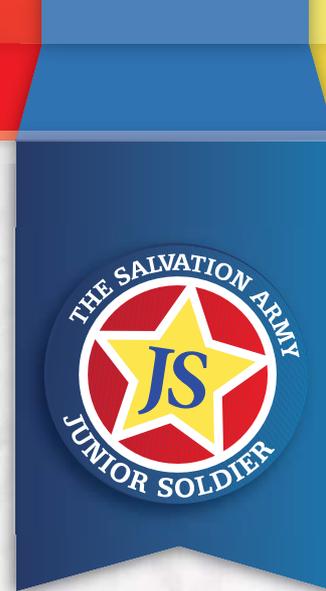


Junior Soldiers

Unit 12 : Lesson 8



Thanks Party!

PURPOSE : For the children to explore and understand that giving thanks is not something you only do once but is an ongoing attitude put into action.

'Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do.'

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Luke 17:11–19

Colossians 3:15–17

Psalm 100:1–5

Giving thanks isn't a one off event—it is an ongoing attitude put into action. Throughout this lesson we will explore what it means to give thanks, and encourage the children to think about some practical ways they can put their thanks and gratitude into action.

'Thank you' or 'Ta' is one of the first expressions a child will learn to say. We encourage them to say it and instil in them from the beginning that it is socially important to say thank you to people when we receive things. Christians also teach children from a very young age to 'give thanks' at each meal by saying grace, but do we help them understand why we do that or is it just a learnt practice?

Many of our everyday phrases utilise the word 'thanks', we hear: 'Thanks for nothing', 'Thanks a million', 'Thanks for sharing', 'Thanks for listening', 'Thank goodness' and 'Thanks for coming'. We use it in so many ways that we may have lost the understanding of its real meaning.

As we worship God, we sing many songs about giving thanks and being thankful for the amazing things he has provided, what he has done and who he is. We sing words such as: 'Give thanks with a grateful heart' and 'I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart'. How often do we stop and think about what we are singing? Are we truly thankful or just singing along thoughtlessly?

The dictionary defines saying thanks as: 'to feel and express gratitude'. It is a verb (a 'doing' word) which means that to thank someone is to do something that requires intention—you can't thank someone accidentally!

We can focus on having hearts of gratitude. Scripture tells us that the wicked are not thankful, but that Christians are to give thanks always, for all people and things. It is easy to give thanks on good days, but can be a challenge when things aren't so great. 1 Chronicles 16:34 tells us to, 'Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.' The things we are experiencing may not always be good, but God is good all the time. It is important, as you are sharing, that you can share times when it might have been difficult to give thanks, but you did so anyway because you remembered how grateful you are for God.

We want our children to be able to explore what it means to be thankful for all that God has given us and for who he is as well as what it means to give thanks, encourage and build others up.



What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Access to a whiteboard or large sheet of butchers paper
- Box or container with coloured pieces of paper in it.
- Music/CD

For 'The Main Thing'

- Extra-large sheet of butchers paper
- Three colours of sticky notes; a small stack of each for each child
- Textas
- Bibles
- Supplies to make invitations

For 'Tying In'

- Butchers paper (one sheet per small group)
- Textas, pens, pencils etc.
- Bibles

For 'Home & Beyond'

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

Connecting In

Thank you tag...

For this activity you are going to play a game of tag. You will need to choose one person to be 'it' and explain the area that the children must remain in for this game. When a child is 'tagged' by the person who is 'it', they need to stand as tall as they can with their arms straight up in the air like a statue. They need to stay like this until someone who is free comes and brings their arms down. Before they are free and able to move, they need to say thank you in a different language. On a whiteboard or a large sheet of butchers paper clearly display the list below. You might like to go through how to say these words before you start the game. You might like to change the person who is 'it' a number of times throughout the game.

- Afrikaans: dankie (dahn-kee)
- Arabic: shukran (shoe-krahn)
- Australian English: ta (informal)
- Chinese, Cantonese: do jeh (daw-dyeh)
- Chinese, Mandarin: xie xie (syeh-syeh)
- Czech: děkuji (deh-ku-yih)
- Danish: tak (tahg)
- Finnish: kiitos (kee-toas)
- French: merci (mehr-see)
- German: danke (dahn-kah)

- Greek: epharisto (ef-har-rih-stowe)
- Hebrew: toda (toh-dah)
- Hindi, Hindustani: sukria (shoo-kree-a)
- Indonesian/Malayan: terima kasih (t'ree-ma kas-seh)
- Italian: grazie (gra-see)
- Japanese: arigato (ahree-gah-tow)
- Korean: kamsa hamnida (kahm-sah=ham-nee-da)
- Norwegian: takk (tahk)
- Philippines: (Tagalog) salamat po (sah-lah-maht poh)
- Polish: dziekuje (dsyen-koo-yeh)
- Portuguese: obrigado (oh-bree-gah-doh)
- Russian: spasibo (spah-see-boh)
- Spanish: gracias (gra-see-us)
- Sri Lanka/Sinhak: istutiy (isst-too-tee)
- Swahili: asante (ah-sahn-teh)
- Swedish: tack (tahkk)
- Thai: kawp-kun krap/ka' (kowpkoom-krahp/khak)
- Turkish: tesekkür ederim (teh-sheh-kur=eh-deh-rim)



Link: 'We have just had some fun together playing a game of tag and using the words 'thank you' in a number of different languages.

- I wonder if you can tell me some of the first words that a child learns when they start to talk—what do we encourage them to say?
- 'Ta' or 'thank you' is usually one of the first words we encourage toddlers to say. It is an important word that we want them to know so that they can be polite and say 'thank you' in the appropriate situation. We also want them to understand that it is important to be thankful for all that we have and receive, and this might not only be in relation to the people around us and our family but also in relation to God.

'Today we are going to explore the importance of saying "thanks" and being thankful—not just when someone does something nice for us or gives us something, but as a continual attitude to God and others.'



Passing on the thanks...

For this activity you will need to have a number of different coloured pieces of paper in a box or container. You will also need access to some music that you can start and stop as you play this giving thanks game.

- Have all the children sit in a circle and pass the container around the group like pass the parcel.
- When the music stops, encourage the child that has the container to pull out one piece of paper.
- Encourage them to give thanks for something that is that colour and say why, e.g. red – 'I thank God for apples', blue – 'I thank God for police who help to keep us safe.'

Link: 'There are many things we can be thankful for and we have just explored some of these together.

- I wonder if there are any people that you are thankful for and why. (*Go around the circle and encourage each of the children to share at least one person that they are thankful for and why.*)
- I wonder if you are thankful for God: why?

'Today, we are going to explore the importance of saying "thanks" and also for being thankful—not only as a response when someone does something nice for you or gives you something, but as a continual attitude to God and others. I wonder if God wants us to be thankful...let's explore together.'

The Main Thing

Being thankful – what does it look like?

'If I asked you to describe what being "thankful" looked like, what sort of example might you give me? (Allow the children some time to give examples of situations where they have seen people showing they are thankful.)

'The dictionary tells us that saying "thanks" is "to feel and express gratitude". It is a verb (a "doing" word), so being thankful is not only about the words we say, it might also be an action or how we behave. If you could not use words or you were somewhere where they did not understand your language, I wonder how you would be able to show your thanks, gratitude or appreciation, I wonder what you would do. (Allow the children some time to make some suggestions about how they might communicate their thankfulness, e.g. give a high-5 or a very big smile or hug etc.)

'We all love it when people show their appreciation to us for the things that we have done or who we are—why do you think we say thank you?

'I wonder what you are thankful for today...'

Brainstorm...

For this brainstorming session, the children will need three different colours of sticky notes, some textas, and a very large piece of butchers paper (you may even like to join a few sheets together).

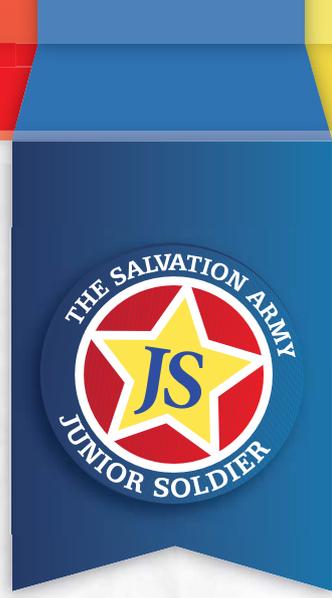
- You have three different colours of sticky notes.
- One colour (assign a colour depending on what you have provided) is for the 'things' you are thankful for.
- The second colour (assign a colour depending on what you have provided) is for 'people' you are thankful for.
- The third colour (assign a colour depending on what you have provided) is for the things you are thankful for in relation to God—this might be things he has provided for you or for who God is, e.g. thank you for always being there for me even when things get tough.
- You might like to play some music while the children write or draw on their sticky notes and place them on the butchers paper.

'We certainly have a lot of things we are thankful for, praise God! I wonder what God has to say about being thankful, let's have a look together.'

What does the Bible have to say about giving thanks?

This section would best be explored in small groups or, if you have only a small group of children, you can explore this as a whole group together. Each group will need some Bibles, a sheet of butchers paper and some textas to record what they find about giving thanks in the following verses. Read the following verses as a group and then explore the following questions:

- I wonder what stands out for you in these verses.
- I wonder what God is saying here about giving thanks.
- Psalm 138:2 – thanks for his loving kindness and truth
- Psalm 136:26 – thanks for his never failing love
- John 6:11 – thanks for food
- 1 Corinthians 15:57 – thanks for victory through Jesus
- 2 Corinthians 9:15 – thanks for his unspeakable gifts
- Daniel 2:23 – thanks for wisdom and strength
- 1 Timothy 2:1 – thanks for everyone



Thanks in action! (God)...

'We love it when people say thanks or encouraging words to us; you know, God loves it too. He deserves all our thanks and praise. I wonder if you, as a small group, could flick through the Psalms and see if there are some things that stick out to you about showing praise and thanks to God.'

- Explore this in your small group and then share what you have picked out with the whole group.
- You might even like to put some actions to the words or phrases you find.

Thanks in action! (Others)...

'There are lots of people and groups of people that help us each day. In some countries there are special days that are set aside for the giving of thanks; there are also days where we are encouraged to show thanks for certain groups of people such as teachers, doctors and nurses, fire-fighters, the police etc.'

- 'I wonder how we, as a group, might be able to say thank you and show our gratitude to someone or a group of people who help us in our community.'
- Use the suggestions on the list below to spark discussion about a project that you can do as a group. This can be recorded within the local project section of your passport.

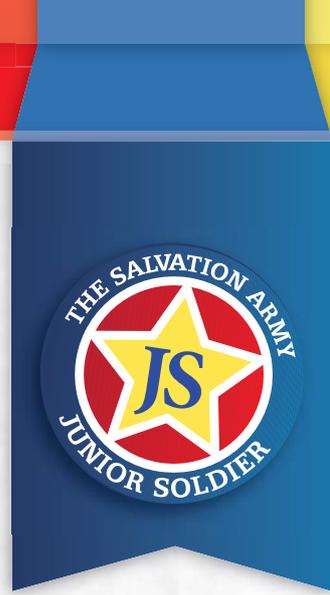
Here is a list of some suggestions to spark discussion about a project for your group:

- Pop up party – surprise someone / group with a party to say thanks.
- Flash cleaning mob – help with the cleaning of the hall or the washing up after morning tea.
- Make slices/cakes/goodies and deliver them to the local fire/police/ambulance stations with thank you notes attached.
- Write thank you notes to your Big Buds/prayer pals for their love and support.
- Host a morning/afternoon tea for teachers at your local school or perhaps the chaplains of some local primary schools in your area.

Make a plan (this might need to be worked on at another time depending on the time available to you)

Once your group had decided what they are going to do, you will need to plan the steps you will need to do next. Some examples of things you will need to think about are below.

- Talk to the corps officers/leaders about your plans.
- Make invitations/fliers.
- Get permission to go off-site and make sure all the safety management documentation is put into place.
- Make a list of food/ingredients.
- Make a time to create thank you notes, cards or letters.
- Invite some people to cook some goodies for a morning tea.



Tying In

Giving thanks is not just something we do to be polite or because we are told to. Ephesians 5:20 (NIRV) says, "Always give thanks to God the Father for everything. Give thanks to him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Being thankful is an important attitude for us to choose and something that God wants for each of us in the way we live our lives.

'We have already explored lots of things that we are each thankful for—things, people and why we are thankful to God. It is important to communicate to someone if you are thankful for them or for something that they have done—it encourages them and builds them up, it makes them feel special, appreciated and valued. It reminds us of the passage that talks about treating others how we want to be treated; we feel good when others thank us and we should have this attitude and behaviour to others.'



Thank you prayers...

For this prayer time you will need as many balloons as you have children/leaders (please be aware if you have any children that have a latex allergy then you may need to change the item that you use, e.g. some screwed up newspaper balls etc.) You will need to write one of the children's names on each of the balloons making sure that everyone in the groups is included. You can use some music if you like or just shout out 'go' and 'stop'.

- When you say 'go' have everyone try to keep all the balloons up in the air and moving around.
- When you say 'stop' each person is to grab one of the balloons and shout out 'I am thankful for...' calling out the name of the person written on their balloon.
- Ask a couple of people each time to share why they are thankful for that person, e.g. 'Thank you for always making me laugh, for being my friend, for helping me to clean up' etc.
- Keep going until everyone has had a turn to encourage and be encouraged by someone else.

'Remember that Ephesians 5:20 (NIRV) says: "Always give thanks to God the Father for everything. Give thanks to him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." It's good to keep reminding ourselves that God is the one who gives us all that we have. Thank you, God, for all the good things that you provide for each one of us and for being such a wonderful God that loves us no matter what.'

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.

The thankful challenge...

- I wonder what you will be thankful for this week and how you will show thanks to others.
- Write or draw a list in your journal for something that you are thankful for each day, e.g. it might be something that someone has done for you, the way that someone has encouraged you, for something you have received or perhaps you are thankful for some people just because they are who they are.
- I wonder what you are thankful to God for, add this to your list each day.
- Share this list with the group next time you meet together.

'Always give thanks to God the Father for everything. Give thanks to him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'
Ephesians 5:20 (NIRV)

