

Junior Soldiers

Unit 4 : Lesson 3



God loves us - just because!

PURPOSE : For children to explore and understand that God's grace is given to them regardless of what they do or who they are, and that-when they accept God's free gift-others will be able to see that they belong to God.

'We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.'

Doctrine 8

'Salvation is a free gift from God. It is received when we believe in Jesus; and when we are saved we know it.'

Doctrine 8 (simplified version)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Romans 3:22-24

Romans 5:1-11

Handbook of Doctrine, p.163-168

The doctrine of grace is one of the things that makes Christianity unique. That we can win God's favour and love without doing anything to deserve it is an odd concept not only for many non-believers but also for believers of other faiths.

The Salvation Army's *Handbook of Doctrine* says: 'We are accepted by God as we are. We do not deserve such acceptance, neither can we earn it, or repay it' (p.163).

It also advises us of the correct response to this free gift from God: 'Faith is our personal response to the grace of God. It is a trusting acceptance of the good news of the gospel, that God accepts us because of Jesus Christ. It involves commitment to him, an obedient response to his goodness and a desire to follow him in the way of discipleship' (p.165).

In today's lesson, the children will learn about the wonder of grace and that God loves us 'just because'. We do not deserve it. We have not earned it. You can't buy it. You can't fight for it. We just receive it in faith.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In' –

- Party decorations.
- Party food.
- Items that you need for a couple of party games.
- A bunch of shopping catalogues for a variety of stores.

For 'The Main Thing' –

- Six wrapped items: wrapped so that you can reasonably guess what it might be from how it is wrapped.
- A box also wrapped with a piece of paper in it with the word GRACE written/printed on it.
- A bottle of milk and a glass

For 'Tying In' –

- The attached S.O.A.P. page, with enough copies printed out for all children and leaders.
- Textas, pens and highlighters.
- Bibles

For 'Home & Beyond' –

- Print off the Home and Beyond cards for each child

Connecting In

Let's party – Just Because...

For this activity you will need to arrange the room to look like you are having a party, e.g. balloons, streamers, special tablecloth, etc. and have some yummy food to eat together (being mindful of any food allergies that your children might have) and a couple of party games, e.g. pass the parcel, musical statues, pin the tail, etc.

When the children arrive they will know that something special is happening and want to know what the party is for. 'Today we are having a party for no reason; just because we wanted to have a party with you.'

Share some party food and play some party games together before pausing to make the link into the next section of the lesson.

Link: We have had a party today because we like you. We like having you around and want to celebrate you. God loves you; He likes having you around and wants to celebrate you.

Sometimes you will have a party because

- It is your birthday and you deserve a party or celebration.
- You received a special award or achieved something. e.g. won a premiership, and you deserve a party or celebration when this happens.

But today our party is '**just because**'. We are going to explore the gift/the party/the celebration that God gives us/offers us not because we deserve it but just because He loves us and wants to be in a relationship with us.



Buying Presents – Just Because...

For this activity you will need a bunch of shopping catalogues from a variety of stores.

We are going to buy a present today for someone you love, mum, dad, brother, sister, grandparent, friend, etc. Not for any particular reason, like a birthday or Mother's Day, but just because.

Have a look through the catalogue with some of those people in mind: can you find something that jumps out at you that you know they will love and you want to buy it for them, just because.



Give the children a little bit of time to browse through the catalogues and then have some of them share what they would like to buy and for whom they would buy it.

Link: We have been looking at some things that we would like to buy for people that we love and not for any particular reason; you just want to show them your appreciation. The gifts that we have looking at today are to be given to these people **'just because'**.

I am sure that there have been times for you when you have been down the street shopping or when you have been looking through the catalogues at home, and you have seen something that you know someone else would love. And even though there is no specific reason, you would like to buy it for them (if you could afford it) just because.

Sometimes we will give or receive a gift because:

- It is a special day, like your birthday, when you deserve to be given gifts and celebrate.
- You have done something really well or something nice and you deserve to be given gifts, shown appreciation or celebrate.

But today the gifts we are looking to give are not for any reason but **'just because'**. We are going to explore the gift/ the party/the celebration that God gives us not because we deserve it but just because He loves us and wants to be in a relationship with us.

The Main Thing

What is inside the present?

You will need to wrap some items (approximately six would be good) for this activity. Wrap them in a particular way that the children might be able to guess or have a bit of an idea of what it might be from looking at it, e.g. ball, toy car or truck, book, tennis racquet etc.

You will also need a wrapped box with a piece of paper in it with the word GRACE written on it.

- Have all the presents lined up on a table out the front so the children can see.
- Ask the children if they can guess what the presents out the front are (*if they are having difficulty with some then you could help by giving some clues*).
- Leave the GRACE box till last; it will be the hardest as there is not really any indication of what is inside.
- When all the other presents have been opened, ask the children for some suggestions as to what would be inside the last present (the box), when they give up, ask a child to come and open it and hold up what is inside.
- GRACE - 'What does this mean? What is GRACE?' (*Encourage some brainstorming, e.g. a girl's name, what you say at dinnertime etc.*)

Remember we provided a party and presents just because we love you - well God loves us just because He wants to. God wants to be in relationship with us and know us and spend time with us because He simply loves us so very much.

We don't deserve it, and that's what this word 'grace' means: getting something freely that we don't deserve.

Imagine if you loved others even if they didn't deserve it. Do you think people would see there was something different about you if you showed grace to others?

God wants us to be so full of His love for us that it overflows. Imagine if I had a glass out for a drink of milk and I tried to pour a whole bottle of milk into it; the milk would overflow wouldn't it? Well, God loves us so much, that it should 'overflow' out of our lives and into those we spend time with. (*You might like to have a glass and some milk to illustrate this point.*)

God's grace is endless. The bottle of milk will eventually run out of milk, but God's grace and love won't run out...ever!



Tying In

Small group S.O.A.P...

For this activity you will need Bibles, printed sheets (as attached), textas, pens, and highlighters.

Divide the children up into small groups for this activity or if you like you might want to invite the Big Buds to come for this part of the session and connect with their little bud. Below are the instructions for each of the letters as the children engage with the passage and with God. It is important that you give guidance on what they need to do, but not guidance on what they see or what God is saying to them.



S stands for Scripture. Read the scripture above; you might like to write it out in your own words or draw a picture that represents the passage.

O stands for observe. What do you see in the passage? What stands out to you?

A stands for apply. From these verses, what has God said to you? How does it connect to you? How do you 'live it out'?

P stands for prayer. Write or draw a prayer in response to what God has said to you today.

When the children are finished, it would be good if the leader or Big Bud could pray for the group.



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.

Just because...at home and beyond

God love you 'just because' with no reason or strings attached. He wants you to also love others without conditions. If you love God and have accepted His gift of grace ('just because') then your behaviour, actions and words should reflect God's love to others.

Do some 'just because' things at home or beyond this week like:

- Someone else's chores.
- Washing the dishes 'just because', not because it is your job.
- Jump in and help clean up at church.
- Go and pick up some rubbish around the school yard without being asked to.

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S.O.A.P

Romans 3:23 & 24

Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory. The free gift of God's grace makes all of us right with him. Christ Jesus paid the price to set us free. (NIRV)

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. (NLT)

All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. But God treats us much better than we deserve, and because of Christ Jesus, he freely accepts us and sets us free from our sins. (CEV)

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