

# Junior Soldiers

Unit 10 : Lesson 2



## Living with sad stuff and dissatisfaction!

**PURPOSE :** To help the children understand that life is not always going to be easy, but when hard times, sadness and struggles come, God promises to always be with us.

*'You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.'*  
Psalm 23:4 (CEV)

## Consider & Prepare

### Read:

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

Romans 8:28

Job (Read at least chapters 1 and 42 and, if you want, a synopsis of the story in Job.)

Isaiah 55:9

Joshua 1:9

Psalm 23 & 31

This lesson only just scratches the surface of living with sad stuff—an area of theological study known as 'theodicy' which has been the focus of thousands of books and countless sermons. At this stage, we want Junior Soldiers to know that we can cling to God in good and bad times; he promises to be with us always.

It is important to challenge the children on the thinking that nothing bad happens to Christians. This thinking sets our children up for a life that is unrealistic because bad stuff and sadness happens to all of us. The important thing we need to remember—and especially what we want our kids to take away—is that during these hard times we have a special source of peace and strength. Knowing that God is walking with us through these difficult times can help to give strength, courage and comfort.

There are many reasons for suffering exemplified in the Bible, including testing of our faith, character development, spiritual awakening, disciplinary reasons and to teach us something. Remember also that Christ suffered and the apostles often spoke of suffering for God being another element in making us Christlike and understanding what he went through.

However, none of these may make much sense to an eight-year-old whose friend has just been permanently disabled in a car crash, or whose parents are divorcing. Suffering is one of the hardest things to live with and understand.

With this in mind, it is important to be sensitive to those children who might be having a difficult time at present. It is really important that each child has got a Big Bud that they feel comfortable sharing their stuff with, to journey with them through the hard times.

It is also important to be willing to share your own experience (appropriately) of how God has been with you and helped you through difficult times.

### What you will need:

#### For 'Connecting In'

- Dry coffee filter circles (absorbent filter paper)
- Non-permanent black markers/textas
- Saucers
- Water

#### For 'The Main Thing'

- A 24-piece puzzle
- Number each piece of puzzle on the back, in order of how the puzzle goes together
- Small basket or container of items that might make you feel safe; see list below in 'The Main Thing'
- Butchers paper
- Textas
- Bibles or Psalm 23 (CEV) printed out for each group

#### For 'Tying In'

- Paper
- Drawing implements such as textas, pencils, pastels etc.
- Paper magiclay

#### For 'Home & Beyond'

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



## Connecting In

### Experiment of colour...

For this experiment you will need some dry coffee filter circles, some non-permanent black markers/textas, some saucers and some water.

You might like to do this experiment all together so that each of the children can experience it at the same time. If you have a really large group you might like to get the children to work in pairs. Doing the experiment all at the same time allows you to explain how it happens and the application of this activity at the appropriate time.

Use your black marker to draw a spot in the centre of a clean, dry coffee filter circle. Put the circle on a saucer, and put a few drops of water onto the black spot. In a few minutes, you will see rings of colour that come out from the centre of the circle to the edges; you'll see some amazing colours.

- 'Wow, I wonder how this works.'
- 'Why does some black ink separate into many colours on a wet coffee filter?'

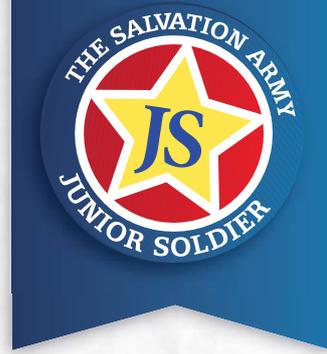
Most non-permanent markers use inks that are made of coloured pigments and water. On a coffee filter, the water in the ink carries the pigment onto the paper. When the ink dries, the pigment remains on the paper. When you dip the paper in water, the dried pigments dissolve. As the water travels up the paper, it carries the pigments along with it.

Different-coloured pigments are carried along at different rates; some travel farther and faster than others. How fast each pigment travels depends on the size of the pigment molecule and on how strongly the pigment is attracted to the paper. Since the water carries the different pigments at different rates, the black ink separates to reveal the colours that were mixed originally to make it black.

**Link...** 'In our lives we all experience things that, at first, might look like difficulties and problems. It can be hard to understand why these things are happening and, perhaps, even why God has allowed them to be. As we look at our filter today, you might say that the black spot we put on the paper first is a bit like those difficulties and problems: dark, black and yuck. I am sure that we would much prefer things to be easy and happy all the time, wouldn't we?

These times are not fun to go through and you might be sad or angry or frustrated. We are lucky, though, because in the Bible God promises that He will be with us always even when tough things are going on. If we are followers of God, even though there will be 'black spots' (hard times) God can help us to see some good things that might come out of these situations—something good—a little bit like the beautiful colours we can now see on our filter.

Today we are going to explore what that might look like; what it looks like to have God with us even when we are going through tough times that might make us sad or disappointed.'



## The Main Thing

### Why?

'Understanding why difficult, sad, disappointing or horrible things happen is a very big question and one that people all around the world ask over and over again. There are also many people who follow God who have tried to come up with an answer for this question. We are going to look at a couple of things that might be helpful for you as you think about this question and what your conclusion might be. It might be that you end up asking even more questions as we explore why these things happen and what we see as God's role with us.'

### Seeing the whole picture...

This is a group activity, which can help the children explore how God can sometimes have a different perspective and see more of the overall picture than we do. We may see things as being awful and sad, but God can see them from a different angle and as part of a bigger picture. Isaiah 55:9 says, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

You will need: a 24-piece puzzle that has each piece numbered 1–24 on the back.

Randomly divide the pieces between the kids in the group, but instruct them to not show anyone else. It is important that they do not show anyone else their piece of the puzzle. Their job is to guess what

the entire puzzle will be if all the pieces were put together. The only information they have is the small piece you have given them. After everyone has had a chance to guess, ask for piece number one and place it in the centre of the group. Then ask for the second piece and place it in into the puzzle. Continue placing the pieces in number order. As you place more pieces, the bigger picture will become more evident, and many will be able to guess it before all the pieces are in place. Eventually you will have all the pieces placed and the puzzle will be complete.

You can then discuss with the group that sometimes God does not let us see the whole picture like He sees. Sometimes we can only see a little piece of our lives, and we need to trust Him when He promises that He will be with us and know that He has a special purpose for our lives, even if we can't see all of it right now. God has a special plan for each of us.



### David's suffering...

For this section it would be good to break into small groups with a leader or Big Bud attached to each group; ideally only having three or four children per group. (This is a good opportunity to build relationships within small groups and have the same children in the same group with the same leader or Big Bud.)

Read Psalm 23 (CEV) together in your group or print out the section below.

#### Psalm 23

*You, LORD, are my shepherd. I will never be in need.*

*You let me rest in fields of green grass.*

*You lead me to streams of peaceful water, and you refresh my life.*

*You are true to your name, and you lead me along the right paths.*

*I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid.*

***You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.***

*You treat me to a feast, while my enemies watch.*

*You honour me as your guest, and you fill my cup until it overflows.*

*Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life,*

*and I will live forever in your house, Lord.*

Each group will need a small basket or container of items that make us feel safe or provide comfort, e.g. band-aids or a bandage, a teddy bear or favourite stuffed toy to help you feel safe or comfortable, a special person (photo) that will help you to feel safe, a rope or harness to help you feel safe when tied to something else etc.

→ 'I wonder what other sorts of things make you feel safe, secure and comfortable.'

In the psalm we have just read, it talks about the shepherd and his rod. The rod is the shepherd's stick that he uses to guide and protect his sheep with. The shepherd is looking out for the sheep and steering them in the way that they should go as well as helping to keep them out of trouble. It is something that would make the sheep feel safe because the shepherd is looking out for them and guiding them in the right way.

→ I wonder how the words in the psalm make you feel.

→ Do you feel safe?

→ What else stands out for you in this passage?



# Tying In

'I am comforted to know that even when things are not going so well—if I am sad or upset or frustrated or having a difficult time—God is with me. He is with me always and every day of my life with His love and kindness and being willing to guide and direct me.'

This would be a good opportunity for you to share when you have felt comforted by God when you have been going through something difficult. However, it is important that you share appropriately with general details and not in any depth.

- 'I wonder if you have experienced some difficult situations, things that have made you feel sad or frustrated or disappointed.' (*Give the children time to share with each other, understanding that there will probably be a vast variety of what these difficult times might be, e.g. a difficult test or project, being bullied to someone close to them dying.*)
- 'Is there anything that has made you feel comfortable or safe during these times?'
- 'Where have you seen or felt God during these times?'

Allow the children some time to reflect on this discussion and to create something that shows how they feel supported, cared for or comforted by God, knowing that He is with them every day. Encourage them to draw, write, create from paper magiclay etc.

Have the children share their creative representation (if they are comfortable to do so) and how they feel supported and comforted by God, knowing that He is with them every day.

**Close in prayer:** Encourage the children to pray for one another and for anyone that is going through a tough time and needs some encouragement and support.



# 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.

Stick a piece of puzzle onto the 'Home & Beyond' card before handing them out to the children.

- Draw a picture or write some words in the box that remind you that God is with you wherever you go and through whatever comes your way.
- Read this verse to remember that God is with you, helping you to feel safe.

***'You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe... Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life.'***

- As you look at the puzzle piece, pray that God will help you to be patient when you can only see your part of the picture.



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