

Junior Soldiers

Unit 9 : Lesson 9

Fiery Furnace!



PURPOSE : For the children to explore and understand that if we stand for what is right, others are able to see God.

'My dear friends, stand firm and don't be shaken. Always keep busy working for the Lord. You know that everything you do for him is worthwhile?'

1 Corinthians 15:58 CEV

Consider & Prepare

Read:

2 Thessalonians 3
1 Corinthians 15:58
Matthew 5:14–16
Daniel 3

One of the hardest things that we face as followers of Christ is persecution. People turn away from us because of our beliefs, watch for and judge us with different eyes when we slip up and make unwise choices, and can show blatant disrespect to us simply for standing up for what we believe in.

In some countries, of course, it's even worse, with Christians physically attacked and their houses and churches burnt or desecrated. There were more Christian martyrs in the 21st century than in all previous centuries combined. So don't believe for a moment that persecution of Christians in the world is a thing of the past.

For our Junior Soldiers, bullying is one of the worst things they can go through, which can mean that standing up for their beliefs is a very difficult thing. The lesson today looks at some men who were persecuted for standing up for their faith in God. This lesson is designed to help children explore one of the reasons *why* we should stand up for what we believe. Understanding the reason why we are doing something is key to helping us stay strong and make a commitment to what we believe.

Looking through the scriptures above, you will see that one of the key ideas is how God wants us to stand up for our belief in Him. We are shown how God was present with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as well as how others were able to see clearly how these men stood up for their faith in God. Through this lesson it is important that you help the children understand that when times of persecution and difficulty happen, God will be with us no matter what, and that others might see something of God because of the way we respond in such situations.

When it comes to persecution, remember that it's something God understands only too well: He watched his son whipped, beaten and crucified. God empathises with all those who are persecuted in His name, just as if they are His own children.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Icy-pole sticks
- Lego
- Straws
- Sticky tape
- Balloons
- Nerf guns
- Music

For 'The Main Thing'

- Bibles
- Paper
- Textas
- Play dough/magiclay
- Lego
- Props

For 'Tying In'

- Butchers paper
- Textas

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child.



Connecting In

Strong Structures...

For this activity you will need a range of supplies (icy-pole sticks, Lego, straws, sticky tape, balloons etc.) and also some nerf guns. Split your group into a number of small groups depending on the number of children you have in your group. Each group must be given the same number of resources for this activity.

Explain to the groups that their task is to create the strongest structure they can within the timeframe given e.g. 2–5 minutes. At the end of the time, leaders are going to shoot at the structures with Nerf guns and the longest standing (i.e. most stable) structure will win.

As they are building, you may want to have some music that represents strength playing in the background such as the *Rocky* theme song or 'Eye of the Tiger'.

When the leaders are trying to knock down the structure, you might like to have a Nerf gun for each of them to shoot at the same time, and the last structure left standing wins, or if you only have one Nerf gun, count the number of shots it takes to get each structure to fall and the one that takes the most bullets wins.

Link... 'Today you have been trying to build structures to see whose was the strongest. Well done to this group, who were the winners! Some of the structures were easier to knock down than others and there were some that had a sturdy base and were able to stay strong under pressure.'

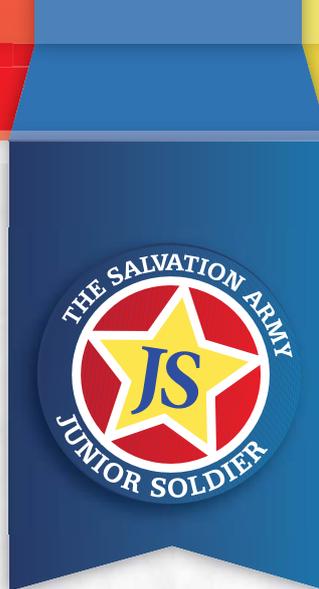
→ I wonder if you have ever found it difficult to be strong in a difficult situation. (*Give the children some time to respond about their experiences.*)

Today we are going to explore a passage in the Bible that looks at three guys who were able to stand up for what they believed in even in very difficult circumstances. We will also have a look at how people were able to see something of God because of the way that they responded in these difficult circumstances.'

Musical statues...

Explain to the children that we are going to play a game of musical statues, but there is a small difference we are going to include in the game today. When the music stops you are going to be asked to make a pose that represents strength/something strong/being strong. You will need to choose some music for this game and it would be good if it was something that represented being strong—it might be the *Rocky* theme or 'Eye of the Tiger', or it could be something like 'My God is So Big'.

- Start the music playing and encourage the children to dance and move as the music plays.
- When the music stops the children should strike a pose. Last child to be still (like a statue) in their pose, is out.
- Encourage the children on their choice of pose and also encourage them to try a different pose each time, not just doing the same pose every time.
- Play the game for as long as you would like; if you don't want to send children 'out', you don't have to—just play the game with no-one eliminated.



Link... 'Today we have been making different strength actions. Some of my favourites were... Standing strong can sometimes be a difficult thing.

- I wonder if you have ever found it difficult to be strong in a difficult situation. (*Give the children some time to respond about their experiences.*)

Today we are going to explore a passage in the Bible that looks at three guys who were able to stand up for what they believed in even in very difficult circumstances. We will also have a look at how people were able to see something of God because of the way that they responded in these difficult circumstances.'

The Main Thing

Exploring Daniel 3...

For this section of the lesson, depending on the size of your group you might like to split into two or three groups, or stay and work together as a whole group.

Have a leader read the passage from Daniel 3. Encourage the children to follow along as the passage is read. To get the children to think about some creative ways to retell and explore this scripture, ask the following questions:

- Who were the main characters in this passage and what were they like?
- What were the main or key events that stood out to you?
- What do you think God is trying to say to us through the events outline in the passage?

Once you have read this passage and answered the questions above, explain to the groups that they will need to choose a creative way to explore and retell the message from Daniel 3. They could do this in any of the following ways or you might like to come up with some other options:

- Rewrite the scripture to make your own drama
- Create a 'story board' using a number of key images
- Use Lego to create the passage and take some photos of the key points that they have identified
- Use some props and children in the group to take still photos to outline the key points from the passage
- Use play dough/paper magiclay to create the key sections of the passage; it would also be good to take some photos of this to use at another stage or share in church
- Rap: you might like to write a few verses to help share the key sections of the passage

Once they have completed this task, if they have divided into more than one group it would be good to share their results with each other. (If they are taking photos, you will need to have the appropriate equipment available to show these or you could share them at a later stage with the whole church).

Tying In

Unpacking the story...

For this activity, get your children to go back into the groups they were in for the previous section. Provide them with butchers paper and textas and have a leader at each group ask the questions listed below. Allow time for children to write or draw their ideas. If the children have created something visual it would be important for them to be able to see this as they go deeper into the passage.

'Today we have looked at Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and recreated their journey as they stood strong against others. The king and others wanted these guys to go against their faith in God and bow down and worship the golden statue, but they stood strong and would not abandon their belief in God. As a result of them standing up for what and who they believed in, they found themselves in a very sticky or, should I say, 'hot' situation; they were thrown into the fiery furnace because they did not bow down to the golden statue. Well, yes, you know the rest of the situation and how God was with them through it all and they helped others see something of God because of their strong faith.

- I wonder if there is anything we can learn from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
- Do you think these guys are crazy or courageous for standing strong for their beliefs?
- I wonder if you were in this situation what you would do. Why?
- Have you ever had a situation where you chose to stand strong for what you believed in?
- How does looking at this story better prepare you for the next time you need to stand strong for what is right?
- How does us standing strong for what is right help others to see God?
- Is there anything that you might be wondering about this situation, e.g. I wonder if the king got rid of the golden statue, or I wonder if anyone else decided not to bow down because of what they guys did and chose to follow God instead.' *(It is a great opportunity to allow the children to sit and wonder about the scripture and all that happens in and around it; I wonder, too, what you might be wondering about this passage.)*

Praying Strong...

Get all the children to stand together in a circle and make a strong pose. Encourage all the children, as you go around the circle, to ask God to help them stand strong in tough situations. When you have been around the circle have a leader pray (in a strong pose) for all the children and that God will be with them through any persecution/tough times they may encounter and that others may see something of God in them because of how they respond during these times.

Home & Beyond

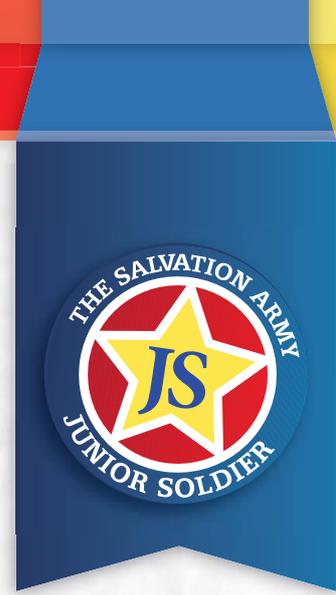
Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

Don't be shaken...

'My dear friends, stand firm and don't be shaken. Always keep busy working for the Lord. You know that everything you do for him is worthwhile.'

1 Corinthians 15:58 CEV

- Make up some actions to help you remember this verse. Make sure you include a strong/firm pose that won't be shaken!
- Ask your parents or Big Bud to share a time with you when God has helped them to stand strong.



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