

Junior Soldiers

Unit 6: Lesson 1

Online Meeting Version



FAITH!

PURPOSE: For the children to discuss faith and to explore what faith looks like in relation to the story of Abraham.

“Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.”

Hebrews 11:1 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-19

Genesis 12

Genesis 22

One of the greatest figures in religious history is Abraham; he is honoured in the Christian faith, Judaism and Islam. Abraham is particularly respected for his faith – simple but strong – that flowed through every aspect of his living.

Note, however, that this does not mean he was perfect. Like all of us, Abraham made mistakes and sometimes strayed from a close relationship with God. His story is a very “human” story of faith and, in many ways, a very humble one.

Abraham was not a king or politician, he was not an academic or famous author, he did not win wars or perform miracles ... yet his faith and willingness to obey God changed history and affected the destiny of millions. God can use individuals and single decisions to impact many people.

In our own lives, helping a neighbour with a simple task one day may lead to a closer relationship, an enquiry about faith and, with time, their own conversation and possibly that of their whole family. A simple act of kindness with eternal ramifications.

To have faith doesn't suggest or imply the end of a Christian journey – it signifies a start. Once we claim Christ as our own, we are then called by Scripture to live lives of faith. We must take numerous “leaps of faith” in our lifestyle, relationships and behaviour.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Check the activities for the “Things that don’t make sense” section. Choose which activity you will do and make sure you have everything you may need. Search for the pictures ahead of time and be ready to screen-share them.
- Have all the video links ready to go before the session starts.
- A range of seeds and bulbs.
- A pot with some soil in it, a container of water and a plant of flower.

For 'The Main Thing'

- A copy of *Horton Hears a Who* (optional)
- Bible



Connecting In

Things that don't make sense

Below are some suggestions of things that don't make sense. This includes some images that you could use or some experiments you can do in front of your Zoom session. Check your chosen activity for the specific materials that you will need.

There are two links below of things that “don't make sense” – sucking an egg into a bottle and piercing a balloon without popping it:

“How to pierce a balloon without it popping” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbITdF638XY&t=2s>

“Air pressure the egg and the bottle” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28TlyWdfxxc>

You may also choose to show some optical illusions that don't make sense. If you Google search for “impossible optical illusions” you will find plenty to choose from. Save those images ahead of time so that you can share the pictures on screen. For example:



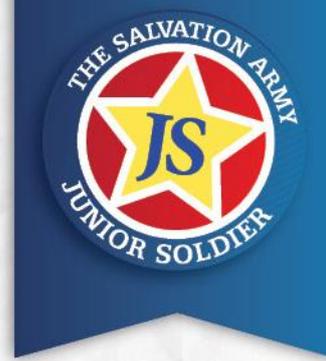
Link...

We have been looking at some pictures or experiments of things that we would say don't make sense. Who would have thought that we could suck an egg into a bottle without cutting it up into little pieces? There are often things that happen in our world that don't make sense, some of those things are in relation to God and the plan that he has for us. Today we are going to explore the story of Abraham and how he had faith in God to be obedient to what God had planned for him, even if it didn't make sense to Abraham.

What a lot of seeds ...

For this activity you will need a range of seeds and bulbs. It would also be good to have a pot with some soil in it, a container of water and a plant or flower.

- Show the seeds/bulbs to the children
- Ask the children to guess what they think each seed/bulb might grow into
- If we leave the seed in the packet on the bench what would happen to it?
- What does a seed/bulb need to grow? (soil, water, sun)
- How do we know that?
- We need to be active; we need to do things for the seeds to help them grow
- But how does the seed actually grow? Is it anything that we do?
- We believe that when we plant the seeds they will become plants



Link ...

We have been talking about seeds and what they need to grow. Looking at something like this (hold up a seed/bulb), we wonder how a tree or a flower or some sort of plant is going to come from it. To look at the seed it doesn't really "make sense" to think that a flower or tree is going to come out of it; that if you put the seed in the ground and – with a bit of water and sunshine – something amazing can happen.

We know though, from books and experience, that if a seed is put in the soil, watered and given some sunshine, that something will grow from it. We believe and have faith this will happen even though to look at this little seed or bulb it doesn't "make sense". There are often things that happen, especially in relation to God, that don't make sense.

Today we are going to explore the story of Abraham and how he had faith in God to be obedient to what God had planned for him even if it didn't seem to make sense.

The Main Thing

Faith...

I wonder if any of you have read the book or seen the movie Horton Hears a Who?

(You may like to watch a clip from the movie or even watch the whole movie the week before you do the lesson. This is a great movie for exploring the topic of faith. Below is a brief outline of the movie for those who might not have seen it. This, along with the questions below, will help the children to engage with the content of the movie and the topic of faith.)

Storyline: One day, Horton the elephant hears a cry for help coming from a speck of dust. Even though he can't see anyone on the speck, he decides to help it. As it turns out, the speck of dust is home to the Whos, who live in their city of Whoville. Horton agrees to help protect the Whos and their home, but this gives him nothing but torment from his neighbours, who refuse to believe that anything could survive on the speck. Still, Horton stands by the motto that, "After all, a person is a person, no matter how small." *Written by Griffin84*

- What did you love about the movie?
- How did Horton try to communicate to others what he believed?
- Horton had faith that there was a town on this tiny clover even though he could not see it. I wonder, if Horton or someone else had told you this, would you have believed them or thought they were crazy? What he was saying just didn't make any sense.

- I wonder if there has been something you believed in and had faith was real, but you had difficulty trying to tell or convince others about it. *(Give the children an opportunity to share, you might also like to share something from your own journey too.)*



We live in a world where some people won't believe something until they can see it, test it, prove it and take it apart to see how it works. But this is not the only way or reason to believe something. Horton just knew that there were people in Whoville. He couldn't prove it, but he believed it.

In Abraham's story, some things seemed to make sense and some things didn't. For the things that seemed unusual or odd, Abraham had to decide if he would ignore or avoid them, or if he would trust God. After all, if God knew what he was doing, shouldn't Abraham just have faith that everything would work out okay?

Put the whiteboard up on the screen or share a screen with a table drawn up with the two headings "makes sense" and "doesn't make sense". Then, with this in mind, take turns reading sections of the Bible: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16, 17-19. If children don't have a Bible at home, perhaps share the passages on the screen to read along together. Encourage discussion, or ask "What side of the screen does this bit belong on?"

- What makes sense in this passage?
- What doesn't make sense in this passage?
- (It is important to get the children to think about this story in relation to their lives and what they would do if God asked them to do these things.) It is easy to think that all this stuff makes sense in relation to the story of Abraham because that is what we might have grown up hearing. But if it was our lives, would it make sense to pack up everything and move to another country just because God told you to?

Faith and believing in God doesn't always make sense, especially to others. There are times when things seem clear to us and we have faith that this is exactly what God wants of us and where he is leading us. But to others, this can look crazy and not make sense.

Create a slide with Hebrews 11:1 on it to share with the children. Reinforce this verse with the children.

Google a picture of Mother Teresa, such as:



Mother Teresa was a nun who worked in Calcutta in India for many, many years. She worked with very poor people, sick people, homeless people and people who had no hope or future. Even though Mother Teresa became famous, she was always very humble. She knew she could only do what she did because God was using her. At one stage, she said: "We can do no great things, only small things with great love."

Abraham, too, never claimed to be great or famous, he simply wanted to be used by God. His faith in God was stronger than what people without faith may have said about the way he lived. He was a strong man of faith even when the world (i.e. people) thought he was just plain wrong.

What God said to Abraham

Pack up and leave
Have a baby
Sacrifice your son

What the world says

Stay, be comfortable
That's impossible
That's wrong



Similarly, for all Christians, even today, the world sometimes doesn't understand how Christians live and what we believe.

What Christians believe vs. What the world says

Choose one child at a time to see if they can match a pair. Be open to more than one possibility! Children might say, "I think b matches with 3."

What Christians Believe	What the world says
a) Serve others and treat them well	1) Do what's best for yourself – you're number one
b) Jesus' teachings have stood for 2000 years	2) Old stuff is bad – new stuff is best
c) We choose to depend on God	3) Don't depend on anyone – be your own person
d) Church is about community and relationships	4) Individualism is the key – you don't need other people
e) Faith is a way to believe things	5) Only believe what can be scientifically tested
f) Giving to those in need is good	6) Wealth wins – the more I have, the better
g) Reflection, peace, calm, silence	7) Be busy, noisy, occupied, in a hurry

Tying In

Planning a holiday ...

We have had a look at some of Abraham's story today and how much he trusted God. He knew that God had his best interests at heart and that God's plan would be best. We are now going to plan a holiday for someone else, remembering that we have their best interests at the heart of what we are doing and thinking ...

Ask the group as a whole, "If you were planning a holiday for one of your friends, what would you consider to make it super wonderful for them?" (Relaxation or adventure? Hot or cold location? Close to home, or far away? Inside activities or outside? etc.) You can use the whiteboard function, and everyone could write, or have a scribe for the group.

Ask the children, "What if this holiday was for you? Does it match up with your likes? Would you be excited to go on this holiday? Would you trust your friend to plan a holiday for you?"

I wonder if you trust God with your life and the things that he has planned for you. I wonder how you fit into God's plan.

Give the children some time to reflect. Allow them some time to write, draw or express themselves in their journal in response to this topic. Ask them to think about the plan that God might have for them and write some suggestions of what this might be. I wonder what they think may happen in their lives. Ask them to silently pray when they have finished in their journals.

Home & Beyond

Put a copy of the Home and Beyond picture up on the screen. Encourage the children to take a screenshot, or to write down the questions and to chat with their Big Bud or parents. The children might like to keep these answers in their journals, where they could also write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.



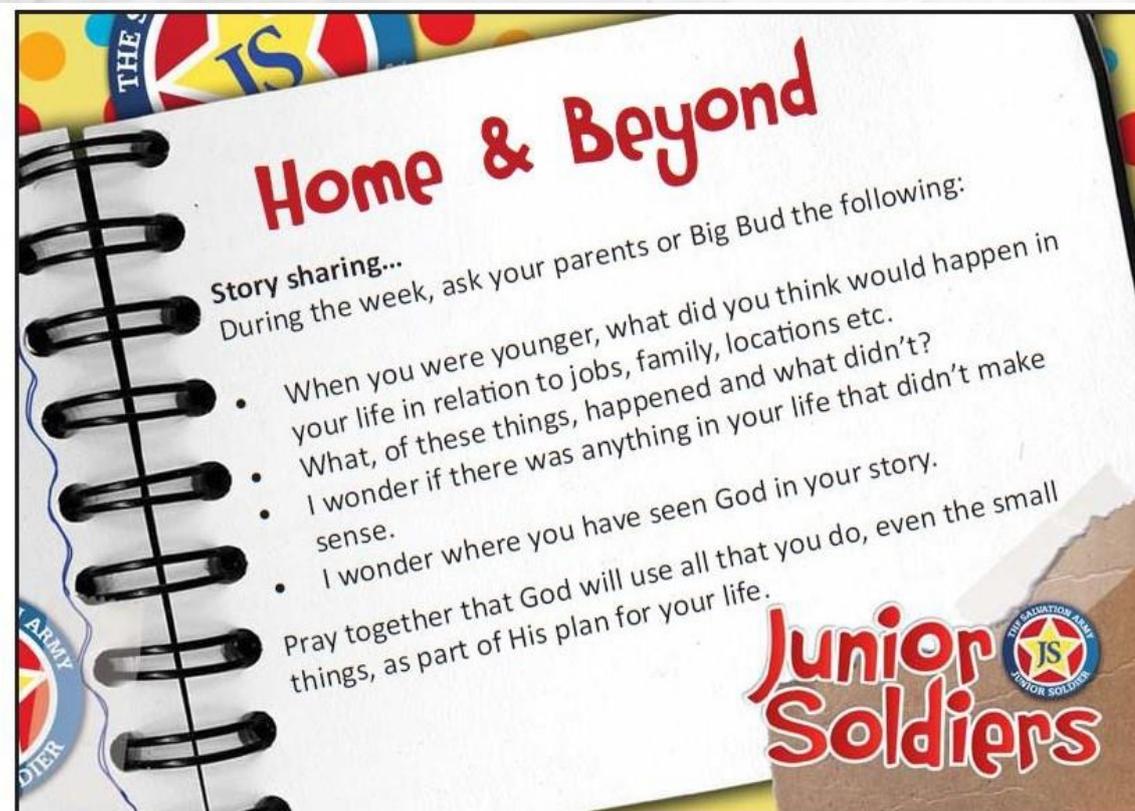
Story sharing ...

During the week, ask your parents or Big Bud the following:

- When you were younger, what did you think would happen in your life in relation to jobs, family, locations etc.?
- What, of these things, happened and what didn't?
- Was there anything in your life that didn't make sense?
- Where you have seen God in your story?

Pray together that God will use all that you do, even the small things, as part of his plan for your life.

Get the children to ask their adults if they can share the adults' story with this group next time you gather online. (Hopefully there are some interesting stories!)



Story sharing...

During the week, ask your parents of Big Bud the following:

- When you were younger, what did you think would happen in relation to jobs, family, locations etc.
- What, of these things, happening and what didn't?
- I wonder if there was anything in your life that didn't make sense.
- I wonder where you have seen God in your story.

Pray together that God will use all that you do, even the small things, as part of his plan for your life.

