

Junior Soldiers

Unit 7 : Lesson 1



You can't stop God From loving you!

PURPOSE : For children to explore and understand that nothing can ever separate them from God's love.

'I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love—not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!'

Romans 8:38–39

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Romans 3:31–39

Ephesians 3:14–21

Psalm 139:1–12

We live in an increasingly short-term world. That is, recent generations have become accustomed to change and evolution more than previous generations ever had to. Do you buy an iPad now or wait for the new version next year? Is it trendy to wear a woolen scarf? No, that was last month. Should I watch this new show on TV? No, watch this newer show streamed live online.

What about careers? The days of working as a postman for 40 years and retiring with a gold watch are long gone. On average now, an Aussie will work in three entirely different careers and with six different companies in their career.

How about church commitment? Almost no-one now attends the same church for their whole life. On average, an Aussie Christian will attend a church for five years and then move on.

So in this world where commitment and longevity and persistence are dirty words, how do we teach children about a God who will always love them, day in, day out, year after year, decade after decade? Will a child believe you when you say that the God who loves them today will still love them when they're 82 with great-grandkids of their own?

This lesson will confirm God's love for the children and His faithfulness to us for the long-term.

When talking about love and having a heavenly Father, remember to be sensitive toward the children, as not all children will have come from a healthy, loving home environment. Avoid 'throw away' lines like 'This is how your mum and dad love you'. You may need to assess whether more discussion or follow up is needed for some children at a different time.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Cards with items from pairs list written/printed on them
- Items for brainstorming activity, e.g. kettle, wind-up car, torch etc.
- Large sheet of butchers paper/whiteboard and appropriate markers

For 'The Main Thing'

- Bibles
- Paper, textas, pens etc.
- Large, cheap rubbish bag (e.g. large enough to fit a child)
- A roll of good quality clear contact
- Sticky notes
- Sticky tape, masking tape and gaffa tape

For 'Tying In'

- A copy of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (not essential but a great resource)
- You will need a variety of craft and creative resources for the children to choose from, e.g. paper, pens, textas, coloured paper, glue, scissors, musical instruments, playdough or paper Magiclay, craft supplies etc.

For 'Home & Beyond'

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



Connecting In

Things that go together...

Think about things that go together, e.g. salt and pepper, shoes and socks, eggs and bacon, Will and Kate. For this activity you will need to write a list of things that go together and then write each item out onto a card. You will need to have at least one card per child and leader in your group.

Explain to the children that they each have a card that goes together with a card that someone else has in the room. (It would be good to give some examples, but ones that are not represented on the cards you are going to hand out.)

- Hand out a card to each of the children.
- You might like to play some music in the background while the children/leaders go about finding the person who has the card that goes with the one that they have.
- Once they have found their pair they are to sit down with their hands on their heads.
- The first group to sit down is the winner but it would be good to see if all the matches can be made.
- When everyone is finished it would be good to go through and see what people had on their cards and if all the matches were made correctly.

Link: Today we have had fun playing a game that looked at things that go together. There are lots of things, people and places that when we think of them we often think about something that goes with them—just like the items that we have matched on the cards. Today we are going to explore something that will always go together with us, and that is God's love—it is always there for us and nothing can separate it from us. When we think about God's love, the perfect match that should come to mind for you, is you!

How does it stop?

For this brainstorming activity it would be good to have some props, e.g. a kettle, a wind-up car, a torch etc. You will also need a large sheet of butchers paper or a whiteboard and the appropriate markers.

- I have some items here that I can start, I can turn the kettle on, wind up the car and push the button on the torch to start it.
- Can you tell me: once I have started them, how do they stop?
- I wonder if you can think of some other items/objects that start and stop.
- Brainstorm them and write them up on the whiteboard or butchers paper.
- What about things like stopping people from doing certain things, e.g. how do I stop someone from bullying me?
- Allow some more time to think about how we might stop some of these behaviours.
- What about something like God's love... I wonder how you could get that to stop?
- Allow some more time for the kids to come up with some suggestions as to how they might be able to get God to stop loving them.



Link: We have been brainstorming about how things start and then stop and we have come up with some good suggestions and explored some great ideas. Even when we thought about how we might get God to stop loving us, we had some great suggestions but today we are going to explore some scripture that tells us that nothing—that's right—nothing, can separate us from God's love. (*It would be important here thought to add that that doesn't give us permission to purposely go and do wrong things.*)

The Main Thing

Can't get it off...

For this illustration you will need a large cheap rubbish bag (large enough to fit a child/volunteer) a roll of good quality clear contact, some sticky notes, some sticky tape, masking tape and gaffa tape etc.

Talk about things that stick and cannot come off easily. Brainstorm what things stick, e.g. contact on books, glue, chewy gum, honey etc.

Get a child/leader to put a cheap garbage bag on (make sure there is a hole in the top of the bag for their head to come through). Stick some post-it-notes to them and show how easily they peel off again. Get the children to say why these don't stick. Talk briefly about people who sometimes let us down and don't 'stick' by us. Reiterate how God will always stick by us.

Get a long piece of contact and wrap the volunteer right around. As you are doing that, talk about how sticky it is etc. Make sure it's good quality contact so that it sticks and, as you try to pull it off the garbage bag, the garbage bag rips.

'God is like the contact on the bag. He is/will always stick by us.'

Let's have a look at Matthew 28:20 together. Have someone read it out loud (you may even want to read it twice).

'I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.'

Now let's read Romans 8: 38–39 together.

'I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love—not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below.'

Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!'

In these verses we have some promises from God:

- I wonder what you think about when you hear these promises?
- I wonder how they make you feel?

Let's think about some things that stick:

- sticky notes:
 - ◊ Some sticky notes are good and others are not so good, but even the good ones don't always stay stuck.
 - ◊ Get a volunteer to stick some sticky notes onto the wall out the front or onto one of the leaders and you can show that they are easy to peel off.
- sticky tape:
 - ◊ Again, with sticky tape, depending on the brand you have it can be sticky or not so sticky.
 - ◊ Have some normal sticky tape, some masking tape and some gaffa tape.
 - ◊ Get a volunteer to come and use the tapes to show the difference between how good they will stick but that you can peel them off if needed.



Does anyone know what a **limpet** is? (You may like to show a picture after you have talked about them; you can find these on the internet and could either print one out or show it on a screen.)

The name **limpet** is used for many kinds of saltwater and freshwater snails, specifically those that have a simple shell which is more or less conical in shape.

Limpets attach themselves to surfaces using a liquid they produce (sort of like a mucus or snot when you have a runny nose) and some muscles in their base. This enables them to clamp down against a rock surface with considerable strength, despite the strong waves on exposed rocky shores. The ability to clamp down also seals the shell edge against the rock surface, protecting them during low tide, despite being in full sunlight.

When limpets are fully clamped down, it is impossible to remove them from the rock using brute force alone, and the limpet will allow itself to be destroyed rather than stop clinging to its rock. This survival strategy has led to the limpet being used as an example for stubbornness. They simply will not be budged!

I think about the promise that Jesus made about being with us always, day after day, and the promise that tells us that there is nothing that will separate us from God's love. It's not like the sticky notes or the sticky tape that can be taken off easily, it is more like trying to take the contact off the garbage bag and like the limpets that stick so tightly. Even limpets can be forced off eventually, however, God's love won't be budged.



Amazing but true...

Explore the following scripture together—read Romans 8:31–39 together.

During this time of exploring the scripture, you might like to work as a whole group (especially if your group is smaller) or you might like to divide your group into smaller age-based groups (discussion in small groups can be very helpful).

Reflect on how loved we are by God. How can we start showing that sort of love to others?

- I wonder what stands out for you in this passage.
- What do you like about this scripture passage?
- Take a moment to reflect on how loved we are by God. I wonder how that makes you feel.
- Re-read verse 31, 'If God is for us, who can ever be against us?' What do you think that might mean?
- What can possibly separate us from each other? (e.g. marriage break-ups, friends moving away, moving house, moving school, the way we behave and sometimes the choices we make etc.)

Talk with the children (using the contact and the garbage bag example) about how some of the choices we make and the way we behave could easily put us outside of God's love—but, in fact, the harder we try to tear away from Him, the closer He sticks.

- I wonder if any of you ever feel as if you don't deserve God's love. Why? (Allow a few moments for the children to respond—this will also need to be a sensitive time, creating a safe space for the children to share.)

→ You know, when we think like that—about not deserving God’s love—we can feel like or think that we might be moving away from God. But God’s pretty big—where could you possibly go to move away from God? (Read *Psalm 139:1–12.*) The reality is that God loves us no matter what, and even if we feel we are a long way from Him, nothing can take us away from His love.

Tying In

What does it look like for you?

For this section it would be good to have a copy of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (it is not essential, as the key phrase we are referring to is below, but it would be good to be able to look at it in context and the book is a great resource to be able to use with the children on a regular basis). You will also need a variety of craft and creative resources for the children to choose from, e.g. paper, pens, textas, coloured paper, glue, scissors, musical instruments, playdough or paper Magiclay, craft supplies etc.

If you have a copy of *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, read page 36 and then come back and reinforce the following statement included in the middle of that page. If you don’t have a copy just share the following statement with them:

‘You see, no matter what, in spite of everything, God would love His children with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.’

Share with the children how this statement makes you feel and what it might look like for you.

‘How does this statement make you feel?’

If you were going to express how this statement makes you feel to others, how might you do it? What might it look like? Would it be a picture or a love letter, perhaps a poem, song or chant, maybe it is something made out of clay that shows how you feel or a collage created with many different things.

Take some time to think about how you might do this and then create something that expresses how you feel when you read these words.’

When the children have finished, it would be great for them (if they would like) to be able to share what they have done and why with the others. When they have finished sharing, have one of the leaders pray for the group and the wonderful promise we are given in both the scripture that we have read and the statement from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.

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.

Special letters for amazing words...

- Below is the key Bible passage and statement that we talked about in this session.
- You might like to re-write the Bible passage in your own words.
- You will need a sheet of paper and some magazines or newspapers for this activity.
- Cut out the letters from the magazines and newspapers to make up one of the texts below, and stick them onto your sheet of paper.
- You might like to get some others in your family to help you. While you are putting this together, share some of the things that you talked about in the session and how these statements make you feel.


‘I am sure that nothing can separate us from God’s love—not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below.

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