

# Junior Soldiers

UNIT 14 : LESSON 4



## The influence of friends

**PURPOSE:** For the children to explore and understand the effect of both positive and negative influences on their behaviour and responses.

Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.

Proverbs 13:20 (NLT)

Dear friend, don't copy the evil deeds of others! Follow the example of people who do kind deeds. They are God's children, but those who are always doing evil have never seen God.

3 John 11 (NLT)

Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think.

Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.

Romans 12:2 (NLT)

## Consider & Prepare

### Read

Proverbs 13:20 (NLT)

3 John 11

Romans 12:2

- What do these verses tell us about the influence of others on our lives?
- What do they tell us about our influence on others?

In this lesson we explore the idea of peer pressure both positive and negative. We consider how others influence us and how we influence others. Think back to your own childhood. How did the beliefs and behaviours of others influence you? Can you think of a time when you were a strong negative or positive influence on someone else?

In order for us to stand firm against negative influences and to be a positive influence on others we need to know what we believe. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you believe. You might like to look up the Apostles' Creed (a brief summary of the beliefs of the apostles), the Nicene Creed (a statement of the orthodox faith of the early Christian church) or the doctrines of The Salvation Army. Write down a summary of what you believe, sign and date it as a personal covenant.

It is important for us to recognise influences and the effect that they have on our behaviours and attitudes. Whilst we focus on the language of 'influence' in this lesson, the content is closely linked to the concepts of 'peer pressure' and 'bullying'. Children are likely to find it easier to see the influence of others on them than their influence on others. Gently challenge them to consider times when they may have been a positive or negative influence on someone else.

Consider having several extra copies of the Junior Soldier Promise certificate handy. Distribute these to any children who require them.

## **You will need**

### **For 'Connecting In'**

- Play dough  
(You will need at least one ball of dough – you might like to supply each child with some play dough.)

### **For 'The Main Thing'**

- A copy of the 'Junior Soldier Promise' for each child to look at (page 8).
- Print enough copies of the 'Influence Quiz' for each child or write the numbers 1 – 11 on small pieces of cardboard and place them in a hat/box/bowl (page 9-10).
- Pens, enough for 1 per child
- Print enough copies of the Personal Covenant for each child.

### **For 'Memory Verse Activity'**

- Write or print each word of Proverbs 13:20 from the New Living Translation on a separate sheet of paper.

### **For 'Tying In'**

- Large sheet of paper with "G O D" printed on it – Outline each letter leaving space for the children to colour in the letters.
- Coloured pencils

### **For 'Prayer Activity'**

- Wipes

### **For 'Home and Beyond'**

- Print enough copies of the 'Home and Beyond' cards for each child.

# Connecting In

## Pressure

*During this section you might like to supply each child with some play dough so that they can feel and experience the idea of pressure themselves.*

Friends influence the way we behave, the way we speak and the way we think. Imagine that this ball of play dough represents you. What happens when I apply pressure to it?

*Take a ball of play dough and apply pressure with the palm of your hand.*

It changes shape!

When friends apply pressure to us it influences and changes us. This is often referred to as peer pressure.

Sometimes the pressure is deliberate and sometimes neither we nor our friends are really aware that it is happening.

*Place the play dough on a table, turn your back then lean backwards on it.*

It may only be when we look back that we realise that it has happened. For example, as children we may listen to a particular type of music because it is what our friends listen to. As we get older we may realise that style of music is not really what we enjoy. Looking back we can see that we only listened to it because that was what our friends were doing.

Sometimes the pressure is small. Sometimes it is strong.

*Ask one of the bigger children in your group to come to the front of your group and stand with their arms folded. Invite one of the smaller children in your group to stand behind them and push them. They bigger child will still be moved by the smaller child.*

Even though the pressure may be small it can still change the way we behave, the way we speak and the way we think.

Often we hear peer pressure spoken of in a negative way. However, friends can have a good influence on us too.

*Mould your dough into a star shape.*

Friends can help us to behave, speak and think in a more positive way. For example, a friend might really love to swim. Because of their influence, you decide to take swimming lessons and become much more active.

*Now crush the star flat by hitting it with your fist.*

At other times, friends might have a bad influence on us. Imagine that all of the kids in your group decide that teasing and pinching a certain student in your class is a great idea. You know that this is mean and not the way that you should act as a friend of Jesus but you worry that if you don't go along with it that they will start to tease you. The whole group has taken turns to be unkind and you find yourself joining in and saying something you never thought you would say.

# The Main Thing

## **I influence others ↔ others influence me**

We influence others and others influence us. This can be positive or negative. We can protect ourselves from negative influences and be a more positive influence on others when we know:

- What we believe and why we believe it.
- Who influences us and who we have influence over.
- Who or what can keep us accountable.

## **Knowing what you believe helps you to stand firm.**

You may have heard people talk about a creed or a covenant. This is a statement about the important things that someone believes. It helps people to make decisions and choices that might be difficult but right.

The Junior Soldier promise is a covenant. Let's remind ourselves about what it says.

*Supply the children with copies and ask them to read it aloud with you (page 8).*

I know that Jesus is my Saviour from sin. I have asked him to forgive my sins, and I will trust him to keep me good. By his help, I will be his loving and obedient child, and will help others to follow him.

I promise to pray, to read my Bible, and to lead a life that is clean in thought, word and deed. I will not use anything that may injure my body or my mind, including harmful drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

- What does this covenant say that we believe?
- What does this covenant say about how we will live?

*Ask the children to write their own covenant/creed/promise by completing the following (page 11):*

### **Personal Covenant**

I believe that God ...

I want to be influenced by ...

The goal I want to achieve is ...

I want to influence others to ...

## **Be aware of who influences you and who you influence.**

Remember that sometimes we can be influenced by someone without even realising it. So, it's very important that we learn to recognise when and how we are being influenced and when and how we are influencing someone else. As we become more aware we have more opportunities to live based on what we believe instead of what others are doing. We are also more likely to be a positive influence on others.

*You can choose to do the "Influence Quiz" or ask the children sit in a circle and take turns to pick a number out of a hat. When they have picked out the number ask them the corresponding question from the quiz to answer.*

*If drawing numbers out of the hat say this to the children before they pick a number:*

Remember to give honest answers. We don't want you to give the answer you think someone wants to hear. For these questions there are no right or wrong answers.

## Influence Quiz

Answer the following questions.

Remember to give honest answers – don't give the answer you think someone wants to hear.

There are no right or wrong answers.

This quiz is about helping you to be more aware of influences.

Each question has a blank line for you to add your own answer if you prefer.

1. Whose opinion do you think matters most to you? Write the name of the person next to the answer you choose.
  - a. Your parents \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Your brother or sister \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. A friend \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Your Big Bud \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who looks up to you? Write the name of the person next to the answer you choose.
  - a. Your brother or sister \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. A friend at school \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. A friend at church \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. No one you can think of
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who are you most likely to turn to for advice?
  - a. Your parents
  - b. Your Junior Soldier leader
  - c. Your Big Bud
  - d. Your friends
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Who comes to you for advice?
  - a. Your brother or sister \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. A friend at school \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. A friend at church \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. No one you can think of
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
5. How do you most often decide what clothes to wear?
  - a. Check the weather report
  - b. Ask your friends what they will be wearing
  - c. Ask your parents what you should wear
  - d. Think about what you like to wear
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
6. How do you choose what new music to download?
  - a. Check the top 10
  - b. Search your favourite artist or style of music
  - c. Copy your friend's playlist
  - d. Ask a family member for suggestions
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
7. What would you do if your friends all decided to switch the sports team that they support?
  - a. Go along with their decision and switch with them
  - b. Think about whether you would like to switch to a different team
  - c. Stay loyal to the team you have been supporting
  - d. Decide that it doesn't really matter and focus on more important things
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_

8. What would you do if your friends all decided to pick on one student?
  - a. Go along with them but stay quiet
  - b. Make up an excuse to leave early so that you don't have to be a part of it
  - c. Let your friends know that you think what they are doing is wrong and unkind
  - d. Send an anonymous note to a teacher about what is happening
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
9. What would you do if two of your friends had a fight and one of them asked you not to speak to the other?
  - a. Avoid both of them
  - b. Try to find a way to help them sort out the argument
  - c. Choose the side of whichever friend is more likely to turn against you
  - d. Remind your friend that you are not part of the argument and that you will continue to be friends with both of them
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
10. What might stop you from trying something new that you would really like to do?
  - a. Your friends might think it's silly
  - b. None of your friends do it
  - c. Your parents don't think it's a good idea
  - d. Nothing would stop you from doing what you want to do
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Who/what has had the most influence on what you believe about God?
  - a. Your own reading of the Bible
  - b. Your friends at school
  - c. A member of your family
  - d. A person at your church
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Who or what can keep me accountable?**

Even when we know what we believe, who influences us and who we influence we can still get off track. So, it's a great idea to have some strategies to keep us accountable.

- What do you think you could do to help you to stay on track? *Allow for responses.*

Here are some ideas:

1. Place a copy of your Junior Soldier Promise and Personal Covenant somewhere that you can see and read it regularly. Whenever you read it, think about what influence your friends are having on your beliefs.
2. Ask God to help you to know when you are being influenced in a negative way. Ask him to help you to be a positive influence on others. The Holy Spirit gives us guidance every day when we ask and are willing to listen to Him.
3. Ask a family member or Big Bud to keep you accountable. Give them permission to tell you when they think you are changing because of a negative influence in your life. Show them your Junior Soldier Promise or Personal Covenant and tell them that this is the way you want to live.

*Ask the children to share with a partner what strategy or strategies they would like to put in place.*

# Memory Verse

*Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble. Proverbs 13:20 (NLT)*

*Ask the children to look up Proverbs 13:20 in their Bibles and read it to a partner.*

*Spread the papers with the words of the verse out in a trail around your space (or use chalk to write the words in a trail on the ground).*

*Ask the children to take turns stepping on each word in order and saying it aloud.*

# Tying In

*Ask the children to sit around a table. Place a large sheet of paper in the centre of the table.*

We can be a positive or good influence on others but it is even better when we are a God influence! What do you think it means to be a God influence?

*As the children respond, write large outlines of the letters 'GOD' in the centre of the paper. Ask the children to heavily colour the letters with pencils. When they rub their fingers over the colours, some of the colour will come off on their fingers. They may then rub their fingers on the blank paper around the letters. The colour will transfer back onto the paper.*

When we are a God influence on others we help them to understand who God is. We set an example for them by living lives of love, service, forgiveness and kindness. We inspire them to live their lives this way too.

# Prayer Time

*Ask the children to write the names of friends they would like to have a God influence on around the edges of the poster.*

*Allow the children some time to rub colour from the letters over the names of their friends as they quietly pray for them.*

*Offer the children wipes (or an opportunity to wash their hands).*

# Home & Beyond

Choose one of these strategies or make up your own.

1. Place a copy of your Junior Soldier Promise and Personal Covenant somewhere that you can see and read it regularly.
2. Write a prayer asking God to help you to be a God influence to others.
3. Ask a family member or Big Bud to keep you accountable. Show them your Junior Soldier Promise or Personal Covenant and tell them that this is the way you want to live.

# RESOURCES / HAND OUT

## Junior Solider Promise

I know that Jesus is my Saviour from sin. I have asked him to forgive my sins, and I will trust him to keep me good. By his help, I will be his loving and obedient child, and will help others to follow him.  
I promise to pray, to read my Bible, and to lead a life that is clean in thought, word and deed. I will not use anything that may injure my body or my mind, including harmful drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

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# Influence Quiz



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There are no right or wrong answers.

This quiz is about helping you to be more aware of influences.

Each question has a blank line for you to add your own answer if you prefer.

## 1. Whose opinion do you think matters most to you?

*Write the name of the person next to the answer you choose.*



- a. Your parents \_\_\_\_\_
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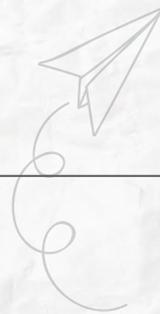
## 2. Who looks up to you?

*Write the name of the person next to the answer you choose.*

- a. Your brother or sister \_\_\_\_\_
- b. A friend at school \_\_\_\_\_
- c. A friend at church \_\_\_\_\_
- d. No one you can think of \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Who are you most likely to turn to for advice?

- a. Your parents
- b. Your Junior Soldier leader
- c. Your Big Bud
- d. Your friends
- e. \_\_\_\_\_



## 4. Who comes to you for advice?

- a. Your brother or sister \_\_\_\_\_
- b. A friend at school \_\_\_\_\_
- c. A friend at church \_\_\_\_\_
- d. No one you can think of \_\_\_\_\_
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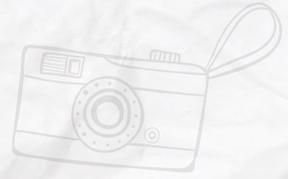
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**6. How do you choose what new music to download?**

- a. Check the top 10
- b. Search your favourite artist or style of music
- c. Copy your friend's playlist
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**7. What would you do if your friends all decided to switch the sports team that they support?**

- a. Go along with their decision and switch with them
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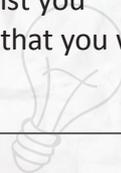
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**10. What might stop you from trying something new that you would really like to do?**

- a. Your friends might think it's silly
- b. None of your friends do it
- c. Your parents don't think it's a good idea
- d. Nothing would stop you from doing what you want to do
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Who/what has had the most influence on what you believe about God?**

- a. Your own reading of the Bible
- b. Your friends at school
- c. A member of your family
- d. A person at your church
- e. \_\_\_\_\_



# Personal Covenant

I believe that God

I want to be influenced by

The goal I want to achieve is

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# Home & Beyond

Choose one of these strategies or make up your own.

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2. Write a prayer asking God to help you to be a God influence to others.
3. Ask a family member or Big Bud to keep you accountable. Show them your Junior Soldier Promise or Personal Covenant and tell them that this is the way you want to live.

  
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