



JUNIOR SOLDIER RENEWAL

- 2022 LEADER'S NOTES

THEME

God's Big Story and US – a story of connection.

KEY SCRIPTURE

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:1-5, NLT)

CONSIDER

Read over the notes in this section as you prepare for your Junior Soldier Renewal Day.

What is Junior Soldier Renewal Day?

Junior Soldier Renewal Day is an annual event that creates a space for all people in your faith community, and Junior Soldiers in particular, to reflect on and renew their commitment to living life as a disciple of Jesus. Invite your Junior Soldiers to be involved in planning, preparing and leading this meeting. This is a great opportunity for intergenerational connection. Choose participants of all ages and abilities to take part and encourage everyone to explore the content together and learn from each other.



Renewal Day packs

You can order Junior Soldier Renewal packs [here](#). Packs include certificates and a sheet of grape stickers for each Junior Soldier. Additional sheets of stickers can be ordered for other children that may take part.

2022 theme


The theme for the National Children's Team for 2022 is '**God's Big Story and Me**'.

God has a plan for creation. It started before time existed and goes on forever. This plan includes us. God's story for creation is a BIG one. We are characters in God's story and each of us has a special part to play – a part that is just for us. Jesus had a very special part to play in God's BIG story. We can learn about how to live our lives by hearing the stories of Jesus.

Jesus often used '**I Am**' statements in his teaching. This Junior Soldier Renewal Day will focus on his revelation in **John 15:1, "I am the true grapevine"**. This passage is about connection. It focuses on our connection to God, through Jesus and our connection with others through Jesus. When we stay connected, together we flourish and bear fruit.

Optional inclusions

We know that no two faith communities look the same, so we've provided lots of options for you.

Whenever you see this grape icon,  it means there are **bonus fun activities** that you might like to add into your meeting plan.

We've provided **two meeting outlines** as examples, but please choose the elements that fit your timeframe and context.

The provided **PowerPoint slides** are fully customisable too.

Videos

We recommend playing the following videos during the Renewal Day meeting:

- [Vine and Branches](#) (see the end of this document for full licensing information)
- Fruit of the Spirit (this video can be downloaded from the Toolkit with the password RenewalDay22)



We have obtained permission to use these videos for our 2022 Junior Soldier Renewal meetings. These resources can also be used where the meeting is streamed. However, recordings that include the videos cannot then be posted on YouTube.

PREPARE

- Ensure all Junior Soldiers have a designated person to pray for them. This may be a Big Bud or another member of the church family.
- Ask Junior Soldiers (and/or others) to:
 - o Prepare a short response to the statement: “I connect to Jesus when ...” (5 or 6 people to respond)
 - o Prepare a 1-2 minute response to the statement: “Connecting with others means ...” (2-3 people to respond)
 - o Assist with decorating and setting up your space
 - o Familiarise themselves with John 15:1-5
 - o Organise and lead the games and activities
 - o Lead the singing
- Consider decorating your space to reflect the themes of the grapevine and staying connected
- Set up the activities that you have chosen to include

MEETING PLAN

You will need

Construct a grapevine before the meeting begins or as you introduce the theme. This could be done in many ways. For example:

- Paint a mural
- Stick a large cardboard cutout onto a wall for the trunk, green crepe streamers for the vines, purple cardboard cutouts for the grapes
- Wrap a microphone stand in brown crepe paper, drape with green streamers for the vines, use purple balloons to represent clusters of grapes

Alternatively, display the slides in the PowerPoint pack that show the different parts of the grapevine.



PART 1 – 'I AM'

God has a plan for creation. It started before time existed and goes on forever. This plan includes us. God's story for creation is a BIG one. We are characters in God's story and each of us has a special part to play – a part that is just for us. Jesus had a very special part to play in God's BIG story. We can learn about how to live our lives by hearing the stories of Jesus.

Jesus also told us a lot about himself when he was teaching. He often used 'I Am' statements. Let's look at seven of his 'I Am' statements.



Do one of the following from the activities section:

- Cardboard
- Quiz
- Images

In John 15:5, Jesus said, "I am the vine." This is the verse that we will focus on today.

People in Jesus' time would have been very familiar with vines. Grapevines grew everywhere.

Create a grapevine as you explain or point to the parts of one you created beforehand, or project images of the different parts.

The people who were listening to Jesus understood that a grapevine has a strong, woody vine. The green branches all grow out of this vine. When the vine and branches are healthy, delicious fruit grows from the branches.

In God's BIG story, Jesus is the vine. We are the branches.

- To stay healthy, we need to stay connected to Jesus
- Jesus helps us to stay connected with others
- When we are connected to Jesus, we can grow fruit



Scripture reading – John 15:1-5

Ask a Junior Soldier to read the verses.

You might also like to:

- **Ask participants to act out the story as it is read – Jesus, disciples, gardener etc.**
- **Follow the Scripture reading with some questions:**
 - **What did you learn?**
 - **What do you think was important about this story?**
 - **Where do you see yourself in this story?**
 - **How do you think this story fits into God's BIG story?**
 - **Why do you think this story was included in the Bible?**

PART 2 – STAY CONNECTED TO JESUS

You will need

- ☐ **Optional:** extra green streamers for participants to add to the grapevine as they share about how they feel connected to Jesus

Imagine a lovely healthy vine growing. Now, take a big pair of secateurs (gardening scissors) and chop off one of the branches. Take that branch and pop it under your bed. What do you think will happen to it?

Allow for responses.

If we chop a branch off a vine, then the leaves will go brown and drop off. Any fruit on the branch will rot and make a smelly mess. The branch will become dry, and the wood will die.

Branches must stay connected to the vine or trunk to stay healthy. Jesus said, “I am the vine and you are the branches...” Just like the branches on the grapevine, if we want to live healthy lives then we need to stay connected to Jesus.

Ask Junior Soldiers (and/or others) to share their response to the statement: “I feel connected to Jesus when ...”

Alternatively, responses could be shared in small groups or pairs. You might also like to provide green streamers for people to add to your grapevine as they share their responses.



Some of the ways that we can stay connected with Jesus are:

- Talking and listening (praying)
- Spending time in God’s creation
- Reading the Bible, watching animations of Bible clips or listening to Bible stories
- Living life like Jesus did
- Singing or listening to music that helps us to think about Jesus
- Spending time with others who are also connected to Jesus

Verse 4 reminds us of something wonderful. Jesus said, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you.” Sometimes, it’s hard for us to stay connected with Jesus – there can be a lot of distractions. But this verse tells us that Jesus is working to keep us connected too.

PART 3 – STAY CONNECTED TO OTHERS



Do one of the following from the activities section:

- *Grape gathering relay*
- *Rope activity*
- *Working together*

John 15:4 reminds us that we are connected to each other through Jesus, the vine. In another part of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 12, this is described in a different way. Followers of Jesus are described as parts of a body. Together, we are connected as the Body of Christ (Jesus).

As branches of the vine, or parts of the body, connected by Jesus, we:

- Have a common purpose
- Can work together
- Can help others

In God's BIG story, God designed us to live in connection, or community, with each other. We can't live healthy lives without each other. Think about it this way ... if we were to disconnect a foot from a body the foot wouldn't be able to do anything! And, the rest of the body would probably fall over too. We need all the parts to be connected for them to work together.

Ask Junior Soldiers (and/or others) to share their response to the statement: "Connecting with others means ..."

Alternatively, responses could be shared in small groups or pairs.



Jesus is the vine, we are the branches. We need to stay connected to him and connected to each other.

PART 4 – MEMORY VERSE



Do one of the memory verse activities.

PART 5 – STAY CONNECTED TO GROW FRUIT

You will need

- ☐ **Optional:** plates of chopped fruit for snacking on during this section (be aware of allergies and keep different types of fruit separated)
- ☐ **Optional:** paper and pencils or playdough for everyone to create fruit as they listen
- ☐ **Optional:** watch YouTube video '[Vine and Branches | Bible Story | LifeKids](#)'. See end of document for licensing information.

I wonder, what is your favourite fruit?

You might like to watch '[Vine and Branches | Bible Story | LifeKids](#)'

In verse 5, Jesus says that we can only grow fruit when we stay in him. Of course, this doesn't mean that grapes are going to start growing from our fingertips or apples out of our ears!

The fruit that Jesus is talking about are the good things that come out of our lives when we stay connected to Jesus.

In the Bible, in Galatians 5:22-23, there is a list of examples.

When we stay connected to Jesus, we will see this fruit in our lives:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control



Divide everyone into small groups and ask each group to talk about one or two of these fruits then answer the question, “How will your life look different to others if you grow more of this fruit this week?”

PART 6 – JUNIOR SOLDIER RENEWAL

You will need

- ☐ Junior Soldier Renewal cards
- ☐ Pens

Invite the Junior Soldiers and their Big Buds to come to the front of your space.

Today we have been focussing on staying connected to Jesus and others. Each Junior Soldier has made a promise that includes staying close to Jesus and his help. It also talks about staying connected with others and helping them too.

Ask the Junior Soldiers to read their promise together.

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.

Today our Junior Soldiers will sign their promise again, to remind themselves of the commitment that they have made.

You might also have made a promise or commitment to live life with Jesus. Remember that in John 15:4, Jesus asks us to remain in him. This is a reminder that sometimes we need to check in and be sure that we are staying connected with Jesus so that we can keep on growing fruit.

The Junior Soldiers will take home a renewal certificate today as a reminder of their promise.

How could you regularly remind yourself to stay connected to Jesus?
Here are some examples:

- Set a special time each day to connect with Jesus
- Listen to a song each day that helps you to feel close to Jesus
- Set an alarm on your phone at a certain time each day to remind you to pray
- Put a card on your mirror with a favourite Bible verse

Make space for the Junior Soldiers to sign their Renewal Cards and for their Big Buds to pray with them.

Invite everyone to join you as you pray for the Junior Soldiers.



PART 7 - PRAYER ACTIVITIES

You will need

1. Stay in the story

- ☐ Printed instruction card
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Crayons, pencils, markers etc.

2. Reflect on the story

- ☐ Printed instruction card
- ☐ Bibles – for those who would like to look up the verses
- ☐ Playdough

3. Stay connected to Jesus

- ☐ Printed instruction card
- ☐ A branch
- ☐ Pieces of green thread – enough for one per person

4. Stay connected to others

- ☐ Printed instruction card
- ☐ Pieces of fruit – be mindful of allergies and place each type of fruit into separate bowls

5. Stay productive

- ☐ Start a paper chain with several links
- ☐ Strips of paper
- ☐ Pens or pencils

Prepare 3-5 of the prayer activities and allow everyone to choose which ones they would like to engage with.



OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES



GENERAL

Make grape scented 'scratch and sniff' paint:

- o Make grape scented 'scratch and sniff' paint using jelly crystals, PVA glue and food colouring
- o Provide everyone with a template that has the words 'Remain connected' written at the bottom
- o Allow everyone to create a painting of a grapevine (or whatever they feel inspired to paint)

Provide resources for everyone to access throughout the meeting:

- o Colouring-in sheets – vines, grapes etc.
- o Purple slime or playdough
- o LEGO blocks or similar (connection)

PART 1 – 'I AM' – Option 1 – Cardboard

You will need

- ☐ Seven sheets of cardboard or butcher's paper
- ☐ Write one of the 'I Am' statements on each

- Write each of the 'I Am' statements on separate pieces of butcher's paper or cardboard:
 1. I Am the Bread of Life
 2. I Am the Light of the World
 3. I Am the Gate (or Door)
 4. I Am the Good Shepherd
 5. I Am the Resurrection and the Life
 6. I Am the Way, Truth and Life
 7. I Am the Vine
- Invite seven helpers to come and hold them, facing the writing away from others
- Ask everyone to call out any of the 'I Am' statements that they can recall
- As each one is mentioned, have the relevant helper turn it around then stick it onto the wall
- Ask the helpers to read out any staying statements

PART 1 – 'I AM' – Option 2 – Quiz

You will need

- ☐ PowerPoint pack slides: quiz
- ☐ Optional: paper and pens
- ☐ Optional: four large sheets of paper labelled a, b, c and d



- For this quiz, either:
 - o Divide everyone into small groups and provide each group with a piece of paper and a pen to write down their answers**OR**
 - o Stick one sheet of paper onto each wall of the room – labelling them a, b, c and d – asking everyone to move to the wall representing the answer that they think is correct
- Show the questions one at a time, leaving space for everyone to write down their answers or move to their chosen wall
- Answers are 1.C, 2.A, 3.D, 4.A, 5.B, 6.C, 7.B
- Quiz:
 1. I can be toasted and eaten with jam
 - a) I am the scone of cream
 - b) I am the crumpet of health
 - c) I am the bread of life
 - d) I am the muffin of happiness
 2. I take away the darkness
 - a) I am the light of the world
 - b) I am the candle that flickers
 - c) I am the glowstick of the disco
 - d) I am the lantern of the people
 3. I am the way to enter
 - a) I am the turnstile
 - b) I am the window
 - c) I am the chimney
 - d) I am the gate
 4. I care for the animals
 - a) I am the good shepherd
 - b) I am the best zookeeper
 - c) I am the great vet
 - d) I am the fabulous dog sitter

5. I live forever
 - a) I am a loop
 - b) I am the resurrection and the life
 - c) I am the never-ending story
 - d) I am limitless
6. I can tell you how to live well
 - a) I am TikTok
 - b) I am the direction, facts and energy
 - c) I am the way, truth and life
 - d) I am your mother
7. I climb up walls
 - a) I am the snail
 - b) I am the vine
 - c) I am the spider
 - d) I am the cat



PART 1 – 'I AM' – Option 3 – Images

You will need

- ☐ PowerPoint pack slides: seven 'I Am' statements

Using the slides in the PowerPoint pack, read each of the 'I Am' statements and show the images.

PART 2 – No optional activities

PART 3 – STAY CONNECTED TO OTHERS – Option 1 – Grape gathering relay

You will need

- ☐ Two or three small baskets or buckets
- ☐ 30-40 strips of purple crepe paper crumpled to resemble individual grapes

- Scatter crumpled pieces of purple crepe paper (to resemble grapes) around the designated space
- Choose participants to form two or three teams (the size of the team can vary) – you can include participants of all ages and abilities, see * below
- Have each team stand in a line, shoulder-to-shoulder, and link arms at the elbows



- Give a basket or bag to the person at one end of each team line
- Explain the rules:
 - o The first person in each line must pick up one 'grape' at a time and hand it to the next person in line
 - o You can use your hands, but you must keep your hands linked at the elbows
 - o Pass the grapes down the line until the grape reaches the basket/bag
 - o If you drop a grape or unlink elbows, the first person in the line must pick up the grape and begin passing it again from the beginning of the line
 - o The team with the most grapes at the end is the winner
- *If you have participants who need to remain seated, place a chair/wheelchair in the middle of each team so that the rest of the line can swivel around them

Link: Jesus is the vine. We are connected to each other in him. When we work together, we can do his work and achieve great things.

PART 3 – STAY CONNECTED TO OTHERS – Option 2 – Rope activity

You will need

- ☐ A long rope

- Stretch a long rope across your space
- Have everyone (or as many as possible) hold onto the rope
- Explain that the rope connects everyone together
- Ask everyone to keep holding tightly onto the rope
- Ask someone at the front of the line to move forward, still holding onto the rope
- The others will all have to move forward together too, as the rope moves

Link: Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. He connects us together, a bit like the way that this rope connects us. When we are all connected to Jesus, we are also connected to each other.

PART 3 – STAY CONNECTED TO OTHERS – Option 3 – Working together

- Choose a volunteer who is willing to do a simple task



- Ask the volunteer to stand on one side of the room and place a hand on the wall
- Then ask them to stretch out their arms and, without removing their hand from the wall, place the other hand on the opposite wall
- Give them a moment to try, ask everyone to encourage them
- Choose another volunteer
- Ask them to stand next to the first volunteer, hold hands with them and try together to reach the other wall
- Continue to add more people to the chain until they can achieve the goal

Link: Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. He connects us together. When we are connected together, we can help each other.

PART 4 – MEMORY VERSE – JOHN 15:5 – Option 1 – PowerPoint

You will need

- ☐ PowerPoint pack slides: Memory verse

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NLT).

PART 4 – MEMORY VERSE – JOHN 15:5 – Option 2 – Balloons

You will need

- ☐ 10 purple balloons
- ☐ A permanent marker
- ☐ A 60-second timer or phone with a timer

- Blow up 10 purple balloons
- Write a section of the verse on each balloon:
 1. I am the vine;
 2. and you are the branches.
 3. If you stay joined to me,

4. and I stay joined to you,
 5. then you will produce
 6. lots of fruit.
 7. But you cannot
 8. do anything
 9. without me.
 10. John 15:15a
- Choose 10 volunteers and give each one a balloon (mix up the order)
 - Set a timer for 60 seconds and ask the volunteers to line up in order so that the balloons they are holding form the verse
 - Ask everyone to repeat the verse together several times – popping one or two balloons each time



PRAYER ACTIVITIES

Choose 3-5 of these activities to do in **PART 7**

1. STAY IN THE STORY

God has a plan for creation. It started before time existed and goes on forever. This plan includes us. God's story for creation is a BIG one. We are characters in God's story and each of us has a special part to play – a part that is just for us.

Draw a picture, write some words or talk to a friend about your part in God's BIG story.

Prayer: I know that you have a plan for this world and for me. It's a big story and I can't always see how all the parts fit together. Help me to trust you, even when I don't understand what is happening. Please show me how to live my life well in this story, remind me that you can see the BIG picture and that you have great plans for me.

2. REFLECT ON THE STORY

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:1-5, NLT)

Read John 15:1-5. What do you think these verses mean?

Use playdough to show what you think is most important in these verses.

Prayer: Thank you for giving us the Bible to help us to know and understand you. You are the vine and I am one of the branches. Please help me to keep learning more about you and your ways.

3. STAY CONNECTED TO JESUS

Just like the branches on the grapevine, if we want to live healthy lives then we need to stay connected to Jesus.

Tie a green thread to the branch as you think about what you do to stay connected to Jesus. Take a twig with you as a reminder of this connection.

Prayer: Help me to stay connected to Jesus. Show me what I need to do to keep my connection strong. Help me to know when the connection is getting weak and remind me to reconnect.

4. STAY PRODUCTIVE

When we stay connected to Jesus, we will grow this fruit in our lives:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

Take a piece of fruit and eat it slowly. As you taste the fruit, think about which of these words describe you and the way that you live. Which of these fruits would you like to grow more of as you stay connected to Jesus?

Prayer: It's exciting to see how my life changes when I stay connected to you. Please help me to grow more and more of your fruit in my life.

5. STAY CONNECTED TO OTHERS

In God's BIG story, God designed us to live in connection, or community, with each other. We can't live healthy lives without each other.

Write your name on a strip of paper. What can you do this week to help someone else live a healthy life? You might like to write this on the other side of your strip. Link your paper to the chain with a piece of tape.

Prayer: Thanks for creating us to live and work together with others. Please help us to find ways to keep each other healthy and connected to Jesus.

EXAMPLE OUTLINES

SUGGESTED OUTLINE 1

PART 1 with Option 2

Songs (relating to 'I Am' – For example, I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life)

Prayer

Scripture reading – John 15:1-5

PART 2

PART 3 with Option 1

PART 4 with Option 2

PART 5 – include Vine and the Branches clip

Song – Fruit of the Spirit

Offering

PART 6 – Renewal segment

PART 7 – Prayer activities 2, 4 and 5

Song



SUGGESTED OUTLINE 2

Call to worship – Psalm 24:1-6, 10

Prayer

PART 1 with Option 1

Songs (relating to 'I Am' – For example, I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life)

Scripture reading – John 15:1-5

PART 2

PART 3 with Option 3

PART 4 – Memory verse with Option 1

PART 5 – Stay connected to grow fruit

Songs (relating to the Fruit of the Spirit)

Offering

PART 6 – Renewal segment

PART 7 – Prayer activities 1, 3 and 5

Song

Benediction



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