cards and for their Big Buds or Prayer Pals to pray with them.

Invite everyone to join you as you pray for the Junior Soldiers.





Part 5: Prayer

To finish, lead the congregation through the prayer stations (see Appendix A).

OR

Invite a Junior Soldier to write and pray a closing prayer.

OR

Invite a Junior Soldier to pray the following prayer.

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for teaching us how to live good lives.

Please help us to always remember that your truth holds us firm like an anchor,
guides us to make wise choices and sets us free to live with you.

Amen.

Benediction suggestion

“And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness” (Colossians 2:6-7, CEV).



APPENDIX A – PRAYER ACTIVITIES

We are going to spend some time now doing some prayer activities. You will have 15 minutes to choose an activity and spend some time in prayer.

PRAYER ACTIVITY 1: Light my way

Set up a tent/fort and make it close to (but not completely) dark. To assist you in making it dark you could use heavy, dark coloured blankets/quilts.

Instructions to print and display:

Go into the tent and turn on the torch. Spend some time thanking God that his truth lights our way in the darkness.

PRAYER ACTIVITY 2: Build a box

Place some pens, small strips of paper and spare box templates on a table.

Instructions to print and display:

Take some small strips of paper and write down some of God's truths. Make your own box and place the strips of paper inside. Spend some time thanking God that his truth brings freedom!

PRAYER ACTIVITY 3: Jenga praise

Write the following words on strips of masking tape, with a sharpie:

- *Jesus is the way, truth and life!*
- *You can be trusted*
- *You never lie*
- *Your truth holds me firm*
- *Your truth lights my way*
- *Your truth sets me free*
- *Your Holy Spirit shows me the truth*
- *Your Bible shows me the truth*
- *Jesus is the truth*
- *You never let us down*
- *We can rely on you*

Once dry, stick the pieces of masking tape to pieces in a Jenga set (NB: Similar wooden block sets can be purchased from Kmart). To make sure each Jenga piece has a phrase on it, you may need to write each phrase on two or three pieces.

Instructions to print and display:

Play a game of Jenga. Each time you remove a block and place it on top, read what it says on the block and pause to praise God for this truth. You can start your prayers, "God, I praise you because ..."

PRAYER ACTIVITY 4: Anchor decorating

Place printed copies of the anchor logo on a table with a variety of craft materials — e.g., stickers, textas, coloured pencils and crayons.

Instructions to print and display:

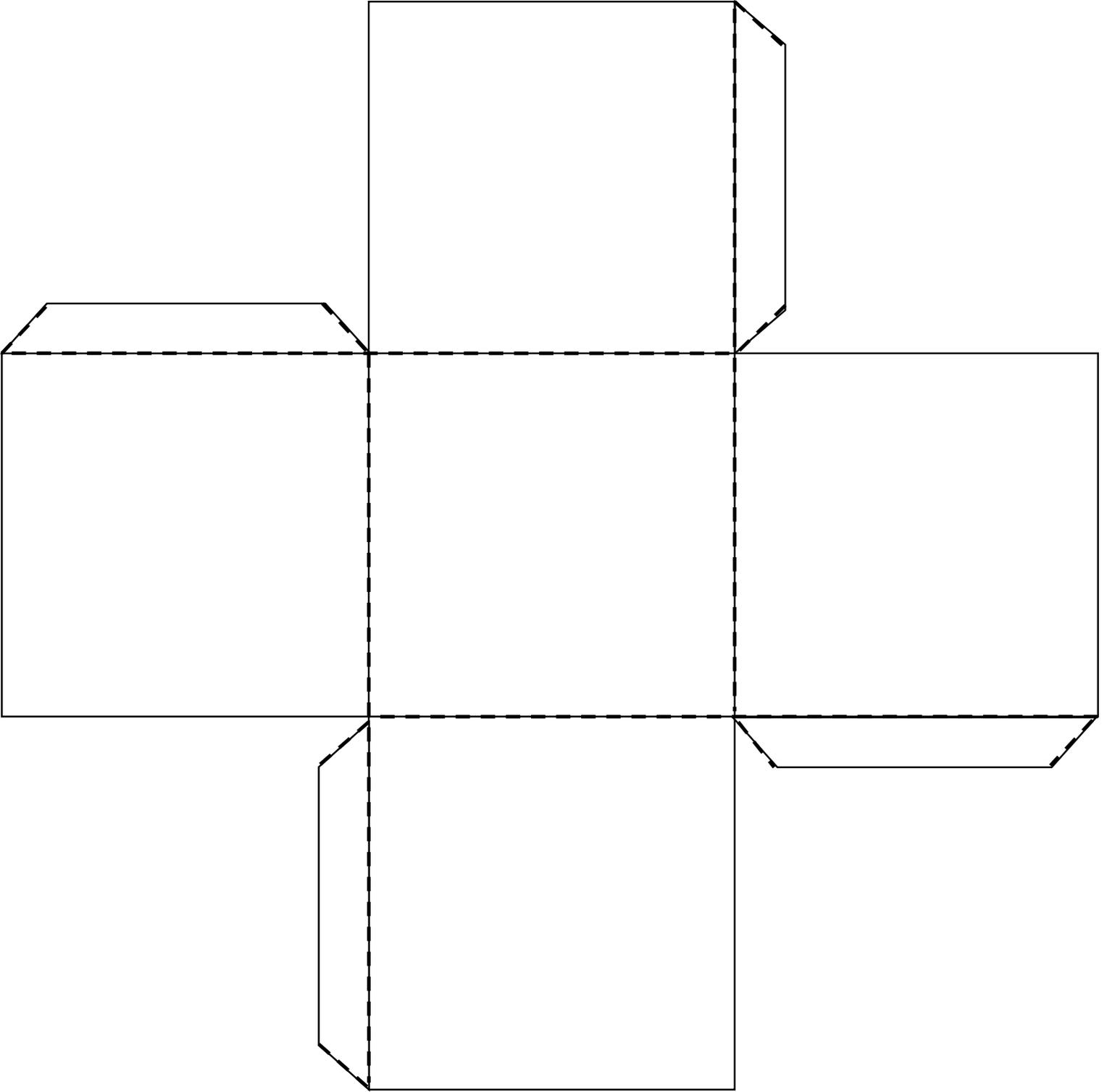
Decorate an anchor. As you do, silently thank God that his truth anchors us and holds us firm.

PRAYER ACTIVITY 5: Praying for others

Place blank paper cutouts of people on a table, with some coloured textas. Optional: you could include googly eyes, strips of wool for hair and fabric for clothing. Strong glue will be required to apply these.

Instructions to print and display:

Think of someone in your life who doesn't know Jesus. Choose a cardboard person cut out and represent them through decoration or drawing. As you decorate your cut out, pray they would come to know God's truth in their lives.





God's
truth
is my anchor

John 8:31-32