Junior Soldiers

Unit 1 : Lesson 5

Staying Connected

PURPOSE : To help the children understand that to continue to be a true Follower of Jesus they need to stay connected with Him.

'We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient Faith in Christ.'

Doctrine 9

'To keep good, we trust in Jesus to help us and we must go on doing as he wants us to do.'

Doctrine 9

(simplified version)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

John 15:1–11 (the vine and the branches)

Matthew 14:22–33 (Jesus walks on water)

The emphasis in this lesson is on 'staying connected' to Jesus in order to continue to be a follower of His. We need to be clear on this truth ourselves in order to communicate it clearly to the children in a way that will make a connection in their life and worldview.

There is a theological school of thought that says once you are saved (i.e. make a commitment to Christ) you are always saved. It follows that some people then live in whatever fashion and according to whatever moral code they choose, because they have been 'saved'.

The Salvation Army - as with most orthodox evangelical denominations - believes that while salvation comes when you accept Jesus into your life, continuance in a 'state of salvation' requires ongoing commitment to Christ and ongoing faith in Christ.

This lesson will teach children that being saved and living in relationship with Christ is a life-choice and daily lifestyle, not a one-off event.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Print off a Home & Beyond card for each child.
- Collect all items that you will need for the Burma trail activity.

For 'The Main Thing'

- Get a copy of *Basil the Branch* from Koorong/Word or from The Lost Sheep website
- Collect items that you will need for the story of Jesus walking on water
- Bibles

For 'Tying In'

- extas, pens and pencils
- Small appliance for the 'Tying in' illustration
- Masking tape for walking the line illustration
- Mobile phone for final 'Tying in' illustration

For 'Home & Beyond'

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

Connecting In

Burma Trail Activity

- Put together an obstacle course for the Junior Soldiers to navigate through. This might include:
  - → Turned-over chairs
  - → Bucket of water
  - → Pile of eggs spread out on a drop cloth
  - → A rope tiedbetweentwoobjects
  - → Pillows
  - → Boxes
  - → Pile of books etc.
- You will need to place a rope through the obstacle course, threading it through and over and around and under items, e.g. under the legs of a chair, over a bucket of water etc.
- Each child will need to be blindfolded for this activity.
- It would be good to have a couple of leaders or children (who do not want to participate) to be standing around the course at specific areas.
- Send the children off at safe intervals.
- Tell them that they are to navigate through the course but at no stage are they to let go of the rope or they will be disqualified. The rope is their lifeline and in order to complete the challenge they need to stay connected to the rope, even at the end.
- Tell them that you will give them some help and guidance along the way but that others may try to distract them or even tempt them to let go of the rope.
- Arrange some of the leaders/older children to be around the obstacle course. You many like them to tempt the children with chocolate to let go of the rope, e.g. 'If you let go of the rope I will give you a chocolate bar or a bag of lollies.' You may also like to have some people throwing soft balls or paper balls at those that are on the rope to distract them and try to get them to let go of the rope. I am sure you can organise some distractions.
- **Link:** When the children have completed the course ask these questions;
  - → How did you feel doing this activity?
  - → Did you like being blindfolded? Why/why not?
  - → Was it easy to follow the instructionsandthecourse?Why/whynot?
  - → Were you distracted or tempted by others trying to get you to let go of the rope?
  - → How did this make you feel?

- It is difficult to fully trust when placed in a situation like this, it is also difficult to focus just on the voice that is going to lead you in the right direction, especially when there are so many distractions and temptations along the way. Today we are going to explore how it is important to stay focused and connected with Jesus. We need to put our trust in Him and continually listen to his directions for us.

Human Tangle…

- Get everyone to stand in a circle.
- Everyone must place their hands into the middle and join hands with two other people in the circle and not those who are directly next to them. This creates a human tangled chain.
- Those in the chain need to stay connected and focused in order to weave their way to form one big circle.
- If you have a large group, you might like to have two groups and make it a competition to see who finishes first.
- **Link:** Ask the children these questions:

  → How hard is it to stay connected while trying to untangle your chain?
  → Is it easy to stay focused on the task and trying to work out the next move?

The Main Thing

Basil the Branch ...

- You can get *Basil the Branch* (a Lost Sheep book) from Koorong/Word, you can also get it in big book form or the best way is to download a screen copy from the website – www.lostsheep.com.au
- Read the story
- Talk about staying connected with the vine
- Find and read together the scripture John 15:1–11
- Focus on verses 4–8
- Ask the kids:
  - → What stands out for you in these verses?
  - → What do you think God is saying?
  - → What do you like about these verses?
  - → Do you have any questions from reading this passage?

(It is important to engage with the Junior Soldiers and the scripture in this way. It is important to help them to consider what God is saying to them and being able to discuss and explore it together. For some groups who are not familiar with exploring in this way it might take a while to develop the skills of sharing and questioning together. It is important for you, as the leader, to ask probing questions to continue the discussion but - as you are exploring together - not feeling like you have to have all the answers. It is ok to say 'I am not sure about that' 'What do you think?' 'Maybe I can try and find out'.)

- Reinforce with the kids that it is important to stay connected with Jesus. He is our vine. When we have made a decision to follow Jesus we need to stay connected with Him, keep our focus on Him and follow His guidance. Just like when you make a new friend, in order to continue to call them your 'friend' you need to do 'friend' things, e.g. talking to each other, hanging out together, caring about each other etc.

- ‘One of the key Salvation Army beliefs is just what we have talked about today. In order to continue to be a follower of Jesus, we have to stay connected and focused on Him. It is not the case that when we make a decision to follow Jesus, everything just automatically happens all by itself. We have to actively want to stay connected with Him.’

Jesus walks on the Water ...

- Matthew 14:22 - 33 is a great story that can be shared with the kids in a number of ways.
- You can dramatise the story, using people to be the waves and water, the boat and all the characters in the story. It is important to involve everyone in the story and experience it rather than just be an onlooker.
- The other options with this story are making a storyboard. You could use large sheets of butchers paper or a whiteboard or just small sheets of paper and get children to identify what are the key elements or images that come out of the story, and then make a visual representation of it. This can also be done by using photos to create a visual representation of the key elements of the story.
- However you decide to engage with the story, it is important to place emphasis on staying focused on Jesus.

- **Questions**
  - → What happened to Peter when his focus was not on Jesus?
  - → What distracted him?
  - → How do we keep focused on Jesus?
  - → What are some of the things that distract us?
  - → Is there something that would take our focus fully away from Jesus? Would we then be disconnected?

There are times when keeping our focus on Jesus and being His follower can be difficult. There are many things that compete for our attention, interest, commitment and time. To continue to be a follower of Jesus, our focus needs to be on Him - we need to be connected to Him.

Tying In

In this section we are trying to solidify the teaching of doctrine nine with the children. A key way of doing this is to give them a visual image to remember and ‘hang’ their understanding on. We have included a couple of illustrations that you can share with the kids and then they will be asked to create their own illustration or story that will convey this truth.

- Have a blender, food processor or any other small appliance to use for this illustration.
- ‘When these items are in full use, sometimes they move around a little on the bench. So imagine this appliance gently pulling on the power cord. If this in not checked, it will continue to pull on the cord and might eventually come out of the wall. What happens then? The appliance stops working; it has stopped being connected to the power source.’

- You will need a line of masking tape laid out on the floor.
- ‘If you were going to walk along this line of tape without wobbling you would probably focus directly ahead or look down and focus on the line of tape. If you had to look at 10 different things while you were walking, your focus would be all over the place and you would become wobbly in your walking style.’

- You will need a mobile phone to use for this illustration.
- 'Sometimes, mobile phone reception can be bad even to the point of dropping out; the signal gets lost. When you go through a tunnel the reception will cut offcompletely . The further you get away from the phone tower the weaker your signal will be, or if something strong gets in between you and the signal (e.g. the tunnel wall) then the signal will be lost.'
- What is the key message that is shown from theses illustrations about being a follower of God?
- Create your own illustration or story to convey this truth. The children could work in pairs or small group to create their own image of the message.
- Pray together as a group. Sit or stand in a circle. It would be good if everyone could either hold hands to pray or link arms (depending on your group). Pray for the person to your right, pray that they will stay connected to Jesus and continue to be His friend.

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.

Staying connected ...

- 'The challenge for this week is to look at how you are staying connected with your friend Jesus.'
- 'On at least three occasions through the week, write down how you have connected with Jesus and focused on being a good friend with Him.'
- 'Ask a couple of family members how they stay connected with Jesus too.'



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