

Junior Soldiers

Unit 8 : Lesson 1



I Choose!

PURPOSE : For the children to explore and understand that they have made a choice to ask God for forgiveness and to follow him.

'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.'

Revelations 3:20 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

1 John 1:9

Psalm 51

Revelation 3:20

John 1:12

This lesson focuses on the part of the Junior Soldier promise that says: 'I have asked him...'. It is aimed at exploring and reinforcing that we have a choice to follow God, and that we need to make the decision to ask him to forgive us.

Every Christian makes the decision at the start of their faith journey to ask God to come into their life and be connected with them. Even though we know that God is always with us, we need to make the decision to allow him to become a part of our life and always be connected with us. God sent his son to make it possible for us to be connected with him, but we need to *choose* to invite him into our life, believe in him and follow him.

It is important to remember—once we have made the choice to ask God into our lives and be connected with him—that although we strive to be like God, we are still human and may continue to sin and make wrong choices. It is during these times that we need to choose to ask God for forgiveness. He loves us unconditionally and wants to forgive our wrong choices but we need to talk to him about this and ask for forgiveness.

For this lesson, you should focus on helping children to understand that although God loves us and will never leave us, we must invite him into our life. Whether it is to enter our life or forgive us, the choice is ours to invite or reject God. God won't force himself into someone's life: he waits, patiently, to be asked.



What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Picture of a door (size A3 or bigger)
- Cards that say 'Option 1' and 'Option 2'
- Prepare 'Would you rather' questions

For 'The Main Thing'

- Prepare different objects or photos that can represent the four categories being talked about in this section and how you show you have chosen to belong to these groups, e.g. a photo of who you love, a ball for a sports team, a school uniform for a school and a cross, Bible or T-shirt for Jesus.
- Four sheets of paper with the headings for the four categories written on one each (the people we love, the teams we belong to, schools we go to, our relationship with Jesus)
- Textas
- Bibles
- Junior Soldier promise to hand out to each child with the words 'I have asked him' highlighted.

For 'Tying In'

- Journals or paper
- Questions/prompts
- Reflection music

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child.
- Icy pole sticks or match sticks



Connecting In

Knocking relay race...

For this relay, you will need to divide the children into two teams. Get them to line up on one side of your room/space and hang your picture of a door. You may even like to use a real door for this game. Explain to the children that they will need to run up to the door and do their most creative or interesting knock—making sure that each knock includes at least five taps. Once they have finished knocking, they need to come back to their team and high five the next person who will go and have their turn. Continue this until all the children have had their turn. Once they have finished they must sit down with their hands on their head.

Link... It has been lots of fun today seeing how creative we can be with knocking on the door!

- Why do people knock?
- What do we do when we hear a knock?

When I hear a knocking on my door I know that someone is there waiting for me to open it and see what they want. It might be a friend visiting, somebody delivering something or perhaps someone selling something. Most people, when they knock on your door, will wait for you to come and answer it—they won't just come on in (although, sometimes, very good friends will come in if the door is open). Today we are going to explore how Jesus wants to hang out with us and is always ready to come in, but he waits for us to invite him in first. It is important that we make the choice to invite him into our lives so that he can hang out with us.

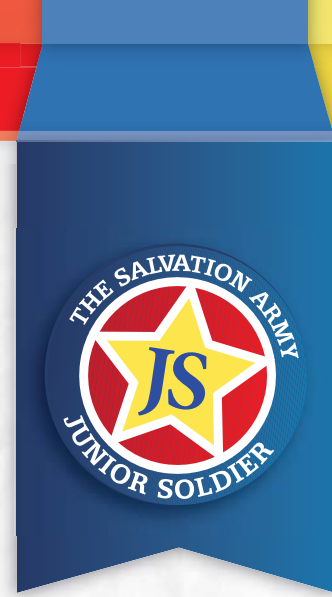
Would you rather...

For this game, you will need to set up two stations/spaces that children can go to, 'Option 1' and 'Option 2'. You will also need to have some prepared questions that have two options as answers (see examples below). Children will need to make the decision of whether they would prefer option one or option two and move to the stations/spaces accordingly. In each round, you may like to ask a couple of the children why they made that choice. Some examples you may like to use are:

- Would you rather be a giant hamster or a tiny rhino?
- Would you rather be able to stop time or fly?
- Would you rather be born with an elephant trunk or a giraffe neck?
- Would you rather be invisible or be able to read minds?
- Would you rather have bright blue hair or bright blue teeth?
- Would you rather be a famous actor or a doctor?

Link... Making decisions or choices can be lots of fun when we are talking about cool ideas like we used in the game, but sometimes we have to make decisions that are really important, or choices that are tricky and more difficult.

- I wonder if you like having a choice.
- What would happen if you were just told what to do and you didn't need to make a choice?



Today we are going to explore a decision that I think most of you will have already made, to follow Jesus. Jesus loves us and wants to hang out with us but he likes to wait for us to choose to ask him to come and be friends with us.

The Main Thing

During this time, you will need the objects listed in the 'What you will need' section that you have brought to represent each of the four groups. Make sure they are on display where all children can clearly see them. You will also need to set out your four sheets of paper with textas and the categories written on them ready for the children to write their ideas.

The people we love...

Each of us can be a part of many different relationships or groups. We make choices that help us to belong to these groups. We are going to talk about four different groups or relationships that you may belong to today. To start off, let's talk about the people that we love.

- I wonder who the people are that you love.
- How do they know that you love them? (*Give the children some time to respond, you may get answers like 'We give them hugs, tell them we love them, share things with them etc.'*)

As you ask these questions, allow time for the children to brainstorm their ideas by writing or drawing them on the sheet of paper provided for 'people we love'. Also allow time for sharing out loud as it would be good for children to hear different ideas.

- If you didn't do these things would they know that you love them? (*No, we need to make a choice to show others that we love them by the words we say and the things we do.*)

The teams we belong to...

You might belong to a sporting team or perhaps even a few teams. (*You may like to ask children to share if they belong to a team or they can write their teams on the paper for this section*). Some of us might belong to cricket clubs, some to footy, some might belong to dance clubs or perhaps even a group that plays music. You might not play a sport but you might be a sporting team supporter and belong to group of sports fans.

- How do people know you are a part of that team? (*Wear a uniform, go to practice, wear a badge etc.*)

As you ask these questions, allow time for the children to brainstorm their ideas by writing or drawing them on the sheet of paper for 'Teams we belong too'. Also allow time for sharing out loud as it would be good for children to hear a range of different ideas.

- If you don't do or wear these things, how would people know that you belong to that team? (*They won't, you need to make a choice to show that you belong to a team and do things that show others you are a part of this group.*)

Schools we go to...

What about the different schools we go to. There are so many different schools (*you can get them to write their school on the paper for this section*).

→ How do we know which school you go to? (*Uniform, logo, you could physically go to the school, school bag etc.*)

As you ask these questions, allow time for the children to brainstorm their ideas by writing or drawing them on the sheet of paper for 'Schools we go to'. Also allow time for sharing out loud as it would be good for children to hear a range of different ideas.

→ If you didn't wear a uniform or attend during the school hours do you think that people would know what school you went to? (*They won't, these are the things that show that you belong to the school and have chosen to go to that particular school.*)



We have shared and written down some of the things we do and what we wear that allows people to see and understand the communities or groups that we belong to, whether that is a school, sports team or a relationship that we have.

There is one more relationship that we are going to look at today—but before we do, we are going to read a Bible verse and our Junior Soldier promise.

- Hand out the Junior Soldier promise to each child, with the words 'I have asked him' highlighted.
- Get the group to read the promise out together.
- Go back to the highlighted words and get the group to read just that line.
- Ask the children what this section means to them.
- Get the children to look up Revelations 3:20.
- Ask one child to read this out.



Our relationship with Jesus...

You might have made a choice to follow Jesus. This means that you are on his team and have a relationship with him.

→ I wonder how we show people that Jesus is a special part of our life.

→ I wonder if there are any things we do or say that would make people think that Jesus was *not* a part of our life.

As you ask these questions, allow time for the children to brainstorm their ideas by writing or drawing them on the sheet of paper for 'Our relationship with Jesus'. Also allow time for sharing out loud as it would be good for children to hear a range of different ideas.

- If we want Jesus to be a part of our lives, we need to make a choice to show him we love him.
- If we want others to know that Jesus is a part of our lives, we need to deliberately choose to make these actions a part of our lives every day.

In the promise we read earlier, the words that were highlighted said 'I have asked him'. Jesus doesn't just automatically become a part of our lives even though he loves us very much and is always ready and waiting to be connected with us: we have to ask him. He gives us the power to make our own decisions. But we don't just make this choice once and forget about it: we make this choice obvious every day through our actions and behavior, our thinking and our words.

Tying In

'Today we have talked about the choices that we need to make involving God in our lives. We have talked about how, first of all, we need to actually let him into our lives so that we can be connected with him and, following that, we need to be making good choices each and every day in what we think, say and do to show God that we love him.

Right now we are going to have some individual reflection time to think about the choices we have made that show others that we have chosen to be connected with God.'

Encourage the children to think about the starter questions below—they can choose to write a prayer, a poem, some words or phrases, or create a picture that shows the choice they have made to be connected with Jesus.

Provide children with their journals or, if they do not have journals, give them some blank sheets of paper. You may like to have some quiet music playing in the background during this time. Write these questions/prompts on a board all the children can see.

- I wonder how others will know I have made a choice to follow Jesus.
- What will I do each day to show Jesus I am choosing to follow him?

Explain to the children that these questions are a starting point for their reflection. They may also like to reflect on other things that they have heard or done during the lesson.

At the end of this reflection time, ask the children to pray quietly and then finish off with a group prayer.

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.

For this home and beyond you will need to provide each child with either icy pole sticks or match sticks in a small zip-lock bag.


Knock knock...

'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.'

Revelations 3:20 (CEV)

- Use the sticks you have been given, with either some glue or sticky tape, to create a door.
- Once you have made your door, write the above verse onto it.
- Put your door where it will remind you every day to think about the choice you have made to be connected with Jesus.
- Share with your family/Big Bud some of the choices that you have made, so that others will know you are on Jesus' team.







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