Junior Soldiers

Unit 1 : Lesson 4

Not Law but Grace

PURPOSE : For the children to come away with an understanding that they are not ruled by law but God's grace and wonderful kindness, however, that does not mean that we just do what we like.

> Don't let sin keep ruling your lives. You are ruled by God's kindness and not by the Law. What does all this mean? Does it mean we are free to sin, because we are ruled by God's wonderful kindness and not by the Law? Certainly not!
>
> Romans 6:14–15

Consider & Prepare

Read:
Romans 6:11-23
Galatians 2:20, 21
Matthew 5:17-20

When Jesus began his ministry, he was confronted with a religion (Judaism) that had become so bound by rules that the Jewish religious leaders had forgotten the purpose and intent behind those rules. Following the rules and laws of Judaism had become more important for some (the 'legalists') than following God himself. The 'means' had become more important than the end!

On the tail of the ten commandments came 613 other laws that all God-fearing Jews were supposed to observe. God gave ten rules, the Jews came up with six hundred more! This set of rules for everyday living became known as 'Mosaic Law' (named after Moses, who delivered the initial ten) or Jewish Law or simply 'the Law'.

Jesus understood the need for rules in ethics, worship and lifestyle, but these rules allowed no room for God's grace. Jesus simply tried to tell the religious leaders that grace and God's love were more important than the rules.

This would not do! This carpenter from Nazareth was inciting Jews to ignore the Law! He would have to be stopped...even if it meant killing him.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Dot-to-dot sheets – one group with numbers and one without

For 'The Main Thing'

- Pencils/textas
- Large jigsaw puzzles for the 'main thing' illustration
- Blindfolds
- Masking tape
- Bibles
- Instruction sheet for flat pack item
- Computer

For 'Tying In'

- A4 sheets of paper (folded and stapled together into a booklet – approx. five sheets folded and stapled)

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off a Home & Beyond card for each child.

Connecting In

Join the dots ...

- Find a dot-to-dot sheet (either from a puzzle book or the internet – there are plenty of sites)
- Choose a puzzle that is not obvious as to what the shape is (some of the puzzles are fairly simple and you can tell straight away what they are just from looking at the dots)
- You will need two copies of the puzzle, one with the numbers taken off (use some whiteout to take the numbers off the sheet and then make a copy) and then one with the numbers on it.
- Give the children a copy of the puzzle with no numbers and ask them to complete the puzzle.
- Give the children some time to have a go at trying to work it out before giving them the one with the numbers on it.
- Let the children complete the puzzle.

- **Link:**
  - → What did it feel like to try and do the puzzle without the numbers?
  - → Was it easier to connect the dots with the numbers on the page?
  - → God loves us enough to give us the numbers to follow. Helping us to navigate with rules and guidelines to follow and not leaving it to guess work like in the first puzzle.
  - → God want us to have the best life possible and to be able to complete the puzzle and so helps us to achieve this by giving us rules and guidelines to follow.
  - → What happens if we don't follow those rules?
  - → We are going to explore that a little more today and seek to understand what is meant by God's grace and his wonderful kindness to us each.

The Main Thing

Putting it together …

- For this illustration you will need the children in pairs (probably best not to use more than four pairs) and you will need to have the following items:
    - → A large jigsaw puzzle for each group (this can be made by printing out a photo-laminate if you like – same picture for each group – and making a puzzle with about six pieces).
    - → A blindfold for each group.
    - → Masking tape to make a line on the floor.
    - → It would be good to have someone timing and keep the time for each group.
- Each of the groups need to start behind the line of masking tape.
- One person in each pair needs to be blindfolded.
- The jigsaw pieces are then scattered on the other side of the line but in front of the blindfolded person (four small groups of pieces spread out evenly along the line).
- The person with the blindfold needs to put the puzzle together with only the directions from the other person on their team. This person cannot go over the line and can only give directions from standing behind the line.
- Time each of the groups and record these for comparison later.
    - → How did it feel doing this activity? What was hard about it?
    - → Was it easy to hear the person giving your instructions?
    - → What would make it easier?
- This time we are going to do the activity again (scatter the pieces again ready for the next turn) but you can take the blindfold off. Everything else is to stay the same, e.g. the person giving the instructions needs to stay behind the line.
- Have a look at the time that it took for your first go, can you do better? Can you be the team to finish first?
- Play the game. Record the new time alongside the other time for each group.
    - → What made playing the game easier this time?
    - → Was it still helpful to have someone helping you?

Read Romans 6:14 - 15 & Matthew 5:17 – 18.

When God gave Moses the ten commandments, the Israelites had guidelines to follow. When Jesus came, he didn't come so that we could get rid of laws but to help us to live by the guidelines easier. So, in the game we just played, the first time was like you only had the rules and guidelines to play by, the second time was easier because you could see and follow the guidelines. Jesus helps us to see things clearer; he helps us to be able to follow the rules and to achieve the goal.

- It is like when you have purchased an item (perhaps from IKEA or a shop like that) that comes in pieces with instructions and you need to put it all together. You can follow the instructions but it is also helpful to have someone else alongside you that has had some experience reading similar instructions or putting together similar items. (*You might like to have an illustration of an item that you might have to put together or a sheet of instructions.)*
- I also find this with the computer; sometimes there are things I don't understand. On the computer you will have a 'help' file that has a list of information that can help you to work out how to do something specific. I can read that information but it is not always that easy. I love it when I have a friend that knows a little more about a computer alongside me helping me to understand the instructions. (*You might like to have a computer set up so that you can demonstrate this.)*

We should be able to complete life by just using the rule book but it is so much nicer having someone to help us see and understand things clearer. That is what Jesus does for us. He didn't come to change the rules or how we live life (Jesus followed the same rules as Moses), the thing that he changed is that we can 'see' (love, understand, experience etc.) God better. The blindfold is taken off.

Playing the puzzle game, if you fell over or picked up the wrong puzzle piece, you ended up with a bad picture.

- → Jesus can pick up those puzzle pieces and help you to rearrange them. He can help to make the picture the way it was supposed to be.
- → (Use the puzzle pieces to illustrate this point.)
- → Jesus can help you rearrange the pieces…but is that what you what Jesus to spend His time doing? That doesn't sound like you are being a good friend to be with.
- → **For example**: If you say to a friend that you have a 'PlayStation' and that they can come over and play on it with you and then, when they come over, you play and they just sit and watch - that is not being a good friend.
- → Being a good friend would be doing the activity together.
- → **So** - being a good friend would be like us trying to follow the rule book so that Jesus doesn't have to pick up after us all the time. This way, we can have fun and good times together.

God wants us to win. He doesn't want us to have so many rules that we will continually fail, He wants us to have guidelines and to help us to be able to see how to connect all the dots, to be able to put all the pieces together to make the right picture. We need to do our part and try our best to follow the rules but when we have trouble with them, God will help us to rearrange the pieces. He responds to us with love and grace.

Tying In

Your own instruction book …

- If you needed to write or illustrate your own instruction book what would that look like?
- Make a booklet from folding some A4 sheets of paper together and stapling down the middle, enough spaces for twenty guidelines or instructions.
- Using some of the rules that we have looked at over the last few weeks as a basis:
  - → Create your own instruction booklet
  - → Include twenty rules or guidelines
  - → Use words or pictures to explain these rules
  - → Include rules that you and Jesus could live by together
  - → Share some of your rules with the whole group
  - → Pray together, thanking Jesus for helping you with 'joining the dots' in your life.

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.

- Read over your instruction book each day.
- Pray for Jesus to help you with following specific instructions that you might be finding difficult at the moment.
- Ask Mum/Dad/Big Bud to also pray for you in this area.
- Share with your leader and other Junior Soldiers which areas you had fun with Jesus in and which areas you struggled.

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