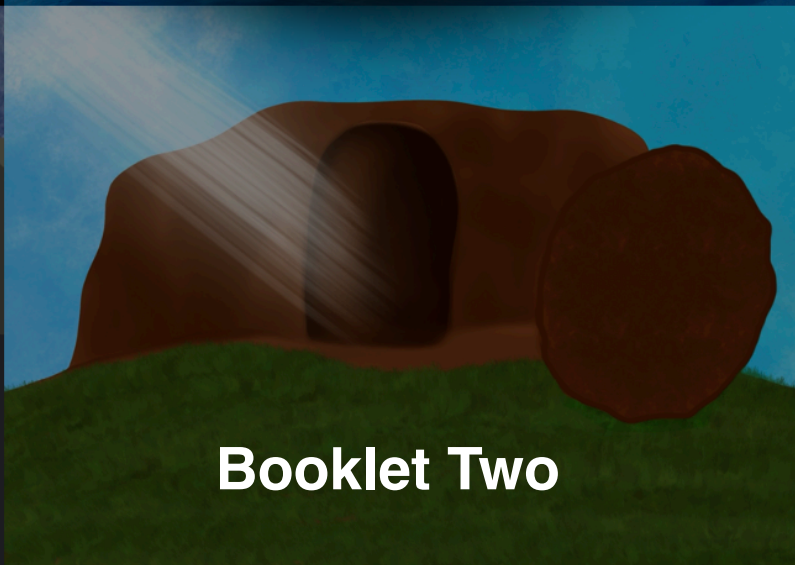
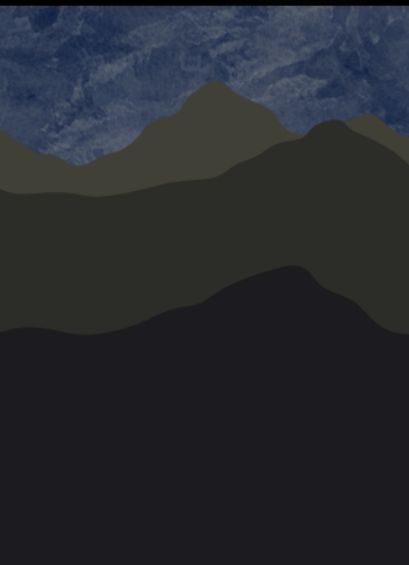
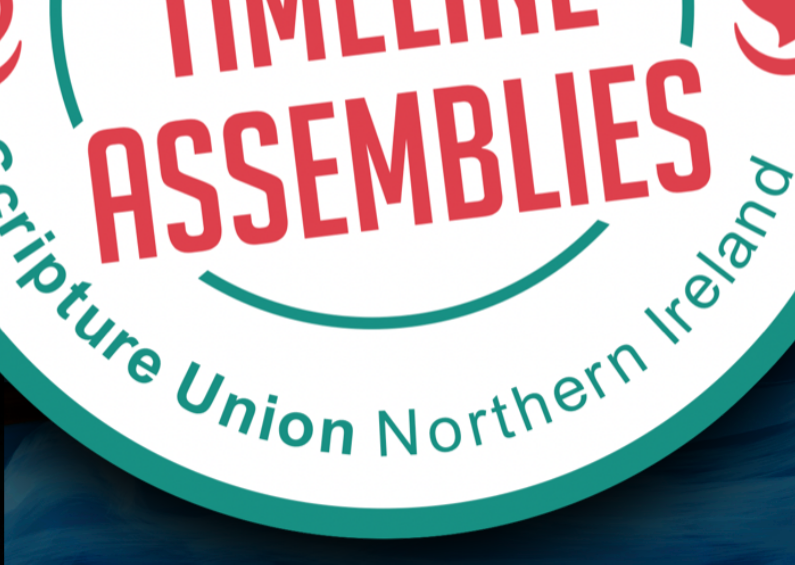
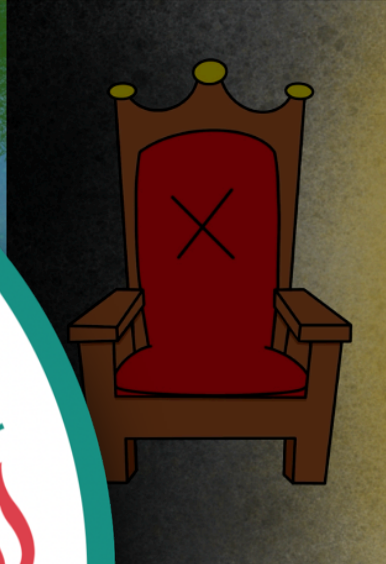


Scripture Union Northern Ireland



Booklet Two



Bible Timeline Assemblies Introduction

In this booklet there are assembly scripts and resources for year two's Bible Timeline Assemblies.

General Information

The assemblies below are designed:

- to help children grasp the overall story and message of the Bible
- to be used with the Bible Timeline PowerPoints
- to be suitable for the whole school
- to be adaptable for use with pupils from KS1 or KS2

Each assembly:

- is based on a Bible story or passage
- focuses on a key Christian belief and its application for today
- includes an opportunity for personal response or reflection (for training on appropriate use of these applications, please contact scripture union for a understanding of the schools' context, info@sunl.co.uk)
- lasts between 8 and 10 minutes

This overview gives details of the 72 assemblies included in the three year outline. The details may be subject to slight alteration as the material is developed.

Three-Year Programme

Together the assemblies are designed to form the basis for a primary school assembly programme over the course of three years (24 assemblies per year) and it is envisaged that they will be led by teachers, ministers or other invited guests on a rota basis. However, individual assemblies can be adapted for use on a stand-alone basis.

The material will be produced on a termly basis over three years as follows:

- nine assemblies usually based on stories from the Old Testament and one Christmas assembly for use between September and December;
- nine assemblies based on stories from the gospels and two Easter assemblies for use between January and April;
- three assemblies based on stories from Acts or the letters of Paul for use during May and June.

Introduction PowerPoint - Overview of the Bible Timeline

The Bible Timeline provided includes 16 full colour pictures, which together tell the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. A poem summarising the story of the Bible is also provided. Each line of the poem accompanies one of the pictures from the Timeline and there are actions to go with it.

Each booklet contains one year of school assemblies divided into three school terms. Below you will see how each of the 16 images connects to a series of assemblies. It is recommended that at the start of each term you use the introduction powerpoint to remind children how far along the timeline you have travelled.



Each set of assemblies is linked to one of the 16 Bible Timeline images, as indicated in the overview, and begins with a brief summary of 'the story so far' to help children put the stories in their context within the overall story of the Bible. Each powerpoint highlights the image being explored, points to the relevant line of the poem and then shows the teaching point or key Christian belief for that particular assembly.

Feedback

If you are using any of these assemblies and have any comments or suggestions to make for improvement please contact info@sunni.co.uk. Any feedback you can give us will be welcome and hopefully will enable us to produce an effective, user-friendly resource that will be widely used in Primary schools throughout Northern Ireland.

Bible Timeline Assemblies

Year Two, Term 1

No	Story / Theme	Bible passage(s)	Key Christian Belief
RED SEA RESCUE From Egypt He rescued them by His mighty hand.... Picture - The Red Sea			
25	Moses Is Born	Exodus 1 - 2	In a broken world, God hears our prayers.
26	The Burning Bush	Exodus 3: 1 - 4: 17	In a broken world, God uses us to make a difference.
27	Red Sea Rescue	Exodus 4: 18 - 14: 31	In a broken world, God rescues us.
BELONGING TO GOD ...And took them to live in their own promised land... Picture - Promised land			
28	The Ten Commandments	Exodus 20: 1-17	God wants His people to obey Him.
29	God's Tent	Exodus 35: 4 - 36: 1; 39: 32 - 40: 38	God wants His people to worship Him.
30	The Twelve Spies	Numbers 13; Joshua 1-6	God wants His people to trust Him.
LIVING GOD'S WAY Their leaders were judges who helped them to fight.... Picture - Shields			
31	Gideon	Judges 6 - 8	God wants His people to fight against wrong things.
32	Ruth (Obed's Family Tree)	Ruth 1 - 4	God wants His people to be kind to others.
33	Samuel (Are You Listening?)	1 Samuel 3: 1 - 4: 1	God wants His people to listen to Him.
CHRISTMAS 2 Angels announced the Good News of His birth.... Picture - Birth			
34	God's Christmas Gift Label	John 3: 16; John 1: 12	Jesus is God's gift to us.

Year Two, Term 2

No	Story / Theme	Bible passage(s)	Key Christian Belief
GOOD NEWS He brought us Good News from the Father above.... Picture - Good news			
35	The Sower	Matthew 13: 1-23	The Kingdom of Heaven is like a seed.
36	The Hidden Treasure	Matthew 13: 44	The Kingdom of Heaven is like buried treasure.
37	The Big Party	Luke 14: 15-24	The Kingdom of Heaven is like a party.
KINGDOM LIFE ...He taught us His ways and He showed us His love. Picture - Good Samaritan			
38	The Good Samaritan	Luke 10: 25-37	Jesus taught us to love our neighbours.
39	The Unforgiving Servant	Matthew 18: 21-35	Jesus taught us to forgive those who hurt us.
40	The Wise And Foolish Builders	Matthew 7: 24-27	Jesus taught us to live God's way.
A DIFFERENT KIND OF KING He died on the cross so our sins can be forgiven... Picture - The Cross			
41	Jesus Enters Jerusalem	Luke 19: 28-38	Jesus came to bring peace, not to make war.
42	Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet	John 13: 1-17	Jesus came to serve, not to be served.
43	Jesus Is Crucified	Luke 23: 32-43	Jesus came to show His love, not His power.
EASTER 2 Then He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Picture - The Tomb			
44	The Road To Emmaus	Luke 24: 13-35	Jesus is King for ever!

Year Two, Term 3

No	Story / Theme	Bible passage(s)	Key Christian Belief
THE FIRST CHRISTIANS He has given us His Spirit to help us since then To spread the Good News until He comes again! Pictures - Spirit / Good News			
45	A Witnessing Community	Acts 1: 1-8	The first Christians told others about Jesus.
46	A Loving Community	Acts 2: 42-47; 4: 32-35	The first Christians loved one another.
47	A Praying Community	Acts 12: 1-19	The first Christians prayed together.
48	Barnabas and Saul	Acts 9: 26-27; 11:19-25; 13: 1-3	The first Christians encouraged one another.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

25. MOSES IS BORN

Bible Base: Exodus 1 - 2

Key Christian Belief: In a broken world, God hears our prayers.

Aim: To help children understand that God hears the prayers of those who are suffering.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation
- an Egyptian (Pharaoh) headdress or eye mask*

*This could be purchased from Amazon or made from card, using a template found by searching on Google.

Introduction

Show the first three pictures from the PowerPoint and ask children if they know who these characters are. (Scar from the Lion King, Cruella De Vil from 101 Dalmatians; Sid from Toy Story; the wicked stepmother and ugly sisters from Cinderella.) Now ask what they have in common? Help the children to see that they are all cruel to others. (Scar is cruel to Simba and his family, Cruella de Vil is cruel to the Dalmatian puppies, Sid is cruel to his toys and the wicked step-mother and ugly sisters are cruel to Cinderella.)

Introduce the fourth character and ask if the children know who it is. It is King Pharaoh and today we are going to hear how cruel he was to the people of Israel.

Telling The Story

The people of Israel were living in Egypt. Many years ago, Joseph had helped King Pharaoh save his people from a terrible famine and he had invited Joseph along with his father, Jacob, his eleven brothers and their families to come and live in a part of Egypt called Goshen. At that time there were around seventy in all who came to live there.

Fast-forward 200* years or so and things have changed. Joseph and his brothers have died long ago but their children stayed on in Egypt, got married and had children of their own. Then their children grew up, got married and had children and so on...until now there are more than 20,000* of Jacob's family, the Hebrews, living in Egypt.

By now there is a new king in Egypt and he is also called Pharaoh. (All the kings in Egypt at that time were known as Pharaohs.) This king doesn't remember anything about Joseph and the famine - and he is getting worried. He spends every day pacing up and down in his palace.

Turn your back to the children and put on your Egyptian headdress or eye mask. Present the monologue below, pacing up and down as if you are king Pharaoh. Encourage the children to boo as indicated in the script.



"There are twenty thousand of them now...TWENTY THOUSAND! Who on earth invited them to live here? What were they thinking of? There will soon be more of them living here than there are of us! What happens if they decide to take over – and take our land away from us? I've seen those Hebrew people. They are always up to something, I'm sure of it...plotting to get a big army together and fight against us, no doubt.

"Well – they won't succeed. I won't let them. For a start, I have made those Hebrew people our slaves. We've got two big cities to build so a long time ago now I put them all to work making bricks all day, every day so they wouldn't have time to think about anything else. With all that hard work to do, I thought they'd have no strength left to fight to us and they certainly wouldn't have time to have any more babies. I thought that would put a stop to them! (Cruel laughter.) What do you think of that?" **(Boo! Hiss!)**

"But it didn't work, did it? Next time we counted them there were even more of them than there were before. Obviously my plan wasn't working. It wasn't going to be as easy as I thought. So I decided to double the number of bricks they had to make each day and told them that if they couldn't make that many, I would tell their masters to have them whipped and beaten. (Cruel laughter.) What do you think of that?" **(Boo! Hiss!)**

"But even that didn't work. Next time we counted there were even more of them – they seem to have more babies being born all the time. So this time I called in the two nurses that help the Hebrew women when it comes time for them to have their babies."

"'Now listen you two.' I said. 'I've had just about enough of these Hebrew people. There are far too many of them so here is what I want you to do. When one of their women is going to have a baby and you see that it is a girl – let her live. But if you see that it is a boy, make sure he has a little accident and dies before his mother has a chance to see him.' (Cruel laugh.) Good plan, eh?" **(Boo! Hiss!)**

"But it still didn't work. Those two nurses let me down badly. They told me that the Hebrew women were too strong for them. Most of them had already had their babies by the time they arrived and it was too late for them to do anything about it."

"Well this time I was furious. 'I don't want any more of those boys growing up in my country.' I yelled. 'From now on all the Hebrew boys that are born are to be thrown into the River Nile!' So there won't be any more of them now. That should finally put an end to any plans they have to take over our land – don't you think?" **(Boo! Hiss!)**

"Only trouble is – my daughter, the princess, claims she found a little Hebrew baby boy the other day. He was hidden in a basket floating among the reeds at the edge of the river where she went bathing. She wants to keep him and bring him up in the palace as her son. I said 'no' at first – but she is my daughter, the princess. After all, what harm can this one little boy do? If he's brought up in the palace, he'll be one of us - probably end



up fighting on our side against his own people if they ever try anything. But they won't, will they? How could they? We've made sure of that, haven't we?" **(Boo! Hiss!)**

Turn your back to the pupils again and remove your headdress or eye mask.

The people of Israel are having a hard time, aren't they? Ask if anyone can remind you of some of the cruel things King Pharaoh did to try to stop them growing any bigger.

This story is found in the book of Exodus chapters one and two. Listen to what it says at the end of chapter two:

'A long time passed and that king of Egypt died. But the Israelites were still forced to work very hard. They cried for help, and God heard them.' Exodus 2: 23 (ERV)

Isn't that interesting? God knew all about the suffering and hardship his people were facing and he heard their cries for help. Actually, the people of Israel didn't know it yet but God already had a plan to rescue them. The little baby, hidden among the reeds by his parents and now being brought up in the palace would have a big part to play in His plan. So next time, we will hear more about God's plan to rescue His people.

*There is some dispute about how many years the people of Israel had been living in Egypt since the time of Joseph and also about how many of them there were when they left Egypt. See the discussion in the relevant Bible commentaries and substitute your own figures if you take a different view!

Exploring Christian Belief

When God's people were suffering, God knew all about it. He heard their cries for help and although they didn't know it yet, He already had a plan to help them.

In our world there are many people who suffer and who cry out to God to help them. There are those who are suffering because they don't have enough to eat. There are those who are suffering because others are cruel and unkind to them. There are those who are suffering because they have been put in prison just for believing in Jesus. There are those who are suffering because they are all alone and have no one to help them.

It is good to know that the God of the Bible is always on the side of those who are suffering and never on the side of those who treat others cruelly or who cause them to suffer. He hears the cries of those who suffer. He knows what they are going through and is always ready to help them. God is on their side and expects us to be on their side too. Christians believe that one of the most important things we can do is to pray for those we know as well as for others around the world who are suffering. We can cry out to God for them. We can add our voices to theirs knowing that God hears and is ready to answer our prayers.



Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to reflect on the way they have behaved towards others in the past week. Whose side have they been on? Have they been on the side of those who suffer – have they spoken up for them and taken every opportunity they have had to help them? Or have they themselves caused others to suffer by the way they have treated them?

Lead the children in a prayer asking that God will forgive them for any ways in which they have been unfair and unkind to others and to help them in future to speak up for and do all they can for others who need their help. Then take a few moments to pray specifically for one or two folk known to the children and others they may have heard about in the news who are going through a hard time at present.

Song (optional)

Never be Shaken, Kids Shout Praises

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

26. THE BURNING BUSH

Bible Base: Exodus 3: 1 – 4: 17

Key Christian Belief: In a broken world, God can use us to make a difference.

Aim: To help the children understand that God wants us to do what we can to help those who are suffering.

You Will Need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Show the first three pictures from the PowerPoint and ask if the children know who these characters are. Give clues as necessary. (Kung Fu Panda; Shrek and Emmett from the Lego Movie.) Now ask what they have in common? Help the children to realise that they are all unlikely heroes. (Kung Fu Panda doesn't have what it takes to fight Tai Lung; Emmett does his best to battle President/Lord Business but only succeeds in making things worse; Gru started out not making good choices; at first Shrek only wants to be left alone and doesn't want to be involved.). It may be necessary to change the images in the PowerPoint to more up to date movie/book characters that pupils will recognise.

Introduce the fourth character and ask if the children know who this is. It is Moses – and today we are going to hear what an unlikely hero he was.

Telling The Story

Moses was the son of Hebrew slaves – but he was brought up in a palace, as the son of a princess. He was the baby we heard about last time. The princess called him Moses.

As Moses grew up, he had the best of everything – just as you would expect growing up in a palace. However, he never forgot who he really was and every time he saw the Egyptians mistreating one of his people, the Hebrews, it made his blood boil.

One day he saw an Egyptian about to beat one of his people and he could stand it no longer. Thinking no one was watching, he took his knife, stuck it into the Egyptian and killed him. Then he quickly buried his body in the sand.

Next day he saw two of his own people arguing and went over to help them sort it out. 'Are you going to kill us too – like you killed that Egyptian yesterday?' they said. Moses panicked. Now he knew his secret was out and if Pharaoh got to hear about it he would be in big trouble.

He'd thought he was helping his people but even they were scared of him now. What a mess he had made of things. He was in trouble with Pharaoh and his own people didn't want him. He decided to run away from Egypt and never come back.

Eventually, Moses arrived in the land of Midian, where he settled down and got married. He took a job looking after his father-in-law's sheep and forgot all about Egypt and what was happening to his people there.

One day as he was tending the sheep out in the desert he saw something strange out of the corner of his eye. He turned round to look and sure enough there was a bush that looked as if it was on fire (nothing unusual about that) but it wasn't getting burnt.

He went to take a closer look when he heard a voice that seemed to come from the bush.

'Moses' the voice called. 'Take off your shoes – you are standing on holy ground.' Moses took off his shoes and hid his face. He knew it was God speaking to him.

'I have seen the suffering of my people in Egypt. I have seen how cruel their masters are to them and how hard they have to work.'

'That's great' thought Moses. 'I'm glad somebody has seen what is going on.' 'I have heard their cries for help' the voice went on.

'That's great' thought Moses. 'I'm glad somebody has heard them.'

'And now I have come down to help them.'

'That's great' thought Moses. 'At last they have somebody to help them.'

'Now' said the voice. 'I want you to go and tell King Pharaoh to let my people go. Then I want you to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.'

Moses stared at the bush in disbelief and for a long time he could say nothing. Finally he managed to speak. 'Me? You want me to go and talk to King Pharaoh? No way. I'm not doing that! Pharaoh would never listen to me. And my people won't listen to me either.

The last time I tried to help them I only made a mess of things. I'm glad you've come down to help but you can count me out. I'm not getting involved.'

'Moses – I will be with you. Sure it will be hard, and Pharaoh won't listen to you at first.

But I will show him who is really in charge and eventually he will listen to you and will let my people go. I will take you out of Egypt and lead you to the land I promised your ancestors I would give you and help you settle there. It is a rich and fertile land, full of good things. Now go to your people and tell them what I have told you to do.'

'But what if they ask who sent me? There are lots of gods in Egypt – how will they know it is you who has sent me?

'If they want to know who is sending you, just say 'I am.'

'But what if they still don't believe me?'

'What's that you have in your hand, there, Moses?' asked God. 'It's a big stick' said Moses.

'Throw it on the ground' said God. And when Moses did so it turned into a snake.

'Now pick the snake up by its tail' said God. And when Moses did so it turned back into a stick again. 'When you go to your people take your stick with you and do exactly what you have just done. Then they'll believe you.'

'But I wouldn't know what to say' Moses objected. 'I'm not a very good speaker...I get my words mixed up...I'm no good at explaining things...Nobody ever understands me...'

'Moses' interrupted God. 'You're doing a pretty good job of speaking right now.'

'Er...yes...well...'

'Now are you going to do this or not?'

'I'm too scared.'

'All right – I'll send your brother Aaron with you. He is a good speaker and he will speak for you. He is on his way to meet you right now.'

By this time Moses had run out of excuses. So, somewhat reluctantly, he went off to meet his brother Aaron and together they set off to tell their leaders what God had told them to do.

Next time we will hear how Moses and Aaron get on when they go to meet king Pharaoh.

Exploring Christian Belief

Moses is an unlikely hero, isn't he? Like Kung Fu Panda he doesn't think he has what it would take to do the job. Like Emmett, he has tried to help his people before but only made a mess of it. Like Gru he's not always made the best choices. Like Shrek, he doesn't want to be involved.

But God has other ideas. Moses is the one that God has chosen to lead His people out of Egypt and God has been preparing him for this since his birth.

Moses did care about his people. He was happy to hear that God had been watching out for them and had seen what they were going through. He was happy to hear that God



had been listening and had heard their cries for help. He was happy to hear that God had come down to help them.

But as soon as God told him that He wanted him to be involved in his rescue plan, Moses wasn't quite so happy and he began to make all sorts of excuses to explain why he couldn't possibly do what God was asking him to do.

As we saw last time, there are many people in our world today who are suffering. It is good to know that God sees what is happening to them, that He hears their cries for help and that He is ready to help them. But Christians believe that God's rescue plan involves us. He wants us to be the ones to speak up for them, to share what we have with them and to do all we can to help them.

And as with Moses, if we are ready to do that, God promises to be with us and to help us make a difference. We may not think we are up to the job. We may not even want to get involved but God's plan is to use us to be the heroes in His rescue plan. He wants to use us to make a difference. And with God's help we can!

Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to think of anyone they know who is going through a hard time and to think of one thing they could do to help. Ask God to help them make a real difference to the people they have thought of this week.

Song (optional)

Be Bold, Be Strong, Morris Chapman

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

27. RED SEA RESCUE

Bible Base: Exodus 4: 18 – 14: 31

Key Christian Belief: In a broken world, God wants to rescue us. Aim: To help the children understand God's rescue plan for us.

You Will Need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Show the first three pictures from the PowerPoint and ask if the children know what movies these scenes are from. Give clues as necessary. (Finding Nemo; Sleeping Beauty; Toy Story 2) Now ask what these movies have in common? Help the children to realise that they are all rescue stories. (Marlin and Dory rescue Nemo; the prince rescues Sleeping Beauty; Buzz Lightyear rescues Woody.)

Introduce the fourth picture and ask if the children if they can remember what is happening in this scene. Today we will hear how God rescued the people of Israel from being slaves in Egypt.

Telling The Story

Tell the story as follows but ask the children to listen out for the words 'the countdown has begun.' When they hear these words they are to punch the air and shout 'ten!' After that, every time you raise your hand to punch the air, they are to join in with the next number in the sequence: 'nine...eight...seven...six...five...four...three...two...one...go!'

Moses and Aaron went to their leaders and told them everything God had said. Then they went to tell King Pharaoh that God said he was to let the people of Israel go.

'Who is this God that I should listen to Him?' asked Pharaoh.

'Who is God?' said Moses. 'Our God says: "I am. You think the gods you believe in are real but they are not. I am. You think your gods are the ones who make the crops grow. But they are not. I am. You think you are in charge, Pharaoh, but you are not. I am." '

'Nonsense!' thundered Pharaoh and he threw Moses and Aaron out of his palace. Once they had left he told his officials to make the Hebrew slaves work even harder. 'Tell them they have to make the same number of bricks – but from now on we're not giving them the straw they need to make them with. They will have to gather that for themselves. That will teach them to come running to me asking me to let them go!'

'Now look what's happened' the leaders of the people of Israel complained. 'All you've done is make things worse. Our people are exhausted.'

Moses prayed to God. 'Now what do I do?' he enquired.

God told Moses and Aaron to go and meet King Pharaoh down by the River Nile where he went every morning. 'Tell him again to let my people go.' said God. 'He won't listen to you at first, but sooner or later he will. I am going to show Him who I really am.'

So Moses and Aaron met King Pharaoh next morning, down by the river. 'God says you are to let our people go into the desert to worship Him' they said, but Pharaoh refused, just as God had said he would. 'All right then' said Moses. 'The countdown has begun!'

TEN

Aaron stretched out his walking stick over the river and immediately the water turned to blood. Fish died, the Egyptians could not drink the water and the river smelt. But still Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrew slaves go.

NINE

Seven days later, Aaron stretched out his walking stick again and frogs came up out of the rivers and ponds on to the land. Soon they were everywhere. Wherever the people of Egypt looked there were frogs - in their beds, in their shoes, in their kitchens, in their cupboards and guess what they found in their lunchboxes? No - ham and cheese! (Sorry.) 'All right! All right!' said King Pharaoh at last. 'I'll let your people go. Just get rid of these awful frogs!'

So Moses prayed and there were no more frogs. But once the frogs had gone, Pharaoh changed his mind and wouldn't let the people go after all.

EIGHT

Next, Aaron stretched out his walking stick again and the dust on the ground turned into hundreds of tiny lice, which got on to the people's skin and into their hair. Even their animals were covered with lice. But once again, Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

SEVEN

Then there were flies - swarms of them everywhere in Egypt - but not in Goshen where the Hebrew slaves lived. There were no flies there.

'All right!' said Pharaoh at last. 'I'll let your people go. Just don't go too far away.' But once the flies had gone, Pharaoh changed his mind again.

SIX

'If you don't let us go' Moses warned 'all your farm animals will die.' 'Never!' replied the king. Sure enough, next day all the farm animals belonging to the people of Egypt became sick and died but none of the farm animals belonging to the Hebrew slaves died. God was showing King Pharaoh that the God of Israel was the one true God. The gods he believed in were powerless to help him but still King Pharaoh wouldn't listen.

FIVE

Next the Egyptians were covered in terrible boils – all over their bodies, but King Pharaoh still refused to let the people go.

FOUR

'If you don't let us go' Moses warned 'God is going to send a terrible hailstorm – the worst there has ever been.' Some of the officials who had been listening to Moses made sure their families and animals were all brought inside but some ignored Moses' warning.

Soon the worst storm anyone had ever seen blew up. Lightning filled the skies and large hailstones came pounding down. Those caught outside were killed. But the storm did not hit the slaves living in Goshen.

'Please forgive me. I have been wrong' said King Pharaoh at last. 'I will definitely let you go this time.' But once again, when the storm had gone, he changed his mind.

THREE

'God is going to send a plague of locusts.' Moses warned. They will eat everything that grows in your fields.' This time, the king's officials tried to persuade him to let the people go. 'All right – I'll let the men go' said Pharaoh 'but no one else.'

So the locusts came and devoured every plant and tree in Egypt.

'I'm sorry' said the king. 'Please forgive me once more. Just get rid of these locusts and you can go.' But once more the king broke his promise.

TWO

Next there was thick darkness over the land of Egypt. The Egyptians could not see and could not move. Only in Goshen, where the Hebrew slaves lived, was there any light.

'All right! You can go.' shouted the king. 'Just leave your animals behind.' 'The animals must come with us!' insisted Moses.

'Get out of my sight – and don't come back!' yelled Pharaoh.

ONE

'Very well' said Moses as he turned to go. 'But at midnight tonight the oldest son in every family in Egypt will die. Tomorrow there will be great weeping in all the land.'

Moses told the people of Israel what God had said would happen. 'Now get ready' he said. 'Each family is to kill a lamb and sprinkle it's blood on their doorposts. The angel of death is coming to visit the people of Egypt at midnight tonight and the oldest son in every family will die. But when he sees the blood on your doorposts, he will pass over you and you will be safe. Have some roast lamb to eat tonight, and drink some wine but be ready to leave at any moment. God is setting you free.'

That night, just as Moses had said, the oldest son in every Egyptian family died but the people of Israel were spared. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Up. Leave my people and go and worship the Lord God. Take your families and animals with you.'

'GO!'

So God's people packed their belongings. The Egyptians, afraid that they might all die, gave them gifts of silver and gold. 'Hurry and leave,' they urged.

The people travelled for a long way until they came to the edge of the Red Sea. Just then they heard the rumble of chariots and horses in the distance behind them. 'Pharaoh and his army are chasing us!' the people cried. 'We're all going to die!'

Sure enough it looked as if they were trapped. The Red Sea was in front of them and Pharaoh's army were chasing them from behind. They had nowhere to turn.

'Stay calm' Moses urged the people 'and you will see. God is fighting for us today!'

God told Moses to stretch his walking stick out across the Red Sea and a strong east wind began to blow. The waters of the sea divided and there was a path for the people of Israel to walk through. Pharaoh's army arrived just in time to see what was happening. They started to follow the people of Israel along the path through the sea. However, the moment the last of the people of Israel reached the other side, the waters began to collapse in on the Egyptian horsemen and their chariots. Every one of them drowned.

Meanwhile, safely on the other side of the sea, the people of Israel sang and danced. God had come to their rescue. At last they were free!

Exploring Christian Belief

This is perhaps the most important story in the Old Testament – the story of God and His people up until the time Jesus was born. The people of Israel never forgot what God had done for them – how they had been slaves in Egypt and God had set them free. He had chosen them to be His people even though they had done nothing to deserve it and He had shown His great love for them by coming to their rescue. Now He was promising to be their God and to be with them forever. No wonder they sang and danced!

We may never have been slaves in Egypt – but we are all trapped in a world in which people often suffer as a result of the selfishness and greed of others. We live in a world where others can be cruel and we may often be treated unfairly. Sometimes, if we are honest, we are the ones who are selfish, greedy, and cruel. The world we live in is not the way God meant it to be.

But as in Moses' day, the good news is that God has a rescue plan for us. The Bible says that He has shown His love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to take the blame for the



wrong things we have done. Christians believe that if we put our trust in Him and choose to follow Him - just as the people chose to put lamb's blood on their doorposts to show that they believed God's promise – God says we can be His people. He will be with us always, taking care of us and using us to make a difference, and one day He will take us to be with Him in a place where there will be no more suffering and where we will be free from all wrong things forever!

God has come to our rescue. Isn't that something for us to celebrate, and to sing and dance about too?

Song (optional)

Invite the children to celebrate what God has done for them by singing a song such as Get Up And Dance from the album Jesus Is My Superhero by Hillsong Kids or I'm So Glad from the album Great Big God Live by Vineyard Kids Worship.



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

28. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Bible Base: Exodus 20:1-19

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to obey Him. Aim: To show the importance of keeping God's rules

You will need:

- The accompanying PowerPoint

Introduction

Ask the children to tell you what rules they have in their school. You may want to use prompts. E.g. Are there any rules about how to behave in the classroom, how to behave in the corridor, how to behave in the playground, what to eat for break...?

Point out that as well as school rules, there are rules for using the road, rules for playing games and rules that the Queen expects everyone who lives in this country to obey.

Ask the children why they think rules are important. Help them to see that most rules are there to keep us safe and to make life fair for everyone.

Ask them if they would like to belong to a school, play a game or live in a country in which there were no rules? Many of them will probably at first think that would be a great idea – but use the following scenarios to help them imagine what it might be like.

Imagine someone steals your PE kit, you complain to the teacher and your teacher replies, 'That's OK – he's allowed to do that' and does nothing to help you get it back. Then money goes missing from your pocket, someone steals your brand new lunch box and no one ever does anything about it.

Or imagine someone runs along the corridor, knocks you over and you twist your ankle. You tell your teacher what happened but he or she does nothing about it because running in the corridor is not against the rules. So it happens again - sometimes in the corridor, sometimes in the playground. At least twice a week someone is hurt.

The P7s play in the same playground as the P1s; nobody ever listens in class or does anything the teacher asks. I wouldn't want to go to a school like that...

Nor would I want to live in a country in which drivers could drive on whatever side of the road they wished or ignore the red lights when people are crossing the road...

Or play a game of football if the other team were allowed to make their nets twice as big as my team's, or lift the ball and run with it whenever they felt like it...

We need rules – to keep us safe and make things fair for everyone.

Point out, however, that people in charge don't always make good rules. For example, a really cruel headmaster might make a rule that no one was allowed to smile or play games in the playground, or that everyone had to do at least four hours homework every night.

There are people who make rules just to get their own way or make life difficult for everyone else. Isn't it just as well that your headmaster is not like that?!

Bad rules make life difficult and unfair and where there are bad rules, they need to be changed. Good rules, however, like the ones in your school, keep us safe and make things fair for everyone. And where there are good rules – it is wise to obey them.

Telling The Story

God's people knew all about unfair, cruel rules. King Pharaoh had made them work hard, and had ordered them to be whipped if they didn't work hard enough. Worse still, he had ordered all newborn baby boys to be killed. But now they were free from this cruel king – and on their way to the new land God had promised to give them.

At the foot of Mount Sinai the people stopped while Moses and his assistant Joshua went up into the mountain to talk with God.

When they came down from the mountain, Moses had a message for the people. It was good news. 'The God who has rescued us from Egypt wants us to be His people. He promises to give us a land of our own, full of good things, and to keep us safe from our enemies. However, if we are His people there are some rules He will expect us to keep.'

The rules that God gave His people that day are known as the Ten Commandments and show us how God expects us to behave, especially if we are His friends.

Use the PowerPoint supplied to teach the children what God's rules were. Go through the list – from the bottom up – and explain briefly what each rule means. For example:

God wants us...

1. to get to know Him, talk to Him and trust Him as the one true God.
2. to put Him first and not let anything take His place.
3. to show how special He is to us by the way we speak to and about Him.
4. to make time to worship Him and to listen to what He says.
5. to do what our mums and dads tell us – without grumbling or complaining.
6. not to hurt others by the things we say and do, especially when we are angry.
7. to keep the promises we make – especially to our future partners.
8. not to take things from others without their permission.
9. always to tell the truth.
10. to be content with what we have and not always wishing we had more.



Then explain that the words fit to the tune of the Twelve Days Of Christmas and encourage the children to sing along, while the words are displayed on the screen a line at a time. You may also wish to use the following actions:

Have no other Gods but me
Don't worship things
Show me respect
Make time for me
Obey mum and dad
Don't go mad
Don't break a promise
Don't steal from others
Don't tell lies
Learn to be content

Shake head and wag finger ('no')
Hands together in front of chest, head bowed
Salute
Tap (imaginary) watch on wrist
Nod head ('yes') and put thumb up
Shake fist
Fists together side by side – then pull apart
Pretend to snatch something with one hand
Place finger across lips
Fold arms

Exploring Christian Belief

Ask if anyone can remember what God's ten rules are? No? Then tell them not to worry – Jesus taught that we only need to remember two:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart...' 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

If we love God we will want to spend time talking to Him and getting to know Him. We will want to do what pleases Him and show Him how special He is to us by what we say and do. If we love others – we will not do anything to hurt them, we will tell them the truth and keep the promises we make to them. We won't take things from them that don't belong to us and we won't be jealous when they do well.

Christians believe that God has shown His love for us by sending Jesus to take the blame for the wrong things in our lives. The Bible says that he wants us to be His friends and promises that, if we choose to be His friends, He will love and take care of us always. However, this story also shows us that if we want to be His friends, He will expect us to keep these two rules.

Jesus said that these are the two most important rules in all the world. They are God's rules – and they are good rules. They are not there to make life hard for us, but rather to help us enjoy God's love and friendship and get on well with others. And where there are good rules – it's always wise to obey them.

Prayer

Let's ask God to help us love Him most of all and learn to love others as much as we love ourselves.

Song (optional)

Love the Lord by Lincoln Brewster

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

29. GOD'S TENT

Bible Base:

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to worship Him.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants to be part of our everyday lives.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint (you will need to adapt for your area)

Introduction

You will need to identify a famous person/people who once lived/were born in the vicinity of the school. If possible, find pictures of the house where they lived – or of any local streets, buildings or parks named after them. Show the children these pictures and ask if they know who the famous person was who lived in the house or after whom the street, building or park has been named and what they were famous for.

(The example given below is suitable for schools in East Belfast. You will need to adapt it for the area in which your school is situated.)

Show the children each of the three houses pictured in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, in turn, and ask if they know which famous person once lived there.

Give clues as follows:

1. This person lived at 16 Burren Way in the Cregagh Estate (pictured) ... has a son called Callum ... was a famous footballer ... has an airport named after him ... played for Manchester United. (George Best)
2. This person was born in a house called Little Lea at 76 Circular Road (pictured) ... became a famous author ... wrote a series of seven books for children ... one was called The Magician's Nephew ... they were set in the land of Narnia. (CS Lewis)
3. This person lived at 125 Hyndford Street ... is known as 'The Man' ... is a famous singer / songwriter ... plays the saxophone ... wrote a song about Cyprus Avenue ... had a hit with Brown Eyed Girl. (Van Morrison)

Point out that all these famous people once lived/still live where we live. We can visit the houses in which they lived when they were children and there may even be plaques there to remind us that they lived here as one of us!

Telling The Story

The children of Israel had come safely across the Red Sea and were now living in the desert.

They didn't have houses to live in; instead they lived in tents – and as they made their way through the desert towards the land that God had promised, they had to carry their tents with them, taking them down each morning and setting them up again each evening at the end of a day's journey.

But now God told Moses that since He was their God and they were His people, He wanted a tent to live in too! And He gave Moses instructions about what it was to look like and how it was to be made.

It was to be made of the finest cloth and it was to have furnishings of gold, silver and bronze. It was to be made by the most skilled and experienced craftsmen. Nothing but the best would do for God.

Show the picture of God's Tent from the attached PowerPoint presentation and explain that when people came here to worship God, they had to stay in the outer part of the tent; they were not allowed into the inner part. Only the priests were allowed in there. The inner part was divided in two by a curtain and only the High Priest was allowed behind the curtain - and even he was only allowed to go in there once a year, bringing the blood of an animal sacrificed to pay for the wrong things the people had done.

Exploring Christian Belief

The people knew of course that the God who made heaven and earth couldn't be confined to a tent! So why did God want the people to make a tent for Him?

The Bible tells us, firstly, that it was a reminder of God's presence. God wanted the people of Israel to remember that He had chosen to come down and live among them. He was their God and they were His people. He was traveling with them and had promised to be their guide and to take care of them.

And so every time the people of Israel packed up their tents, they were to pack up God's tent too. And every time they put their tents up again they were to put God's tent up again too – right in the middle of the camp where everyone could see it. This would remind them that God was with them and that they could trust Him to take care of them when things were tough.

But it would also remind them that they needed to make God welcome by the things they said and did. God made it very clear that He hated all wrong things and that if they wanted Him to be with them and to take care of them they couldn't treat wrong things as if they didn't matter! They needed to get rid of all wrong things from their lives.

However, God also told them that if they ever said or did something wrong, they could come to Him, bringing an animal sacrifice to say sorry, and He would forgive them. Secondly, the Bible tells us that it was a place to meet with God. God's tent became known known as the Tent of Meeting. It was a place where God's people could come and meet with Him and where He had promised to meet with them.



The Bible says that Moses often went to the tent to talk to God face-to-face. There, God would speak with Moses and Moses would pass on to the people all that God had said.

But it wasn't just Moses who went to the tent. People sometimes came to the tent to bring their thanks to God for what He had done for them. Sometimes they came to ask Him for His help. Sometimes they came to say sorry for the wrong things they had done. And God promised that when they did so, He would hear and answer their prayers.

Christians believe that the God of Israel is still the same today. He still chooses to come down and live among His people and He wants us to make Him welcome by the things we say and do. He still wants us to meet with Him as we spend time reading or listening to what He says in the Bible and talking to Him.

These days, because of the perfect sacrifice that Jesus has offered for us, Christians believe that we don't have to be in any special place to meet with God. We can read or listen to what He says and talk to Him anywhere. And He has promised that when we do so, wherever we are, He will be there to speak to us and to hear and answer our prayers.

Share some examples of how you make time to meet with God and what this means to you today.

Reflection & Prayer

Invite the children to think about how they might remember that God is with them and make time to meet with Him in their lives this week and finish with a prayer asking God to help them do so.

Song (optional)

Ask, Seek, Knock by Hillsong Kids

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

30. THE TWELVE SPIES

Bible Base:

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to trust Him.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to rely on His promises.

You will need

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- items such as false moustaches and cardboard glasses for 12 children

Introduction

Ask the children if they have ever been excited and scared at the same time. For example, they may have been going on an overnight trip and they were excited about all the things they were going to do – but scared because they would be spending the night away from home for the first time and weren't sure if they would be able to cope.

Or maybe they had been given a part in a school play – they were excited to be on stage in front of everyone, but scared that they would not be able to remember their lines.

Show the pictures of the fun fair rides, the zip line and the abseiling from the attached PowerPoint and talk about how these can be both exciting and scary at the same time.

Share an example of a time when you really wanted to try something like this but were too scared. Everyone told you it was safe; you had seen other people do it but you let your fears put you off – so now you will never know what it might have been like. Or alternatively, share an example of a time when you took part in something like this, even though you were scared, and describe what it was like.

Telling The Story

The people of Israel were feeling excited and scared at the same time. They had been traveling through the desert towards the land that God had promised He would give to them. He had told them that it would be a land filled with good things. And now they were nearly there. They would soon be moving into this new land.

Moses decided to send some spies into the land to check it out – to see if it was as good as God had said it would be and to see what the people living there were like. He chose twelve men and sent them off to travel through the land and bring back a report.

Choose twelve children to act as the spies and, for added effect, give them each a false moustache or a pair of dark (cardboard) glasses to wear. (Send them all off to one side.)

The spies set off on their mission but finally after forty days they returned and Moses gathered the people together to hear what they had to say. (Bring the spies back again.)

Ask the children to imagine that they are the people of Israel and that they have come together to hear from the spies. They have been living in tents in the desert where water has been scarce and they have had nothing but manna to eat every morning and roast meat every evening. Once they have heard what the spies have to say, they will have to decide whether to stay in the desert or move into the Promised Land.

The spies told them that the land was just as good as God had said it would be. There were beautiful mountains covered in snow in the winter. There were lovely green valleys with rivers flowing through them. The cows grazing in the rich farmland produced the creamiest milk they had ever tasted. The bees buzzing in the flowers produced the sweetest honey. The whole place was full of the most delicious fruit - clusters of grapes, pomegranates and figs.

But the spies also told them that some of the people living there were as tall as giants. There were lots of them and they lived in cities with big strong walls, which were guarded by soldiers night and day.

Ask the children now what they think. How many of them would vote to stay in the desert and how many would vote to move into the land? Ask one or two in each case to say why they would vote this way.

Moses asked the spies whether they thought the people of Israel would be able to go in and take over the land. (Divide the spies into two groups – two on one side, ten on the other. Ask the two to put their thumbs up and the ten to put their thumbs down.)

Ten of the spies thought there was no way the people of Israel could take over the land. The people who lived there were big and strong and there were too many of them. If they decided to fight them, the people of Israel would have no chance against them. They should just stay where they were.

Two of the spies, however, Joshua and Caleb, reminded everyone that this was the land that God had promised to give to them. They were not alone. God was with them. With His help they could certainly take over the land.

Sadly, the people listened to the ten spies and decided to stay where they were. They let their fears put them off moving in to the land that He had promised to give to them.

God was angry with the people because they would not believe His promise. He told them that all the grown ups who were there that day, except Joshua and Caleb, would grow old and die in the desert without ever seeing the Promised Land. However, once their children had grown up, they would enter the land, along with Joshua and Caleb, and see all the amazing things that God would do for them.

And that is exactly what happened. After forty more years of wandering around in the desert, the time finally came for the children, who were grown up by now, to move into the Promised Land. The Bible tells us how Joshua, who had been one of the spies, led



them into it and how God helped them to settle there. It was tough and there were many battles to face – such as the battle of Jericho - but in the end, Joshua was able to look back and remind the people that not one of God's good promises had failed. He had promised them a new land of their own and now they were living in it. It was every bit as good as God had said it would be. God had kept His promise.

Exploring Christian Belief

God had an amazing plan for the people of Israel – but most of them never got to see it because instead of believing God's promise, they let their fears get in the way. They would not do what God had told them to do because they were afraid.

Christians believe that God wants us to enjoy His love and friendship and discover His amazing plans for our lives. However, in order to do so, we need to be ready to do what God says and sometimes we can be like the people of Israel and let our fears put us off doing what we know God wants us to do.

For example, there may be times when we want to do what is right but we are scared of what others will think of us. Perhaps we think they will laugh at us and make fun of us if we make friends with someone no-one else likes, do what our parents have told us even when they are not watching, or tell the truth about something even it means getting into trouble. There may be those who try to persuade us to do something we know is not right and say they will not be friends with us any more unless we do what they say.

Christians believe that if we let our fears put us off doing what God wants, we will never discover for ourselves how good God is or how good His plans for our lives are. Instead, when we feel scared, we should remember that God is with us and that He has promised to help us. We should trust God, as Joshua and Caleb did and, if we do, we will discover God's amazing goodness and love for ourselves.

Songs (optional)

The songs 'Be Bold! Be Strong!' or 'Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho' would be appropriate for this assembly.

Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to give the children courage and strength always to do what they know to be right.

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

31. GIDEON

Bible Base: Judges 6, 7

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to be strong.

Aim: To help children understand that God gives us strength to do what is right.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Ask if anyone knows who Clark Kent is? (Superman) Bruce Wayne? (Batman) Peter Parker? (Spiderman) Bob and Helen Parr? (Mr and Mrs Incredible)

As each answer is given, reveal the picture on the PowerPoint slide and comment on that superhero's special powers or gadgets. When the world is in danger, threatened by the bad guys, these superheroes come to the rescue.

When God's people moved into the Promised Land, there were other people living nearby, who often invaded and tried to take over their land from them. They needed heroes to rescue them. We are going to hear about one of them today.

This hero was not like the superheroes we have mentioned, however. He didn't have any special gadgets or superpowers to help him. He was just an ordinary person like you or me – and yet he was able to do something quite amazing. How was he able to do it? Let's hear the story and find out...

Telling The Story

Choose a boy to play the part of the hero. Tell him that his name is Gideon and that he is to act out what Gideon does as you tell the story. Then tell the story as follows:

Gideon was a farmer. He was out working in his fields one morning, when he decided to stop and take a break. He took a sip from his water bottle and stood thinking for a moment. He was feeling sad and fed up.

'I don't know why I bother' he said to himself. 'Every year it's the same thing. As soon as I get a nice field full of corn, what happens? Our enemies - those big bullies, the Midianites - come and burn it all down. They did it last year and the year before and the year before that. For seven years now they have been coming and burning down all our crops. It's just not fair. I wish someone could put a stop to it!'

'And as soon as I get nice fat flock of sheep, what happens? Our enemies – those big bullies, the Midianites – come and steal them all away!'



They did it last year and the year before and the year before that. For seven years now they have been coming and stealing all our sheep away. It's not fair. I wish someone could put a stop to it!

That morning, Gideon got a surprise – because there in the field, right in front of him, was an angel. (Choose a girl to come up to the front and play the part of the angel. Gideon and the angel face each other.) Gideon rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn't seeing things. Then the angel spoke. 'The Lord is with you, brave and mighty soldier!'

Gideon looked all round the field, but there was no one else there. 'Are you talking to me?' he said. 'Yes' said the angel. 'The Lord is with you, brave and mighty soldier.'

'I don't know what you are talking about' replied Gideon. 'I'm not a brave and mighty soldier – I'm just a farmer; in fact I'm the least important person in the least important family in the whole of Israel. What makes you think I'm a brave and mighty soldier?'

'God has sent me to you today to tell you that He wants you to be the one to put a stop to what your enemies – those bullies, the Midianites – have been doing.'

This time Gideon laughed out loud. 'Don't be so daft!' he said. 'I couldn't possibly do that. This must be some kind of joke!

'It's no joke' said the angel. 'This really is what God wants you to do. But don't forget, Gideon, God says He will be with you.'

Well – it took Gideon a very long time to be convinced that God could possibly want him to be the one to fight against the Midianites, but finally he was persuaded and the angel left and went back to heaven. (The angel goes back to her seat.)

Next day Gideon decided to get a great big army together. So he sent messengers all round the country telling all the fighting men to come and meet him. It was time for them all to get together and put a stop to what the Midianites had been doing.

Explain that at this point you need 32,000 volunteers. Begin to count the children, realise there aren't going to be enough and just ask everybody to stand.

When Gideon saw how many had turned up, he was very pleased. 'With an army this size' he thought, 'we can soon do the job!'

But then Gideon got another surprise. 'Wait a minute' God said. 'Before you go – just one thing – your army is too big.'

'What?' said Gideon. 'How can my army be too big? Surely the bigger my army is, the better chance we have of winning.'



'But Gideon – you are forgetting something. The reason you are going to win today is not because you have a great big army. It is because I am with you. I want you to remember that – so I'm asking you now to send anyone who is scared back home.'

So Gideon went around his army to see whose knees were knocking together and who was looking very pale and he sent them all home – all 22,000 of them. (Ask roughly two-thirds of the children to sit down.) There were 32,000 to begin with; now 22,000 have gone home. How many are left? Just 10,000.

Gideon scratched his head. 'There's bound to be more of them than there are of us' he thought. 'How are we meant to do this?' But then he remembered that the ones who were left were all brave fighting men. They weren't going to be scared of anything. They wouldn't run home to mummy when things got tough. 'Maybe...' he thought 'maybe, with brave, strong soldiers like this we can do the job.'

Then Gideon got yet another surprise. 'Hold on, Gideon' said God. "Before you go – there is just one other thing. Your army is still too big!"

'But there are already far more of them than there are of us' wailed Gideon in despair.

'I know that' said God 'but don't forget Gideon – the reason you are going to win today is not because you have a great big army and it's not because your men are brave and strong either. It's because I'm with you. I want you to remember that – so please take your men down to the river and watch them drink.'

At this point ask for a volunteer to come up to the front to demonstrate how, if they had to, they might drink water from a river. Then ask if anyone can think of a different way and invite someone up to demonstrate this. (One should pretend to use their hands to scoop the water up; one should put their head into the water to drink.)

As Gideon watched, some of his men used their hands to scoop up the water and some put their heads into the river and used their tongues to lap up the water. And God told Gideon to keep the ones who used their hands and send the others home. Unfortunately, nearly all of his men put their heads into the river and Gideon had to send them home. (Choose three of those still standing to remain standing and tell the others to sit down.)

Now look at Gideon's army. 9,700 more have gone home – only 300 are left!

'How on earth' thought Gideon 'are we supposed to fight an army the size of the Midianites with an army of just 300. It's like playing football with three men against eleven. It's impossible!'

'But Gideon' said God. 'You are forgetting something. It's not just you and your 300 men. I'm with you and that's what will make all the difference.'



Explain that you don't have time to tell the children exactly how it happened – though they can read about it for themselves in Judges chapters 6 and 7 – but believe it or not, with just 300 men Gideon and his army won! They chased the Midianites away and for many years to come they did not dare to come back. The Israelites and their land were safe once again thanks to Gideon and his army.

Exploring Christian Belief

How was it that Gideon and his men won that day. It wasn't because they had superpowers, it wasn't because they had a great big army and it wasn't because their men were so brave and strong. The Bible says that it was because God was with them!

Display Ephesians 6: 10 and explain that this was something Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus to remind them that God was with them too. Christians believe that God gives us His mighty power to help do everything He asks us to do. Being a Christian is not about us doing our best to keep lots of rules; it's about discovering the amazing things that God can do as we trust Him and ask Him to be with us and to help us each day.

When Gideon first heard what God wanted him to do he thought it was impossible. But he discovered that with God's mighty power He was able to do it. The Bible says that God wants us to get rid of wrong things from our lives – bad temper, bad language, being selfish, rude, unkind or lazy. You might think that's impossible – but with God's help you can do it!

The Bible also says that God wants us to make a difference in the world around us – bringing His love to those who are hurting, lonely or struggling. You might think there is nothing you can do – but with God's help it's amazing the difference you can make. You might not ever be a world-famous superhero but with God's help you can be a hero to someone!

So if there is something you know God wants you to do – some way in which you need to change, or some person you can be a friend to, don't say as Gideon did at first 'I can't do that.' Instead why not say, 'With God's help I am going to do it' and see what happens?!

Song (optional)

'God's People Aren't Super Brave Superheroes' by John Hardwick would be a good song to use with this assembly.

Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children do what is right and make a difference to others in the week ahead.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

32. OBED'S FAMILY TREE

Bible Base: Ruth 1-4

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to love one another.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to be kind to others as He is to us.

You will need:

- a photograph album
- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation – along with some photographs from your family and an outline of your family tree, going back two generations
- simple costumes (optional) and name cards for eight pupils, as follows: Obed, Naomi, Elimilech, Mahlon, Chilion, Ruth, Orpah, Boaz (5 boys/3 girls unless in a single sex school).

Introduction

Show the pupils your photograph album explaining that you love looking at old photographs from your family album – seeing pictures of people you know as they were long ago – and of people who were part of your family in the past but aren't around any more. If possible, display one or two photographs from your family album on the screen, explain who the people in them are and share a memory you have of them.

Talk about how many people like to try to find out who the people in their families were and what happened to them long ago. Sometimes they use a family tree to help them see how all the people in their families were connected to each other. If you can, show your family tree going back two generations and explain who everyone is.

Now show the title 'Obed's family tree' and explain that today we are going to hear about a young boy called Obed and his family. We will imagine that Obed is looking through an old photograph album, finding out about his family from his mother, Ruth.

Choose eight volunteers to act as the characters in the story and give them each a costume (optional) and a name card. As you tell the story ask them to come to the front as required, act out what happens to them and have their photograph taken for the family album. Ask Obed to sit to one side, as if looking through a photograph album.

Advance the PowerPoint slides as appropriate while telling the story.

Telling The Story

Obed's grandparents were called Naomi and Elimilech. (Ask the children playing these parts to come forward and have their photograph taken, as if on their wedding day, for the family album. You can pretend or take a real photograph.) They lived in Bethlehem (ask them to move to one side of the stage) with their two boys, Mahlon and Chilion. (Ask the two boys to come forward and have their photograph taken with their 'parents'.)



One year, the rains didn't come and the crops didn't grow as they should have done and there was a famine throughout the land of Israel. In order to get food, the family had to move to Moab. (Ask the four family members so far to move across to the other side of the stage.) While there, Elimilech died leaving Naomi to look after the two boys all on her own. (Ask Elimilech to sit down.) The two boys both married women from Moab – Ruth and Orpah. (Ask Ruth and Orpah to come to the front take a photograph with Naomi in the middle, Mahlon and Ruth on one side and Chilion and Orpah on the other.)

Ten years later, however, the two boys died too (ask Mahlon and Chilion to sit down) leaving Naomi on her own with Ruth and Orpah. Then Naomi heard that there was food again in Bethlehem and decided to return. Orpah chose to stay in Moab but Ruth chose to go to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law. She told her mother-in-law that she would never leave her. She also told her that she wanted the God of Israel, whom she had learned about from Naomi, to be her God from now on too. (Ask Orpah to sit down, and ask Naomi and Ruth to move across to the other side of the stage again.)

Naomi and Ruth arrived back in Bethlehem at harvest time. Ruth went to work in the fields in order to provide bread for herself and her mother-in-law. The person who owned the field in which Ruth went to work was called Boaz. (Ask Ruth to come to the centre of the stage and ask Boaz to come up and stand behind her a little way off.)

When he saw Ruth and heard how kind she had been to her mother-in-law, he told his workers to look after her and to make sure there was plenty of barley for her to take home. He also spoke to Ruth and assured her that the God she now believed in would look after her and keep her safe. He promised that he and his men would look after her too. When Ruth got home Naomi couldn't believe how much she had gathered. (Ask Ruth to go back to Naomi.) God was taking care of them both through the kindness of Boaz.

However, Ruth still had no husband to look after her and in those days that meant she would always be poor. But some months later Boaz and Ruth fell in love and Boaz asked Ruth to marry him. Can you imagine what a happy day that was? Now Ruth and Naomi would have someone to look after them for the rest of their lives. (Ask Ruth, Boaz and Naomi to come to the centre of the stage and take a photograph.)

And even that is not the end of the story because sometime later baby Obed was born to Ruth and Boaz. As you can imagine, his parents and his grandmother were delighted! (Ask Obed to join them for a final family photograph.)

Exploring Christian Belief

So this is the story of Obed's family up until the time Obed was born. What a great family to be part of! Did you notice how kind the people in it were to each other? Naomi was kind to Ruth and Orpah – allowing them to choose whether to come back with her to Bethlehem or not. Ruth was kind to Naomi – choosing to stay with her and look after her



even though she did not have to. Boaz was kind to Ruth even though she was a stranger – making sure his men looked after her and that she had plenty of barley to take home.

The people of Israel were God's people and this is how He wanted His people to behave. He had taught them to be kind to each other and to any strangers who came to live among them. He had told them to remember that when they were slaves in Egypt, He had been kind to them and now He wanted them to show this same kindness to others.

And God was good to His people in this story too, wasn't He? They had been through some tough times, but through it all, God had been with them, taking care of them.

The story shows how good God is and how good it is to belong to His family. Ruth, Boaz, Naomi and Obed were part of God's family back then – but Christians believe that we can be part of this family too!

The birth of Obed was not the end of the story. Eventually Obed grew up and got married and had a son called Jesse and he was the father of King David. Many years later someone very special was born into David's family. His name was Jesus and the Bible says that it is because of His kindness to us, coming to earth to show how we can be friends with God, that we can be part of God's family and discover for ourselves how good God is and how good it is to be part of His family, just as Naomi, Ruth and Obed did all those years ago.

Reflection

The one thing that Ruth noticed when she arrived in Israel for the first time was how kind Boaz and his workers were towards her. She was a stranger and yet they welcomed her and made her feel at home. They were generous towards her and made sure she had plenty of barley. I wonder if the first thing someone arriving in our school for the first time would notice is how kind we are to them?

Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for Jesus and for His kindness to them and asking Him to help them show the same kindness to others.

Song (optional)

God you're good to me from Great Big God by Vineyard kids as a reminder of God's kindness to us.

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

33. ARE YOU LISTENING?

Bible Base: 1 Samuel 3

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to listen to Him.

Aim: To encourage children to listen to God.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint

Introduction

Ask children to be silent for thirty seconds and listen out for any sounds they can hear. Invite some to share what they have heard.

Ask them if they would have heard some of these things if they had not been listening. Point out that there are often things we don't hear, because we are not listening. For example – there may be a bird singing a beautiful song outside the window – but we don't hear it because we are busy with our work, concentrating on a game or watching television. Worse still, our parents or teachers may be talking to us – but we haven't heard because we haven't been listening.

Today's story will help us to know how to listen to God – so that we do not miss what He is saying to us.

Telling The Story

Explain that Samuel was a small boy who lived long ago and whose job it was to help the old priest Eli to look after the temple where people came to worship God. It may have been his job to sweep the floors, for example, or when visitors came to show them where everything was. Not only did Samuel work in the temple, however; he lived there too and so every night when the work was done, the lamps would all be blown out and Samuel would go to the part of the temple where his bedroom was, lie down in his own little bed and go to sleep.

As you tell the story, encourage children to join in with some actions, as if they are Samuel. Each time Samuel goes to bed, invite them to stretch, yawn, pull a blanket up round them and close their eyes. With their eyes closed, get them to imagine what Samuel might have heard in the dark, mentioning something different each time –e.g. the drip, drip, drip of a leaking oil lamp, the wind blowing gently outside, the barking of a dog, the scratching of a mouse... Leave a short pause each time as Samuel drifts off to sleep and then say 'Samuel, Samuel!' Invite the children at this point to open their eyes and cup a hand round one ear, as if they are Samuel listening to find out who is calling him and what for.

Act out Samuel tip-toeing along the hallway to Eli's room, having to waken a snoring Eli each time and then tip-toeing back to his own bed.

On the third visit to Eli teach the children the response that Eli gave Samuel, with the following actions:

'Speak, Lord' (hands cupped outwards at either side of the mouth)
'your servant' (hands together in bowing position)
'is listening' (hands cupped around ears)

As you reach the appropriate point in the story, invite the children to say this with you, as if they are Samuel.

Explain that God had a message for Eli and wanted Samuel to pass it on to him. (There is no need to go into what the message was.) Even though it wasn't something that Eli wanted to hear, next morning Samuel told Eli everything that God had told him to say.

Exploring Christian Belief

This was the first of many times that God heard Samuel speak and passed it on to others. In those days, before the Bible was written, this was how God spoke to people. He chose messengers, called prophets; He told them what He wanted to say and asked them to pass the message on to His people.

Nowadays, God's message is written down for us in the Bible. It is very rare to hear God speak in a voice that you can hear out loud. These days, Christians believe that God more often speaks to us quietly in our hearts, especially when the Bible is being read or explained, helping us to know what it is He wants to say to us.

However, just like Samuel, we need to be ready to listen. The prayer that Eli gave to Samuel is a good one to pray every time you come to read or hear what the Bible says. Ask God to speak to you and to help you to understand what it is He wants to say to you and be ready to listen quietly in your heart.

And, just like Samuel, we need to be ready to do what God says. Eli taught Samuel to use the words 'your servant' in His prayer. Christians believe that God speaks to those who are ready to do what He says, no matter what it is. So whenever there is something you know God wants you to do, always be ready to do it. Then you can be sure that God will speak and keep on speaking to you!

God wants to speak to us. There are important things He wants us to know. What a pity it would be if we did not hear what He has to say to us because we weren't listening!

Prayer

Invite the children to say the words Eli taught Samuel, along with the actions you have taught them, at the end of each sentence you say, along these lines:



Each time I read or hear stories from the Bible...
When I'm not sure what to say or do...
When I need to be reminded of your love...
When there is something new I need to learn...
First thing every morning...
And throughout each day...

Song (optional)

God Speaks, Emu Music



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

34. GOD'S CHRISTMAS GIFT LABEL

Bible Base: John 3: 16; John 1: 12

Key Christian Belief: The gift of God's love is for everyone.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus is God's gift to everyone who believes.

You Will Need

- three gifts as described in the introduction
- a large gift label with the words of the two headings below written on it
- the accompanying PowerPoint

Introduction

Display three presents you have brought each wrapped up with a label. The labels should say 'mum', 'brother' and 'baby'. Produce a tie, for example, from the gift labelled baby, perfume from the gift labelled brother and a baby toy from the gift labelled mum.

Get the children to work out that the labels have been mixed up. Point out that labels on gifts are important because they tell us who the gifts are from and who they are for.

Explain that at Christmas we remember how God gave us the gift of His Son, Jesus. When He was born as a baby He did not come with a gift label but today we will imagine what it might have looked like and what it might have said on it if He had.

With Love From God

Read or have a child prepared in advance to read John 3: 16 in a child-friendly version. Display the first part of your large gift label.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was God's Son and that God sent Him into the world to show us how much He loves us. When He grew up Jesus taught people about God's love. He also showed God's love to everyone – including those whom no one else cared about and those who knew they did not deserve it. He wanted them all to know that God loved them. And finally He showed God's love for us all by dying on the cross, which is what the Bible says He had been sent to do, to take the blame for the wrong things in our lives so that we can be God's friends and one day live with Him in heaven.

Christians believe that Jesus came to bring us the Good News that God loves us and wants us to be His friends. He was sent into this world with love from God.

To All Who Believe

Read or have a child prepared to read in advance John 1: 12 in a child-friendly version. Display the second part of your large gift label.



The gift of God's love is not just for those who are clever, talented, rich or good enough to deserve it. What Jesus came to do, He came to do for everyone.

Both poor shepherds and rich Wise Men came to visit the baby Jesus. And because of what Jesus has done for us, the Bible says that everyone can know God's love and friendship in their lives. This is God's gift to us – we don't need to earn it or pay for it but we do need to accept it and the Bible tells us that it is by believing in Jesus, and welcoming Him into our lives, that we receive the gift of God's love and are welcomed into His family as His children!

And so the gift of God's love, that Jesus came to bring, is for all who believe.

Exploring Christian Belief

There were lots of people in Bethlehem in those days who knew nothing about the wonderful gift that had been given. But people like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men – who had heard and believed the Good News had something wonderful to celebrate that the others did not have.

There are lots of people around us who will not give a second thought to Jesus this Christmas while those who have heard and believed the Good News of what He came to do for us have something to celebrate that will last far beyond Christmas. Because of Jesus Christians believe we can be God's friends forever!

Action Rhyme

For young children, conclude by teaching them the following rhyme, with actions, to remind them of the Christmas story.

This is the stable warm and dry,	(Make a roof shape with your fingertips.)
This is the star that shone in the sky,	(Open and close fingers repeatedly.)
This is the baby who came from above	(Fold arms as if holding a baby.)
To bring us the wonderful gift of God's love.	(Give yourself a hug.)

Songs (optional)

The carol 'O Little Town Of Bethlehem' which includes the line 'How silently the wondrous gift is given' might be appropriate for older children to sing or Born is the King by Hillsong Worship.

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

35. THE SOWER

Bible Base: Matthew 13: 1-23

Key Christian Belief: The kingdom of heaven is like a seed.

Aim: To help children understand that the Good News of God's love is intended to make a difference our lives.

You will need

- a handful of seeds
- a Bible
- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Show the children a handful of seeds and ask them to imagine what might grow from these – e.g. a garden full of vegetables or flowers, an orchard full of fruit or a field full of corn. Ask them now to imagine now that you have an apple seed in your hand. What could it grow into? An apple tree! What will grow on the apple tree? Apples! What will you find inside each apple? More apple seeds! And what could they grow into...?

Isn't it amazing how much can come from a tiny little seed? When he was on the earth, Jesus told a story once in which he said that the message He had come to bring, the Good News of God's love, was like a seed. Today we are going to hear this story and think about what it teaches us.

Telling The Story

You will need nine children to act out the story as you tell it.

Choose one child to be the farmer. His job will be to walk across the hall from one side to the other, pretending to scatter seed across his land. Ask him to wait at one side.

Choose four children to be the seeds in the story. Ask them to spread out across the front of the hall and kneel down facing away from the audience. Give them each a number from one to four and explain that when they each hear their number they are to turn round and act what happens to that seed in the story.

Choose two children to be birds. Show them their action – flapping their wings – and ask them to wait at the other side of the hall.

Choose two children to be thorns and weeds. Ask them to kneel down, facing the audience, behind seed number three. Explain that you will tell them what to do...

Now tell the story as follows, prompting the children to act it out as you go along.

Once there was a farmer who when spring time came thought it was time to plant some seeds across his land. He spent the whole day out in his fields scattering seeds far and wide. (The farmer walks across the front of the hall, scattering seeds.) At the end of the day when the seeds had all been planted he came back home, sat down and had a rest. (The farmer goes back to where he started and sits down.)

Some seed – number one – fell along the pathway. (Seed number one turns round.) It didn't even get into the soil. It just lay on the path for all to see. High overhead some birds were flying. (The birds begin to flap their wings.) It was near lunchtime and they were feeling peckish – when what should they see but some nice juicy seed lying on the pathway below. 'Yum, yum!' they thought 'Just right for our lunch!' So down they swooped and carried off the seed that fell on the pathway, took it back to their nest and had it for lunch. (The birds take seed number one by the arms back to where they came from.) No lovely harvest of corn from this seed – it ended up as birds' dinner!

Some seed – number two – fell on rocky soil. (Seed number two turns round.) Here, it grew up very quickly. (Seed number two jumps up quickly with arms and legs outstretched. If too slow the first time ask him / her to do it again - very quickly!)

It looked as if it was doing really well – but as the day went on, the sun rose high in the sky and by midday it was very hot. The plant was very thirsty. (Seed number two wipes his / her brow.) It tried to send its roots down into the soil to get some water to drink but there were too many rocks and stones in the way and the roots couldn't get down deep enough to where the water was. So, sadly, this plant just withered away and died. (Seed number two withers and dies.) No lovely harvest of corn from this seed either; it just withered away in the hot sunshine.

Some seed – number three – fell among thorns and weeds. (Seed number three turns round.) It grew up very nicely at first. (Seed number three grows up slowly with arms and legs outstretched.) But so too did the thorns and weeds. (The thorns and weeds grow up slowly with arms and legs outstretched.) Eventually, there were so many of them, and they were so strong, that they choked the plant the fell among them and it died. (The thorns and weeds act this out – without physical contact – and seed number three dies.) No lovely harvest of corn from this seed either – it had no room to grow among the thorns and weeds. (The thorns and weeds each give a triumphant fist pump.)

Some seed, however – number four – fell on good soil. (Seed number four turns round.) Here it grew up very nicely and became a beautiful harvest of corn. (Seed number four grows up nicely with arms and legs outstretched.) This, of course, is what the farmer had been hoping for all along. He will be able to take the corn and use it to make bread for hungry people to eat.

Invite the audience to give the actors a round of applause, but ask the actors to stay where they are for a few minutes more.

Exploring Christian Belief

Remind the children that in the story, Jesus said the message He brought - the Good News of God's love that is now written down for us in the Bible (hold up a Bible) - is like a seed. We are now going to think for a few moments about what He meant by this.

Invite the farmer to walk with you back across his 'land'. Explain that the children have been watching and they will be able to tell him what has happened to the seeds he planted.

Stand with the farmer where seed number one was and ask the children in the audience to tell him what happened to it. Ask him how he feels about this.

This seed did not even get into the soil. Jesus is telling us that if the Good News of God's love that He came to bring us (hold up a Bible) is to make any difference in our lives, we need to take it in. We need to listen to what Jesus says and pay attention to it.

Stand with the farmer by seed number two and ask the children in the audience to tell him what happened to it. Ask him again how he feels about this.

This seed didn't get down deep enough. Jesus is telling us that if the Good News of God's love that He came to bring us (hold up a Bible) is to make any difference in our lives, it needs to sink down deep into our hearts. We need to think carefully about it and ask God to help us understand it and believe it so we are able to keep on following Jesus and not give up when things are tough.

Stand with the farmer by seed number three, along with the thorns and weeds. Ask the children in the audience to tell him what happened to this seed and ask him how he feels about this.

There was no room for this seed to grow. Our lives are full of many things but Jesus is telling us that if the Good News of God's love (hold up a Bible) is to make any difference in our lives we need to make room for God – taking time each day to talk to Him, and perhaps read the Bible for ourselves, and meeting with others in His family, in SU or in a kids club, to learn more about Him and what it means for us today to live as His friends.

Stand with the farmer by seed number four. Comment on the beautiful harvest of corn that is growing here and ask him how he feels about this.

This seed fell on good soil. Jesus is telling us that if we pay attention to the Good News of God's love that He came to bring us (hold up a Bible), ask God to help us understand and believe it and make room for Him in our lives – this is what will happen. Our hearts and lives will be full of God's love and it will show. And not only that but it will spread to others too as we learn to show God's love to them by the things we say and do.



Christians believe that God wants to make our lives beautiful and useful for Him. The seed that makes this possible is the Good News of God's love that Jesus came to bring us and that is now written down for us in the Bible. It is what we do with it that makes all the difference. What will you do with it? Which type of soil will you be like?

Song (optional)

'Seed You Sow' from the album 'Songs That Jesus Said' by Keith & Kirsten Getty would be a good song to use with this assembly.

Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for the Good News of His love that Jesus brought. Ask Him to help the children to understand and believe it and to make room for God in their lives each day so that they will grow to be the people he created them to be.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

36. THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Bible Base: Matthew 13: 44

Key Christian belief: The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. Aim: To help children understand that God's love is the greatest treasure of all.

You will need:

- a treasure chest (if possible) hidden from view to begin with
- a label with the word 'everything' written on it tied to the treasure chest
- The accompanying PowerPoint Presentation

Introduction

Have you ever made an exciting discovery? It could be something you had been searching for, or possibly something you weren't expecting to find but as you walked along the street, through the park or on the beach – suddenly; there it was! And you wanted to call everyone over and say 'Come here – look what I've found!'

Often we hear about exciting discoveries that are made – things that have been left in an attic, or lying at the bottom of the sea or buried underground for years. Today we are going to think about a story Jesus told in which a man made an exciting discovery.

Telling the Story

An Exciting Discovery

(Act out the story as you tell it.) As the story starts, the man is out working in a field. We don't know who he was or what he was doing there, but we know it wasn't his field – so perhaps the owner of the field had sent him there to dig out the weeds or to clear the loose stones out of the soil.

Anyhow, as he was digging, suddenly his spade struck something hard. Maybe it was a big stone or a large piece of rock. He tried digging to the left and then to the right but he could not get his spade any further into the soil. Whatever was there was very big. So he began to scrape the soil away from on top of it, in order to see what it was. The more he did so, the more excited he became. It didn't look like an ordinary piece of rock or a stone...it looked like...no...it couldn't be...could it? It looked like an old treasure chest!

So the man kept scraping away the soil and then dug a big hole all around the treasure chest. Finally he was able to reach down and with a heave...and a tug...he was able to lift the treasure chest out of the hole and plonk it down on the ground in front of him. He rubbed his hands together and began to get very excited indeed.

Next he needed his penknife to scrape the soil away from the hinges and the lock. Then he used his screwdriver to unscrew the lock. Finally, with another heave...and a tug...he

was able to open the lid. (Make a creaky noise as you open the lid - towards the children, so they can't see inside.) It was a very old and very rusty lid!

When the man looked inside, his heart started beating very fast, his eyes opened wide and his mouth fell open. Inside there were diamonds, rubies, pearls, gold...silver...coins... every kind of treasure you could possibly imagine. (Produce a necklace, a brooch or some coins, for example, from inside the chest to illustrate what it contains.)

This was a very exciting discovery indeed. Jesus is telling us that there is an exciting discovery that He wants us to make. He wants us to discover how very much God loves

us. Christians believe that the more you get to know about God and His love for us, the more exciting it is. It is even more exciting than all the treasure in the world!

A High Price

The next thing the man did will surprise you. He closed the lid of the treasure chest, put it back into the ground and covered it up with soil again. Then he went looking for a stone with an unusual shape, one he'd be sure to recognise again, and when he had found one, he put it on top of the spot where the treasure chest was buried.

Next he went to the bank and took out all of his money. It wasn't enough. He went home and gathered together all the money he had there. It still wasn't enough. Next day he loaded everything he had on to a big cart and spent the day at the market selling it all. When he counted up how much he had made, it still wasn't enough, so the day after that he went round to the estate agent and put his house up for sale. A few days later, some folk called to see the house; they agreed to pay him what it was worth and gave him the money. He counted it up and at last he had enough money for what he wanted!

He went to see the owner of the field and asked him if he would be willing to sell the field he had been working in to him. 'That depends on how much money you are willing to pay' said the owner. The man showed him how much money he had collected and the owner smiled. 'That's a lot of money' he said - 'a very fair price indeed.' All right then, if you want it the field is yours!

At this the man ran to the field, looked all round for the stone with the unusual shape and when he had found it he began to dig furiously. Sure enough the treasure chest was still there - with all the treasure still inside it. The man lifted it out of the ground and this time threw his arms around it saying, 'The greatest treasure in the whole world - and now it's mine!'

He had sold everything he had to buy the field and own the treasure but as far as he was concerned it was worth it because now the greatest treasure in the world was his!

Exploring Christian Belief

In this story, Christians believe Jesus is telling us that the Good News of God's love is like the greatest treasure in the world. Because of what Jesus came to do for us, all the wrong



things in our lives can be forgiven and we can know God's love and friendship in our lives now and forever. I think there is nothing more exciting or valuable in the world than this.

No amount of money could ever pay for it. Instead, when Jesus gave His life for us it is as if He paid the price so that this treasure could be ours – as His free gift to us.

But still there is a price for us to pay. The Bible says that the treasure of God's love is for those who trust and follow Jesus and Jesus says that if we want to be His followers, we must be ready to give Him everything we have. If we are His friends, our lips, our hands, our minds and our lives are not ours to do what we want with any more – instead they belong to Him and we must be ready to do what He wants with them.

The man in our story was willing to give everything he had in order to own the treasure he had discovered because as far as he was concerned, it was worth it. And many Christians would say the same. Following Jesus – doing what pleases God – is not always easy but it is always worth it because what He gives us is greater and more valuable than anything else in the world!

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to imagine they have to sell everything they own. What would they miss most? What would they be willing to sell it for?

Finish with a prayer thanking God that His love is like the greatest treasure in the world and asking Him to help the children to show how glad they are of His love for them by using their hearts and minds, hands and lips to do what pleases Him.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

37. THE BIG PARTY

Bible Base: Luke 14: 25-33

Key Christian Belief: The kingdom of heaven is like a party

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus invites us to know the joy of being loved by God

You will need:

- an invitation of some kind
- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- a large sheet of card, designed to look like a party invitation, with the words 'Come – everything is ready!' and the letters RSVP on it.

Introduction

Show your invitation and talk about something special you have been invited to in the past. Ask the children if they have ever had a special invitation.

The famous singer, Sir Cliff Richard, was invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen – but he says he once had an invitation that was even better than that. This is the invitation we are going to think about today.

Telling The Story

Choose – or have ready in advance - three volunteers to help you tell the story. At several points in the story you will ask them to decide what happens next – so they need to be good at making things up. Proceed to tell the story as follows.

Lord Ponsonby-Smythe lived in a large castle on a hill overlooking a sleepy little village. He was thinking one day how sad it was that he had lots of rooms in the castle and lots of gardens and fields around it, but no one from the village ever came to visit him. Suddenly, he had a great idea. 'I know what I'll do!' he thought. 'I'll have a great big party here in the castle and I'll invite everyone from the village to come to it. I will make it the best party they have ever had in their lives!'

Now Lord Ponsonby-Smythe had lots of servants. He called three of them over one day. (Call your three volunteers over beside you.) He told them he was planning to have a party for everyone in the village and that he wanted it to be the best party ever.

'We'll need to decorate the castle' he said. 'What do you think we should use?' (Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)



'All right then' he said. 'That sounds great. You three order as many balloons, banners, coloured lights, glitter balls and streamers as you think we need. Remember, money is no object. I will pay for everything. Just make sure you get the best there is!'

'Now' he said. 'My guests will need to have something to do. Remember there are lots of rooms in the castle and plenty of grounds outside. We want them all to have a really good time. What do you think they would like to do? (Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)

'Excellent!' said Lord Ponsonby-Smythe. 'See that all of this is ready when the guests arrive – a bouncy castle, volley ball, football and races outside; party games, a play

station or two, table tennis, snooker and a disco indoors. And remember, money is no object. I'll pay for everything. Just make sure there will be lots of fun for everyone!'

'Now - most important of all' said His Lordship 'is food. We need good food and lots of it. Who do you think we could ask to cook it?' (Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)

'All right then – see if Jamie Oliver and Mary Berry are free and tell them they are hired. No expense spared. We want the best! What do you think should be on the menu?' (Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)

'Great – in that case, let's make sure we have lots of burgers, chips, sausages and pizza all cooked to perfection by Jamie Oliver. And let's have lots of different puddings and cakes all made by Mary Berry. And while you are at it order bucket loads of ice cream, all flavours, and lots of different kinds of juice for people to drink. And what about a chocolate fountain? We've GOT to have a chocolate fountain... And remember, money is no object. I'll pay for it all. Just order as much as you need!'

'And finally' said Lord Ponsonby-Smythe excitedly 'we need some entertainment. After dinner we could have a big concert and maybe invite some comedians, some singers, a band or two and maybe a magician to take part. Who do you think our guests would like to see on stage in the ballroom?' (Invite suggestions from your volunteers and incorporate their ideas into the story.)

'Fantastic!' he said. 'Let's invite them all...and let's see if Ant and Dec are free to host it. This is going to be the best party ever!'

So the three servants went off to organise everything – the decorations, the games, the food and the concert. Meanwhile Lord Ponsonby-Smythe put up large posters around the village telling everyone that they were invited to a party in his castle on a certain day in about a month's time. There would be lots of fun and lots to eat and it was all free!

The day of the big party arrived. The decorations were all up, the games were ready, One Direction were rehearsing in the ballroom and the smell of burgers being cooked came wafting through the castle.

Lord Ponsonby-Smythe had organised a luxury coach to go down into the village and bring everyone up to the party. When the time came, he sent his three servants into the village with the coach driver to tell everyone: 'Come, everything is ready!'

When they got to the village, however, there was no one waiting for the coach. So the servants went round, knocking on everyone's door. 'Come – everything is ready!' they said. But the villagers had forgotten all about the party. They had seen the posters, but they hadn't thought any more about it. They were too busy with other things. So one by one they began to make excuses. (Ask each of your three volunteers in turn to finish off the sentences below.)

The first one said: 'I'm so sorry. I'm afraid I can't come because...'

Another one said: 'I can't come either. I have to...'

A third one said: 'I'm afraid today's no good for me because...'

Not one of the people who lived in the village were coming to the party. Sadly, the three servants went back and reported this to Lord Ponsonby-Smythe.

'What?' he said, shocked. 'You mean we have all these games to play, Jamie Oliver is cooking burgers in the kitchen and Ant and Dec are getting ready to host a concert in the ballroom and no one wants to come? Well – we can't let all this go to waste! Drive out into the streets and lanes beyond the village and tell everyone you meet about the party. Anyone who wants can come!'

So that's what they did and it wasn't long before the coach was full of homeless people and others who had never been invited to a party in their lives. And do you know what? They had a great time - and for all I know the party might still be going on - while those from the village who had been invited, and who could have been there, missed out. It's almost as if they didn't realise what a wonderful invitation they had been given!

Exploring Christian Belief

Display the large poster with the words 'Come – everything is ready!' on it. This is what the servants in the story were to say to the people in the village. It is also, I believe, what would be written on the invitation that Jesus gives to each one of us. And this is the invitation Sir Cliff was talking about – the one that was even better than being invited to meet the Queen.

Christians believe that Jesus invites each of us to know the joy of being God's friends. He wants us to have the privilege of belonging to God's family and of enjoying His perfect love in our lives now and forever. The Bible says that Jesus has done everything that is needed to be done to make this possible for us. Everything is ready. All we need to do is to come!



Point to the letters RSVP and ask if anyone knows what they mean. Normally, when you get an invitation, the person inviting you expects you to reply to let them know if you're coming.

Christians believe that the choice to follow Jesus or not is one we all have to make for ourselves and it is important to think carefully about it. The problem with the people in the village wasn't that they thought about the party and decided not to come; rather, they didn't think about it at all! They ignored the invitation completely and as a result missed out on something far better than they could ever have dreamed of.

As Christians we believe this is like the invitation Jesus gives to us. He doesn't want us to just ignore it, or forget about it. Rather – He wants us to check it out, think carefully about it and make up your own mind about it.

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to help everyone understand more about this invitation to enjoy His love and friendship in their lives and to think about it for themselves.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

38. THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Bible Base: Luke 10: 25-37

Key Christian Belief: Jesus taught us to love our neighbours.

Aim: To help the children understand that God want us to show the same love to others as He has shown to us.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Divide the children into two groups. If possible, have them seated facing each other. Ask the two groups to imagine that they don't like each other very much and ask each group to show the other, using gestures and facial expressions, what they think of them.

Explain that today's story takes place at a time when there were two groups of people in Israel who did not like each other very much. They were the Jews and the Samaritans.

Display the map from the PowerPoint presentation and tell one group that they are the Jews. They live in the South and their capital city is Jerusalem. Tell the other group that they are the Samaritans. They live in the North and their capital city is Samaria.

Explain that in a few moments each group will have some lines to say. The Jews are to say the words in red, when they appear on the screen, and the Samaritans are to say the words in yellow. Encourage the groups to say their lines to each other with feeling, remembering that the Jews and the Samaritans couldn't stand each other. (Invite each group to show the others again what they think of them.)

But why did the Jews and the Samaritans hate each other so much? Well, for one thing, hundreds of years ago the Samaritans had started marrying people from other nations so that when they had children, their children were only half-Israelite and half-something else. The Jews were horrified and told them: 'You are not true Israelites any more.'

Samaritans: Oh yes we are!

Jews: Oh no you're not!

For another thing, the Samaritans had started to worship other gods as well as the God of Israel. Again the Jews were horrified by this and decided not to let the Samaritans worship God in their temple in Jerusalem any longer. 'You don't belong here' they said. 'You are not God's people any more.'

Samaritans: Oh yes we are!

Jews: Oh no you're not!

As far as the Jews were concerned, it was they who were the true Israelites; it was they who were the true people of God. They hadn't mixed with other nations or worshipped other gods like the Samaritans had. They felt sure that God was pleased with them and that He would be on their side!

But then one day, as Jesus was teaching a large crowd of people, a Jewish teacher who had studied God's law stood up and asked Jesus a question. 'Teacher' he said. 'How can I live a life that pleases God?'

'You have studied the law.' Jesus replied. 'What does it say there?'

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength' the man replied 'and love your neighbour as you love yourself.'

'You are right' said Jesus. 'If you do that, you will certainly live a life that pleases God.'

The teacher was a little embarrassed because although he had got the answer right, he knew he didn't always love God and love his neighbour the way God's law said he should. So to cover up his embarrassment he asked 'But who is my neighbour?' In reply, Jesus told him this story.

Telling The Story

Either tell the story using the pictures from the PowerPoint presentation or ask for some volunteers to act out the various parts – the traveller, the robbers, the priest, the temple helper, the Samaritan and the innkeeper – as you narrate. Imagine Jerusalem being at one side of the stage and Jericho (where the inn is) at the other. The robbers might be given somewhere to hide and the innkeeper might be seated at a desk. The robbers should be told to act their part without physical contact!

Ask the other children to remain in their groups and to imagine that they are either the Jews or the Samaritans listening to Jesus telling the story. The 'Jews' should cheer every time they hear the word 'Jewish' and the 'Samaritans' should cheer every time they hear the word 'Samaritan'. Explain also that at the end of the story you will have a question for everyone to answer.

One day, a man went on a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, a journey that would usually take about four hours. The road was rough and hilly and as the traveller walked along, there were robbers hiding in the hills. When they saw him, they jumped out, beat him up, took everything he had and ran off, leaving him lying by the side of the road.

A few minutes later, a Jewish priest came along the road. He was someone who loved God and taught others to love Him too. Surely he will stop and help the man.

But no - he saw the man, but instead of stopping to help him, he crossed over to the other side of the road and walked on past.

Next, a Jewish temple helper came along the road. He was someone who helped out at the temple when people came to worship God. Surely, he will stop and help the man.

But no – he saw the man, but instead of stopping to help him, he too crossed over to the other side of the road and walked on past.

Finally, a Samaritan came riding along the road on his donkey. The man lying by the roadside is his enemy. Surely he won't stop to help him!

But yes – when this Samaritan saw the man lying by the roadside he stopped, got off his donkey and went over to help him. He rubbed some oil into his wounds to take the pain

away and bandaged him up. Then he helped him on to his donkey and took him to the nearest inn. He gave the innkeeper two silver coins. 'Look after this man for me' he said 'and if I owe you any more money, I'll pay you when I come back.'

Jesus turned to the teacher of the law and asked him: 'Which of the three men who saw the traveller lying by the roadside acted like a neighbour to him?'

Ask the children what they think – and why.

'The one who showed him kindness' the teacher replied. 'You are right' said Jesus. 'Now go and do the same.'

Exploring Christian Belief

The teacher of the law in this story wanted to know how to live a life that pleases God. Jesus helped him to see that it's not complicated. He even knew the answer himself! Love God and love your neighbour. Jesus' says that's all there is to it. However, as Jesus' story shows, it may be easy to understand what God wants but it is not always easy to do it.

The Jewish people claimed to love God. They hadn't mixed with other nations or started worshiping other gods as the Samaritans had. They knew all God's commandments inside out. They had built a magnificent temple as a place for people to come and worship Him. They expected to be the heroes in Jesus' story – but they weren't. Imagine how shocking it was for them that the hero in Jesus' story was a Samaritan!

The problem was that although the Jewish people knew what God wanted them to do, often they didn't do it! In this story, the Jewish priest and the Jewish temple helper, both of whom should have known better, walked on past the man who needed help. They knew what God wanted them to do but they hadn't done it. It was the Samaritan who was the hero in this story because he actually did what God wanted him to do and took care of the man, doing everything he could to help him.

Jesus wanted the Jewish people to understand that if you really love God, you will show it by loving others too - because that is what pleases Him. If you say you love God but never lift a finger to help someone else, it shows you don't really love Him at all. That kind



of love is useless. It is only empty words. If you really love God and want to show it, the way to do it is by loving others, no matter who they are and no matter what it costs you, as this man did. Christians believe that this is how to live a life that pleases God.

However, it is not always easy to do this! It is easy to make excuses – like the priest and the temple helper did – and just walk on past the people who need our help. That's why the Bible says that loving God comes first. Before we start trying to love our neighbours – especially those who have hurt us – Christians believe that we need to open up our lives to God's love. We need to get to know Him and find out for ourselves how much He loves us, because the more we realise how much God loves us, and the more we grow to love Him, the more we will want to do what pleases Him and the easier it will be for us to show the same love to others as He has shown to us. And this is what pleases God most of all!

Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to watch out for others who may need their help during the next week and encourage them, with God's help, to be like the Good Samaritan and to do everything they can to help. Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children realise how much He loves them and to show the same love to others as He has shown to them.

Song (optional)

Shine (from the inside out), Nick Jackson

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

39. THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Bible Base: Matthew 18: 21-35

Key Christian Belief: Jesus taught us to forgive those who hurt us.

Aim: To help the children understand that God wants us to forgive others as He has forgiven us.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- costumes and props for the drama (if desired)

Introduction

Ask the children if they can imagine a conversation like this taking place at home.

Monday morning: 'Don't forget to take your uniform off and fold it up neatly when you come home from school!'

'Sure mum!'

Monday teatime: 'Have you taken your uniform off yet?'

'Oh sorry, mum. I forgot.'

Tuesday teatime: 'Are you still wearing your school uniform?'

'Sorry mum – I forgot!'

Wednesday teatime: 'Haven't I told you to take your school uniform off as soon as you come home from school?'

'Yes mum.'

'Then why are you still wearing it?'

'Sorry mum – I guess I forgot again.'

Thursday teatime: 'I see you are still wearing your school uniform. HOW MANY TIMES do I have to tell you to take it off as soon as you come home from school?'

Or it might be that you are the one getting exasperated. Imagine you are talking to your brother or sister if you have one.

Saturday morning: 'Please don't touch my brand new colouring pencils. I need them for a school project.'

'OK – I won't.'

Saturday afternoon: 'Have you been using my colouring pencils?' 'Yes.'

'But I told you not to!'

'Sorry – I forgot.'

Saturday evening: 'Didn't I tell you not to touch my colouring pencils?'

'Yes'

'Then why have you got them out again?'

'Sorry - I keep forgetting!'

Sunday afternoon: 'I see you are using my new colouring pencils again. HOW MANY TIMES do I have to tell you not to touch them!'

Peter, one of Jesus' followers, was having trouble with his brother. Perhaps Peter had told him not to do something but he had kept on doing it anyway. 'HOW MANY TIMES do I have to forgive him?' he asked Jesus and then, thinking he was being generous, he suggested 'How about seven times?'

'No' said Jesus, looking straight at Peter. 'More like seventy times seven!' In other words – forgive him and keep on forgiving him no matter how many times he upsets you. Peter didn't say anything but I imagine that in his head he was thinking to himself. 'But why? Why should I forgive him?'

Just as you might be thinking – for example, when your best friend tells everyone a secret you didn't want anyone to know, when your kid brother scribbles all over your homework and you have to do it again or when someone borrows your mobile phone and it gets broken. 'Why should I forgive them after what they have done?'

To help us think about that, here is the story that Jesus told Peter.

Telling The Story

If possible, have a group of children prepared in advance to present the drama attached. With notice, a P6 or P7 class may be willing to take this on. Alternatively, ask for five volunteers to play the parts of the king, the first official, the second official and two other officials who do not speak, while you narrate. Arrange to meet with them for 15 minutes in advance of the assembly to prepare the drama. Provide simple costumes and props – such as a 'throne' for the king, a large scroll of paper (like a huge till receipt) to represent the first official's debt and a much smaller scroll of paper (like an ordinary till receipt) to represent the second official's debt.

Alternatively, tell the story in your own words, using the pictures from the PowerPoint presentation attached and two scrolls as suggested above to represent the debts owed by the two officials.

Exploring Christian Belief

If you have used the drama, ask a few questions to ensure that the children have understood the story. For example:

- How much did the first official owe?
- How much did the second official owe?
- Why was the king angry with the first official?

Point out that in this story, Jesus wants us to understand that God is like the King and we are like the first official. Christians believe that God wants us to forgive others as He has forgiven us. This means choosing not to treat those who have hurt us as they deserve. It means choosing not to make them pay for what they have done but instead being willing to forgive them and to treat them as if it had never happened!

This is probably the hardest thing that Jesus ever taught. It is never easy to forgive others who have hurt us. But He is not asking us to do something He wasn't willing to do Himself. As He was being nailed to the cross He prayed for those who were responsible for putting Him there – 'Father, forgive them; they don't know what they are doing.' Jesus forgave those who were hurting Him and He wants us to be like Him – and to forgive those who hurt us. But why is this so important? Here are three possible reasons why Jesus wants us to learn to forgive others.

First, Jesus wants us to let go of our angry feelings. Anger can cause us to do all sorts of things that we may regret later on and that will only make things worse. Anger can also do a great deal of damage to us - as well as to the person with whom we are angry. Carrying angry feelings around with us, going over and over in our heads what the other person said or did to us, only makes us miserable. Why should we let the other person do that to us? It may not be easy, but it is always better to let go of angry feelings rather than hold on to them or give in to them. And the only way to do that is to decide to forgive the other person and not to make them pay for what they have done.

Second, Jesus wants us to learn to make friends again. It is sad when two people who used to be friends fall out with each other. Sometimes when this happens, the two people concerned are still fighting or refusing to speak to each other years later. They may even have forgotten what it was that caused them to fall out in the first place. The best thing that can happen when two people fall out is for them to become friends again as quickly as possible, and this of course is what Jesus wants. It takes two to mend a broken friendship and if the other person does not want to be friends again, then there is nothing you can do. But Jesus wants us always to be ready to play our part - saying sorry or being ready to forgive whenever we need to in order make friends again.



Finally, Jesus wants us to be forgiven. It is good to remember that all of us at one time or another will need others to forgive us and surely we can't expect others to forgive us if we are not willing to forgive them? This story also shows us that we cannot expect God to forgive us if we are not willing to forgive others. If we want to be forgiven we need to learn to forgive. The Bible says that because of what Jesus has done for us, God is willing to forgive us for all the wrong things we have ever said or done. Surely the least we can do, once we have received God's forgiveness, is to forgive others as He has forgiven us?

Reflection And Prayer

Invite the children to think of someone they may need to forgive and make friends with again. Finish with a prayer thanking God for His forgiveness and asking Him to help the children always to be ready to forgive others as He has forgiven them.

Song (optional)

You forgive me, LifeTree Kids

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

40. The Wise And Foolish Builders

Bible Base: Matthew 7: 24-27

Key Christian Belief: Jesus taught us to live God's way.

Aim: To show that it is wise to listen to Jesus and do as He says.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- two hard hats

Introduction

Display the first pair of pictures - two bumble bees - and challenge children to spot any differences they can find between these.

Display the second pair of pictures - two houses - and again challenge children to spot any differences they can find.

Give them some time to do so and then explain that there aren't any differences between the two houses in the picture. However, in a story that Jesus told there were two houses that probably looked exactly the same - and yet there was a very important difference between the two - but it was a difference that could not be seen. Ask the children to listen carefully to the story and see if they can spot what the important difference was.

Telling The Story

Ask for two volunteers who are good actors to come up to the front and help you. Provide each with a hard hat to show that they are builders and ask one to act the part of the first builder as you tell the story and the other to act the part of the second.

Explain that Jesus had spent a long day teaching His followers how to live God's way. He told them: 'If you want to live in a way that pleases God, you must learn to -

- love God and do what pleases Him even when no-one else is watching;
- tell the truth and keep your promises so that others can rely on every word you say;
- look out for others and do all you can to help them;
- forgive those who hurt you;
- trust God and talk to Him about everything.

Then Jesus said: 'If you have been listening to what I have told you today and you do it, this is what you are like...'

You are like a wise builder who decided it was time for him and his family to have a new house. He had been to building class so he knew that the first thing to do was to find a nice piece of flat rock. So he looked around and once he had found one he began to build his house on the rock, brick by brick, taller and taller, higher and higher. Soon he

needed to go and get a ladder and climb up to finish off the walls and to put on the roof. Once he had finished, he climbed down the ladder, took a step back to look at the house he had built and was very pleased with what he saw.

Then he chose his favourite colours of paint and painted his house outside and in, until it looked just right. Finally, he brought in the tables, chairs and beds that he would need for every room and when the house was ready he and his family moved in.

For some months they lived happily in their new house. Then one night there was a terrible storm. The wind howled, the lightning flashed, the thunder boomed, the rain poured and the rivers overflowed. This man looked out of his window, saw the storm - but wasn't worried about it one little bit. He knew the house he had built would keep him safe. So he just made a cup of tea, sat by the fire and read a book until the storm had passed.

Then Jesus said: 'If you have been listening to what I have told you today and you don't do it, this is what you are like...'

You are like a foolish builder who decided it was time for him and his family to have a new house. He had been to building class so he knew that the first thing to do was to find a nice piece of flat rock. However, in the spot where he wanted to build he couldn't find one. So he just shrugged his shoulders, thought it wouldn't matter and began to build his house on the sand instead - brick by brick, taller and taller, higher and higher. Soon he needed to go and get a ladder and climb up to finish off the walls and to put on the roof. Once he had finished, he climbed down the ladder, took a step back to look at the house he had built and was very pleased with what he saw.

Then he chose his favourite colours of paint and painted his house outside and in, until it looked just right. Finally he brought in the tables, chairs and beds that he would need for every room and when the house was ready he and his family moved in.

For some months they lived happily in their new house. Then came the night of the terrible storm. The wind howled, the lightning flashed, the thunder boomed, the rain poured and the rivers overflowed. This man suddenly heard a terrible rumbling noise and when he looked up, there was a huge crack running down the wall of his house - then part of the roof blew off and this man and his family had to run for their lives as their house fell down round them.

Ask the children what the important difference was between the two houses. One was built on rock - and one was built on sand. When the wind blew, it blew lots of sand away and when the rain fell, it washed away whatever was left and because the house built on sand had nothing left to stand on, it fell flat. But no matter how hard the wind blew it couldn't blow the rock away and no matter how much rain fell it couldn't wash the rock away and so the house built on rock stood firm.

Ask the children if they can tell yet which of the two houses in the picture is which. Of course they can't - but ask them to watch and they will see. Then show the animation.

Exploring Christian Belief

What made the foolish builder so foolish? He knew what to do but he didn't do it. He had been to building class and knew that if you wanted to build a house that would keep you safe - you needed to build it on rock, but he thought it wouldn't matter and he built his house on sand instead. And because he knew what to do but didn't do it, Jesus calls him a foolish builder.

We would say the same of anyone who, for example, had been to cycling proficiency lessons and had learned all about looking after a bike and keeping safe on the road, and then went out without wearing a helmet. We would say that was very foolish indeed.

Jesus is telling us that when it comes to living our lives in a way that pleases God, He is the one to listen to and follow; He is the One who knows what He is talking about. It's wise to listen to what He says and to do it. And then we can be sure of His promise that He will be with us and take care of us whatever happens. Just as the wise builder knew that he could trust his house to keep him safe, Christians believe we can trust Jesus to be with us and to take care of us whatever happens. I hope we will all choose to be like the wise builder – putting our trust in Jesus and learning to listen to Him and do what He says always.

Song (optional)

You might use the song 'I'm Gonna Build My House On Solid Rock' (by Doug Horley) to finish the assembly.

ASSEMBLY OUTLINE

41. JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

Bible Base: Luke 19: 28 – 38

Key Christian Belief: Jesus is God's chosen King.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus came to bring peace, not to make war.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation.
- three small prizes – e.g. crème eggs.
- a crown, a royal robe and a 'throne' - e.g. a chair draped in velvet cloth.
- some palm leaves made of sugar paper.
- party poppers and streamers
- a copy of the words spoken by Jesus in Luke 19: 30-31

Introduction

Display a picture of the Queen's carriage and ask the children if they know who would normally ride in a carriage like this. Invite three (older) pupils to take part in a quiz about the royal family using the following questions:

Where does the Queen live?

Who is the Queen's husband?

Who is next in line to the throne?

Who did Prince William marry?

Who is Prince William's brother?

What is the name of William's son?

Where does the Queen stay when she visits Northern Ireland?

What kind of dogs does the Queen own?

Name the Queen's only daughter?

In the event of a tie ask:

For how long has Queen Elizabeth reigned? (Nearest answer wins.)

Award a small prize to each contestant but ask the winner to stay behind – to be crowned, dressed in a royal robe and invited to sit on a throne!

Telling The Story

When we think of a King or Queen this is what we usually think of - someone who wears a crown and a royal robe, sits on a throne, lives in a beautiful palace and rides in a golden carriage.

We read in the Bible that long ago the people of Israel had a king like this – his name was Herod. But he was not really the one in charge. That was Caesar – the Emperor of the mighty Roman Empire. He had chosen Herod as king of Israel – but Herod’s job was to make sure the people obeyed Roman laws and paid their taxes to Rome. The people of Israel hated this. They were not free to make their own laws or spend their own money the way they wanted.

However, they believed that one day God would send them a new king – someone born into David’s family, who would be able to set them free from their enemies, rule justly and wisely over them and enable them to live in peace and safety.

Many had started to believe that Jesus was this new king; he talked often about God’s kingdom, and the amazing things He did seemed to show that He had come from God. So when the rumours began to spread that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem a large crowd gathered to welcome Him. They sang and cheered and waved palm branches in the air - like flags. They threw their coats down in front of Jesus – like a red carpet.

Explain it might have been a bit like this on that day... (Use the dramatised Bible reading from Luke 19:28-40 to help children picture the scene. You can prepare pupils before you read out the story so they know what to do as you narrate. Choose a pupil to be Jesus and a few to be the disciples as they make the journey to Jerusalem- walking from one side of the assembly hall to the other.)

When Jesus had finished saying all this, he went on toward Jerusalem. As he was getting near Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples on ahead. He told them, “Go into the next village, where you will find a young donkey that has never been ridden. Untie the donkey and bring it here. If anyone asks why you are doing that, just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” **(Jesus speaks out instructions to 2 disciples who mime going and getting the donkey.)**

They went off and found everything just as Jesus had said. While they were untying the donkey, its owners asked, “Why are you doing that?”

They answered, “The Lord needs it.”

Then they led the donkey to Jesus. They put some of their clothes on its back and helped Jesus get on. **(The disciples mime leading the donkey to Jesus and putting coats on its’s back.)**

And as he rode along, the people spread clothes on the road in front of him. When Jesus was starting down the Mount of Olives, his large crowd of disciples were happy and praised God because of all the miracles they had seen.

They shouted,

“Blessed is the king who comes
in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven

and glory to God.”

(Choose a few volunteers to mime spreading out clothes in front of Jesus and the disciples, give others paper palm branches to wave and everyone shouts Hosanna x3)



Some Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, make your disciples stop shouting!” **(Ask everyone to make a shhh! and for a few volunteers to come to the front and have grumpy angry faces, arms folded etc.)**

Do you think His followers noticed anything strange about the way Jesus came riding into Jerusalem? It must have seemed very strange to them that He was riding on a donkey. They would have expected their king to come riding on a battle horse, not on a donkey. But Jesus wanted them to see that He wasn't the kind of king they were expecting. He had come to bring peace – not to make war.

Exploring Christian Belief

The Bible tells us that human beings, like us, have turned away from God. Christians believe that God is the One who made the world and has the right to rule over it – but we have ignored what God says and chosen our own way instead. We have acted as if we are the ones in charge and not God. We have not looked after our world or treated others the way God says we should. It is like we are at war with God.

But the Bible also says that God sent Jesus into the world to do something about this. It says that Jesus didn't come to remind us of all the rules we have broken, to tell us off, or to punish us as we deserve. Instead it says that He came to make peace – to put things right between us and God and to take the blame for the wrong things we have done so we that we who are God's enemies could become His friends instead.

Someone once said that the best way to destroy an enemy is to make Him your friend. And Christians believe that that is what God has done for us - He sent Jesus into the world to show His love for us, even while we were His enemies. Because of what Jesus has done for us, God says in the Bible that if we turn away from wrong things and put our trust in Him, He is ready to forgive us and we can change from being His enemies to being His friends. We don't need to be at war any more. Jesus came so we could have peace with God.

And Christians believe that peace with God is just the beginning. Once we have peace with God, with His help we should be able to start living in peace with others too. Jesus has promised us in the Bible that if we follow Him we will live with Him one day in His forever Kingdom and when that day comes there will be no more war. The whole world will be at peace. I don't know about you – but I'm looking forward to that!

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to imagine a world in which everyone was at peace with God and with each other. What would that be like?

Finish with a prayer thanking God that Jesus came to bring us peace and asking Him to help the children live at peace with others.

Song (optional)

My Lighthouse, Rend Collective

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

42. Jesus The Servant King

Bible Base: John 13: 1-17

Key Christian Belief: Jesus came to serve, not to be served. Aim: To show that Jesus wants us to serve others as He did.

You will need:

- a royal robe
- a crown
- an apron
- a cook' s hat
- a pair of smelly socks
- a card with the word 'UGH!' written on it.
- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Invite a child to the front. Dress him / her in a robe and a crown and invite everyone else to guess what he / she is dressed up as – a king / queen.

Let's imagine that the Queen or a member of the royal family is coming to your school. The school is spotlessly clean. You have been told to come to school clean and tidy – looking your best. A shiny black car pulls up outside the school. A man in a smart uniform gets out of the front seat and opens the back door. Out steps her majesty the Queen. The headmaster and one or two others in their best suits welcome her to the school, shake her hand and bow or curtsy.

The Queen then visits your class. Everyone stands nicely by their desks as she comes in. If she asks you a question you answer 'Yes, Ma'am or 'No Ma'am' very politely.

Then she comes to your dining hall for lunch. There is a table with some nice flowers on it for her to sit at. Someone brings her lunch to her (she doesn't have to queue) and it is the best school lunch you have ever tasted that day.

Afterwards she comes to the school hall where the choir sings for her or the orchestra plays some music. At the end the head boy or girl presents her with a bouquet of flowers and makes a short speech thanking her for her visit. Then off she goes to visit some other important people...

Today's story is about something that happened when King Jesus came to visit us on earth. We read in the Bible that when He came to be with us it wasn't at all like we imagined it would be if the Queen or a member of the royal family came to your school. Some very surprising things happened and I want to tell you about one of these today.

Produce the word 'UGH' written on a card. Ask if anyone knows what the word is.



To help them, produce a pair of socks you've been wearing for three weeks and ask if anyone wants a smell. They will probably say 'ugh'. Tell them that when you hold up the word you want them to say it like that.

Telling The Story

When King Jesus lived on earth there were no cars, trains or buses. Most of the time if you wanted to get anywhere you had to walk. The country Jesus lived in was hot for most of the year – so just as when you have been out walking or playing football in the heat – their feet were often sweaty, sticky and smelly. (Ugh)

The roads they walked on weren't tar-covered roads with nice footpaths – they were covered in sand and dust. Jesus and his friends wore open sandals so as well as getting sticky, sweaty and smelly their feet often got dusty and dirty too. (Ugh)

Sometimes people traveled by donkey or camel – so when you were out walking you had to be careful not to put your foot in something that a donkey or camel might leave behind - if you know what I mean...(Ugh)

One day Jesus and his friends had been out walking and they came to a house where they had arranged to have tea. Normally there would have been a servant at the door to welcome everyone and to wash their smelly feet. (Ugh)

But this time there was no servant. Jesus and his friends went up to the room where they were going to have tea. There was a table with a meal all ready for them. In one corner of the room there was a small table with a jug of water, a basin and a towel on it. Jesus and his friends noticed it as they sat down.

Andrew turned to Peter and said, 'Your feet don't half pong!' (Ugh)

Peter replied, 'You think mine are bad? You should smell yours!' (Ugh)

For a while there was silence. Jesus friends looked over at the jug of water, the basin and the towel. No one said anything but you could tell what they were all thinking. 'I hope no one thinks I'm going to wash anyone's smelly feet. No way!' (Ugh)

After a while - to everyone's surprise - Jesus got up, went over to the table in the corner, tied the towel round his waist and poured the water from the jug into the basin. Then he picked up the basin, carried it over, knelt down and washed every one of his friends' feet. His friends were amazed – this was King Jesus kneeling in front of them, washing their smelly feet, doing the job of a servant.

Imagine how amazed you would be if the Queen came to your school one day and as she came in she took off her royal robe and crown (take the robe and crown off your



volunteer) and instead put these on (put on an apron and a chef's hat) and then went into the kitchen and started washing up the messy pots.

You would be amazed - Queen Elizabeth, in your school, dressed like this, washing up the messy pots! That's how amazed Jesus friends were when He started washing their feet.

Exploring Christian Belief

Jesus wanted His friends to know some important things that day. One was that when He came from heaven to earth it wasn't to show off and make sure everyone knew He was the King – it was to help and to serve others in every way He could. He wanted them to know that He loved them and that because He loved them there wasn't anything He wouldn't do for them. The Bible says that just a few days later He was hanging on a cross giving His life for them and for us so that we could be God's friends forever.

He then told His friends that He had given them an example – that they should do for others what He had done for them. That doesn't mean that He wants us to wash everyone's feet but it does mean that He wants us to be ready to do the job of a servant – and to serve others as He did.

In Jesus day a servant was someone who had to look after everyone else in the house before they looked after themselves; to make sure everyone else had something to eat before they had something to eat themselves. A servant was someone who put others first and themselves last. That's the sort of person Jesus was – and the sort of people He wants us to be as well.

If you are giving out sweets let others have first pick, even if they pick your favourite. If there are lots of people trying to get into a room don't push your way up to the front – let others in first, maybe even hold the door open for them and you go in last. If there aren't enough seats for everyone make sure others have a seat and then if there any left you have one.

And if there is a messy job to be done – picking up the litter in the playground, washing up after art – don't be like Jesus friends, hoping no one asks you to do it – instead you be the first to volunteer.

When you take the place of a servant in ways like this you are following the example of Jesus – the best example you could ever follow - and Christians believe you can do this to show Him how glad you are of His love for you.

Reflection and Prayer

So – in your imagination, which clothes will you be wearing today? Will you be dressed like a king – insisting that everyone does what you want – or will you be dressed like a servant – putting others first and being ready to help them in any way you can?

Let's ask God to help us be more like Jesus and put others first!

Song (optional)

I want to be like Jesus, SovereignGrace kids



ASSEMBLY OUTLINE

43. JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

Bible Base: Luke 23: 32-43

Key Christian Belief: Jesus is God's chosen King.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus came to show God's love, not His power.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- a packet of Smarties

Introduction

Ask the children to guess what you are describing. To make this more fun, present it as a Smartie Quiz. You will give the children the clues, one at a time. Each time a clue is given they can guess as many times as they like – but must guess at least once before you go on to the next clue. Every time they guess incorrectly, you eat a Smartie. When someone guesses correctly they get the rest of the Smarties in the packet.

1. This is a collection of 142 different objects.
2. They are all at least 350 years old and are very valuable.
3. They include a robe, a sceptre and a sword.
4. They are kept in the Tower Of London.
5. They belong to the royal family.
6. They include the crown that the Queen wore on her coronation day.

Show the pictures of some of the Crown Jewels from the attached PowerPoint explaining what they are.

In the past two weeks we have been discovering that Jesus came to be our King – but He was not the kind of king that everyone had been expecting. He had come not to make war but to bring peace. He had come not to be served but to serve.

Today we will hear about the robe and crown that Jesus was given to wear – which were very different from the ones we have seen in the Crown Jewels.

Telling The Story

Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey. He had knelt down and washed His disciples' feet and now Judas, one of Jesus' friends, had had enough. This wasn't the kind of king he had been looking for or the kind of kingdom he wanted to be part of. So he made a deal with the religious leaders to hand Jesus over to them.

After supper, Jesus took three of his closest friends with Him and went to a quiet garden to pray. Suddenly, Judas arrived along with a crowd of people with swords and sticks. They had come to arrest Jesus and take Him to the religious leaders. Without a fuss Jesus allowed them to lead Him away. He knew the time had come.

First He was taken to the High Priest, where they put together some charges against him, twisting his words so that it sounded like he had said things He hadn't said at all.

Then they took Him to the Roman governor, Pilate and tried to persuade him that Jesus was a troublemaker and deserved to die. Pilate, however, could see that their stories

didn't agree. So he found nothing wrong with Jesus – no reason to have Him put to death. However the religious leaders there had persuaded the people to shout for Jesus to be crucified. They decided that He wasn't the kind of king they wanted, so they did what the religious leaders told them and shouted for Him to be crucified.

When Pilate heard them all shouting, he was afraid of a riot and so he gave in. He allowed the people to do what they wanted with Jesus. So they took Jesus and dressed Him up like a king using a purple robe and a crown of thorns. Then they laughed at Him, whipped Him and led him away to be nailed to a cross with a sign on it saying 'Here is the King of the Jews'. The passers-by also laughed at Jesus and spat on Him.

There were two thieves also being crucified, one on either side of Jesus. One made fun of Jesus and said: 'If you really are God's promised king, why don't you save yourself - and us!' The other thief, however, had watched Jesus and seen something different. He knew Jesus didn't deserve to die. He knew Jesus could have come down from the cross if He had wanted to – and somehow He seemed to know that this was not the end for Jesus. And so he turned to Jesus and said: 'Lord, remember me when you become king!' and Jesus told him he would be with Him that very day in God's forever kingdom.

Exploring Christian Belief

Once again Jesus showed that He was not the kind of king everyone expected. A king nailed to a cross, wearing a crown of thorns just didn't make any sense! The friends of Jesus thought everything had gone wrong. They hadn't understood yet that this was all part of God's plan and that Jesus had come to give His life for His friends.

No one forced Jesus to give His life for us. He could have come down from the cross if He had wanted to. He could have asked for ten thousand angels to come and help Him and He would have got them. But He didn't. Christians believe that He stayed there willingly because He knew that there was no other way for us to be forgiven and become friends of God again. He did it because He loves us. He had come not to show God's power, but His love.

Christians believe that by sending His own son Jesus to die for us, God has shown us how much He loves us. This was the price that He was willing to pay so that I could be His friend and live with Him in heaven one day. So if I am ever tempted to doubt that God loves me or to think that He doesn't care, I remember what Jesus has done for me and I know for sure then that God loves me and that a love like this will never fail. He will always be there for me. What a wonderful truth: God loves me!



Songs (optional)

'I'm Special' by Graham Kendrick or Hey, Jesus loves me by Shout Praises Kids would be good songs to finish this assembly with. Ask children to reflect on the words as they sing them and, if they wish, to make them their prayer of thanks to Jesus for what He has done for them.



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

44. THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Bible Base: Luke 24: 13-35

Key Christian Belief: Jesus is king forever.

Aim: To show that Jesus died and rose again in accordance with God's plan.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Have you ever met someone you should have known - but you didn't recognise them? (Give a personal example, if possible.)

Display the distorted images from the PowerPoint slides, one by one, and see if the children can recognise in each case whose image it is.

Explain that today you are going to tell the children a story from the Bible about two friends who were talking with someone they knew but didn't recognise.

Telling The Story

As you tell the story, walk slowly from one side of the stage (Jerusalem) to the other (Emmaus). Have a seat and a table with bread on it at the 'Emmaus' end. As you tell the relevant part of the story, sit at the table facing the audience. Then run all the way back to 'Jerusalem' to tell the last part of the story.

Two friends were walking along the road on their way from the big city of Jerusalem to their home in a little village called Emmaus, six miles away. It was teatime and the sun was beginning to set in the sky behind them. They both shook their heads sadly as they walked along the road talking to each other.

Just then another traveller came up from behind and greeted them. They turned round to see who the man was but the sun was in their eyes and they couldn't see him properly. (Display the slide with the silhouette on it.)

He asked them what they were talking about.

'We've been talking about what has happened to Jesus' they replied. 'Jesus?' said the stranger. 'Who's he?'

'Where on earth have you been?' exclaimed the two friends. 'Everyone in Jerusalem has been talking about him. He was a teacher who travelled around our country teaching people about God and doing many amazing things. We thought he would one day be our king and help us get rid of the Romans who have taken over our country. Our



prophets have been telling us for centuries that God will one day send a new king to rescue His people and we thought Jesus might even have been the one - but he can't have been.'

'Why not?' asked the stranger.

'Because now he's dead' the friends blurted out sadly. 'Our leaders didn't like some of the things Jesus taught and they especially didn't like the people he chose to hang around with. They had him arrested a few days ago, made up some lies about him and handed him over to the Roman governor - who sentenced him to be put to death on a

cross. His body was buried on Friday evening. And to make matters worse some of our women friends went to visit the place where he was buried this morning and they say his body isn't there any more. We don't know what to make of it all.'

'Why are you so surprised?' said the stranger. 'Weren't you expecting this to happen?'

And the stranger began to explain, reminding them of what their Scriptures - what we would call the Old Testament - said about the new king that God had promised.

'Haven't you read what Isaiah says about him?' said the stranger. 'That the punishment we deserve would be given to him, that he would suffer and die in order to complete the work that God had given Him to do and that afterwards He would see life again?'

'Well yes' said the friends 'we have read those words often, but we didn't think it meant that God's promised king would have to die - and surely dead people don't come back to life again, do they? Some of our women friends did say they had seen angels who told them that Jesus was alive, but you know what women are like! They'd believe anything! We told them they were seeing things. Jesus died and was buried. He can't be alive again. The whole thing is impossible.'

The stranger just smiled. By now the two friends had arrived at their village and the stranger went to continue on his way.

'Where are you going at this time of night?' asked the two friends. 'It will be dark soon and it's not safe out on the roads at night time. Why not come and stay with us until the morning - and then you can set off on your journey again.'

'That's very kind of you' said the stranger and he followed them to their house. Once inside they all sat down at a small table. The two friends offered their guest some bread to eat. He took a piece and broke it and just as he did, a candle flickered into life and for the first time the two friends saw exactly who they had been talking to. (Display the slide with the picture of Jesus on it.) It was Jesus!

They could hardly believe their eyes. But the moment they recognised him, Jesus disappeared. (Display the blank slide.) The two friends immediately ran all the way back to Jerusalem and found some of Jesus friends in an upstairs room with the door locked.

'Let us in!' they shouted. 'We've seen Jesus - He is alive!'

'Nonsense' said their friends. But no sooner had they said it than somehow or other Jesus was in the room with them all. (Display the slide with the picture of Jesus on it.)

'It's a ghost!' said his followers.

'Come over and touch my hands' said Jesus. 'You can't touch a ghost, can you?' Then he lifted a piece of fish and ate it. 'And ghosts don't eat fish, do they?'

It was Jesus - He was really and truly alive.

'Now go and tell everyone the Good News' said Jesus. 'And remember - I will be with you always!'

Exploring Christian Belief

Slowly, in the days that followed, Jesus friends began to realise that they did have Good News to share. When Jesus died on the cross it wasn't an accident or a mistake – it had all been part of God's plan. And now God had raised Him to life again to show that He really is the king that He had promised to send.

But now for the first time they understood that He had come not to rescue the people of Israel from the Romans but to rescue all of us from the wrong things that are in our lives and in our world. The Bible says He had come not just to be king over one country for a short period of time but to be king over all God's people forever. Christians believe that because of what He has done for us, if we choose to accept Him as our King, we can be sure that our sins are all forgiven, that He will be with us always, and that one day we will be with Him in His forever kingdom!

Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to imagine what the perfect king would do for His people and what it would be like to live in the perfect kingdom. Thank God that Jesus is our perfect king and that He has made it possible for us to live with Him in His perfect kingdom forever!

Song (optional)

You are Good, Good, Good by Tre Sheppard, Vineyard Kids as a reminder that God is good and sent Jesus, our perfect King because he loves us.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

45. A WITNESSING COMMUNITY

Bible Base: Acts 1: 1-8

Key Christian Belief: The first Christians told others about Jesus.

Aim: To help children understand that the church is a witnessing community.

You will need:

- A bar of chocolate (or similar), costumes and a Tesco bag for the opening scenario
- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

You will need to have set up the following scenario in advance. Fred and Harry could be played by two friends you have brought with you, two teachers or two older pupils.

Take out a bar of chocolate (or similar) and set it down somewhere prominent. Explain that you need to pop out for a moment and ask the children, while you are gone, to keep an eye on the bar of chocolate and make sure no-one touches it.

Once you have left the room, Fred and Harry enter – each wearing two or three easily identifiable items of clothing such as a baseball cap, a rugby shirt, a coat or a scarf. Harry is carrying a Tesco shopping bag. They look around for a while and then speak:

Harry: Here, Fred... do you see what I see?

Fred: Where?

Harry: (pointing) Over there.

Fred: Yes, Harry, I see it. It's a big bar of chocolate. Yum, yum!

Harry: You could go and get me that chocolate, couldn't you, Fred?

Fred: I don't know, Harry. What if someone sees me?

Harry: There's no one else here. Go on, Fred. I'll share it with you!

Fred: Oh – all right then.

Fred walks furtively over to where the chocolate is, lifts it, takes it back and gives it to Harry. Harry puts it into his shopping bag.

Harry: Well done, Fred! No one will ever know it was us!

They both leave the room. After a few seconds you return and notice that the chocolate has gone. Ask the children if they know what happened and to tell you what they saw.

For example, you could ask them:

- What happened to the chocolate?
- What did the people who stole it look like?
- What were they wearing?
- What were their names?
- Which one stole the chocolate?
- Where did he put it?
- Which way did they go?

Send a teacher off to look for them and thank the children for watching so carefully and for giving you such a good description of the two thieves. With their help, you are sure the thieves will soon be caught.

The teacher brings Fred and Harry back in. Look in the Tesco bag and find your bar of chocolate. Tell Fred and Harry that they have been caught red-handed. After assembly, they will have to face the school principal and he will decide what to do with them.

Now explain that the scenario the children have been watching was just pretend and, if the parts of Fred and Harry were played by older pupils, thank them for playing their parts so well and perhaps award them with your bar of chocolate to share between them. Ask the children to give them a round of applause as they return to their seats.

Telling The Story

Point out that, if what the children had seen this morning was real, it is possible that Fred and Harry would be arrested and charged with stealing a bar of chocolate. They would then have to go to court so that a jury could decide whether or not they were guilty and a judge could decide what to do with them. In that case the court would be looking for witnesses to help them find out what really happened.

Ask the children if they know what a witness is and explain that a witness is someone who saw or heard something and tells others about it. The children themselves might be called as witnesses to tell the court what they saw!

Tell the children about a time when you were called as a witness in court or show the picture in the attached PowerPoint presentation and explain that Lisa is on the witness stand answering questions from a lawyer about a website she created.

The Bible tells us that after Jesus had been raised from the dead, and just before He returned to heaven, Jesus and His followers had climbed a little way up the Mount of Olives and were sitting talking together. Jesus told them that He was going to go back to His Father in Heaven.



One day He would return and take them to be with Him there forever but in the meantime He gave them a promise and a command. (Read and display Acts 1: 8)

He promised that He would send them an invisible helper, the Holy Spirit, to remind them of everything He had taught them and to help them live as His followers and tell others about Him. Then He gave them a job to do. They were to be His witnesses - starting in Jerusalem, and then going into Judea, Samaria and the rest of the world.

They had been with Jesus and had seen and heard everything He said and did. Now they were to tell others what they had seen and heard - helping them to understand who Jesus is and what He has done for them.

And that is what they did – and we can read about it for ourselves in the book of Acts. They went everywhere, telling people about Jesus, just as Jesus had told them.

Exploring Christian Belief

Not only that, we can also read what they said about Jesus in the Bible. Christians believe that the stories of Jesus that we read in the Bible are not made up but actually come from reliable witnesses – people who saw and heard for themselves what Jesus said and did. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John gathered their stories together and wrote them down for us so that we too can know what happened when Jesus lived on earth.

Christians today weren't there when Jesus lived on earth but we can help people to hear and understand what those who were there said about Him. We can also tell others what we know about Jesus - the difference He makes in our lives as we trust and follow Him.

Share some of the ways in which your church helps to share the Good News about Jesus with others – including the activities you run for kids and perhaps one way in which you support others who have gone to another part of the world to tell others about Jesus.

Christians believe that if we are His followers, Jesus wants each of us to play our part in helping others get to know Him. Suggest that the children themselves can be witnesses for Jesus in school as they show by their lives that they are His followers and tell others what they know and believe about Him.

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to think about how they would answer if someone asked them what they believe about Jesus.

Finish with a prayer asking God to help those who don't know much about Jesus yet to find out more about Him and to help those who are His followers to be ready to share what they believe with others.

Song (optional)

Shine (from the Inside Out), Nick Jackson

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

46. A LOVING COMMUNITY

Bible Base: Acts 2: 42-47; 4: 32-35

Key Christian Belief: The first Christians loved one another.

Aim: To help children understand that the church is a loving community.

You will need:

- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation and pictures of your local churches and pictures illustrating the life and activities of your church.

Introduction

Show pictures of some local churches and ask the children if they know what they are called. Ask if anyone belongs to, or has been to any of the activities in these churches. Ask if they know anything about what happens in them.

Now explain that the pictures you have shown are church buildings – but when Christians talk about a church, they do not usually mean the building but the people who meet in it. The church is made up of people who love Jesus and want to follow Him. They are the church. The building is really only the place where they meet.

Show pictures illustrating the variety of people who belong to your church, and the things they do together. Highlight especially, but not exclusively, any activities in which children can be involved. The church is the people, not the building.

Telling The Story

Soon after Jesus returned to heaven, Peter stood up in front of a large crowd and told them all about Jesus and what He had done for them. Lots of people became Christians that day and started to follow Jesus. These first Christians had no church buildings to meet in – but they still met together, along with Jesus' disciples, sometimes in the Temple and sometimes in each other's homes. They became the very first church.

In Acts 2: 42-46 Luke describes what they did together and what it was like to belong to the first church. Read extracts from these verses (as below) from the ERV and ask the children to listen out for the sorts of things the followers of Jesus did together.

'The believers spent their time listening to the teaching of the apostles. They shared everything with each other. They ate together and prayed together. All the believers stayed together and shared everything. They sold their land and the things they owned. Then they divided the money and gave it to those who needed it. Every day they spent much of their time together in the Temple area. They also ate together in their homes. They were happy to share their food and ate with joyful hearts.'



Ask children what they noticed about the followers of Jesus from these verses. Comment that they seemed to spend a lot of time together. They got together to learn from their leaders and from each other, they ate together and they prayed together.

But notice also that they also shared everything they had with each other. In those days, people who were sick or disabled, widows whose husbands had died and children who had no parents to look after them often didn't have any money and couldn't afford to

buy food and clothes for themselves. So those who could sold their land and possessions and the money was used to provide food and clothes for those who needed them.

The first Christians were like a family to each other. They looked out for each other and did what they could for those who were in need. So much so that later on someone wrote: 'See how these Christians love one another.' And this of course is exactly what Jesus wants His followers to do. While He was with them He had told them: 'This is my command – that you love one another as I have loved you.'

Exploring Christian Belief

The Bible teaches us that we are not meant to follow Jesus on our own. Jesus wants us to be part of His family – a family that learns, prays and works together for Him and that loves, helps, encourages and cares for each other as we do so. This is what the church is meant to be like.

Share some of the ways in which your church cares for those in need in your fellowship, in your community and perhaps in the wider world.

Suggest that the children in their classes might think of ways in which they can be like a family and care for each other in school. For example, they might make sure that no one is left on their own in the playground, watch out for others and offer a helping hand to anyone who needs it and be kind and thoughtful in the way they speak to each other.

Reflection and Prayer

Ask each child to think of something thoughtful they could do for someone else in school this week. Finish with a prayer thanking Jesus for His love and asking Him to help the children be like a family together and show the same love to others as He has to them.

Song (optional)

Listen to Feels Good (Upbeat song) by Rend Co. Kids as a reminder that we are better together and God can help us show love to each other.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

47. A PRAYING COMMUNITY

Bible Base: Acts 12: 1-19

Key Christian Belief: The first Christians prayed together.

Aim: To help children understand that the church is a praying community.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Tell a few 'Knock! Knock!' jokes and ask the children if they know any too. E.g:

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Me!'

'Me who?'

'Miaow!'

Explain that today's Bible story is about someone who heard a knock on the door and got a very surprising answer when she asked 'Who's there?' As you tell the story, invite the children to join in, in the usual way, every time you say 'Knock! Knock!'

Telling The Story

Peter was in bed asleep when he heard someone knocking loudly on the door.

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Soldiers!'

'Soldiers who?'

'Soldiers who have come to arrest you!'

'Arrest me? What for?' Peter asked as he opened the door. 'Are you Peter from Capernaum, ex-fisherman, brother of Andrew, follower of Jesus?' asked one of the soldiers, reading from his notes. 'I am' replied Peter. 'Well' said the soldier 'it says here you've been telling people about Jesus.'

'So – what's wrong with that?' asked Peter. 'Your leaders don't like it' replied the soldier. 'They've told you to stop again and again and you still keep on doing it. They say you're a trouble-maker and they've sent us to arrest you and take you to prison.'

'I've always obeyed my leaders' replied Peter 'but I can't stop telling people about Jesus. It's what God wants me to do. This time, I have to obey God even if it means disobeying my leaders.' 'We don't know about that, mate' said the soldier roughly 'but our orders are clear. We're to take you to prison. Now come quietly!'

So Peter was taken off to prison. (Walk across to the other side of the stage.)

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Soldiers!'

'Soldiers who?'

'Soldiers who have brought Peter here to be locked up.'

The prison guards turned the keys, and pulled back the bolts and slowly the big prison door opened. The guards led Peter inside and took him through several doors to a dark cell, where he was chained to two soldiers so that he could not escape. And just to make sure, all the doors he had gone through were locked and bolted behind him.

Next day news of Peter's arrest spread and that night all the Christians gathered in Mary's house to pray for Peter. (Walk back to the other side of the stage.)

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Matthew!'

'Matthew who?'

'Mathew who has come to pray for Peter.'

It was Rhoda the servant girl who answered the door and took Matthew into the room where others had gathered to pray for Peter. They were just about to start when...

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Thomas, Andrew and Martha!'

'Thomas, Andrew and Martha who?'

'Thomas, Andrew and Martha who have come to pray for Peter.'

So Thomas, Andrew and Martha joined the others. Again, they were just about to start when...

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'John, Mark, Barnabas, Silas, Philip and Nathaniel!'

'John, Mark, Barnabas, Silas, Philip and Nathaniel who?'

'John, Mark, Barnabas, Silas, Philip and Nathaniel who have come to pray for Peter.'

And so it went on until it seemed like the whole church had come to pray for Peter. Meanwhile... (Walk across to the other side of the stage again.)

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'It's the duty officer!'

'It's the duty officer who?'

'It's the duty officer who has come to bring the prisoner's supper.'

'Come in!' grunted one of the soldiers. Peter drank the water and slowly ate the bread. Then, still chained to the soldiers, he lay down and began to drift off to sleep. Suddenly, there was a bright light in the room and Peter thought he saw a man dressed in white standing there. The man seemed to put his fingers to his lips and whisper 'Quick – put your sandals on and follow me!'

As Peter did so, his chains seemed to fall away and the doors opened silently in front of him. 'I must be dreaming' he thought. 'I'll waken up in a minute!' Before he knew it, however, he was outside in the street with the big prison doors locked and bolted firmly behind him. A cold blast of air hit him and suddenly he was wide-awake. It hadn't been a dream. He was free. God had sent His angel to rescue him!

Meanwhile (walk back to the other side of the stage) the Christians were still gathered in Mary's house praying for Peter – asking that God would be with him and help him to be brave and strong; asking that next morning he would be found not guilty of causing trouble and be set free. Just then...

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Peter!'

'Peter who?'

'Peter who has just escaped from prison!'

Rhoda ran into the room where everyone was praying. 'Listen, everyone!' she called out, interrupting their prayers, 'It's Peter – he's at the door!'

'Impossible!' they all said. 'Peter is in prison!' 'Go and see who it really is; and be careful – it might be a trap.'

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Peter!'

'Peter who?'

'I've told you – it's Peter who has just escaped from prison!'

'Are you sure?' called back Rhoda. 'Of course I am' said Peter. 'Haven't you been praying for me?' 'Yes – all night' answered Rhoda. 'Well' said Peter 'God has answered your prayers. He sent his angel to recue me and here I am!'

Rhoda ran to tell the others. 'It is Peter!' she said, excitedly. 'He says God sent an angel to rescue him.' The others could hardly believe it. They had been praying for Peter – but they hadn't really expected God to answer their prayer – or at least not like this!

'Knock! Knock!'

'Who's there?'

'Peter!'

'Peter who?'

'Peter who is still standing out here and is now freezing! Will you please let me in?'

The others stared in amazement as Peter came in to the room. 'Thank you for your prayers' he said with a big smile. 'God certainly answered them!'

'Praise God!' they all said together.

Exploring Christian Belief

As we saw last time, the first Christians often met in each other's homes and one of the things they did was to pray together – praying for those who were sick or who needed help, praying that God would be with them and help them to tell others about Jesus. Isn't it strange that although they were praying, they didn't really expect God to answer their prayers – or at least not in the amazing way that he did.

Explain that Christians today still meet to pray together and talk about some of the ways in which this happens in your church.

Point out also that Christians believe God still answers their prayers – sometimes in surprising ways. Share some ways in which God has answered your church's prayers.

If it is true, tell the children that your church (or perhaps a group from your church) regularly prays for them and their school, mentioning some of the things you pray for. (With prior permission you might say that in their classes they will have an opportunity, if they wish to do so, to write down something they would like your church or group to pray for. Tell them that their requests will be passed on and promise that your church or group will pray for them.)

Finally, if appropriate, suggest to the children that there is no reason why some of them shouldn't get together, say, at break or lunch time once a week, to pray for their school. Maybe the School Council or one of the teachers could help organise this or find a place for them to meet. Who knows in what surprising ways God may answer their prayers!

Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to think of one person, other than themselves, that they would like to pray for and of what they would like to ask God to do for them. Finish with a prayer thanking God that He answers our prayers and asking Him to answer those that the children have brought to Him this morning as He sees best.

Song (optional)

After or as they reflect children could listen to I will pray, Yancy and Little Praise Party

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

48. BARNABAS AND SAUL

Bible Base: Acts 9: 26-27; 11:19-25; 13: 1-3

Key Christian Belief: The first Christians encouraged one another. Aim: To help children consider how they can encourage one another.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- a video clip of Jonathan and Alastair Brownlee in Rio. (see below)

Introduction

Ask if any of the children have nicknames. Invite one or two of them to come to the front and explain what their nicknames are and how they got them (if they can). Say what your nickname was at school and mention any other people you know of who have interesting nicknames.

Explain that the story today is about someone in the Bible whose real name was Joseph – but no one ever called him that. He was known to everyone as Barnabas, which means something like 'born encourager'. They called him this because he was really good at encouraging others. This means that he was always looking out for people who were having a tough time and doing what he could to cheer them up and help them keep going.

It is what Andy Murray's fans do when they call out 'Come on Andy!' as they watch him play tennis. They want him to know that they are on his side and they hope that this will help him to find the courage and strength he needs to keep going when the match is hard. Perhaps you have had people cheer for you as you took part in a match or a race of some kind. When things are tough, it helps to know that others are on your side.

The Bible says that we should 'encourage one another'. So today we are going to find out how Barnabas encouraged a young man called Saul and think about some ways in which we can encourage others who are having a tough time.

Telling The Story

Imagine you are a group of Christians living in Jerusalem. The last time you heard of Saul he was on his way to Damascus to arrest the Christians there and put them in jail. He has already put some of your friends in jail. He had been there watching while one of your friends, Stephen, was stoned to death just for believing in Jesus.

You have gathered together in someone's house when there is a knock on the door.

'Who is it?' you ask.

'It's Saul' comes the reply.

You freeze. Then you lock the door and tell him he can't come in. You are scared he is going to arrest you and throw you in jail.

'But I believe in Jesus now too,' says Saul.

'Don't believe him – it's a trap!' your friend whispers to everyone.

Then you hear a voice you know. It's your friend Barnabas. 'It's OK' he says. 'It's true. Saul has changed. He is a follower of Jesus now too.'

Slowly you open the door and when you realise that Saul is telling the truth, and that he really has changed, you welcome him in as your friend.

Barnabas spoke up for his friend when everyone else was against him. Maybe you could be a friend like that to someone? Maybe you know someone who feels that everyone is against them - and you could speak up for them and maybe persuade others to let them join your group? What an encouragement that would be to them!

Some time later Barnabas heard that there were lots of people in Antioch who wanted to know more about Jesus – so off he went to find out what he could do to help. When he got there, however, he discovered that there were so many of them that he would need another helper – so he went to visit his friend Saul.

'You are just the person I need' he said. 'You would be really good at telling others about Jesus. Why not come with me and we can both do it together? I'll show you what to do and help you if you get stuck. So Saul became Barnabas's helper. He loved telling others about Jesus and with Barnabas to help him he soon became really good at it.

Barnabas helped his friend do something he wasn't sure he could do. Maybe you could be a friend like that to someone? Maybe you are good at something and you could take time to help someone who does not find it so easy to learn to do it too. Maybe you could say 'You can do it!' when they don't think they can or 'Well done!' when they have done a good job. What an encouragement that would be to them!

Barnabas and Saul made such a good team that their leaders decided to send them both on a long journey to lots of other places so that they could tell people there about Jesus too. Only soon it wasn't Barnabas and Saul any more - it was Saul and Barnabas! Saul was now the leader and Barnabas was his helper. Barnabas was ready to help his friend in any way he could - even if it meant taking second place.

He was the sort of friend who would give up his own seat or his own slice of cake so that you could have one or give up his own plans in order to help you with yours. Maybe you could be a friend like that to someone? What an encouragement that would be to them!



Here is another example of someone who was willing to take second place in order to help someone else. Jonathan and Alastair Brownlee were competing in a race in the Paralympics in Rio during the summer of 2016. Towards the end of the race Jonathan's legs wouldn't work any more. Watch what happened next.

If you wish, you can show a clip of the race from Youtube.

Alastair could have won the race - but he gave up his own chance of winning in order to get his brother across the finish line. What a great encouragement that must have been to Jonathan to know that he had a brother who would do that for him!

Exploring Christian Belief

Saul (who was later known as Paul) went on to be one of the most famous missionaries ever. But he never forgot his friend Barnabas. Without his encouragement and help, he might never have got started and he might never have been able to keep going.

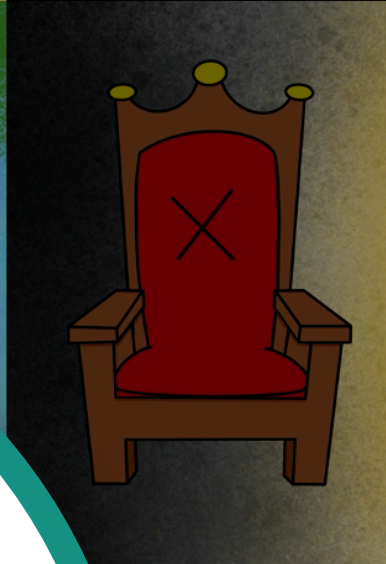
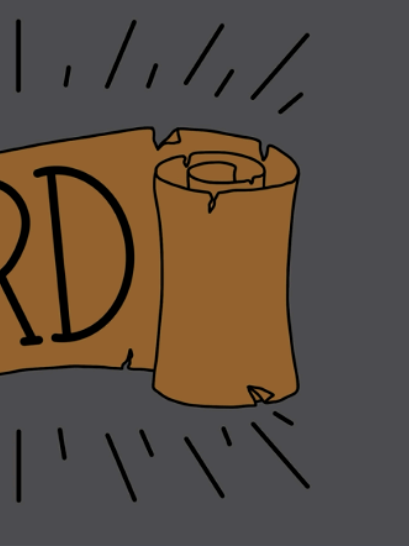
Life can be tough sometimes and the Bible says that we should learn to encourage one another. Maybe you know someone who feels that everyone is against them. Maybe you know someone who is finding it hard to do something you are good at. Maybe you know someone who has an important job to do. What could you do to show them that you are there for them? What could you do to cheer them up and help them keep going?

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children look out for others who are finding things hard and do what they can to encourage them in the week ahead.

Song (optional)

Our God is a Great Big God, Vineyard Kids



Scripture Union Northern Ireland