

Junior Soldiers

Renewal Day 2013



Who are you listening to?

Intro

Junior Soldier Renewal day is scheduled on the territorial calendar for Sunday 23 June, 2013. Your corps may choose to celebrate with a service or include the renewal day segment and/or theme on a different date. The important thing is that all Junior Soldiers have an opportunity to review their promise and be supported by the wider church family in their discipleship journey.

Context

The theme this year, 'Who are you listening to?', is aiming to help our Junior Soldiers and others to focus on listening to the voice of Jesus and blocking out other distractions that make it difficult to hear his voice. This focus comes from the section in the Junior Soldier Promise that states 'I will trust him to keep me good.'

This statement implies that we will be putting all of our trust and faith in God and that we aim to rely solely on him in all aspects of our life. In order for this to filter through our lives, we refer back to the theme of listening intentionally to the voice of Jesus, listening to his guidance and direction in all that we say, think and do. If we are not listening or don't know his voice, we will miss all that he has to say to us and we begin to rely and trust in ourselves and other things rather than on Jesus.

Next in the promise, it goes on to highlight all the areas where we need Jesus' guidance and need to be listening to his voice for help. For this Renewal Day we are asking Junior Soldiers, as well as the congregation, to think and reflect on what it would mean to block out all distractions and spend quiet time with Jesus—focusing on, listening to, and relying on him in all aspects of our lives.

Below is some scripture that will help us to focus on the theme of 'Who are you listening to?' for our 2013 Renewal Day.

John 10:1-10 (CEV)

Jesus said:

I tell you for certain that only thieves and robbers climb over the fence instead of going in through the gate to the sheep pen. But the gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and he goes in through it. The sheep know their shepherd's voice. He calls each of them by name and leads them out. When he has led out all of his sheep, he walks in front of them, and they follow, because they know his voice. The sheep will not follow strangers. They don't recognize a stranger's voice, and they run away. Jesus told the people this story. But they did not understand what he was talking about.

Jesus said:

I tell you for certain that I am the gate for the sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture. A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest.

The Renewal Day notes include message outlines and other suggestions for a celebration service as the Junior Soldiers renew their promise and, possibly, where new Junior Soldiers will be enrolled. We have also included some family resources that will support the teaching and help reinforce it in a number of environments the Junior Soldiers interact in.

Renewal Day Items

The Renewal Day items for 2013 include two items per child and one for Big Buds:

- Headphones that come in a case with the Junior Soldier badge and theme printed on them.
- A postcard Renewal Day card (with space for the Junior Soldier and Big Bud to sign as they renew their promises).
- A postcard Renewal Day card for the Big Bud (with space for the Junior Soldier and Big Bud to sign as they renew their promises)



The Renewal Day card (including the Junior Soldier promise or Big Bud promise) and the headphones will help to reinforce the key ideas of the promise and the theme of the day—listening and relying on God. It would be good to encourage the Junior Soldiers (and family) to use these to:

- Remind them to take time out each day to listen to Jesus
- Spend time praying with their family
- Think about what Jesus is asking them to do in their church and their community.

Display/setting the theme suggestions

The first interactive message is about setting up an obstacle course. You might like to gather all the items that you are going to use for this message and have them set up into an obstacle course or displayed on the platform ready for the helpers to create the obstacle course.

As the theme is 'Who are you listening to?' you might like to use some sound equipment to set the stage, e.g. microphones, speakers, iPods, sound systems/CD players, large headphones etc. You could also create some of these out of cardboard to display on the platform, especially if you are wanting something larger.



Options to create your service

We have provided you with a children's story/interactive message to introduce the theme, some prayer ideas, a sermon outline, details for the renewal segment and some song suggestions. You might like to choose from these suggestions or use them all. We have placed the suggestions in order of where we might place them in the meeting, including the renewal segment as a response to the message, not only for the Junior Soldiers but for the whole congregation to be involved in and respond to.

Introduction to the theme:

Children's story/interactive message/Illustrations...

Obstacle Course

To set this message up you will need to have boxes, chairs and other items that could be used to create an obstacle course in the hall. You will also need to inform pre-arranged 'distractors' of what will be occurring during this time and that you would like them to be calling out wrong or different instructions to try and stop the person from completing the obstacle course. The number of people doing this may vary according to the size of your congregation.



You can either set up an obstacle course before the service starts or get some helpers to come and help set up an obstacle course around the church as you begin to tell the message. Explain to them that they will need to create a course that can test a person's ability to listen carefully to instructions.

When your obstacle course is complete, ask for a volunteer who would like to come up and attempt the obstacle course while being blindfolded and having to rely solely on their listening skills. Ask for another volunteer (someone they trust) who can be 'the voice' who stands at the front and gives directions to the person attempting the course. (Note that these should be different volunteers to the ones pre-arranged, and should not know what will be happening during the course).

What to do and say:

'Sometimes it can be hard listening to and following someone's instructions. There might be those we don't trust, or perhaps we think we know better, or we might simply prefer to do things our own way. Today we are going to watch as our volunteers try to break this barrier, listen intently and navigate the obstacle course working and relying just on each other.'

Get the two volunteers to start navigating the obstacle course. Allow them to make it past one section of the course before you indicate to the distractors to begin calling out. As they begin calling out and it becomes harder to hear 'the voice' volunteer, add to the confusion yourself by speaking over 'the voice' and continually saying, 'You need to listen to the voice'.

Once this has gone on for a few minutes, stop all volunteers, thank them and bring them back to the front. At this point you may like to ask some questions about what their experience was like to allow the congregation to understand how hard it really was.

- What was the easiest/hardest part of that task?
- I wonder how you felt when you only had to listen to the 'one voice'.
- I wonder how you felt when you were trying to listen to the 'one voice' amongst all the others calling out and distracting you.
- How did you feel (the voice volunteer) when you were trying to get the person doing the obstacle course to only listen to you and your instructions?

Thank the volunteers again and allow them to sit down.

'We said before that it is hard listening to instructions. It becomes harder again when distractions occur that stop us from being able to hear an instruction clearly or perhaps at all.

- Share with the people around you three things that can distract us when we are trying to listen to instructions.

'Today it is important for us to think about how we can stop the distractions from occurring in our life that make it harder to hear God's voice, some of the things that might be happening around us that make it difficult to listen to God's voice. I wonder what we might be able to do to make it easier to hear God's instructions and know His voice.

'God is always trying to connect and communicate with us. He is telling us that he loves us, he is telling us that he cares for us, and he is telling us that he is willing to walk with us and help to guide us along the way. However, if we are not listening, or don't know his voice, or if we are trying to listen but there are

too many distractions, we are going to miss all of the wonderful things that he wants to share with us.

‘Today is Junior Soldier Renewal Day and the Junior Soldiers will be renewing their promise to God later this morning, but even if you are not a Junior Soldier, I want you to start thinking about your own commitment to God and what this means. How can you ensure that you are tuned in to everything that he is saying to you?’

Media Suggestions:

Below are two YouTube clips that you might like to use in your service to help reinforce the theme of listening to God’s voice, especially as we deal with distractions around us.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4e87vIRpds> – ‘Be still and know that I am God’

This clip is of a black screen with no sound that helps us to stop and prepare to be still before God. This would work really well in the following prayer segment.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfyRkzbwjwE> – ‘Lifehouse’s Everything Skit’

This clip shows the inner wrestle we can have between listening to God’s voice and being guided by him and all of the other things that want to take our time and attention away from him.



Prayer suggestions

Interruptive reading

To prepare for this section you will need to ask a number of people to be one of the ‘pre-arranged distractions’ listed below or some others that you might like to add.

Someone will announce that it is now time for the Bible reading and prayer segment. The reading will be John 10:1–10. While this Bible reading is happening, the pre-arranged distractions need to occur. Some suggestions for these are listed below, however, you may have some of your own ideas that you could use instead of or as well as. These distractions would happen at different times throughout the reading. The person reading should previously be made aware of what will be happening.

- Person in congregation has an uncontrollable coughing fit
- Band person knocks over cymbal or music stand
- Adult gives child a noisy toy to play with
- Person loudly asking, up the back of the hall, ‘What verse are they reading? Huh? Where?’

At the end of the reading, the person at the front will stop and explain:

‘With so many distractions occurring during that time, I am sure that it was quite difficult to listen in carefully to what was being read from the Bible. With so many distractions occurring on a daily basis (big and small) it becomes challenging to be able to hear God. It is important that we stop, that we are still and quiet and we make time to listen to God. When we are quiet and taking time out of our lives to simply sit and allow space to listen, we will be more likely to hear God’s voice. In fact, what we can do right now is, without the distractions that we had during the Bible reading, try and stop, be quiet and focus your thoughts ready to listen, to listen to just God. Let’s be silent and focused on God for one whole minute – it might not seem like long but it will certainly feel like a long time.’

→ I wonder what God might be saying to you during this time.

After this, you might like to have three people representing different aspects of the corps (Junior Soldier, youth and adult) come and pray. This may just be a sentence prayer that can conclude this prayer time. Let the people know who they are before the day so that they are prepared to get up and pray.

In this Bible reading/prayer segment you might like to use 'Be still and know that I am God' before the one minute silence, to help prepare for this section.

Song/music suggestions

Below are just a few suggestions for songs to use as a congregation or that can be played at a particular time during the service. Each church has their own style and repertoire of songs and so we have only made a few suggestions that you might find helpful to include. It would be good to play the Junior Soldier song at some point throughout the service (there is a PowerPoint presentation alongside these notes that has the words for 'I'm a Junior Soldier' as well as the words of the promise.)

- 'Every Move I Make' (*Every Move I Make*, Promise Land, 2003)
- 'Jesus Loves Me' (*Jesus Loves Me*, Hillsong Kids, 2007)
- 'Be Still' (David Evans, Thankyou Music, 1986)
- 'I Can Only Imagine' (*Almost There*, Mercy Me, 2001)
- 'God Speaking' (*True Beauty*, Mandisa, 2007)
- 'Let Your Light Shine' (*Super Strong God*, Hillsong Kids, 2005)



Message/Sermon

Sermon focus...

Who are you listening to?

Sermon purpose...

To identify some of the things that might be distracting us from listening to God's voice and guidance and how important it is that we create space and take time out to listen to God and nothing else.

Scripture...

John 10:1-10

You Will Need...

To have some people prepared before the service to help with this activity. They will need to be a part of the follow the leader game and, at an agreed time, change the direction and say 'Follow me' as they start doing a new follow the leader action.



Message...

Play 'follow the leader' with some volunteers from the congregation, you would be best to choose a variety of ages including children, youth and adults. As you are leading this game of follow the leader, have one of the arranged people at the appropriate time interrupt and say 'Follow me', change direction and change action. Then, after a little while, have the next person do the same, say 'Follow me', change direction and change the action. Finish the game by saying 'No, follow me. I am the leader of the game', change direction and do the final action. When you have finished this action you can send everyone back to their seats.

'I wonder who you are listening to. I wonder who you are following.

We have just been playing a game of 'follow the leader'—I was the leader that set up the game but then we had some other people take over and lead the followers in another direction and doing a different action. This is frustrating because I was the leader but others wanted to lead you in a different way. I don't know about you but at times can find it difficult to always know who to follow and who to listen to when making choices.

Our follow the leader game is a little bit like the obstacle course and Bible reading segment we had earlier, they remind us that when instructions are given without distractions it is so much easier to follow the right voice: we know who we are listening to and other things are not taking our attention. However, when others start to interrupt and take over, it is not so easy to know who we should be following and who we should be listening to.

- I wonder what you think might be some of the things that distract you from hearing God's voice.
- Share this with the people around you.
- (It would be good to get some feedback from around the congregation – suggestions – media, work, relationships, technology, greed, sport, shopping/consumerism etc.)

It's very difficult to talk to God during the hustle and bustle of life if you don't have a quiet block of time reserved for prayer and listening to Him. It's even more difficult to listen to God in those busy times when we are running from one thing to another.

'God, is there anything you would have me hear from you right now?' followed by a two-second pause before heading out the door is highly unlikely to result in a spiritual awakening. Listening requires time set apart, this is not always an easy thing and might take some practice to get comfortable with it.

With all of the distractions occurring in our lives, some of which we mentioned before, I'm not sure how we are capable of getting any work completed, let alone being able to hear and listen to God. However, if we don't listen well or know who we should be listening to, how will we get our instructions from God? Listening intentionally allows us to receive all that God has for us.

- I wonder what listening intentionally to God might look like for you. (This will probably look different for each person.)
- Discuss this with the people near you.
- (It would be good to get some feedback from around the congregation.)

Our scripture reading today, talks about sheep following their shepherd because they know his voice. When another tries to steal the sheep away, they will not go because they do not recognise the voice and only follow their master's voice. In this scenario the shepherd is the leader. Today we have been playing a few games with a 'leader' in charge, but others have stepped in to try and take over that position.

- I wonder who your leader is – the leader that you follow and listen to their voice.

While some people claim to have heard God's voice audibly, for most of us, God speaks internally.



Some people talk about conversing with God in their thoughts, almost as though someone is replying to their questions and statements as fast as they can pose them. Others talk about ideas and words coming to them that don't seem to be their own—like they've come out of 'nowhere'.

Maybe you're familiar with the idea of 'hearing' your mother's voice when she's not anywhere near you (or your grandmother or your father etc.). You wonder if you should take an umbrella with you on a cloudy day but decide you can't be bothered carrying it, then you 'hear' your mum saying, 'Better safe than sorry'—as she said to you 100 times when you were growing up—and you stop and take the umbrella.

Sometimes God's voice is reminding us of a Bible verse, or telling us to apologise to someone, or reminding us that we'd promised Him we'd pray every day. It's not an audible voice, but you know it's a message from God.

- Are you finding time to stop and simply listen to God?
- How does God 'speak' to you?
- Now is a great time to intentionally stop and begin listening to the voice of God and His leading.

Reflection song: 'Be Still'

Renewal Segment

On the day your corps has scheduled Junior Soldier Renewal Day, opportunity should be given in corporate worship for Junior Soldiers to consider their promise and renew it in a public way. We encourage you to include this segment in response to the message so that once the Junior Soldiers have renewed their promise, the rest of the congregation can be involved. After the conclusion of the message, opportunity for the Junior Soldiers to renew their promise can be given.

It would be good to have the promise on a PowerPoint slide (this can be accessed in the PowerPoint slides alongside these notes) so that people can see and be reminded of the promise that the children are renewing on this day. Have one or all of the Junior Soldiers read/ say the promise together before signing their renewal cards.

As the music is playing, encourage the Junior Soldiers and their Big Buds to come forward, sign their renewal certificate, pray together and receive their head phones and CD case.

Pray, as a congregation, for the Junior Soldiers that they will be able to find quiet times to listen for God's voice and that those in the congregation will help to guide them in God's way on their discipleship journey.

Once the certificates have been signed and the Junior Soldiers prayed for, an opportunity for others to come and make a commitment can be offered. Even though the day is specifically about the Junior Soldiers and their promise, it's also encouraging for them to see the rest of the congregation make their own commitment to God, being willing to be challenged and willing to put their faith into practice. The congregation can be encouraged as well to affirm that they are listening to God and being guided by Him.

Sending Out/Benediction

'May we each be able to find the quiet times where we can stop and simply listen to God. May we find that in those quiet times we can clearly hear God's voice and not just listen, but trust and do what he says. Amen.'



Home & Beyond

Supporting and growing our Junior Soldiers at home...

For this section you will need enough blank CDs for each family (you can get these that come in CD cases or plastic sleeves), you will find attached to these notes an insert with the Home & Beyond instructions on it to be used with this item.

In this Home & Beyond section, families will be encouraged to take time together to block out distractions and listen to God.

These CDs could be given out during the reflection time while people are committing to taking time to listen—make sure that families not able to make it on this Sunday are also given the opportunity to receive one.

The focus has been about taking time to listen to God. The blank CD and case can remind you to take time out regularly to spend with God.

Together as a family think about the following:

- What is one of your favourite songs that helps you to think about God?
- Why did you choose this song?
- Use the blank CD to combine these songs into a family album.
- Think of some places where you might like to listen to this CD together, e.g. while having dinner, while driving in the car etc.

Listening challenge: 1 Minute. Take time each day to find one minute to put your headphones on. Don't plug them into anything but instead take that one minute to sit and be quiet with God.

Disclaimer: We understand that every corps is different and will need to adapt and change ideas to suit. These ideas are provided as a guideline.

May God continue to bless you in your ministry and as you make a difference in the lives of young people.

Tracey Davies (Captain)
Territorial Children's Ministry Secretary



