

Junior Soldiers

UNIT 11 : LESSON 6



The Generals!

PURPOSE: For the children to explore and understand how God has used key people in The Salvation Army; this lesson will focus specifically on the importance of the role of the General.

‘The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’

1 Samuel 16:7

Consider & Prepare

Read:

The Salvation Army Year Book contains a brief explanation of the High Council (that elects each General) as well as a photo and brief biography of each General of The Salvation Army. If you want to look deeper, read, Inside a High Council, a book by John Larsson, or, The People’s General, a tribute book to General Eva Burrows.

The international leader of The Salvation Army is given the rank of General and is based at International Headquarters in London. There have been 22 Generals of The Salvation Army, including two Australians, George Carpenter and Eva Burrows. The first General was our Founder, William Booth. Each General is elected to office by a High Council. This council is made up of the Territorial leaders of The Salvation Army across the world. At the 2023 High Council, 114 officers met for five days before electing Commissioner Lyndon Buckingham to be the next General. The role of General carries a great deal of responsibility, including upholding the legal and ethical responsibilities of a church denomination operating in 125 countries around the world. The General also has the opportunity— with the Holy Spirit’s guidance—to set the spiritual direction of The Salvation Army. Salvationists look back and discuss the legacy of different Generals: how was the direction and tone of the Army’s work and worship impacted by a General? Each General gives much thought and prayer to their time in office and planning for the future of the Army. For this reason, the choice of General is incredibly important. In this lesson we will have an opportunity to discuss the Generals of The Salvation Army, but more importantly, we will consider the gift of leadership and the qualities we look for in a leader.

What you will need:

For ‘The Main Thing’

- A copy of the picture chart in Appendix A for each child
- Pens or pencils
- Slips of paper

For ‘Home & Beyond’

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

Connecting In

Who would you follow

For this activity it would be good to divide the children into pairs. Each pair will have to agree on a leader they would like to have in charge for the following activities.

This leader can be anyone: a famous person, a celebrity or someone they know who has the right qualities. For example, if you had to choose someone to run as fast as they can around the block, who would you pick? Some children might choose Usain Bolt while others might choose their big brother or the fastest runner at their school. There are no wrong answers. Below are some examples for you to use with the children, but you might like to come up with your own, too:

- Who would you choose to lead a team asked to cook a fantastic three-course dinner?
- Who would you choose to star in a movie about Superman?
- Who would you choose to sing the lead in a famous pop group?
- Who would you choose to lead an expedition into Africa?
- Who would you choose to be the mayor in charge of your town or suburb?
- Who would you choose to lead a team to renovate your house?

Link... I hope you had some fun choosing some leaders and key people for those tasks. It's always a challenge picking a leader when there is a group of people involved: how do you decide which one has the qualities that make them a good leader? Can you tell me about a time at school when a leader had to be picked—maybe it was for a school project or a sporting team or even a school captain? (Take some examples from the group.)

The Salvation Army is a big church. We operate in 125 countries round the world and have nearly two million members. Imagine picking one person to lead all of that. And yet, we do! We have a General who is the international leader of The Salvation Army. The General is based in London but travels all around the world to visit members of The Salvation Army. The current General is a man called Lyndon Buckingham and he became General in August 2023. Today we are going to look at the people that God has chosen to be the General of The Salvation Army and we are going to think about how you pick a good leader.

The Main Thing

Guess Who

This activity is based on the game 'Guess Who', where you pick a person from a group of people provided on the board and then the other person asks you questions based on physical characteristics to discover who was selected.

You will need to print off a copy of Appendix A for each child. The children will also need some pens or pencils to cross out people they have ruled out. When each child has the sheet provided and a pen, you will need to select a General—but don't tell anyone—and then invite the children to ask questions about physical characteristics that will help them to eliminate the other Generals that have not been chosen. Questions should be about physical characteristics, e.g., does your General wear glasses? Not, 'Is your General the second one on the top row?' Have the children continue to ask questions until there is only one General left on their sheet. 'Is this your General?'

Once they have picked the General you selected, tell them a little about that General (see Appendix B). You can play the game several times. The last time you play, select General Lyndon Buckingham.

Our current General, Lyndon Buckingham is the first General from New Zealand. He and his wife, Bronwyn, were commissioned as Salvation Army officers in 1990. Lyndon likes to stay fit by walking and jogging and he is a keen supporter of the 'All Blacks' rugby team. He wants to find ways for The Salvation Army to be more effective in sharing the love of Jesus.

In June 2023, the High Council was called to London where he was elected to become The Salvation Army's 22nd General, following the retirement of General Brian Peddle on 3 August 2023.

Selecting a leader is not always an easy thing to do. When that High Council met in 2023, there were 114 officers in the room and the process started with lots of prayer and discussion about the needs of The Salvation Army and the challenges it was facing internationally at the time.

Then people were asked to nominate someone for the position of General. 'If a person was nominated and accepted the nomination, they were then asked some questions about what they would do as General and their thoughts about The Salvation Army. They had the chance to make a speech about what sort of leader they would be and what issues were important to them.

Activity

We are not going to elect a General, but we are going to elect a school captain. I've decided that you are all students at Corps Primary School (enter the name of your corps) and we need a new school captain. You can nominate whoever you want to be the captain and then it's up to them if they want to accept the nomination or decline it.

Once we have three people who have accepted nominations, they will all go away to another room (with another leader, preferably; get a volunteer or Big Bud to help for the morning if you need to) and plan a one-minute speech about why they should be our school captain (they can write it down if they want to). While they're doing that, the rest of you will be discussing questions to ask our nominees. We will pick two questions to ask each nominee—so we need six different questions in all.

Once we are all ready, the nominees will come back in and each one will make their speech and be asked their two questions. Then we will vote by writing down on a slip of paper—so it's a secret—who you want to be school captain. Alright, let's hear who you want to nominate.

Allow about ten minutes for the nominees to write their speeches. Gather everyone together to listen to the speeches, ask questions and vote. Announce your winner.

Well, we have a school captain. Unfortunately, we're not a real school!

What did you think about that activity? (Take a few responses.)

- For the nominees: how did it feel to receive a nomination?
- For the nominees: was it easy or hard to prepare your speech?
- For the voters: what helped you to know who to vote for?

Now, remember, there are only of us here but there were 114 members at the High Council. And we were just deciding who should be school captain not the leader of an international church. The job of the High Council is very complex and very serious. That's why every High Council starts with lots of prayer for guidance from God that the right person will be picked. It's not just about picking the smartest person or the tallest person or the best-looking person, it's about picking the person who is right for the job.

Remember the activity we started with, picking someone to cook a dinner, renovate a house, lead us to Africa? It was important that we thought about what sort of person we needed before we decided who to pick. I might pick Jamie Oliver to cook my dinner, but I probably wouldn't pick him to renovate my house or sing in a pop band! Let's see what the Bible says about picking a leader.

Tying In

Saying Yes...

The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

Read the verse out and ask the children what they think it means. What does it mean to 'look' at someone's heart?

Being elected as leader of an international organisation, like The Salvation Army, must be an amazing feeling.

How do you think you would respond if you were made General? (Give them a chance to respond.)

- Would you feel scared of your new responsibilities?
- Would you be bossy and order everyone around?
- Would you treat your old friends the same or differently now?
- Does it mean you're always right just because you're the General?

At the 1999 High Council, when Commissioner John Gowans was chosen as General, he said: 'It was not that I thought I might be chosen for office by my peers, but I did know that God often chooses the weak for his purposes. If He wanted to make such a choice, I should not deprive Him of the opportunity. I did not nominate myself. I could not approve myself. In an odd way, I felt safe and at peace.'

Commissioner Gowans felt comfortable because he knew God was in control. If He became General, it was God's will. If he didn't become General, well, that was God's will. Commissioner Gowans' job was to make sure his heart was right, because he knew God would judge him by his faith and his love of Christ and his love of people, above all else. Remember, God doesn't judge us by our outward appearance, but by our heart.

Let's finish by praying for the General.

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.

Thanks...

- Throughout the week pray for your Junior Soldier leader, corps officer and for General Lyndon Buckingham
- Take time to thank some important leaders you know for what they do. For example: your school principal, teacher, corps officer, sporting coach, hobby group leader or music teacher
- You might like to write a leader a note of appreciation or make a card to say THANKS

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Appendix A

				
William Booth	Bramwell Booth	Edward Higgins	Evangeline Booth	George Carpenter
				
Albert Orsborn	Wilfred Kitching	Frederick Coutts	Erik Wickberg	Clarence Wiseman
				
Arnold Brown	Jarl Wahlstrom	Eva Burrows	Bramwell Tillsley	Paul Rader
				
John Gowans	John Larsson	Shaw Clifton	Linda Bond	Andre Cox
				
Brian Peddle	Lyndon Buckingham			

Appendix B

1. William Booth and his wife Catherine were the Founders of The Salvation Army. He was born in Nottingham in England in 1829 and, as a young man, became a minister in the Methodist Church before starting The Salvation Army.
2. Bramwell Booth was the eldest son of William and Catherine. His first name was actually William, too, but that was confusing so everyone used his middle name, Bramwell. He became General in 1912 when his father died.
3. Edward Higgins had been Chief of the Staff (that is, second-in-charge) to Bramwell and then became General when Bramwell died in 1929. He - obviously - wasn't a Booth and was the first General elected by a High Council.
4. Evangeline Booth was a daughter of William and Catherine and became the fourth General of The Salvation Army. Before becoming General, Evangeline led the work of The Salvation Army in America for 30 years!
5. George Carpenter became General in 1939. He was an Australian (yay!) born in the NSW town of Raymond Terrace and had worked mainly in editorial and literary work in Australia and England and was a well-known writer.
6. Albert Orsborn was an English officer, voted in as the sixth General of The Salvation Army. He was also a very popular songwriter and poet and many of his songs are in The Salvation Army songbook.
7. Wilfred Kitching became a Salvation Army officer when he was only 20 years old and was elected as General in 1954. He served as General for nine years and was known for travelling all around the world to visit Army services.
8. Frederick Coutts served in the English Royal Air Force before joining the Army - The Salvation Army! He was a very thoughtful man and wrote several books, especially on holiness. He was a gifted teacher and speaker.
9. Erik Wickberg was the first European General, born in Switzerland in 1904. He was fluent in Swedish, German, French and English and a gifted chess player, once defeating the Swiss national champion.
10. Clarence Wiseman was the first General to come from Canada. He served as an officer in Africa and, as General, was very supportive of advancing the work of the Army in Africa and other developing countries.
11. Arnold Brown was a gifted preacher and writer and also pioneered the Army's work in media, promoting the use of radio and television in America, Canada and Australia. He was General from 1977 to 1981.

Appendix B con...

12. Jarl Wahlstrom was born in Finland and served The Salvation Army in Finland, Sweden, Canada and the United Kingdom. He also led a six-day Holy Land Congress involving 1,500 delegates from 23 countries.
13. Eva Burrows was General from 1986 to 1993 and became known as 'The People's General' because of her love of being with people and travelling the world. An Australian officer, she was born in NSW and grew up in Queensland.
14. Bramwell Tillsley is a Canadian officer who became General in July 1993 and resigned from office only 11 months later due to a serious heart condition and health issues. He is a gifted writer and speaker.
15. Paul Rader was the first ever American General. With multiple university degrees and doctorates he was and is one of the Army's leading thinkers on masters of doctrine and theology. That means: he's very smart.
16. John Gowans was born in Scotland and became General in 1999. A gifted poet, writer and lyricist, he wrote 10 musicals for The Salvation Army with another officer, John Larsson, writing the music to accompany Gowans' lyrics.
17. John Larsson followed his good friend John Gowans as General; between them they wrote ten musicals for The Salvation Army, Larsson being a gifted songwriter and musician. He served as General from 2002–2006.
18. Shaw Clifton worked hard at establishing the Army in countries it had never operated before; while he was General our work grew from being in 111 countries to 123, including Greece, Nepal and Kuwait.
19. Linda Bond was the third female General of The Salvation Army and was born in Canada. She served as territorial commander of the Australia Eastern Territory from 2008–2011 before becoming General.