

Junior Soldiers

Unit 14 : Lesson 2



The Heart of Forgiveness!

PURPOSE: For the children to understand that God requires us to forgive those who have hurt us AND for the children to explore and understand the truth that God will forgive our wrongdoings (sins).

A special psalm by David - 'The Joy of Forgiveness'

Our God, you bless everyone whose sins you forgive and wipe away.

² You bless them by saying, "You told me your sins, without trying to hide them, and now I forgive you."

³ Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long.

⁴ Night and day your hand weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat.

⁵ So I confessed my sins and told them all to you. I said, "I'll tell the Lord each one of my sins." Then you forgave me and took away my guilt.

Psalm 32:1-5 (CEV)

Instead, be kind to each other, tender hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)

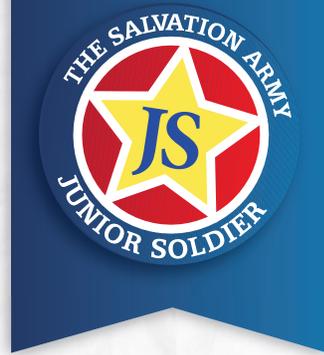
But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. We can trust God. He does what is right. He will make us clean from all the wrongs we have done.

1 John 1:9 (ICB)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

- Psalm 32:1-5 (CEV)
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV)
- 1 John 1:9 (ICB)
- Acts 3:19 (NLT)
- Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)
- 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (CEV)



Take some time to read these verses and reflect on a time when you forgave someone or you were forgiven by someone. What were the challenges in this situation? What were the benefits?

This lesson is focusing on God's forgiveness for us and God's expectation for us to forgive others. Forgiveness can be a challenging and confronting time not only for children but for adults as well. Forgiveness is complex and is accompanied by many different emotions. It is very clear in the bible that forgiveness, although difficult, is a requirement of our Christian faith and walk. It is a continual journey and one that should be done from the heart and through kindness.

We want the children to understand that we can be forgiven by God and other people and that this goes hand in hand with the requirement that God gives us to forgive other people.

When we forgive others it doesn't necessarily mean that we will forget all about what happened. It also doesn't mean that what happened was okay.

When we ask God for forgiveness from our wrongdoings we can be released from guilt and can learn to forgive ourselves as God has forgiven us. We can then use our energy on good thoughts, word and deeds.

This is not an easy topic as it has the potential for 'opening a can of worms.' You will need to be aware that this lesson may bring up situations and conversations for some children that can be very confronting. You need to be alert to these situations and be prepared to chat to your Corps Officer or another trusted adult that could help connect the child with professional assistance.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- 18 cans of food or 18 bags of rice
- 2 Backpacks
- 2 Chairs
- 2 sets of printed paper/labels with one word on each label – Lying, Swearing, Gossiping, Bullying, Stealing, Cheating, Disobedience, Using God's name as a swear word, Hatred – resentment.
- Stick the printed labels to each set of cans or bags of rice

For 'The Main Thing'

- Bibles
- Small whiteboard or mirror or window
- Whiteboard markers
- Whiteboard wiper

For 'Tying In'

- Bibles

For 'Memory Verse'

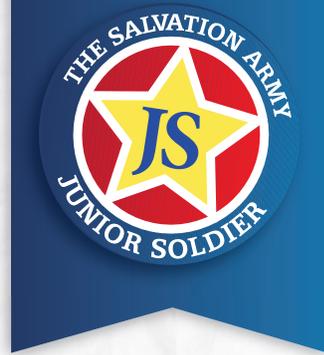
- Small whiteboard or mirror or window
- Whiteboard markers
- Whiteboard wiper

For 'Prayer Time'

- A packet of band aids
- Permanent markers
- A cross (big enough for the children to place their own band aid on it). You could make a cross out of sticks or cardboard.

For 'Home & Beyond'

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



Connecting In

Heavy Load...

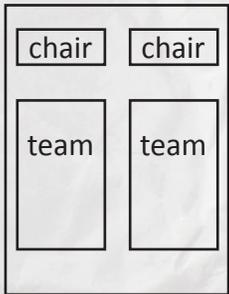
The aim of this activity is for the children to experience the challenge of carrying a heavy weight.

Place two chairs at one end of your space.

Put a set of labelled weights (cans or bags of rice) onto each chair.

Have a helper (older child or leader) stand next to each chair.

Divide the children into two teams and ask them to line up at the other end of your space. Provide a backpack for each team. Follow the step-by-step instructions below:



- The first child from each team places the backpack on and runs to their chair.
- The helper for that team picks up a weight, shouts out the “sin” on the label and places it in the backpack.
- The child with the backpack then runs back to the next child in the line.
- That next child then takes and wears the backpack with the weight in it and races back to the helper by the chair.
- The game continues until all the weights have been picked up and the backpack is extremely heavy.

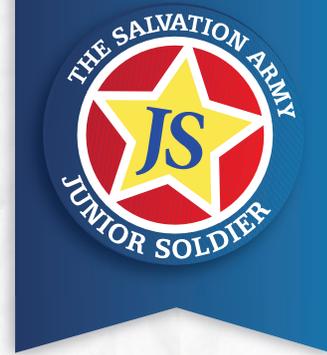
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Bring the last two children, still wearing the backpacks, out the front:

- Wow, how does it feel to wear the backpack with all those weights? (*You may even want to lean on the backpack to make it that little bit heavier.*)
- When we carried the backpacks around, our load got heavier and heavier. What do you think it would be like if you had to carry them around all the time?
- When we do wrong (or sin) we need to be forgiven. Can you think of a time when you forgave someone or someone forgave you? How did that feel?
- In our game, each can/ bag of rice represented a sin. When we carry our sins around with us it can feel like we are carrying a heavy load.
- Begin to remove the weights one by one.
- I wonder how it would feel to carry all those sins around on your heart all the time.
- I am curious, did you notice that the backpack got heavier as each weight was placed in? Do you think this happens to our heart every time we do something wrong?

Let's now take the cans/rice out of your backpacks. As you take each weight out of the bag ask the child how they are feeling about the backpack becoming lighter.

We are going to look now at how God can take the weight of sin away from us.



The Main Thing

Together as a group look up and read Psalm 32:1-5 (CEV).

A special psalm by David – ‘The Joy of Forgiveness’

Our God, you bless everyone whose sins you forgive and wipe away.

² You bless them by saying, “You told me your sins, without trying to hide them, and now I forgive you.”

³ Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long.

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Explain that King David felt **weighed down** by his sin until he confessed them and was forgiven.

- I wonder how it feels when we hold onto our sins. (Allow the children to share their stories. Encourage a leader or yourself to share a time when you have held onto your sin)

Just like taking out the cans/ rice from the backpacks is a big relief, we can feel relieved and filled with joy when God forgives our sins.

Together look up the following Bible verses:

2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV)

‘Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.’

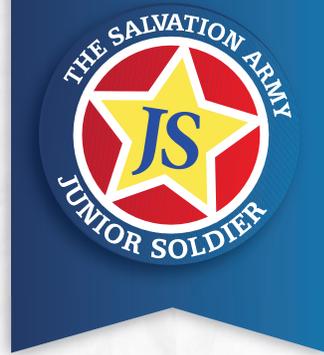
- I wonder how you feel when you hear this verse (*e.g. relieved, free, liberated, empowered, peaceful, ready for a fresh start.*)

Explain that sin and guilt can be heavy burdens, but when God forgives us it can bring joy and relief.

1 John 1:9 (ICB)

‘But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. We can trust God. He does what is right. He will make us clean from all the wrongs we have done.’

- How does it feel when you hear that ‘He will make us clean from all the wrongs we have done’?
- I am curious, when God forgives us, do you think it means that He thinks what we did was okay?
- Why do you think we deserve to be forgiven by God? (*We don’t actually “deserve” to be forgiven but God forgives us anyway - we call this ‘grace’*)
- Who does God forgive? (Everyone who asks)



Acts 3:19 (NLT)

'Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.'

- Why do you think it is important for God to wipe away our sins?

As a group, brainstorm some wrongdoings/sins/errors. Write them on a whiteboard (or use a mirror or window). Explain that when we ask God to forgive us, he not only forgives us but he wipes away our sins; he remembers them no more; he will never bring them up with us again; we have been set free from our sins.

Remember what David wrote in Psalm 32. Verse 1 says, 'Our God, you bless everyone whose sins you forgive and wipe away.'

Wipe the whiteboard clean to demonstrate that our sins are forgiven and gone forever.

Tying In

As a group, look up the verse from Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)

'Instead, be kind to each other, tender hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.'

Wow, it makes it clear in the Bible that we are to forgive one another.

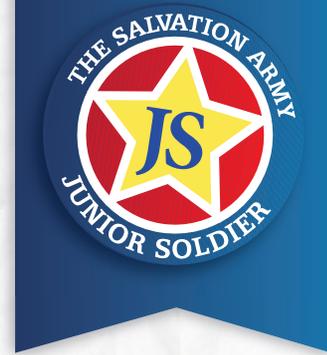
- I wonder how you feel when you hear this.
- Can you think of a time when somebody was mean to you or hurt your feelings? How did you feel?
- Sometimes when people hurt or upset us it is really hard to forgive. Sometimes we want to 'get back' at them.
- Have you ever felt like you wanted to get someone back for hurting you? Why or why not?

Together look up 1 Thessalonians 5:15 in the (CEV). 'Don't be hateful to people, just because they are hateful to you. Rather, be good to each other and to everyone else.'

- I wonder why God wants us to forgive rather than get even. What do you think?

Share with the children about a time when you have had to forgive someone who hurt you.

When we forgive someone, we are not saying that what they did was right. Rather, we are leaving the problem and our hurt with God. God is the one who will judge what should happen to those who do wrong.



Memory Verse

Instead, be kind to each other, tender hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)

Using a whiteboard marker, write the memory verse, Ephesians 4:32, on the whiteboard. Ask the children to read the verse aloud several times. Each time the children read the verse, wipe off a different word until the children can recite it.



Prayer Time

Give each child a band aid and marker.

Encourage the children to think of something that they would like God to forgive and heal them from. Invite them to use a marker to write it on their band aid. It could be as simple as telling lies, swearing at or being nasty to a sibling or friend.

Ask the children to stick their band aid on the cross as a sign that you are handing over that sin to God to forgive and heal them.

Finish by praying as a group, thanking God for forgiving and healing them.

Home & Beyond

Print the 'Home & Beyond' cards. 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.

- As a family, spend time together chatting about the importance of forgiveness. Pray together that you would always show forgiveness to each other.
- Every night when you clean your teeth, write your wrongdoings on your bathroom mirror using a whiteboard marker (ask a parent's permission first!). Spend a moment praying to God, asking Him to forgive you. Then wipe your mirror clean because God wipes our sins clean!!
- Ask an adult to help you memorise a bible verse about forgiveness.

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