

Junior Soldiers

Unit 2 : Lesson 1



I say, I say, I say!

PURPOSE : For children to explore and understand the power and impact of the tongue, the damage it can do and how God can help us to use it wisely.

'It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that.

By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it.'

James 3:5-6 (TM)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

James 3:1-10

Ephesians 4:29

Colossians 3:16 & 17

This lesson focuses on our choice of words - whether spoken or written - and picks up on the part of the Junior Soldier promise that says a Junior Soldier promises to 'lead a life that is clean in thought, word and deed'.

While our actions are more commonly deliberate and thought-out, our words can sneak out sometimes before we even know what we're saying! It's vital that we learn, at an early age, that our words can have real power and influence and, subsequently, our choice of words is important.

As you move through this lesson, be careful to not let the children get carried away with their stories or examples - you don't want the lesson to become a competition about who can say the worst word or come up with the funniest/most biting insult. Positive speech is to be encouraged and potentially damaging words should be quickly cut off.

Remember that, in this day and age, we also need to include such things as text messaging and social networking online when it comes to learning how to communicate positively.

By the end of this lesson, Junior Soldiers should understand the importance of choosing their words carefully and they should have an idea of the sort of language that God finds pleasing.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- 2 sets of hand weights (1kg or 1.5kg will be best for this activity)
- A stopwatch or something to time the children with in 'No put downs'

For 'The Main Thing'

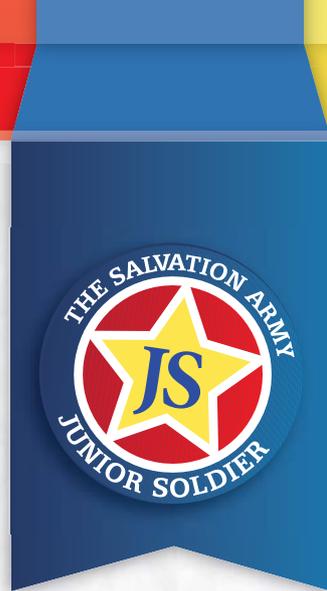
- List of tongue twisters
- A banana and tube of toothpaste
- Plain T-shirt and sticky address labels

For 'Tying In'

- A large piece of paper or card (A2 or A3 would be best) for each child
- Textas
- Bibles
- Materials to creatively share the passage (e.g. playdough/plasticine or paper magiclay, paint, a camera etc.)

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Bright coloured sticky notes (hearts or stars)
- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child.



Connecting In

No Put Downs ...

- You will need two sets of hand weights (1 or 1.5kg sets will work well).
- Two children face each other holding one set of hand weights (one in each hand) with their arms straight out in front of them (arms straight out from the shoulder).
- The children start at the same time.
- Have the children to see how long they can hold the weights without 'putting them down'.
- Record the times.
- Let all the children have a turn and see who can hold the weights for the longest time.
- **Link:** Why do you think we called the activity 'No Put Downs'? (Let the children make some suggestions before moving on.) We called it this because this is what we want: we want everyone to be strong and to use their words to encourage and build people up, not to use words that are nasty or putting people down.
- Has anyone ever used hurtful words towards you? How did it feel? What did you do? What did you feel like doing? (Important in this section to not go over the words that were said, just that they were words that were hurtful and not encouraging.)
- Have you ever used your words in 'put downs' towards other people?
- The tongue (our words) can be used to build people up or to put them down. Our words can be very hurtful and do a lot of damage; they can hurt people's feelings, spread things that are untrue, say things that are just to boast, etc. Today we are going to look at the part of our Junior Soldier promise that talks about being 'clean in word' and explore in the Bible what it teaches us about our tongue and the words we speak.



Terrifically terrible tongue twisters...

- For this activity you will just need a bunch of tongue twisters and see if kids can say them 10 times to complete the challenge.
- There are a few tongue twisters listed below but you might like to google some more and provide a list for the children to choose from.

- You might even want to give the kids the opportunity to create their own tongue twisters with a focus on the first letter of their name.
 - *Double bubble gum: bubbles double*
 - *Black bug bit a big black bear. But where is the big black bear that the big black bug bit?*
 - *A big bug bit the little beetle but the little beetle bit the big bug back.*
 - *An ape hates grape cakes*
 - *A skunk sat on a stump. The stump thought the skunk stunk. The skunk thought the stump stunk . What stunk: the skunk or the stump?*
 - *If Freaky Fred found fifty feet of fruit and fed forty feet to his friend Frank, how many feet of fruit did Freaky Fred find?*



- **Link:** Have you ever been tongue tied? Not when you were trying to say a tongue twister but just when you were trying to say something?
- It can be tricky trying to get the right words out in order to say what you are thinking or what you are trying to communicate. There are times when we get angry or upset or flustered by something and it can be even more difficult to get the right words out. Has this ever happened to you? (Give the kids opportunity to share.)
- I wonder if there has been a situation where you were trying to tell someone something and they have totally taken it the wrong way or misunderstood what you were trying to say.
- We need to be very careful with the words we use, sometimes things can be taken the wrong way or - because we have got upset or angry or frustrated - things have been misunderstood or not come out the way we intended. Today we are going to look today at the part of our Junior Soldier promise that talks about being 'clean in word' and explore in the Bible what it teaches us about our tongue and the words we speak.

The Main Thing

You Can't Take It Back...

Read James 3:1-10 together.

I am sure that you have all had the experience of saying something that you would like to take back...

Toothpaste & Bananas

- You will need a small tube of toothpaste and a banana for this illustration.

Do you like bananas? I love bananas but sometimes don't want to eat the whole thing. (*While talking to the kids start to peel the banana, break off a piece and eat it.*) You know once you peel a banana, you can't close it back up again. I think that that is the worst thing about bananas, especially if you only want a little bit.

With toothpaste you only need a little bit of the toothpaste to clean your teeth with, however, have you ever got a little bit carried away and squeezed out too much? (*At this point squeeze out at least half of the tube of toothpaste onto a volunteer's hand for the illustration.*) If you squeezed out too much, could you get it back in?

I am sure that there are some creative ways that you could try and seal up the banana or try to get some of the toothpaste back into the tube, but this would not be an easy thing. Our words can be like a banana that you can't close and the tooth-paste that you can't get back into the tube - once you have said them you can't take them back.

- I wonder if you have ever had a situation where you have said something and straight away you wish you could take those words back? Maybe you were goofing off with some friends and said something hurtful about someone else and then found that that person was standing behind you.

Maybe you were frustrated and you said something that you didn't really mean. Maybe you have said something that was a bit of an exaggeration, making something out to be bigger or better than it is, inflating the numbers or adding untruths. I think we have all had times like these. (*Get the children to share some examples in small groups or with the person next to them.*)

- Why do you think we do this?
- Is it easy to take those words back or to fix them?
- Has it happened to you? How did you feel?
- What does James have to say about this in the passage we just read?
- Read James 1:19 'Be quick to listen and slow to speak'. What is the Bible telling us here?



Labels can stick

- You will need a plain T-shirt and some sticky address labels for this illustration.
- Choose a volunteer to come and put on the plain T-shirt and have someone ready, maybe even two people, to write things on the sticky labels.
- 'I am sure that you have been called names before or had people put labels on you such as 'smart' 'funny' 'sporty' 'nerdy' etc. Let's put some of those names and labels on our stickers today and place them on....'
- These words can hurt and stick to us; they can impact what we think about ourselves.
- Some of you might have seen the movie *Despicable Me*. At the end of the movie, when Gru has built his rocket, he has a flashback to all the times when he had created rockets or pictures of them and his mum had not been encouraging. This is something that stayed with him and impacted what he thought about himself. Even if these words aren't true, if people say them often enough we will start to believe them.
- Take the T-shirt off, leaving the stickers on, and put it back on your volunteer inside out.
- So looking at everything looks okay but on the inside the hurtful words and labels are still there. Even though we can look like everything is okay, the words and labels that others place on us still impact who we are and how we think about ourselves.
- We need to choose to not let the labels stick. However, we can't do this on our own. Jesus is the only one that can help us not to let them stick and for us not to believe all the negative comments and names others say about us.
- If you have a large group you may like to divide into smaller groups for these questions.



- I wonder if there are some labels that people have said about you that have hurt you.
- Other than speaking words, what are some other ways we might communicate in a hurtful way?
- (Important to talk about inappropriate internet use, i.e. email, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- How does God want us to use our words?
- God wants the words coming from our mouth to encourage and help others, to show honesty and care. I wonder how you can live that out? (Ask for some examples of this.)
- Share together in prayer, focusing on saying sorry for the hurtful things that we say but also for Jesus to help us not take on labels that others might try to put on us.

Tying In

Choose one of the activities below for your 'tying in' activity.

100 Words of Praise ...

You might have seen a poster that includes the following 100 words of praise for a child.

Read through the words of praise with the Junior Soldiers.

Give the Junior Soldiers a large piece of paper or card (A2 or A3 would be best) and encourage them to create their own 100 words of praise poster. It might include some of the words/phrases below but it is important for the kids to create some of their own as well.

- They could draw their name in bubble letters and write all the words and phrases in it.
- They could choose a shape (square, diamond, heart, person outline) and place all the words inside the outline.
- They could cut the paper/card into a shape and then fill the space with the words/phrases.
- Display the posters in the foyer at church.
- It would be great if the Junior Soldiers could share during the meeting some of the things they have learnt about the tongue and the words that we speak, and to share some praise words with the congregation.

Hey, I love you! * Way to go * You're special * Outstanding *
Excellent * You are fun * You're a real trooper * You're on target *
Outstanding performance * Great * Looking good * You brighten my day *
Good * Well done * Remarkable * Super * I knew you could do it * Nice work
What an imagination * I'm proud of you * Super star * Fantastic
You're on top of it * You're catching on * Now you've got it * How smart
Good job * You are the clever one * You are just delightful *
That's incredible * Remarkable job * You're beautiful * You're a winner
You make me happy * Dynamite * Hip, Hip Hooray * You're important
Magnificent * Beautiful * Super job * You're the best * You're on your way
How nice * You're spectacular * You are a Darling * Beautiful work
Good for you * Nothing can stop you now * You're fantastic * Wow
You're a legend * Great discovery * You've discovered the secret
Fantastic job * You're a champion * Awesome * You're precious
Marvellous * You are responsible * Terrific * You are exciting *
You're growing up * You tried hard * Neat * You figured it out
You're unique * What a good listener * You're a treasure * Super work
You mean a lot to me * You're a good friend * You deserve a big hug
You are an absolute gem * You're incredible * I like you * Now you're flying
I respect you * You're sensational * Phenomenal * Hooray for you * You care
Creative job * You belong * You made my day * You are nice to be with
You mean the world to me * You're important * You've got a friend
You're a joy * You make me laugh * You're A-OK * You're my buddy
I trust you * You're perfect * Bravo * You're wonderful *
A big kiss * Exceptional performance * That's correct * Hey, I love you!
PS Remember a HUG is worth 1000 words!



Creatively Sharing Scripture ...

Read James 3: 1–10 together a couple of times.

- Ask the children what the key phrases or parts of the passage were. Highlight at least six key parts (*there might be more but for the activity you will not want to do more than 10; it's good to still write down all the parts that the kids think are important but, at the end, choose which ones stand out*).
- What sorts of images would represent or communicate these key parts of the passage?
- Choose, as a group, a way to creatively share this passage, e.g. playdough/ plasticine or paper magiclay, you could set these up for people to look at or take photos of them for use in a PowerPoint while the scripture is being read. Alternately, take photo's with the kids and props and dress ups or draw/paint posters as part of a storyboard. (*Your group might have some more suggestions as to how they might like to do this*).
- This scripture can then be presented creatively in church, in the foyer or during the service in a PowerPoint.



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.

Post It Notes...

Buy some bright coloured sticky notes for your Junior Soldiers to take home with them, preferably hearts or stars.



Use the sticky notes throughout the week to use your words in a positive way.

Leave random notes in special places for specific people, e.g. on the bench for Mum saying how much you appreciate all she does. In someone's lunch box to brighten their day. On someone's pillow. In the car. In their Bible or book they are reading, etc.

Make sure you leave one for your Big Bud, or maybe even send it in a card.

These sticky notes can also be a reminder to use your tongue to pray for these people this week.

