

Junior Soldiers

Unit 4 : Lesson 10



Salvation Army Distinctives – part 2

PURPOSE : For children to explore and understand the reasons behind why we do some distinctive things in The Salvation Army.

‘We’re an Army saved, by blood and fire made strong;
And with righteousness we mean to conquer wrong;
This shall be our universal battle song:
There’s salvation for the world.’

William Pearson (1896 Salvation Army Song Book)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Chosen to be a Soldier, Chapter 5, sections 3.2 and 3.3

1 Corinthians 12:12–31

The Salvation Army in the Body of Christ

(a small book available from Salvationist Supplies or readable online at the IHQ website in the ‘About us’ section).

This lesson is part 2 on the ‘distinctives’ of The Salvation Army - that is, what it is that makes our denomination different from all other Christian denominations. Part 1 can be found in Unit 2, Lesson 10 and covers more things to do with the unique identity of The Salvation Army (focusing on the uniform/flag/crest/shield).

We want the children to understand why we do what we do in the Army, and it is important that they have some knowledge of the thought/motivation behind Army practices, symbols and beliefs.

While the Bible passage above, from 1 Corinthians, is normally used to discuss different individual spiritual gifts, it also has an important application to the whole ‘body’ of the Christian Church. Each Christian denomination is different in some way from all others: it may be in the way they worship, the doctrines they teach, their internal structure, their mission focus or some other area of church life. However, all parts of the Church are important and appeal to people for different reasons.

The Salvation Army is known as the ‘practical’ or ‘activist’ church. We are a part of the universal Church that particularly focuses on service, on community and on living out our beliefs in practical ways. We are not known for our academics, famous preachers, monasteries or towering cathedrals - we are known for helping people and for ‘being’ Christ’s hands in the world.

As we continue to show our Junior Soldiers how we are distinct from other churches, we want to explain some of the details of Army life, and today we focus on the mercy seat and holiness table, the sacraments (religious ceremonies), the Army motto and the salute.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- 'If Only I Had a Green Nose' by Max Lucado

For 'The Main Thing'

- Bibles

For 'Tying in'

- Access to a 'mercy seat' and 'holiness table'

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home and Beyond cards for each child



Connecting In

If only I had a green nose...

For this connecting in activity you will need a copy of Max Lucado's book *If Only I Had a Green Nose*. (If you are having difficulty finding a copy, check with your divisional headquarters as they may have one you can borrow.)

The blurb from the book says: 'From the heart of author Max Lucado, once again we're off on a new adventure into the wonderful world of Wemmickville. Our faithful Wemmick, Punchinello, along with his close Wemmick friends, Lucinda and Twiggy discover an important lesson: that changing their appearance to fit in is like chasing the wind. Willy Withit has just rolled into town, and he's got a message for any Wemmick who wants to get with it - yep, you guessed it - 'A green nose is the most fabulous new thing of all time.' And best of all, 'It's free!' (minus charges for labor, fad tax, rash liability, and a two-hour warrantee.) Punchinello soon realizes that keeping up with everyone else in Wemmickville is not only exhausting, but very costly!'

Read the story to the children.



Link: Have you ever tried to be like someone else? Have you wanted to wear clothes the same as someone, have the same stuff, do the same things?

- I wonder why Punchinello wanted to be like the others?
- Why do you think we want to be like others?
- Do you think this is a good thing? Why/why not?

Even though we might try to be like others for a number of reasons, God has created us in a unique and one of a kind way. Just like God has created us in a special way, so too has he created The Salvation Army in a unique and individual way. Today we are going to explore some things that The Salvation Army does that makes it unique and different from many of the other churches.

The Main Thing

Imagine if everyone at your school behaved exactly like you: would it be a good school or not? Imagine if all of the different sorts of fruit disappeared and we only had watermelons; would that be a good thing? Imagine if everyone on a cricket team was a great batsman but a bad bowler: would they win matches?

Christians all around the world like to worship in different ways and do different things to express what they believe and how to be a Christian, so it's wonderful that there are so many different churches that people can choose to go to. The Salvation Army is one of the world's best-known Christian churches and is especially known for the way it helps people and has very practical Christian practices. We are unique among all of the different Christian churches.



Today we are going to look at some things The Salvation Army has or does that make us unique. We are going to talk about the mercy seat and the holiness table, something called 'the sacraments' (which are religious ceremonies), the Salvation Army motto and the Salvation Army salute. Yes, we even have our own way of saluting.

The Sacraments (religious ceremonies)...

Have you ever heard of the term 'the sacraments'? The word comes from an old Latin word that means to 'promise' or 'make a vow' to God and it is used to group together some different religious ceremonies that many Christian churches do, although they're best known from the Catholic church.

Some of these ceremonies are called communion, baptism, confirmation, confession and others.

The Salvation Army also has some religious ceremonies, such as when we enroll a new junior soldier or senior soldier and when we dedicate a baby, and marriage is also considered a religious ceremony because it involves promises made to God.

The most important thing to know about these religious ceremonies is that they are symbolic only.

Hands up if you think you can show us how to hammer a nail into a piece of wood. (*Pick a volunteer.*) Okay, here is your imaginary hammer and imaginary nail and imaginary block of wood, show us what it would look like to hammer that nail into a block of wood. (*Allow them to act it out.*)

Now, having done that, everybody, tell me: is he/she now a qualified carpenter? (*Await replies.*) No, symbolically pretending to hammer a nail into some wood doesn't make you a carpenter.

Doing a religious ceremony doesn't make you a Christian and doing a religious ceremony doesn't keep you being a Christian. The Founder of The Salvation Army, William Booth, worried that some people might think that if they show up at church and take part in some rituals, they might think they are a Christian - but he stressed that being a Christian means being in a relationship with Christ; someone who follows Jesus.

In the Bible, in the book of Romans chapter 10 verses 9–13 it says (*read the passage*). Believing in God in your heart is far more important than any religious ceremony.

The motto...

- What is a motto? Do you know of any; maybe your school has a motto?
- Can anyone tell me what the official motto for The Salvation Army is?
- Have you heard of the phrase 'Blood & Fire'? Have you seen it anywhere? (*You could show them an Army flag.*)
- Can you tell me what it stands for? (The Army's motto 'Blood & Fire', was developed in order to reduce Salvation Army doctrines into two powerful words. 'Blood' represents the blood of Jesus shed for our sins and 'fire' represents the fire of the Holy Spirit which empowers us.)

'Blood & Fire' is the official motto of The Salvation Army, however, you may have heard a number of other slogans, sayings, phrases etc. that say something important about what The Salvation Army is and what it does. Can you tell me any others?

- 'Saved to Save' or 'Saved to Serve' is what you might have heard people say the S's stand for on the senior soldier uniform. This explains a little bit about who we are - saved people - because of Jesus and because we are saved we serve others and seek to introduce them to Jesus.
- 'Heart to God, hand to man' indicates that we have given our hearts to God and that we use our hands (that is, we work) at helping people. (*You may need to explain that 'man', in this context, is short for 'mankind, and includes everyone'.*)
- 'Christianity with its sleeves rolled up' is a phrase some people use to describe The Salvation Army's very practical style of Christianity.
- 'Serving the lost, the last and the least' is another phrase used to describe the work the Army does for the most disadvantaged in our society.



Having a motto or slogan or catchphrase can help us to remember a significant truth about something. 'Blood & Fire' reminds members of The Salvation Army about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Make up a chant, song, rap or motto that might help you remember something that you believe is central to being a good Christian. It might be something important to you about God or about being in The Salvation Army.

For example, the Junior Soldier promise is made up of a set of key phrases that explain the promises we want to make to God. You could use that for some ideas if you want or you can make one more unique to you.

(It might be good to have a brainstorm about some promises that are listed in the Bible or key verses or some statements that describe The Salvation Army and what they do. This activity could be done as a whole group, in small groups or as individuals. It would be good to have the children to present what they have done, to affirm them and encourage others within the group.)

The salute...

For this section we are going to play a game of 'Captain's coming', the instructions are below. (*This will be a familiar game for most, the key to use in this game is 'Captain's coming' so that the link can be made to the lesson.*)

Assign one person to be the 'Captain' (*usually a leader*). The Captain then is to call out the actions and dismiss the players who don't do the actions quick enough or who break from character. Once the Captain calls an action, each player has 3 or 4 seconds to start performing the action. If they don't find a group fast enough or perform the right action, they are out. Here is an explanation of each of the actions...

- Captain's coming!: Everyone stands at 'attention', saluting, and they can't move from this position until the caller says, 'At ease!' If they laugh or break from attention, they are dismissed.
- Port: Players run to the left.
- Starboard: Players run to the right.
- Bow: Players run to the front.
- Stern: Players run to the back.
- (*For an added bonus, be sure to point the right direction the first few times and then begin to point the opposite way occasionally. You will be surprised how many go the way you point instead of the right direction.*)
- Captain's daughter: thrust out right hip, placing right hand on that hip, take left hand and make a big exaggerated wave and put hand on the back of your head while saying 'Woo oo!'
- Hit the deck: fall to the floor on your stomach with arms and legs spread out.
- Sea sick: pretend to throw up.
- Man the lifeboats!: find a partner, sit on the floor facing each other, holding hands and rocking backwards and forwards singing 'row, row, row your boat' or call out a number and the children have to get into groups and row their lifeboat.
- Raise the flag: pretend to go hand over hand pulling on a rope to raise a flag up a flagpole
- Scrub the decks: pretend to clean the floor with their hands.
- Man overboard: on their backs waving legs and arms in air as if they are drowning.
- Walk the plank: walk in a perfectly straight line, one foot exactly in front of the other, heel to toe with arms outstretched to the sides.
- Submarines: lie on the floor with one leg raised like a periscope.

Familiarise the children with the instructions and the actions that they need to do before starting the game. It would be good to have a couple of leaders watching for those that are last to complete the instructions. When finished, get the children to sit in a circle.

- When we say 'Captain's coming' what did you do? (*stand at attention and salute*)
- Why do we salute? (*a sign of respect for a superior*)
- Why do we salute like that? (*it originated from the Victorian-era practice of 'doffing your hat'/lifting your hat off by the visor when meeting someone; a salute raises the hand there but doesn't 'doff the hat'*)
- In The Salvation Army, how do you think we salute? (*raise right hand to shoulder height and point index finger upwards*)
- I wonder if you know why. (*We point to God to give him the glory, i.e. it's not about me or you, it's about God, and we point towards heaven because as follower's of God we are citizens of His Kingdom.*)



The Salvation Army salute is used during Salvation Army ceremonies (*like enrolments and swearing-in*) and at official formal meetings, especially by the territorial commander. It's an easy salute to remember; should we practice it a few times?

Tying In

The Mercy Seat/Holiness Table...

For this section you will need to take the children into the space where the mercy seat and holiness table are. If this is not practical during this time (*Junior Soldier at your corps might be held during the one of your services*), either see if you can bring these items into your meeting room or see if you have some items that could be used to represent them for this activity.

Mercy Seat: This is normally a wooden bench at the front of the church where people can kneel to pray, sometimes with someone kneeling with them to pray for them. In the Bible, the mercy seat was the section on top of the Ark of the Covenant (*an ornate chest discussed in Exodus 25 and holding the tablets with the ten commandments*) and is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments (*although the NIV translates it as 'the atonement cover'*).

Holiness Table: This is generally a small table placed with the mercy seat. It is often used for signing documents on when a soldier is enrolled or sworn in, or used to place special collections on (for example, for Self-Denial Appeal). It can also be knelt at for prayer.

It is important that we remember that these are not the only places where we can talk to and connect with God. God is not in the furniture, the furniture is not holy but a special place set aside as one place that we can go to meet with and spend time with God talking about anything that we are feeling at that particular time.

(*Give the children the opportunity to spend time with God; you may like to have something that will help the children to focus on a particular topic, e.g. some pictures or an item etc. or you might like to play a song/music and let the children have some quiet time to reflect and talk with God. Finish this time with prayer from one of the leaders, remembering to thank God that we can connect with him wherever we are and not just in special places set aside for this opportunity.*)

Home & Beyond

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

My family...

Just like The Salvation Army has distinct practices, so will your family have certain things that make it special and unique.

- Take some time to think about and brainstorm together about what some of those things are.
- You might like to make a rap/song/poem/motto that includes some of those unique things that you do as a family. Share this with the group next time you meet.

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