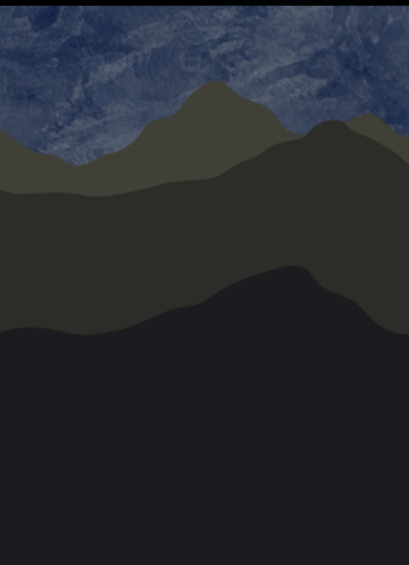
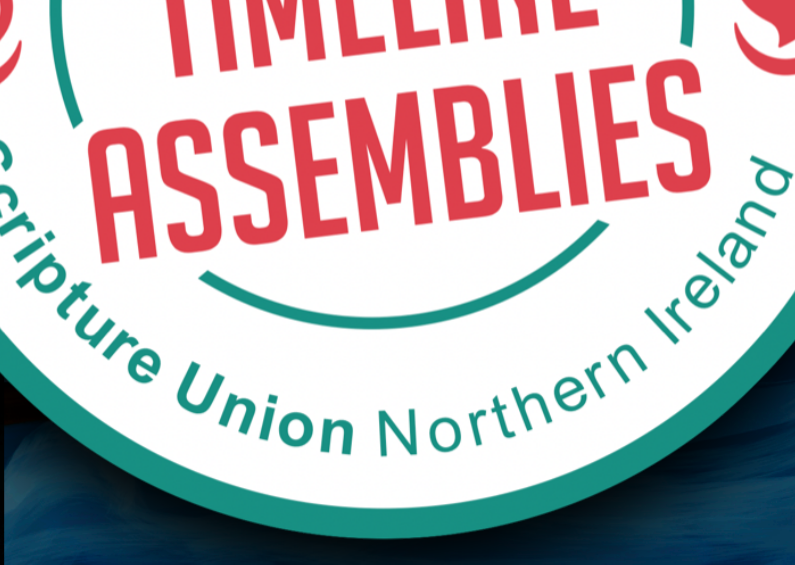
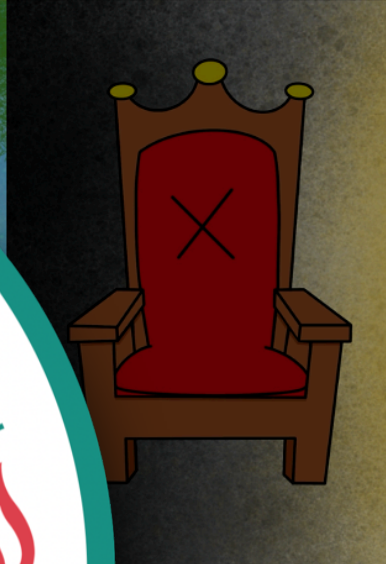


Scripture Union Northern Ireland



A central circular logo with a teal border. The text 'Scripture Union Northern Ireland' is written in teal at the top and bottom. In the center, the words 'BIBLE', 'TIMELINE', and 'ASSEMBLIES' are stacked in large, bold, red capital letters. Two red flame icons are positioned on either side of the central text.

Booklet Three



Bible Timeline Assemblies Introduction

In this booklet there are assembly scripts and resources for year three'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 it's 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 Three, Term 1

No	Story / Theme	Bible passage(s)	Key Christian Belief
GOD'S CHOSEN KING ...They were followed by kings; some did wrong, some did right. Picture - Thrones			
49	David Is Chosen	1 Samuel 16: 1-13	God chooses a king who follows His ways.
50	David And Goliath	1 Samuel 17: 1-54	God chooses a king who fights for His people.
51	David And Jonathan	1 Samuel 18: 1-12; 20: 1-42; 2 Samuel 9: 1-13	God chooses a king who keeps his promises.
GOD SPEAKS Their enemies came, took God's people away... Picture - Slaves			
52	Elijah	1 Kings 16: 29-33; 18: 1-46	God says, 'I am the true and living God.'
53	Jonah	Jonah 1 - 4	God says, 'Come back to me.'
54	Isaiah	Isaiah 40: 25-31	God says, 'I have not forgotten you.'
THE FAITHFUL FEW ...But God kept His word to restore them some day...Picture - Word			
55	Daniel	Daniel 6	In a hostile world, God wants us to choose God's way.
56	Esther	Esther 1 - 10	In a hostile world God wants us to do what we can for others.
57	Nehemiah	Nehemiah 1: 1 - 6: 16	In a hostile world God wants us to work together for Him.
CHRISTMAS 3 Angels announced the Good News of His birth... Picture - Birth			
58	The Perfect Gift	2 Corinthians 9: 15	Jesus is the perfect gift.

Year Three, Term 2

No	Story / Theme	Bible passage(s)	Key Christian Belief
JESUS MAKES A DIFFERENCE He brought us Good News from the Father above...Picture - Good News			
59	Jesus Goes To A Wedding	John 2: 1-11	Jesus came to give us new life.
60	The Touch Of Jesus	Mark 1: 40-45	Jesus came to make us clean.
61	Jesus Heals A Man Born Blind	John 9: 1-41	Jesus came to open our eyes.
LOST AND FOUND He brought us Good News from the Father above...Picture - Good News			
62	The Lost Sheep	Luke 15: 1-7	Jesus came to rescue the lost.
63	The Pharisee And The Tax Collector	Luke 18: 9-14	Jesus came to bring us back to God.
64	Zacchaeus	Luke 19: 1-10	Jesus came to give us a new start.
JESUS AND PETER ...He taught us His ways and He showed us His love. Picture - Good Samaritan			
65	Jesus Calls Peter	Luke 5: 1-11	Following Jesus means accepting His invitation.
66	Who Do You Say I Am?	Mark 8: 27-33; 9:2-13	listening to Him.
67	Peter Walks On Water	Matthew 14: 22-33	following His example.
EASTER 3 He died on the cross so our sins can be forgiven; Then He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Pictures - The Cross / The tomb			
68	A Picnic On The Beach	John 21: 1-19	Jesus wants us to love Him most of all.

Year Three, Term 3

No	Story / Theme	Bible passage(s)	Key Christian Belief
THE STORY OF PAUL He has given us His Spirit to help us since then To spread the Good News until He comes again! Pictures - Spirit / Good News			
69	Paul Is Converted	Acts 9: 1-19	God offers His love and friendship by grace.
70	Paul And Silas In Philippi	Acts 16: 11-40	God offers His love and friendship through faith.
71	Paul Spreads The Good News	Acts 19-27	God offers His love and friendship to everyone.
72	The Gift Of God	Romans 6: 23	God offers His love and friendship as a gift.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

49. DAVID IS CHOSEN

Bible Base: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

Key Christian Belief: God chooses a king who follows His ways.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus is able to help us follow God's ways.

You will need:

- a tin of fake dog/cat food (see below) and 3 plastic forks
- the accompanying PowerPoint

For your fake dog food, you will need the label from a tin of dog food, another tin of food the same size (ideally with a ring pull at the top), some orange jelly, some fun-size Mars bars, sellotape and glue.

Carefully take the bottom off your tin of food. Empty the tin and wash it out. Make the jelly, ideally slightly thicker than the instructions. Cut the Mars bars into pieces and put them into the upturned tin until almost full. Then pour in the jelly to fill up any spaces. Leave the tin in a fridge over night to set. When set, carefully sellotape the bottom of the tin back in place. Now carefully remove the label from the tin of dog food and glue it around the one with the jelly and Mars bar pieces in it. Try to do this as carefully as possible so people won't notice the join. You should now have what looks like a tin of dog food with a sealed lid and ring pull intact!

Introduction

Try to look a little embarrassed as you explain that you haven't had time for breakfast yet and you're starving. Would anyone mind if you just had a little bite to eat before you start? Look apologetically at the staff as you take your tin of 'dog food' out of your bag. Hold the tin at the bottom with the seam towards you. Make sure the label is clear for the pupils to see.

Talk as you slowly open the dog food. Comment on the fact that you've seen the adverts and noticed how the dogs always look so fit and strong. You've noticed how shiny their hair is and how strong and healthy their teeth look. You reckon that if this stuff is good for dogs, it must be good for humans too.

Now start to open the tin and take your time as you put the fork in and lift the food out, ready to eat. Have a little sniff of the food – and comment on how appetising it smells. Savour a mouthful. Comment on things like the contrast between the jelly that just slips down the throat and the meat, which is so satisfying and chewy.

By this stage you will be getting a lot of odd looks and sounds of disapproval. Pretend to notice their disgust for the first time. Ask them what's wrong. Assure them that it is delicious and ask if anyone else wants to try it... There are usually one or two (*check food allergies in the school before your assembly!*). Check they don't have any food allergies or anything they are not allowed to eat, because you can't guarantee what's in the dog food! Using the spare forks, give them a mouthful and just ask them if they like it. Try not to give them a chance to say what it is.

Now explain to the pupils what is really in the tin and how you swapped it. There will be a lot of relieved faces – not least, amongst the staff!

Point out that things aren't always as they seem. Although the label said 'dog food' that wasn't what was in the tin at all. When we opened it we found something else entirely.

A book or computer game may look really exciting but when you try it, it turns out to be really boring. On the other hand a book or computer game that doesn't look very exciting may turn out to be the best ever. You can't always tell by the cover.

People are not always as they seem either. Your new teacher might seem scary at first but once you get to know them they may turn out to be much friendlier than you think. On the other hand someone who looks friendly might turn out to be really nasty instead. You don't know what people are like until you really get to know them.

In today's story Samuel has the job of finding a new king for the people of Israel. There were seven people lined up in front of him. How would he know which one to choose? They all looked like they would make good kings...

Telling The Story

The people of Israel were living in the land that God had promised to give them. When their enemies attacked them they looked to judges like Gideon (whom we heard about last year) to look after them. But now they wanted a king to lead them. God told them at first that He was their king but they kept on asking and finally God told them that they could make Saul their king.

Saul started well but after a while began to think he could do whatever he liked and started to do things his way and not God's, so God told Samuel that he had decided to choose a new king to take Saul's place.

God sent Samuel to Bethlehem and told him that the new king would be one of Jesse's sons. So Jesse had seven of his sons line up before Samuel.

'Any one of these would make a great king' Samuel thought as he looked at them. 'Look how strong and handsome they are!' So Jesse and Samuel walked along the line and Jesse introduced each of his sons to Samuel. Samuel listened carefully to see which one God would choose.

As he came to the first one a little voice inside him said 'No – not this one.' And it was the same for the second. 'Not this one either.' And for the third. 'Not him.'

So Samuel and Jesse continued on down the line. 'No – no – no' said God each time until there was only one left. 'Well, it must be him' thought Samuel to himself but again God said 'No – not him either.'

'This is odd' said Samuel to Jesse. 'Are these all the sons you have?'

'Well no' said Jesse 'There is one more – David, my youngest. He's out in the fields over there looking after our sheep.'

'Bring him' Samuel commanded.

As soon as David arrived the voice inside Samuel said. 'He's the one. Anoint him to be the next king of Israel.' So David knelt down and Samuel poured

some oil over his head as a sort of ceremony to confirm that God had chosen him to be the next king of Israel.

David wasn't the one Samuel would have chosen. If it had been up to him, he would have chosen any one of Jesse's other sons. They looked just right! But God told Samuel 'I don't judge people by how they appear on the outside but by what is in their hearts.'

Exploring Christian Belief

We can see what people look like on the outside. We can see how they behave in public but we do not know what they get up to when no one is looking. We cannot see what is going on inside their heads. We do not know what they are thinking or how they are feeling. We do not know what they will turn out like in the future. But the Bible says that God knows all these things. He knows everything there is to know about us. He knows what we are really like. He knew everything there was to know about David.

And he knew that David would be exactly the kind of king the people needed – the kind of king God wanted him to be. He knew that deep down in his heart David really loved Him. He would follow God's ways and teach the people to do the same. And this was what mattered to God. This was the kind of king God chose for his people.

And this is the kind of king that God has chosen for us today too. He promised David that one of his descendants would be king forever. And Christians believe that Jesus is that king! The Bible says that he was born into David's family, and was born in Bethlehem just as David was – and that He is the one that God has chosen to be king over all His people forever.

Jesus loved God and perfectly obeyed Him – so much so that Christians believe He was willing to die for us so that we could be part of God's forever Kingdom. The Bible says that if we choose to trust and follow Him He will help us to live God's way, as He did. He promises to provide us with everything we need and to keep us safe from all that is evil so that we can enjoy God's love and friendship now and always. He is exactly the kind of king we need and Christians believe that everyone, everywhere is invited to belong to His kingdom. And that includes you!



Reflection and Prayer

Remind the children that God knows everything there is to know about each of us and finish with this prayer of David's from Psalm 19: 14 (CEV).

'Let my words and my thoughts be pleasing to you, Lord, because you are my mighty rock and my protector.' Amen

Song (optional)

Big family of God, Nicky and Becky Drake or Wild, Grace Vineyard Music



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

50. DAVID AND GOLIATH

Bible Base: 1 Samuel 17

Key Christian Belief: God chooses a king who fights for his people.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus fought against sin for us and won.

(The drama script for this assembly was originally written by a team from Scripture Union England for an event called X:site in 2012 and is used with permission.)

You will need:

- a sword and a shield for Goliath;
- a crown for King Saul;
- a sling and some pretend stones (scrunched up paper) for David; some oversized pieces of 'armour' for David to try on – e.g. a helmet, a leather jacket, shin guards or boots.
- the accompanying PowerPoint

Introduction

Talk about people who are chosen to represent their country in sporting competitions. Give some current examples. They may take part individually – e.g. in swimming - or as part of a team – e.g. in football. If they win, the medal (or cup) is awarded not just to them but to the country they represent – e.g. Great Britain. They are playing for their country and if it is our country they are playing for, we watch and cheer for them. We may say 'we won' at the end – even though 'we' weren't actually taking part at all. This one person or team has been representing us. When they win – we win.

Ask if any of the pupils have been chosen to represent their school in a competition of any kind? What was that like? What might it be like to represent your country?

Today's story is about someone who volunteered to represent his country in a contest – but it wasn't just a cup or a medal he was playing for. It was far more serious than that!

Telling The Story

Tell the story using the attached drama script. Choose volunteers (preferably in advance) to play the parts of David, Goliath, Saul and three of David's brothers. Give each of them a copy of the script with his character's lines highlighted. The part of Goliath could be played by an adult – either someone you bring with you, or a male member of staff who is willing to do it. The drama will work best if at least David, Saul and Goliath know their lines without having to use a script.

Exploring Christian Belief

How do you think the people of Israel felt when they saw a shepherd boy with no armour on going out to represent them against Goliath?

How do you think they felt when David won? Why?

Of course, David became their hero. They talked about him, they told his story over and over again, they made up songs about him. He had gone out to fight for them and won. And because he had won – they had won. They were no longer in any danger of being taken captive by the Philistines. Now they were free – free to live as God's people in the land full of all the good things that He had promised.

The people didn't know it yet - but this young shepherd boy would one day be their king and the people of Israel even today will tell you that he was the best king they ever had. But he was not perfect. There were times when he made selfish choices and disobeyed God. There were times when he brought trouble on his people. So God promised that one day an even greater king would rule over all His people - and His name is Jesus.

Like David, this king too fought for His people and won. The Bible says that God had always intended that we would live as His friends, enjoying all the good things that He would provide for us. But there was one big giant problem in the way – the problem of the wrong things in our lives that separate us from Him. And there wasn't a thing any of us could do about that.



Christians believe that the wrong things in our lives and in our world come from Satan, God's enemy. It is as if we are his prisoners and cannot escape.

The Bible teaches us that it took Jesus to come and fight for us. By taking the blame for the wrong things in our lives it is as if He went into battle against Satan, sin and death for us - and won! We have no need to be afraid of any of these things any longer. Because Jesus won – we win too.

Christians believe that if we are trusting and following Him we are free to live as God's friends and to enjoy all the good things that He has promised. There is no longer anything in the way!

The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the perfect king. Just like David, He fought for His people and won. And because He won – we win too!

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking Jesus for the victory He won and for what it means for us today.

Songs (optional)

King of Me, Rend Co. Kids or All Through History,

David And Goliath: Drama Script

Characters: David, Goliath, Saul, three of David's brothers.

Goliath could maybe stand on a chair hidden behind the piano, for example, so that it can't be seen. He should have a sword and a shield. David should have a sling and some 'pretend' stones. Saul should have a crown, and you may wish to have some armour type things to try on David which are obviously too big for him.

Narrator

Let me introduce you to the people from today's story. (Gather your volunteers on stage and introduce them. Have Goliath stand on one side of the stage and Saul on the other, each facing his own half of the audience. Have David and his three brothers off stage until they are needed; David off to the side where Goliath is; his three brothers off to the side where Saul is.) Now this half of the room, I want you to pretend you're the Philistines. This is your champion, called Goliath. This half of the room, I want you to pretend you're the Israelites. You are fighting for King Saul. Each side has a chant. Let's have a quick practice.

Philistines

Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!

Israelites

Come on, David! Come on Israel!

Narrator

The Philistines were at war with the Israelites. The Philistines were on the top of one hill. At the bottom of the hill was a valley and at the top of the hill on the other side were the Israelites. The two armies stood facing each other. Then a man from the Philistine army came forward. As the Israelites watched, they could see that he was no ordinary man. He was over 3 metres tall and wore a heavy suit of armour. He stood and faced the Israelite army, and shouted:

Goliath

I challenge you, Saul, to send one of your men to fight me. If your man wins, we will all become your slaves but if I win you will all become our slaves!

Narrator

And all the Philistines chanted...

Philistines

Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!

Narrator

Saul and the Israelites were terrified. They were so scared that they didn't even have the heart to shout back.

(Pretending to ask the audience) Any of you fancy having a go against this man? Well, the Israelites weren't stupid. There was no way any of them were going to fight against such a giant. The next day the same thing happened again.

Goliath

I challenge you, Saul, to send one of your men to fight me. If your man wins, we will all become your slaves but if I win you will all become our slaves!

Philistines

Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!

Narrator

This went on for forty days, with Goliath coming out every day to challenge them. King Saul was desperate.

Saul

I'll give lots of money to anyone who will fight Goliath. You can marry my daughter and you and your family won't have to pay any more taxes.

Narrator

It was a good offer, but it was not enough to get anyone to fight Goliath.

Now three of David's older brothers were there in the army and one day David came to see them, bringing them some food from their father. (Have the brothers come on stage and have David walk across the stage to meet them.) David arrived just as Goliath came out and shouted his usual challenge:

Goliath

I challenge you, Saul, to send one of your men to fight me. If your man wins, we will all become your slaves but if I win you will all become our slaves!

Narrator

David heard this and couldn't believe his ears!

David

How dare this Philistine make fun of the army of the living God? Why doesn't anyone go out to fight him?

Narrator

His brothers told him off.

Brother 1

What are you doing here?

Brother 2

Sneaking off to watch the fight?

Brother 3

Get back home and look after your sheep!

Narrator

But David went to Saul and said:

David

I will fight the battle.

Narrator

Saul was amazed.

Saul

You're only a boy. Goliath is a trained warrior. You've no chance.

Narrator

But David insisted. He'd killed bears and wolves to protect his sheep and he believed God would help him. They tried to make him wear some armour, for protection, but it was too big for him. Instead, he got out his sling, and gathered five smooth stones from the stream. Then off he went to confront Goliath.

So what do you think will happen next? Who thinks David will win? Who thinks Goliath? Let's have some support for your teams.

Philistines

Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!

Israel

Come on, David! Come on Israel!

Narrator

David began walking towards Goliath. Goliath saw him and said:

Goliath

Get out of my way, little boy. Come any closer and I'll tear you into pieces and feed you to the dogs.

David

You come to me with a sword and a spear, but I come to you with the true and living God on my side.

Narrator

David put a stone in his sling, whirled it round his head and let it fly. It struck Goliath in the forehead, and he crashed to the floor, dead. David ran up to him, got Goliath's sword out, and cut off his head. The Israelites gave a huge cheer.

Israel

Come on, David! Come on Israel!

Narrator

The Philistines couldn't believe their eyes. They turned and ran for their lives with the Israelite army behind them, chasing them all the way!



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

51. DAVID AND JONATHAN

Bible Base: 1 Samuel 18: 1-12; 20: 1-42; 2 Samuel 9: 1-13

Key Christian Belief: God chooses a king who keeps his promises.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus can be trusted to keep His promises.

You will need:

- three medals to be awarded to the winners of a competition
- a pair of crutches
- a spear
- a 'royal' robe
- a crown
- the accompanying PowerPoint

Introduction

Ask the children to think for a moment about what makes a really good friend. Give some examples. E.g. A good friend is someone who:

is fun to be with;

likes doing the same things you do;

is kind and helpful;

sticks by you;

shares what they have with you;

encourages you;

puts you first;

sets you a good example;

can be trusted.

A really good friend is one of the best things anyone can ever have. Talk about one of your friends and something they did for you that showed you how much they care about you and explain that if there were a competition to find the Best Friend In The World you would nominate your friend to win.

Now explain that you are going to have a competition to find out who here this morning is the best friend in the school. You are looking for some volunteers to nominate their friends for this and to explain to everyone why

they think their friend deserves to win. Explain that they will need to think of something really special that their friend did for them if they want them to win.

Choose three volunteers and give them thirty seconds each to bring their nominees up to the front and explain why they deserve to win the 'Best Friend In The School' award.

Take a vote – but give medals to all three, explaining that you think they all deserve to be winners. Then explain that in today's story we are going to hear about someone who was a really good friend to David.

Telling The Story

Choose four volunteers to represent Mephibosheth, Saul, Jonathan and David and have them stand in a line, spread out across the front of the stage. Explain that you will give them each a prop to hold, to remind everyone of their part in the story.

The nurse looked at the boy. He was just five years old. His father, the prince, had just been killed in battle and now his enemies would be trying to find him so that they could kill him too. She picked him up and ran but in her haste she tripped and fell. Both of the boy's legs had been broken and they had never mended. And so for the whole of his life Mephibosheth, for that was his name, had had to use crutches to get around.

Give Mephibosheth a pair of crutches to hold.

His nurse had taken him far away from the capital city to a place called Lo Debar so that his enemies would never find him and that was where he was living now. As a young man he had been unable to get a job and, with his father's money all gone, he was now very poor. However, although he didn't know it yet, he was about to become rich beyond his wildest dreams. It all went back to a promise that King David had made to his father a long time ago.

Give Saul a spear to hold.

Back then David was a hero and everyone was singing songs about him. 'Saul has killed his thousands' they sang 'but David has killed his ten

thousands!' King Saul heard their songs and he wasn't happy. Everyone seemed to think David was a better soldier than him and he became jealous of David's success and popularity. The more he thought about it the angrier he became and he was often in a bad mood because of it.

Now it happened that David was a skilful musician and before all this trouble began he had been chosen as one of the musicians who would come to play in the royal court from time to time. After killing Goliath, David had come to live in the palace and when Saul was in a bad mood, David would play the harp for him and he would calm down.

But one day when Saul looked up and saw that it was David playing the harp he suddenly became very angry. He picked up his spear and hurled it at David. Fortunately it whizzed past David's ear and he was able to escape.

Give Jonathan a robe to hold.

'Your father is very angry with me' David told Prince Jonathan. Ever since David had come to the palace he and Jonathan had become good friends.

As Jonathan thought about how David had defeated Goliath, and then heard about some more amazing victories that David had won since he joined the army, he began to suspect the truth. God was with David now and was no longer with his father. 'David will be king one day instead of me' he thought. But unlike his father, he wasn't jealous. He simply accepted that that was what God wanted and began to help David prepare for the day when he would become king.

One day he brought out his royal robe and gave it to David along with his tunic, his belt, his sword and his bow. (Have Jonathan give David the robe.) 'These are yours now' he told him. 'You will need them more than I do. Only remember me and my family when you become king.' And David promised that he would.

Saul's angry temper grew worse and soon David realised that it was no longer safe for him to stay in the palace. His friend Prince Jonathan tried to reason with his father, asking him what David had ever done to deserve to be treated this way.

'So you are on his side too, now are you?' his father snapped back angrily.

Jonathan realised then that David was right. It was not safe for him to stay in the palace any longer. He would have to go. Now David was hiding in the woods when Jonathan came out to give him the news. They both wept and hugged each other. Jonathan made David promise again that he would take care of him and his family whenever he became king. And then David was gone. They would never see each other again.

Give David a crown and ask him to wear it along with the robe.

Now, many years later, David was king. His best friend Jonathan had been killed in battle along with his father, King Saul. David mourned and grieved for his friend for many days. And then he asked his advisers what had happened to Jonathan's family.

'All of them gone' he was told. 'Except for one son, who was crippled when he was five years old and now lives in a place called Lo Debar.'

'Send for him' David commanded.

Mephibosheth was probably very nervous about going to the palace to see King David. Whatever could the king want with him?'

'It's good to see you' said David as Mephibosheth stood before him, leaning on his crutches.

'Your father and I were great friends' he went on. 'I promised him that I would take care of him and his family whenever I became king and so here I am. Your father Jonathan was killed in battle – but you are his son, aren't you?'

Mephibosheth nodded, not sure what was coming next.

'Well' said David. I want you to go and pack up all your things. From now on you will be living here in Jerusalem with me, and dining at the royal table



every night. I will give you back everything that once belonged to you and will see that you have everything you need.'

Mephibosheth did not know what to say. Instead of hiding away and living in poverty, from now on he would be living like a prince with the king to look after him and to provide him with everything he needed. It was the best day of his life. All his wildest dreams had come true - and all because the king had made a promise to his father!

Exploring Christian Belief

Review the story with the children. In what ways was Jonathan a good friend to David? What did David promise to do? How did he keep his promise?

Jonathan could see that David was going to be king one day. God had clearly chosen him for this. So Jonathan showed David that he understood this and was willing to serve and be loyal to David – even though it meant that he himself could no longer be king.

David made a wonderful promise to Jonathan to look after him and his family when he became king and although many years had passed and Jonathan had died, David still kept his promise. He welcomed Mephibosheth into his family and treated him like a prince because of the promise he had made to his best friend, Jonathan.

As we saw last week, the Bible teaches us that Jesus is the one whom God has chosen to be our king. When He was on earth it was clear that God was with Him. Otherwise He could not have done the amazing things He did.

Once Jonathan knew that David was God's chosen king he did the right thing. He gave up his own right to be king and showed that he was ready to serve and be loyal to David instead. Christians believe that if we are willing to do the same with King Jesus – accepting that He is the one God wants us to listen to and follow, and showing that we are ready to do so, then just as David gave Jonathan some wonderful promises - so King Jesus gives some wonderful promises to us too. He promises that He will always be with us and that He will take care of us. And, like David, Christians believe He is a King who keeps His promises.



He is also a king who treats us as His friends. Even after he became king, David still thought of Jonathan as his friend. And because Jonathan was his father, he thought of Mephibosheth in the same way too. Isn't it great that King Jesus wants us not just to be His servants but His friends? I believe He is the best friend anyone could ever have. He is certainly my best friend...

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for friends and especially for Jesus, the best friend of all. Ask God to help the children to be good friends to others.

Song (optional)

My Best friend, Hillsong Kids as a reminder of the kind of friend Jesus can be to us.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

52. ELIJAH

This assembly has been adapted, with permission, from a KS1 assembly 'Carmel Competition' published by Scripture Union and available from: www.biblebasedassemblies.com.

Bible Base: 1 Kings 18: 1-40

Key Christian Belief: God says: 'I am the true and living God.'

Aim: To help children understand that Christians believe the God of the Bible is the true and living God, that He is the greatest and that He is real!

You will need:

- a few simple props for the story – e.g. a crown for Ahab, a cloak for Elijah, a spade and a bucket.
- the accompanying PowerPoint

Introduction

Discuss with the children times when they have had to make choices. Show them the items in the PowerPoint and get them to choose which one they prefer. At the end ask if they found it difficult to choose or have there been times when they have found it difficult to choose? Talk about a time when you found it hard to choose and perhaps kept changing your mind. You might say that you used to be indecisive but now you're not so sure...(!)

Today's story is about a time when God's people, the Israelites, had an important choice to make but they weren't sure what to choose and kept changing their minds.

Telling The Story

Explain to the children that after the time of David, the people of Israel had many bad kings, one after the other. Probably the worst was King Ahab along with his wife Jezebel who was even nastier than him! Ahab did not care about God. Jezebel worshipped a false god called Baal and taught the people to do the same. Some, like Elijah, continued to worship the true and living God but others began to worship Baal. Most of the people, however, just didn't know what to believe and couldn't make up their minds.

In those days when God had something to say to someone, He would give the message to one of His special messengers – the prophets - to pass on to them. (Remember how Samuel heard God speak and passed the message on to Eli?) Anyhow, in the days of King Ahab, Elijah was one of God's special messengers. God had already sent him to King Ahab to try to make him see sense but he wouldn't listen.

After that, there had been no rain for three years and Ahab was in a foul mood when God sent Elijah to speak to him again.

Choose volunteers to act as King Ahab, Elijah and some of the prophets of Baal as you tell the story. All the other children in the assembly will be the crowd watching what happens. Have Ahab and Elijah standing facing one another.

When Ahab and Elijah met, Ahab was so angry he could hardly keep still. He was twitching and shaking with anger. (Have Ahab shake with rage.)

'You have caused this trouble!' Ahab shrieked, his voice shrill and squeaking. 'It's not my fault,' said Elijah. 'You have forgotten the true and living God, and taught His people to worship a made-up god instead. You have told them lies and now He wants them to know the truth. Get all the prophets of Baal together on Mount Carmel. Then get all the people to gather there too. There's going to be a competition.'

Soon, a huge crowd of people had gathered along with 450 prophets of Baal, all ready for a big competition. (Have Elijah face the rest of the children.)

'Listen,' said Elijah to the people. 'You've got to make up your minds. You can't follow both God and Baal. You've got to choose one or the other. Which one will it be?'

But the people said nothing.

'OK' said Elijah. 'Slaughter two bulls and bring them here.' In those days the meat from bulls and other animals was burned as a sacrifice to God – to show Him respect.

Choose volunteers to mime bringing out the sacrifices and leaving them one on either side of the stage.

'The competition will be to see which god, the God of our ancestors, whom I serve, or Baal, sends fire to burn the sacrifice' said Elijah. 'The one that answers is the true and living God and we will follow Him. The other is just make-believe. Do you agree?'

The prophets of Baal stamped and shouted and whooped and made a great noise. (The prophets of Baal stamp, shout, whoop, etc.)

'Is that a yes?' said Elijah.

'Yes!' they roared.

Have the prophets and Elijah mime appropriately as the story continues.

The prophets went over to their bull, built a pile of stones, put wood on top and then lifted their bull on to it. Then they started to pray. 'Baal, hear us! Baal, hear us! Send us fire and make it hot!' (The prophets could say this after you.) But nothing happened.

So they yelled all the louder, 'Baal, hear us! Baal, hear us! Send us fire and make it hot!' But again nothing happened.

'Perhaps he's out? Or sleeping? Or on the loo?' suggested Elijah, smiling. The prophets of Baal went crazy: dancing, leaping, shouting and screaming. But still nothing happened.

Hours passed. Then at last Elijah told the people very quietly to gather round. And they did. He built a pile of twelve stones, put the wood on top and lifted his bull on to it. Then he dug a deep ditch round the stones and asked for a bucket of water.

'Water?' said the people. 'He's definitely crazy.'

Elijah poured water over the bull.



'Doesn't he realise?' said a little old woman. 'It will never cook like that!'

Elijah poured on water a second time. And a third time. Now the bull was soaking wet. Water trickled down into the deep ditch below.

'Now Lord,' he said. 'Show these people that you are the true and living God, that you are the greatest and that you are real!'

Almost at once, fire came down and licked up the water like a hungry beast. Flames roared round the stones, the wood, the meat and leapt red and yellow into the sky. When all the people saw this they jumped up in surprise.

'Wow!' they yelled. 'That's amazing!' Then they knelt down.

'It's true' they whispered in awe. Elijah's God is the true and living God. He is the greatest - and He is real! From now on we will follow Him.'

Exploring Christian Belief

Ask the children to think about the story they have just heard and seen and about what they will decide, or may have already decided, about God.

Lots of people these days have different ideas about whether or not there is a God and, if there is, what He is like. Just as it was for the people in Elijah's day it can be hard for us to know what to believe. How are we to know the truth?

Christians believe that the God of the Bible is the true and living God. He has shown His power in creation. As we look around we can see all the amazing things that God has made and that helps me to know that He is real.

He has shown His power in history too. There are many stories written down for us in the Bible, telling us about the amazing things God did for His people long ago and Christians believe these stories – such as the one we heard today - are true.

He has shown His power through Jesus. Jesus did many amazing things when He was on earth. He said that He had come from God and that God

had given Him the power to do all these things. Most of all, the Bible teaches us that God showed His power by raising Jesus from death to life so that we would know for sure that He really is God's Son.

And finally Christians believe that God wants to show His power in our lives too and many of us can tell you about the amazing things He has done for us.

Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to join in this prayer by saying 'Amen' at the end if they agree.

Dear God, help us to know that you are real and with us even though we can't see you with our eyes, hear you with our ears or touch you with our hands. Thank you that you are the one true God, the greatest, the real thing. Amen.

Song (optional)

God is Real, Vineyard Kids

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

53. THE STORY OF JONAH

Bible Base: Jonah

Key Christian Belief: God says 'Come back to me.'

Aim: To show that God is always ready to forgive us and wants us to forgive others too.

You will need:

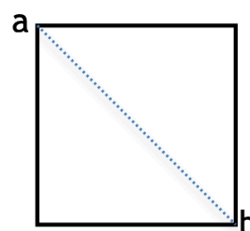
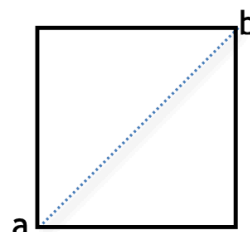
- the arrows visual attached. Print the arrows back to back on A4 card with the arrow on one side pointing up, the one on the other side pointing right. Then cut this into a square, 21cm x 21cm.
- the accompanying PowerPoint

Using The Arrows Visual

This takes practice in front of a mirror.

As you begin the story, hold the visual up so that the audience sees an arrow pointing right. Then follow these instructions as indicated by the red numbers in the script.

1. Hold the card with your left hand at point a and your right hand at point b. Flip the card around this axis and the audience will see the arrow change from pointing right to pointing left and vice versa.
2. Hold the card in the middle at either side and flip the card around the horizontal axis and the audience will see the arrow change from pointing right to pointing down and vice versa.
3. Hold the card with your left hand at point a and your right hand at point b. Flip the card around this axis and the audience will either see the arrow change from pointing up to pointing down and vice versa or they will see an arrow that seems to point right on either side.



Introduction

Ask the children to think of times when they might say 'Serves you right!' to someone else. For example:

- Your brother is playing with his game boy in your bedroom after lights out. You tell him that he is not allowed to do this and that if your mother finds him, she will take the game boy from him. When this happens, and he doesn't get it back for a whole week, you might say 'Serves you right!'
- Someone in your class is found running in the corridor. Your teacher tells him that if she finds him running in the corridor again she will have to keep him in at break time. Next day he is found running in the corridor again and is kept in at break time. When he complains to you about it, you might say 'Serves you right!'

We often say this when someone deliberately does something they have been told not to do, even after they have been warned about what will happen if they do it. They do it anyway and when what they were told would happen happens, we say 'Serves you right!' They are getting what they deserve.

Today's story is about one of God's messengers who was sent with a message from God to people who were deliberately breaking God's rules and doing what He had told them not to do. What did God have to say to them?

Telling The Story

One day God said to Jonah: 'Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh.'

'Nineveh?' said Jonah. 'I'm not going there! 1 The people there are nasty and mean. They are always arguing and fighting. They bully others. They tell lies and they cheat. I don't want to go there!'

'But Jonah,' said God, 1 'I want you to go to Nineveh and tell the people there that if they do not change their ways they will be in big trouble.'

'Serves them right!' said Jonah and off he went in the opposite direction. 1

He headed down to the harbour, found a boat that was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and got on board. The boat set sail from the harbour and out into the ocean. When they were far from land a fierce storm blew up. The wind blew hard, the sea got very rough and the sailors were frightened.

'I think it might be my fault that we are in the middle of this storm,' said Jonah. 'Here I am on my way to Tarshish when I should be going to Nineveh. 1. If you want the storm to stop you will have to throw me overboard.'

The sailors did not want to do this – but eventually Jonah persuaded them and they threw him over the side.

'Serves him right!' they said as Jonah sank down into the sea. 2

God looked down at Jonah, but He didn't say 'Serves you right!' and leave him to drown. Instead, he sent a great big fish to swallow Jonah up. The fish swallowed Jonah down in one gulp and he ended up inside the fish's tummy where it was all smelly and horrible.

Jonah looked up to God. 3 'Thank you for sending the fish to rescue me,' he said.

God looked down at Jonah. 3 'Well, Jonah' He said. 'Are you ready to go to Nineveh?'

'Yes I am,' said Jonah. 3 'I'm sorry for disobeying you. I'm ready to do what you want.'

So God commanded the fish to spit Jonah out on a dry sandy beach. 3 Jonah cleaned himself up and set off for Nineveh. 2 Now at last Jonah was going God's way. 3*

When Jonah got to the great city of Nineveh, he told the people there that they were in trouble. They knew that God wanted them to be kind to each other but instead they had chosen to argue and fight. 1 They knew that God wanted them to be truthful 1 but instead they had chosen to cheat and to



tell lies. 1 They knew that God wanted them to share what they had with others 1 but instead they had chosen to be selfish and mean. 1 Jonah told them that God had been looking down at them 2 and was not pleased with what He had seen. If they did not change their ways they would be in big trouble.

'What are we to do?' asked the people of Nineveh.

'Say sorry to God, 3 change your ways and He will forgive you' replied Jonah.

So that is what the people did. They told God that they were sorry and were ready to change their ways. And when God looked down 3 and saw how sorry they were, He did as He had said. He forgave them and helped them to make a new start. 2 So now the people of Nineveh were going God's way too! 3*

* Turn the card round several times at this point so that the arrow seems to continue pointing right no matter which way the card is turned.

Exploring Christian Belief

In some ways we are all like Jonah and like the people of Nineveh. There are times when we know what God wants us to do and we don't do it. We know what the right thing to do is but we deliberately do the opposite. We know it is wrong but we still do it anyway.

The people of Nineveh were treating each other very badly and God wanted them to know that He would not allow them to go on doing so forever. So He sent Jonah to warn them to change their ways. Unfortunately, Jonah didn't like the people of Nineveh and thought they deserved to be punished. So he ran away in the opposite direction instead.

God was not pleased with Jonah but He did not treat him as he deserved. Instead, He was patient with him and, when he was ready to change his ways, He forgave him and gave him a second chance.

So Jonah went to Nineveh and told the people there what God had said. Fortunately, they listened to Jonah, said sorry to God and began to change



their ways. Instead of arguing and fighting, cheating and telling lies and being selfish they began to treat each other with love and kindness and, as a result, I imagine Nineveh became a much happier place for everyone - which is just what God had wanted all along!

As with Jonah, God did not treat the people of Nineveh as they deserved. Instead, He was patient with them and when they were ready to change their ways, He forgave them and gave them a second chance.

When God looks down from heaven, He sees the wrong things that are in our world and in our lives and He wants us to know that He will not allow these things to continue forever. But for now He does not treat us as we deserve. Instead, He is patient with us and, if we tell Him that we are sorry and are ready to change our ways, He will always be ready to forgive us and to help us make a new start.

And He wants us to treat others like that too. If they say or do things that annoy us or hurt us He does not want us to treat them as we think they deserve but instead He wants us always to be ready to forgive them and to make friends with them again.

So if there are things in our lives that we know are not right let's learn to say sorry to God and ask Him to help us make a new start. If there are people who have hurt or annoyed us, let's learn to forgive them and to make friends with them again because we know that this is what God wants. And above all, let's learn to go God's way because, as Jonah and the people of Nineveh discovered, God's way is always the best way!

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God that even though we often disobey Him, He is always ready to forgive us and to help us make a new start. Ask Him to help the children forgive those who have hurt them and make friends with them again when necessary too.

Song (optional)

King of Me, Rend Co. Kids

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

54. ISAIAH

Bible Base: Isaiah 40: 25-31

Key Christian Belief: God says 'I have not forgotten you.'

Aim: To encourage children to trust God when things are tough.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- a video clip of an eagle soaring. (see below)
- the audio track for the song 'Do You Not Know?' (see below)

Introduction

Imagine you are on your way to school one morning with your school bag packed and your school uniform on when you bump into one of your friends who doesn't seem to be dressed for school at all. In fact he is going in the opposite direction.

'Where are you going?' your friend asks you.

'To school, of course' you reply.

Your friend stares at you for a moment.

'Do you not know?' he says. 'Have you not heard? There is no school today. The headmaster told us in assembly last week. You got a letter about it to take home!'

'Oh yes' you say, remembering the letter that is still in your school bag. 'I'd forgotten that!'

You had heard and you should have known - and if you had remembered, it would have saved you from having to get up early, put your school uniform on and pack your school bag. Maybe it would have saved your mum from having to make you a packed lunch!

Or maybe you are running down the corridor one day and your teacher stops you. 'Do you not know?' she says. 'Have you not heard? NO RUNNING IN THE CORRIDORS!'

But of course you do know and you have heard - so that's you in detention over break time. If only you had remembered what you had been told and should have known!

We have been thinking about some of God's messengers and the messages God gave them for His people – the things God wanted to say to them.

'I am the true and living God' was the message He gave to Elijah. Maybe that is what God would want you to say to you.

'Stop doing wrong things and come back to me' was the message He gave to Jonah for the people of Nineveh. Maybe that is what God would want to say to you.

Or maybe this is what God would want to say to you:

Display Isaiah 40: 28a from the attached PowerPoint presentation and have the children read it with you. Explain that this was the message that Isaiah brought to the people in today's story. It was something they had heard many times before and should have known but they were acting as if they hadn't heard and didn't know.

So Isaiah says: 'Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God!'

Have the children learn this so that they can say it with you every time it comes up in the following story. You could add some actions too: E.g.

Do you not know?	(Shrug shoulders as if asking this question.)
Have you not heard?	(Cup ears.)
The Lord	(Point upwards with the index finger of both hands.)
Is the everlasting God	(Make spirals with your index fingers moving away from each other in opposite directions.)

Telling The Story

The people of Israel had been captured by their enemies. They had been forced to leave their own country and go wherever the king of Babylon sent them. They hated having to leave their own country. They hated having to do what the king of Babylon told them. But they were prisoners. What could they do?

They had been prisoners now for nearly seventy years and all hope of returning to their own country was gone.

'What has happened to God's promise?' they wondered. 'Didn't He say that He would always be our God and we would always be His people? Well, where is He now? Why hasn't He come to rescue us?'

Of course they knew very well that the reason they had been captured was because they had turned away from God and had stopped obeying His laws. God had told them over and over again that this was what would happen - but they hadn't listened. They were learning the hard way that they couldn't just behave as they liked and expect God to be there for them every time they needed Him.

So was this the end of God's promise? Had he forgotten His people? Had he decided that He would no longer be their God; that they would no longer be His people? Were they stuck in Babylon forever? Would they never be able to return home?

It was as they were thinking this way that Isaiah brought them this message.

'Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God!'

What did it mean?

'Well' said Isaiah. 'Look up into the sky on a dark night when the sky is clear and what do you see? Hundreds and millions of stars of course!'

Display the picture of the stars.

Ask the children if they have ever looked up into the sky on a clear night and seen the stars. Have they ever been to the Planetarium? Do any of them know the names of any constellations (groups of stars)?

Explain that when you look into the sky, the stars look like little dots. If you were to join them together, like in dot-to-dot, you could make some pictures – like these.

Show the pictures from the attached PowerPoint presentation and explain that these groups of stars (constellations) are named after the pictures you could make if you joined them together. If you study the night sky carefully enough you might be able to find these groups of stars for yourself. Why not ask someone who knows where to look to help you get started?

As well as the stars, of course, you can see the eight planets that travel around our sun. (NB: Pluto is no longer regarded as a planet.) Now ask the children if any of them could come up to the front and name all eight? Award a prize (a Milky Way or a Galaxy) to the first one who can do so!

Comment on how impressive that was. But according to Isaiah, God knows the names of all the planets and all the stars in every galaxy throughout the universe. How awesome is that? He knows them because he made them. He hasn't forgotten one of them. Not one of them is missing.

He made them at the beginning of time and to this day He continues to look after them and to keep every single one in exactly the right place.

So if you think He has forgotten you, think again. The Bible says that the God who knows every single star by name and has not forgotten one of them, has not forgotten you either. The God who knows exactly where each star is, knows where you are too - and what you are going through. He has not forgotten you.

And if you think He has grown tired or weary, think again too. The God who looks after the stars and keeps them all in place is well able to look after you too. Don't you know? He is the everlasting God. He never grows tired and He never grows weary. Christians believe He is still the same today as He has always been. His wisdom, His love and His power will never end!



Even though we have disobeyed Him, even though things can seem hopeless sometimes remember, God has not forgotten you. And neither has He grown tired and weary. So if we trust in him there is no need to worry, no need to fret, no need to panic. Don't give up. Just wait and see what He will do.

And in the meantime, says Isaiah, the One who never grows tired or weary can give you all the strength you need to get through this difficult time. Those who put their hope and trust in Him will find all the strength they need to keep going just as an eagle finds strength to soar from the wind beneath its wings.

You could play a clip of an eagle soaring from YouTube (Young eagle flies for the first time, BBC Earth). If you put your hope and trust in God, says Isaiah, you can learn to soar through difficult times just like that. God can give you all the strength you need. What a great promise!

Exploring Christian Belief

The people of Israel were going through a tough time. They were stressed and anxious. Many of them had given up hope and that's why Isaiah says to them:

'Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God!' They had been told this many times and should have known – but they were acting as if they had never heard and didn't know.

Maybe some of us here this morning are stressed and anxious about something. Maybe we have given up hope. If that is the case, I believe God wants you to know that He is the everlasting God. He has not forgotten you. He never grows tired and He never grows weary. The Bible says that if you put your hope and trust in Him, He will give you the strength you need to cope with whatever it is you are going through. That was His message to His people in Isaiah's time. Perhaps it is His message to someone here this morning? Let's say it one more time...

'Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God!'



Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God that He is the everlasting God and asking Him to help the children put their hope in Him and find strength to soar when things are tough.

Song (optional)

God is for me, Lifetree Kids



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

55. DANIEL

Bible Base: Daniel 6

Key Christian Belief: In a hostile world, God wants us to choose His way.

Aim: To help children understand that we show our faith in God by choosing His way.

You will need:

- the trailer for the 'Inside Out' movie
- either four plain tee shirts (large enough to fit P6-7 pupils) each with one of the words JEALOUSY, PRIDE, ANGER and FEAR printed on the front - or four labels, each with one of these words printed on it, to be hung around a volunteer's neck
- a crown
- three lanyard-style badges with the word 'ADVISOR' printed on each and another with the words 'CHIEF ADVISOR' printed on it.
- Accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Ask if anyone has seen the movie 'Inside Out' and perhaps show the trailer.

Explain that the film is about how different characters inside Riley's mind try to control her actions. Does anyone know who these five different characters are? (Joy, Sadness, Anger, Disgust and Fear.) These are all feelings that we can have inside our minds and if we allow them to, they can end up making us behave in certain ways. But as we shall see, it is not always good to allow our feelings to be in control.

Today we are going to meet four of the imaginary characters we might sometimes find in our heads - two of which we have seen in 'Inside Out' and two others who are similar - and we will see how they tried to control the actions of the people in our story. Most of them did what their feelings told them to do – but one did not. See if you can spot which one was different and why.



Ask for four volunteers who are good actors to come to the front. Either dress them in the tee shirts you have brought, or hang the labels you have prepared around their necks. Ask them each to adopt a pose that represents the word they have been given. Invite them each to try this out now and then to go and stand to the left of the stage until you call them forward. Explain that these are the four imaginary characters from inside our heads that we are going to meet in our story today.

Now ask for five volunteers to play the parts of the king, the three advisors and Daniel. Explain that these are the five real people we are going to meet in our story. Give the king a crown to wear, give the advisors each a badge with the word 'advisor' on it and give Daniel a badge with the words 'chief advisor' on it. Explain that you want them to act out what happens in the story and that you will show them what to do when the time comes. For now, ask them to stand to the right of the stage until they are needed.

Telling The Story

Daniel was a young man of about 17 when the enemy soldiers came and attacked the city of Jerusalem in which he lived. They broke down its walls, set fire to its buildings and took lots of young men, including Daniel, away as prisoners to the land of Babylon.

God's people had turned away from Him and had refused to follow His laws. And so God had allowed their enemies, the Babylonians to invade their land and take them captive.

As a result many of them, including Daniel, spent the rest of their lives far away from home in Babylon. Daniel, however, was not like the rest of his people. He loved God and from the moment he arrived in Babylon, he was determined to stay faithful to Him. He was chosen to work for the king in the palace and soon gained a reputation for being wise and trustworthy. Eventually he became one of the king's chief advisors.

Jealousy

Have Jealousy standing at the front of the stage to the left. Have the king seated to the right with Daniel standing talking to him. Have the three advisors huddled together at the back of the stage in the centre. Have them



follow Daniel around and then return to their places as Daniel kneels, as if in prayer, at the front of the stage in the centre.

Daniel was now 70 years old and King Darius was the third king he had served. Like the others, this new king liked Daniel and again made him his chief advisor. The problem was that the three other advisors who were closest to the king were jealous of Daniel.

'That job should have gone to one of us' they said. 'Daniel wasn't even born in this country so how come he gets the top job?'

As the days went by they grew more and more jealous. They hated having to take orders from him. They hated it when King Darius listened to him rather than them.

'I've had enough of this' one of them finally said one day. 'We have to do something about this. We have to get rid of Daniel.'

'But how are we going to do it?' asked another.

'I know' said the third and they all huddled together to hear his idea.

'King Darius thinks very highly of Daniel. But what if we were to find out something about Daniel that the king wouldn't like? We could tell on him. Then maybe he would give Daniel the sack and make one of us his chief advisor instead.'

'Great idea!' said the others. 'Let's follow Daniel and see what he gets up to when the king isn't looking. There's bound to be something that will get him into trouble.'

And so they followed Daniel everywhere but no matter how much they spied on him, they never caught Daniel doing anything he shouldn't.

'This is useless' they said after a month of trying. 'We're never going to catch him out this way. We'll have to find another way of getting rid of him'.

As they had spied on Daniel for the past month, they had noticed that three times every day he knelt down by an open window and prayed out loud to God and that gave the three jealous advisors an idea.

Pride

Have Pride standing at the front of the stage to the left. Have the king seated to the right with the three advisers standing talking to him. Have Daniel kneeling, as before, at the front of the stage in the centre.

'Your majesty' these three advisors said to the king next day. 'You are the greatest king who has ever lived. You are the ruler over the greatest empire there has ever been.'

'Yes I am' thought the king to himself proudly as he listened to them. 'No one has ever been as great or as powerful as I am. I am the greatest of them all.'

'Not even the gods have as much power as you. You are greater even than the gods' his advisors continued.

The king hadn't thought about that before but the more he thought about it the more he liked the idea. 'You're right' he said as his chest puffed up with pride. 'Not even the gods are as great as I am!'

'O King, live for ever!' his advisors went on. 'Why don't you remind everyone how great you are by making a law that no one is to pray to any god but you for the next thirty days. And, just in case, why not say that anyone who breaks this law will be thrown into a den of lions?'

'Well' thought the king 'I suppose it would do no harm to remind people that I am their king and that they don't need anyone else but me.' So he agreed and, without stopping to think, immediately signed the scroll his advisors had prepared.

'We've got him!' chuckled the king's advisors as they left the room. 'Daniel will never agree to this. He will just keep on praying to his God as he always has before and when the king finds out, he'll be mince meat!'

Fear

Have Fear standing at the front of the stage to the left. Have Daniel pacing up and down and finally kneeling again, as if in prayer, at the front of the stage in the centre. Have the advisors huddled together, watching from behind.

When Daniel heard about the new law, he knew he would be in trouble. In his head he began to imagine what the lions would do to him if he was caught and thrown into the den with them. He wondered what he should do.

It would only be thirty days...maybe he could just stop praying for thirty days? But no. Daniel loved God and had made up his mind to do what God said no matter where he was, who he was with or what happened and he knew that he needed God's help every day to do that. He could not stop praying – not even for a single day.

Maybe he could shut his window and just pray quietly so that no one would know? But no. Daniel wanted everyone to know that his God was greater by far than any king and that he could trust Him to take care of him. He had no need to be afraid of any lions. So he decided to keep on praying out loud three times a day in front of an open window just as he had always done before.

Anger

Have Anger standing at the front of the stage to the left. Have the king pacing up and down on the right. Have Daniel off stage to the right of the king and then walk on again as if coming out of the lion's den. Have the advisors to the left of the king and have him act out throwing them into the lion's den (off stage to the right).

One night soon after he had signed the new law, the king couldn't sleep. His friend Daniel had been caught praying to God and earlier that night he had been thrown into the den of lions. 'May the God you serve rescue you' the king had said but inside he didn't really believe that any god could save Daniel now.

He paced up and down in his room. What had he done? He hadn't meant to hurt Daniel. It was those other advisers. They had tricked him into signing the law. This was what they had wanted after all.

He was very angry. 'How dare they trick me like that?' he thought. 'I'll see they are punished for this. They'll get what they deserve!'

Early in the morning, the king crept nervously down to the den. 'Daniel' he called out. 'Are you alright?' (Pause here for a few seconds.)

'Of course I am' Daniel replied at last. 'My God has rescued me from the mouths of the lions. Look – not a scratch!'

The king was overjoyed and sent word throughout the empire that Daniel's God was to be honoured by everyone from now on. He had even been able to save Daniel from being torn to shreds by a den full of hungry lions.

As for the advisors who had tricked the king - the king had them thrown into the den of lions instead of Daniel and unfortunately the lions weren't quite so friendly to them...

Exploring Christian Belief

Did you notice how all the people in this story, except Daniel, allowed their feelings to control how they behaved?

Have Jealousy come forward.

The advisors were jealous of Daniel and did what their jealous feelings told them to do. They followed Daniel around, looking for something that would get him into trouble with the king. When that didn't work, they tricked the king into signing a law they knew would get him into trouble. They hated Daniel and would not stop until they had found a way to get rid of him.

Have Pride come forward.

The king was proud of himself. He did what his proud feelings told him to do and allowed himself to be tricked into signing a law that would hurt his friend Daniel. If only he had stopped to think about what it would mean for Daniel, rather than how good it would make him look, he would never have signed that law. But at that moment, he was thinking only of himself.

Have Anger come forward.

When the king found out that he had been tricked, he was angry and did what his angry feelings told him to do. He threw the advisors who had



tricked him into the den of hungry lions. It didn't matter that it had been partly his own fault – they were going to get all the blame. They were going to get what they deserved!

Have Fear come forward. But Daniel was different. No doubt he was scared and his fears told him it would be safer just to stop praying for 30 days. Or maybe instead of praying out loud in front of an open window, like he usually did, he could just do it quietly so no one would find out. But Daniel didn't give in to his fears. He didn't do what they wanted him to do.

That was because Daniel was a friend of God and had long ago made up his mind to do what He knew God would want him to do - no matter what anyone else said or did and no matter how he felt. If he gave into his feelings he knew he would be letting God down and he was determined not to do that. He also knew that as long as he continued to choose God's way, he could trust God to be with him and to take care of him.

It is easy to give in to your feelings. It is much harder to choose God's way and go on doing what is right when you feel like doing something else. Maybe that was why three times every day Daniel got down on his knees to ask for God's help. He knew it wasn't always going to be easy to choose God's way. But with God's help he was able to do it.

And then when he was thrown into the den of lions, God was with him and took care of him just as Daniel believed he would.

Christians believe that through Jesus, God offers His love and friendship to us today too. If we are His friends, he wants us to trust Him, like Daniel did, and to show it by choosing His way even when our feelings may be telling us something different. And His promise to us is still the same as it was for Daniel – that if we choose His way we can trust Him to be with us and to take care of us no matter what happens.

So if the voices in your head are telling you to do something you know isn't right, or not to do something you know you should do, don't give in to them. Instead, ask God every day to help you choose His way and do what is right no matter how you may feel.



Daniel did that three times every day. How about you try it even once a day for the next week and see what happens?

Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to join in this prayer with you by saying the line in italics each time you say 'Lord...'

When we are feeling jealous, Lord

Help us to do what is right.

When we are feeling proud, Lord... When we are feeling scared, Lord...
When we are feeling angry,

Lord... However we may feel, Lord...

Song (optional)

King of Me, Rend Co. Kids or All Through History,

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

56. ESTHER

This assembly has been adapted, with permission, from an assembly published by Scripture Union in 'Everyone Matters' by Emlyn & Tricia Williams

Bible Base: Esther 1-10

Key Christian Belief: In a hostile world, God wants us to do what we can for others.

Aim: To encourage children to do what they can for others even when it is costly to do so.

You will need:

- Seven strips of paper each with one of the following secrets written on it:
- Seven envelopes labeled 'Secret 1', 'Secret 2' and so on, each with the appropriate secret inside.
- Labels to hang on volunteers representing Esther, the king, Mordecai and Haman.

Secret 1: I am Jewish

Secret 2: They were planning to assassinate the king.

Secret 3: I am going to have all the Jewish people killed.

Secret 4: I am going to ask the king to save my people.

Secret 5: I am going to have Mordecai hanged.

Secret 6: I am going to reward Mordecai for saving my life.

Secret 7: I am going to tell the king what Haman has done.

Introduction

Talk about some 'big reveals' that the children may be familiar with – such as the identity of the new Doctor Who, new Blue Peter presenter or the winner of the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award or share a personal story which reflects this e.g. secret Santa among the family at Christmas time. These are closely guarded secrets until the time comes for them to be revealed.

Talk about award ceremonies where the names of the winners are kept inside sealed envelopes until the time comes for them to be announced.

Show the children the envelopes that you have brought with you and explain that today's story is one that is full of secrets that will all be revealed as they listen.

Ask for four volunteers to represent four of the characters they will meet in today's story and ask them to stand across the front of the stage.

Hang the labels on them and introduce their characters as follows:

- Esther – a brave and beautiful queen
- Mordecai – Esther's cousin who had looked after her since her parents died and who has an important job in the king's government
- Haman – the wicked Prime Minister
- The king – who is crazy about Esther and has made her his queen

Telling The Story

Secret 1

The king of Persia was looking for a new queen. The old one had made him angry so he had decided to get rid of her and find a new queen instead. Lots of beautiful girls were taken to meet the king and he chose Esther. She was very beautiful and clever but there was something about Esther that the king didn't know.

Give envelope 1 to Esther and ask her to open it and read out what it says.

The Jews were God's special people. As we heard last time, many of them had been captured by the Babylonians. But now, many years later, the Persians had taken over and many of the Jewish people had been forced to move to their capital city, Susa. And it was there that Esther had been born. However, if the king had known she was Jewish, it is unlikely that he would have wanted to marry her – so Esther kept quiet about it.

Secret 2

Esther was an orphan and from a young age she had been looked after by her uncle Mordecai. He was a kind and highly respected man and he had been given an important job in the king's government. It was while he was working in the palace one day that he overheard two men talking about a secret plan. They didn't know that Mordecai was listening and that he had discovered their secret.

Give Mordecai envelope 2 and ask him to open it and read out what it says.

Mordecai told Esther about this and she told the king. As a result the king's life was saved. The king was very grateful to Mordecai and the story of what he had done was written down in the king's chronicles so that it would not be forgotten.

Secret 3

Soon afterwards, the King made a man called Haman, who was from Persia, the Prime Minister. Haman was very pleased with himself and expected everyone to bow to him. Everyone did except for Mordecai. He explained that he couldn't bow down to Haman because as a Jew he was not allowed to bow down to anyone except God. This made Haman furious and he soon came up with a very wicked plan.

Give envelope 3 to Haman and ask him to open it and read out what it says.

Haman did not know that Queen Esther was a Jew. And so he went to the king, told him lots of lies about the Jewish people and persuaded him to sign a law saying that in a certain month, on a certain day, all the Jews were to be killed.

Secret 4

When Esther found out about this, she knew that she and all her people were in great danger. She sent a messenger to Mordecai to ask what he thought she should do. He gave this message to Esther: 'Who knows, but perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?'

Esther thought about what Mordecai had said. 'Yes,' she thought, 'perhaps this is the reason why I have been made queen, so that I can save my people.' She thought long and hard about what she should do and soon decided on a very brave plan.

Give Esther envelope 4 and ask her to open it and read out what it says.

This was a brave plan because it meant telling the king that she was a Jew and also because in those days you could get into big trouble if you went to

see the king without being invited. And so she asked Mordecai to send word out to all the Jews throughout the land asking them to pray for her for the next three days.

After three days, Esther finally took a deep breath and went in to see the king. To her great relief, the king held out his sceptre (a sign that he was happy to see her) and asked, 'What do you want, Queen Esther?' She wasn't ready to tell him her secret yet so she asked him to come to dinner that evening.

As they were having dinner together, the king asked her again what she wanted. Esther asked him to come to dinner again the next night and to bring Prime Minister Haman with him this time too.

Secret 5

When Haman heard about the invitation, he was delighted, thinking that the queen wanted to show how pleased she was with him. He couldn't help boasting to others that he was the only one that Esther had invited to dinner with the king.

However, he was still very angry with Mordecai for not bowing down to him. He just couldn't stop thinking about it. His wife suggested that he would feel better if he got rid of Mordecai. So Haman came up with another secret plan.

Give Haman envelope 5 and ask him to open it and read out what it says.

And so Haman began to build the gallows in his back garden. But he did not tell anyone what he was building or why he was building it just yet...

Secret 6

That night, the king couldn't sleep. He asked for the chronicles he had kept to be read out to him – and his servant read out the story of how Mordecai had saved his life.

'What did I do to reward him for this?' the king asked.

'Nothing' replied his servant.

So the king decided to do something about it at last.

Give envelope 6 to the king and ask him to read out what it says.

Early next morning, Haman came to the palace to see the king. He was secretly planning to ask the king's permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had been building.

'Good morning Haman' said the king when he saw him arrive. 'I have a question for you. What should the king do for the person he wants to reward?'

'Well' thought Haman to himself. 'Who else would the king want to reward but me?' And so he thought of all the things he would like for himself. 'Have him dressed in a royal robe' he suggested. 'And then have him ride all around Susa in the king's best chariot and have it announced that this is what the king does for those he wants to reward.'

'Excellent!' said the king. 'That's exactly what I will do. Now go and see that this is done for Mordecai – the one who saved my life.'

Haman almost exploded. The king was asking him to parade his worst enemy around the city streets and get everyone to clap and cheer for him. The day wasn't going the way he had planned. He certainly couldn't ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai now!

Secret 7

Meanwhile, Esther was planning her second dinner party and she had another secret. Give envelope 7 to Esther and ask her to open it and read out what it says.

At the second dinner party, the king again asked Esther what she wanted. 'Whatever it is, I will give it to you, even if it is half my kingdom' he said.

Esther knew that the time had come for her to speak up, and so with great courage she said, 'My Lord, if I have pleased you, then spare my life and the lives of my people, because we are going to be killed.'

'Who is going to kill you?' asked the king in surprise.

'It's Haman' the queen replied, pointing the finger at him. 'The Jewish people including me and my uncle Mordecai have served you and your country well but this man has told lies about us in order to have us killed.'

The king was so angry when he heard this that he ordered Haman to be hanged on the very gallows that he had been building for Mordecai. And Mordecai was made Prime Minister instead of Haman.

Because of Esther's bravery, the Jewish people were saved. It would have been easier for Esther to say nothing but she chose to speak up. She could have been killed for going to see the king without being invited. But she was brave and chose to risk her life in order to save her people. She did it because she could see that God had put her where she was for that very reason. She had become queen for 'such a time as this'. (4:14).

Exploring Christian Belief

Christians believe that God has placed each one of us exactly where we are and that He has put us there for a reason. So imagine that like Queen Esther you find yourself in just the right place to do something to help someone else. There is no one else around who is either able or willing to do it. It is up to you! It may be easier to say or do nothing. If you get involved, there is a risk that you will be rejected or laughed at. So what will you do? Will you be selfless and brave like Queen Esther was?

Give examples...

- Making friends with someone new on their first day.
- Telling the truth so someone else doesn't get in trouble or punished unfairly.
- Sticking up for someone no one else likes.

So remember Esther and the courage she showed in speaking up for her people when they were in danger. Look out today or in the week to come for opportunities you may have to speak up or do something to help someone else and ask God to help you to be brave enough to do it no matter what it may cost you to get involved.



Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to give the children the courage they need to speak up and do what they can for others no matter what it may cost them to do so.

Song (optional)

Be Bold, Be Strong, Morris Chapman



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

57. NEHEMIAH

Bible Base: Nehemiah 1-6

Key Christian Belief: In a hostile world, God wants us to work together for Him.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to respond to others in need.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Show the picture of Bob the Builder from the attached PowerPoint presentation and ask the children if they know who this is.

It's Bob the Builder, of course! Can he fix it? (Yes, he can!) I didn't hear that. Can he fix it? (YES HE CAN!)

Now ask the children if they can remember the names of any of his helpers. (Scoop, Muck, Dizzy, Roly, Wendy, Pilchard, Bird, Travis, Spud)

In the Bob the Builder stories, 'Bob and the gang have so much fun. Working together they...? (Get the job done!)

Explain that in the Bible there is someone who reminds you of Bob the Builder. He is famous for some building work he did – and like Bob the Builder, he had a gang who helped him get the job done!

Telling The Story

The people of Israel had been taken prisoner by the Babylonians. But then, as we heard last week, the Persians had taken over from them and moved many of them to their capital city in Susa. That was where Esther and her uncle Mordecai lived.

Soon after he had defeated the Babylonians, the King of Persia gave all the people of Israel who wished to do so permission to return to their own country again and many of them decided to do so.

Others, however, chose to remain in Susa where they were comfortable. One of them, called Nehemiah, had an important job working for the king. It was his job to look after the king's wine and to see that he and his guests had plenty to drink whenever they needed it. And as the king liked having parties – that was nearly every day!

One day a relative of Nehemiah's called to see him. He had been to Jerusalem and had now come back with news of how the people there were getting on.

'It's not good news' he told Nehemiah. 'The people there have managed to build houses for themselves, but the city is in ruins. Its walls have been broken down and its gates destroyed by fire. The people are in great danger and people from other nations are making fun of them.'

Nehemiah was upset when he heard this. He thought about what life must be like for the people who had gone back to Jerusalem. He knew it would be difficult for them to get food until the land was ready for farming again. He knew the streams, rivers and wells would be blocked up and it would be hard to find water to drink. He thought of them trying to sleep at night in a city with no walls - where bandits could break in any time and steal from them. He imagined their enemies laughing and making fun of them.

He tried to forget about it but he couldn't get the pictures out of his head. 'If only there was something I could do!' he thought.

For three whole days he shut himself in his room, praying for his friends and asking God to be with them and to help them. Then, finally, an idea came to him. Maybe he could go to Jerusalem to help them? But it would mean asking the king for time off and that would not be easy. He could be in big trouble if the king thought he was just being lazy.

So he began to pray again, this time asking God for an opportunity to talk to the king about it and maybe explain to him what it was he wanted to do.



Some months later, Nehemiah was standing in the dining room one day, deep in thought.

'What are you thinking about?' asked the king. 'You look very worried about something. What is the matter?'

Nehemiah knew that this was his chance. God had answered his prayer and given him an opportunity to speak to the king. Without closing his eyes or moving his lips, Nehemiah said a quick prayer in his heart asking God to help him find words that would help the king to understand what it was he wanted to do.

So he told the king all about the danger his people were in and about how much he wanted to go back and help them.

'Well of course you must!' said the king to Nehemiah's relief. And what's more, I'll send letters with you so that any time you are crossing a border from one country into the next, the guards at the checkpoint will let you past. And I'll order the royal timber yards to have all the wood you need sent to Jerusalem for you.

Nehemiah was overjoyed, thanked the king profusely and was soon on his way.

When he arrived in Jerusalem he rested for a few days and did not tell anyone what he planned to do. Then one night when it was dark, he travelled on horseback right round the city walls, noting the damage and what would need to be done to fix it.

Next day he got the leaders of all the people together and told them that it was time to start building. He told them about how God had answered his prayer and how the king had allowed him to take time off work to do the job.

'Now' he said. 'Let's get started!'

And so the work began. Each family or group worked on the wall nearest to where they lived and Nehemiah told them what to do. When the other



nations around them heard about this, their leaders, Sanballat and Tobiah, came to see for themselves.

'You are wasting your time' said Sanballat. 'You'll never be able to build those walls up again. There's far too much damage.'

'If a fox were to climb on to that' said Tobiah, pointing to a section of the wall that had been started 'it would all come crashing down again!'

Even so, the people of Israel all joined in the work with willing hearts and soon the walls had reached half their height.

When Sanballat and Tobiah heard this they were furious and planned to gather their armies together to attack the people of Israel and stop them from building any further.

But Nehemiah heard about it and posted guards all around the walls, wherever there were gaps. From then on, half the people kept watch with swords and bows while the other half continued to work.

It was long, hard work. The people had to work every day from dawn until sunset and they were tired. After a while some of them began to argue and fight with each other and the work stopped.

Nehemiah got the two sides together. 'We will never get these walls built unless we all work together' he said. 'Our enemies are making it hard enough for us as it is. Now what is this argument all about?'

So they talked together and with Nehemiah's help they were able to reach an agreement. They shook hands and the work started again.

Sanballat and Tobiah continued to make trouble. Several times they invited Nehemiah to leave the walls and come out to meet them. They were planning to get him on his own so they could assassinate him. But Nehemiah knew what they were up to.

'The work I'm doing is far too important' he said. 'I can't leave until it is finished.'



And so they kept going and at last, 52 days after they had started, the work was done. The city now had strong, sturdy walls again and brand new gates made out of the wood that had been supplied by the king.

Everyone knew it was because God had been with them that the work had been done so quickly. Their enemies knew it too and decided to leave them alone after that.

'Let's have a celebration' said Nehemiah. And, of course, they did!

Exploring Christian Belief

So, just like Bob the Builder and his gang, Nehemiah and the people of Israel worked together to get the job done.

But notice how the story started. Nehemiah heard the news that the people of Israel were finding things tough back in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a long way away and the trouble they were in didn't affect him. He could easily have said 'It's nothing to do with me' and just forgotten all about it.

But instead, he began to imagine what life was like for them and the more he did that, putting himself in their shoes, the more he wanted to do something to help.

Then he began to talk to God about it, asking God to show him if there was anything he could do. Once he had an idea, he asked God to help him put his plan into action and before long he found himself in Jerusalem helping the people to build their walls.

These days we hear many stories of people in different parts of the world – and some even here on our doorstep – who are suffering. As in Nehemiah's day, there are some who have had their homes, towns and villages destroyed by war and are having to rebuild them. Some are refugees a long way from home. Some are starving because the crops have failed – again. Some are ill, perhaps because they cannot get clean water to drink, and they cannot get the medicine they need to make them well again.

What do we do when we hear these stories and see these pictures on TV? Do we just forget about them - or do we do what Nehemiah did and talk to



God about the people involved, asking Him to be with them and to help them – and asking Him to show us if there is anything we can do to help?

We cannot help everyone, of course, but every now and then you may hear a story or see a picture from the news that you will not be able to get out of your mind. The more you think about what life must be like for the people involved, the more you want to do something to help. That may be God's way of telling you that these are the people He wants you to do something about. So ask Him to show what it is He wants you to do.

There may be lots that you are able to do to make a difference. (If possible share some stories – e.g. from the Tear Fund or Open Doors websites – of things that children have done to make a difference to others around the world.)

Once you have an idea, talk to others about it and ask God to help you do it!

Then, if you keep on talking to God about the stories you hear and the pictures you see, who knows, maybe someday He might send you to another part of the world to build walls, dig wells or teach people how to grow their own food.

There are lots of people all over the world who need our help in one way or another. What will you do to make a difference?

Reflection and Prayer

Father, help us to care about others in different parts of the world who are suffering and show us what we can do to help. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song (optional)

Sing Never give up, Hillsong Kids as a reminder that just like Nehemiah we can trust God to be with us and ask for his help in the challenges we face.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

58. JESUS THE PERFECT GIFT

Bible Base 2 Corinthians 9: 15

Key Christian Belief: Jesus is God's gift to us.

Aim: To show why Christians believe Jesus is the perfect gift.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- three 'disappointing' Christmas presents – as below.
- three large gift tags – each with one of the headings below written on it.

Introduction

Ask the children what gifts the children are looking forward to receiving at Christmas. Have they thought yet about what gifts they are going to give to others this year? Explain that Christians believe the reason we give and receive gifts at Christmas time is to remember how God gave us the gift of His Son, Jesus, who came into the world to take the blame for the wrong things in our lives so that we can be friends of God forever. Christians believe that Jesus is the perfect gift. There has never been a better gift than this!

Tell the children that you are going to show them some gifts that people in your family have already opened (or received last year) and were disappointed with - in order to help them understand why Christians believe that Jesus is the perfect gift.

Something We All Need

Show the first gift - a bottle of aftershave. Point out that it is a good brand, probably very expensive. Ask an older pupil, or a female teacher, to smell it and confirm that it smells really nice. So why would anyone be disappointed with this?

Ask your volunteer to say if they would be disappointed if they were given this bottle of aftershave as a present and hopefully they will say that they would be disappointed with it because they don't need aftershave. It would be no use to them!



Gifts that are no use to us are disappointing, aren't they? (Mention a few more examples – a jumper that is too small, a toy that doesn't work, an X-box game for someone who doesn't have an X-box.) Some presents are disappointing because they are no use to us. However - the gift that God has given us, the gift of His Son Jesus, is not like that.

Display the first gift tag: 'Something We All Need'

Christians believe that when God sent Jesus into the world, He sent Him to bring us something we all need. Joseph was told to call Mary's new baby Jesus – which means Saviour – because He had come 'to save His people from their sins'. All of us have said and done wrong things and the Bible teaches us that without God's forgiveness we cannot be His friends or live with Him in heaven. All of us need God's forgiveness – and the good news of Christmas is that that is exactly what Jesus came to bring!

Something No One Else Can Give

Show the second gift – a popular DVD that the children are likely to have seen and that some are likely to own. Ask the children if they have seen it and what they thought of it.

How many of them enjoyed it? Do they think it would be a good present to give someone their age? So why would anyone be disappointed with this as a gift?

Ask if any of the children have a copy of the DVD at home. Ask one of them to imagine you are giving them the copy in your hand for Christmas. Would they be disappointed? Hopefully they will say that they would be disappointed because they already have one!

It is disappointing when someone gives you a book, a DVD or a game that you already have. It is also disappointing if everyone buys you the same thing for Christmas. Mention some examples from your own experience – e.g. your tenth pair of socks! Thankfully, the gift that God has given us, the gift of His Son Jesus, is not like that either.

Display the second gift tag: 'Something No One Else Can Give'



Christians believe that Jesus is God's Son. There is no one else like Him. He was the only one who ever lived who never said, or did, or thought anything wrong. No one else could have done for us what Jesus did. No one else was good enough. It is only because He was willing to give His life for us that we can be forgiven. The gift of God's forgiveness is something no one else can give.

Something That Lasts

Display the third gift - an empty tin of chocolates. Explain that the chocolates were great while they lasted – you especially enjoyed the purple ones – but the problem was that in your family even a tin this size didn't last very long and now there are none left.

Some presents are great while they last - but are disappointing because they don't last very long; the sweets run out, the shoes don't fit any more, the toy is broken and can't be fixed. The gift that God has given us, the gift of His Son Jesus, is not like that either!

Display the third gift tag: 'Something That Lasts'

Christians believe that because of what Jesus has done for us we can be God's friends now and always. No one will ever be able to take His love away from us. One day we will go to be with Him in heaven forever. The gift of God's love and friendship lasts forever!

Exploring Christian Belief

Christians believe that Jesus is the perfect gift. The Bible tells us that He came to bring us God's forgiveness and that is something we all need. It is something only He can give and something that lasts forever. And Christians believe that if you choose to accept God's gift and welcome Jesus into your life, you will find Him to be the best gift you have ever received!

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for the gift of His love and friendship through Jesus.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

59. JESUS GOES TO A WEDDING

Bible Base: John 2: 1-11

Key Christian Belief: Jesus came to give us new life.

Aim: To show that Jesus is able to make a difference in every part of our lives.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- You might also wish to come dressed as if you are going to a wedding and to bring:
 - a wedding invitation
 - a flower for your buttonhole. a box of confetti

Introduction

If you have chosen to dress up, ask the children to look at how you are dressed and to see if they can guess where you are going. Show the items you have brought with you, commenting on each one, and explain that you are going to a wedding.

Alternatively either show the picture of the bride and groom from the PowerPoint presentation or show some pictures from a wedding you have been to.

Ask the children if any of them have ever been to a wedding and talk about what happens at a wedding.

Telling The Story

Today we are going to hear a story from the Bible about something that happened at a wedding party. We don't know who the couple were who were getting married because the Bible does not tell us. All we know is that they lived in a little village called Cana in Galilee. However, we do know the names of at least two people who were at the party. Jesus was there, along with His mother Mary and some of His friends.



It is interesting to note that Jesus was at a party. Sometimes when I think of Jesus, I think of him teaching people about God or caring for people who were sick – and of course He did that. But here is a story in which Jesus went to a wedding party where He had fun and enjoyed Himself along with everyone else.

This reminds me that when Jesus lived on earth He wanted to be part of everything that was going on. And so today, Christians believe that Jesus cares about everything that is happening in our lives. He is with us when we are learning about God and when we are sick but He is with us just as much when we are in the playground playing with our friends, at a party or at home having fun on the computer or play station.

So the first thing to notice about this party is that they invited Jesus to be with them.

And wherever Jesus is invited, He always makes a difference. The people at the party were going to be so glad that Jesus had been invited. He was going to make a very big difference at the wedding party. And Christians believe that if we invite Him to be with us in everything we do, Jesus can make a big difference in our lives too!

It wasn't long, however, before Mary noticed that something was going wrong. The servants coming in and out of the kitchen all had very long worried looking faces. So she went up to one of them and asked what was the matter.

'Oh Mary' said the servant. 'You are not going to believe this. All these people are here for a big fancy wedding party and we've nothing left to give anyone to drink. We've run out of wine. This is going to be so embarrassing. We are going to be in big trouble!'

'Don't worry!' said Mary to the servant. 'I have a feeling Jesus may be able to help.'

So she went to Jesus, told him what was wrong and asked Him if He would be willing to help. And as we shall see, even though it wasn't time for Him to start showing people who He was yet, He was still willing to help.

So the second thing to notice about this party is that they asked Jesus to help them. And Christians believe that we can still do this today. When things seem to be going wrong or we are not sure what to do, we can ask Jesus to help us, knowing that He cares about us and will always be ready to help. But notice that Mary didn't tell Jesus exactly what to do - she just told Him what was wrong and left it to Him to find the best way of helping. When we ask Jesus to help us we need to remember that He knows better than we do what the best thing to do will be and trust Him to do as He sees best.

So Mary went to the servants and said 'Jesus is ready to help. Do whatever He tells you.' She knew that if someone is going to help you, you need to be ready to do what they say. (For example, it is always wise to do what the doctor or crossing patrolman says. They can't help you if you don't do what they say!)

Jesus told the servants to fill six big stone jars full of water. As they were going to the well to fetch the water, the servants were perhaps thinking to themselves:

'Water? But you don't go to a big fancy wedding party and get water to drink! Giving our guests water to drink would be nearly as bad as giving them nothing at all! But Mary says we should do what Jesus says so I suppose we'd better do it.'

So they filled the six stone jars full of water and then took some of it to the head waiter to taste. Then I imagine that they ran and hid in a corner!

Maybe they were thinking, 'We are going to be in such trouble when he finds out that's water in there'. 'He is going to be so cross with us. I can't bear to look.'

Meanwhile the head waiter took a little sip but instead of being cross with them, a big smile spread across his face.

'Hey!' he said. 'This is the best wine I've had all day!' The servants hiding in the corner thought to themselves: 'Wine? Did he say wine? But that was...'



And then they realised that Jesus had done something very special for His friends that day. Somehow or other, He had taken the water and turned it into wine – and it wasn't just any old wine. The head waiter said it was the best wine he'd tasted all day!

So the third thing to notice from this story is that they did what Jesus told them. And what was the result? He gave them the best wine they had tasted all day!

Christians believe that when we invite Jesus into our lives, ask Him to help us, and do what He tells us the result is always the same. He gives us the best there is.

Exploring Christian Belief

Christians believe that the reason Jesus came from heaven to earth was to take the blame for the wrong things in our lives. The Bible says that He did this, first of all, so that we can have a new life as God's friends – because that is the best kind of life it is possible to have here on earth. And He did it so that we can live with Him in heaven one day – because that is the best place it is possible to be.

Jesus came from heaven to earth because He loves us and wants us to have the best. He once said: 'I have come that you might have life – life in all its fullness.'

Some people think that if they invite Jesus into their lives, and learn to do what He says He will just spoil things because He will say 'Don't do this' or 'don't do that.' But He didn't spoil things at the wedding, did He? No – instead He gave them the best wine they had had all day! Everyone who was there was glad that they had invited Jesus to be with them, that they had asked Him to help them and that they had done what He told them.

And I believe that if you do the same, you will always be glad you did because Jesus gives us the best there is!



Reflection and Prayer

Pray asking Jesus to be with them throughout the year/term/month, asking Him to help them with any problems or difficulties they might face and asking Him to help them do as He says. Pray that they will know the joy that Jesus brings in every part of their lives.



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

60. THE TOUCH OF JESUS

Bible Base: Mark 1: 40-45

Key Christian Belief: Jesus is able to make us 'clean'.

Aim: To show that Jesus cares about everyone and to encourage the children to do the same.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Ask for three volunteers to take part in a 'bush tucker trial'. Have three bowls hidden under a tea towel. Each volunteer puts his / her hand under the tea towel and into one of the bowls, in order to identify what is in the bowl by touch alone. The contents of the bowls are as follows: custard, raw egg, baked beans.

Point out that some things are not nice to touch - e.g. worms, dirty nappy, dead mouse.

There were people who lived in Jesus day that no one would touch. They had a terrible skin disease called leprosy and no one would go near them. Today we are going to hear what happened to one of these people with leprosy.

Telling The Story

Use volunteers to act out the story. You will need one to represent the man himself, two or three to represent his family, one to represent the Jewish priest and two or three to represent others with leprosy. You will represent Jesus.

Have the man standing at the front of the stage beside you, his family seated at one side of the stage (your right), the priest standing in the middle at the back (behind you), and the group of other leprosy victims seated at the other side (your left). Ask them all to act out the story as you tell it.

In the days when Jesus lived, there was a man who lived with his family in a little village in Galilee. One day he noticed that a tiny white spot had appeared on each of his hands. Perhaps he shook his head nervously and stuck his hands in his pockets so that no one would see them. Then he started walking home towards his family. When he got there, he smiled at them as if everything was fine and sat down with his hands firmly in his pockets.

(The man with leprosy looks down at his hands and shakes his head nervously. He puts his hands in his pockets and walks towards his family. He smiles at them and sits down.)

However, the next day when he took his hands out of his pockets to eat his breakfast, his family saw the white spots, which were bigger now, and sent him off to see the priest. They all knew that the disease of leprosy often begins with little white spots on the skin and in those days it was the priest who could decide if you had leprosy or not.

(The man takes his hands out of his pockets. His family notice the white spots and point him to the priest. The man walks towards the priest.)

When the priest saw him, he shook his head sadly. 'I'm sorry' he said. 'You've got leprosy. You can't come in here.'

(The priest shakes his head and puts up his hands to indicate that the man cannot come in to the temple.)

The man walked home slowly and gave his family the news. When they heard it they too shook their heads sadly and said, 'You can't live with us any more. You've got leprosy.'

(The man walks back towards his family. His family put up their hands to indicate that he cannot come in to the house.)

In Jesus' day if you had leprosy you were not allowed to go near anyone else and were not allowed into the temple to worship God. Anyone with leprosy had to stay outside their village or town and rely on others to leave out food for them to pick up when no one else was around. So the man left home

sadly and went right outside the village. There he found some others with leprosy and sat down around the campfire with them.

(The man crosses the stage and sits down sadly with his fellow leprosy-sufferers as if around a campfire.)

One day the man heard a rumour that Jesus was coming to the village. He had heard that Jesus had been able to heal others like him and he began to get very excited. 'Maybe Jesus could heal me too' he thought. 'Then I could go back home to my family and be allowed back into the temple again.'

So he began looking out for Jesus and when he saw Him coming into the village, even though he wasn't meant to go near anyone, he ran up to Him and knelt down at His feet.

(The man puts his hand above his eyes, looking towards the centre of the stage as if watching for someone and then runs over to you and kneels down beside you.)

'If you are willing' he said 'you can make me clean.'

Jesus reached out and touched the man. 'I am willing' he said. 'Be clean'. (You reach out and touch the man, as if you are Jesus.)

'Go and show yourself to the priest.' said Jesus. In those days it was the priest who could decide whether you were well enough to go back home and live with your family again or not.

(You point to the priest. The man walks over to him.)

When the priest saw him, he smiled and said, 'The leprosy has gone. You have been completely healed. You can go back home and see your family again!'

(The priest smiles, puts up both thumbs and points him back home.)

When the man heard this, he ran back home as fast as he could and when his family saw him they welcomed him back home again with a great big hug!

(The man runs over to his family and when they see him they give him a big hug.)

Exploring Christian Belief

The man with leprosy fell at Jesus' feet saying, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' This man was sure that Jesus could help him - but he wasn't sure whether he would or not. Perhaps Jesus would simply treat him like everyone else did.

Jesus only had to touch him - and he knew at once that Jesus cared about him. It doesn't take much, sometimes, to show someone that you care. (E.g. – a friendly smile, squeezing someone's hand, inviting someone into your game, asking how someone is...)

Notice also that Jesus was able to make him 'clean'. With other diseases, the Bible says that Jesus made people 'well' but with leprosy it says that He made them 'clean'. People with leprosy were thought to be 'unclean'. In other words, they had the kind of disease that meant they had to keep away from others and were not allowed into the temple to worship God. When Jesus made them clean, it meant that they could go back to their families and were allowed back into the temple again to worship God.

The Bible tells us that because of the wrong things we say, do and think we cannot be God's friends or live with Him in Heaven. But the good news is that Jesus is able to make us 'clean'. Because of what He came to do for us, Christians believe that all the wrong things in our lives can be forgiven so that we can be friends of God and one day live with Him in heaven.

This story shows us that, no matter who we are, Jesus cares about us and is able to make us clean - so that we can be friends of God forever!

The story also reminds us of how Jesus wants us to treat others. There may not be anyone in your school who has leprosy, but there may well be those around you who are treated as if they had. If we are friends of Jesus, He wants us to watch out especially for people like that and to show them by the little things we do that we care about them and are ready to be their friends even if no one else is.



Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God that no one is excluded from His love and asking Him to help the children ensure that no one feels excluded from the friendship of others in their school and community.

Song (optional)

Hey! Jesus Loves Me, Shout Praises Kids



BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

61. JESUS AND THE MAN BORN BLIND

Bible Base: John 9: 1-41

Key Christian Belief: Jesus came to help us see.

Aim: To show that Jesus wants us to see who He really is.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Play the Specsavers ad eg. Specsavers Vet or Specsavers sheepdog and talk about how important it is to be able to see clearly. (Share a story of your own to illustrate this if you can.)

Talk about how poor vision can be corrected these days and about how opticians test someone's eyes to see what strength of lenses they will need to help them see clearly.

Ask the children what else is needed, as well as good eyesight, in order to be able to see clearly? Point out that light is also needed. We need both light AND good eyesight in order to see. No matter how well our eyes are working, we can't see anything if it is dark. No matter how bright the sun is, we can't see anything if our eyes aren't working.

Our story today is about someone who lived in the time of Jesus and who couldn't see at all - because he was blind. In those days that meant that he could not get a job to earn money for food – so instead he had to sit all day, every day by the roadside and beg.

Telling The Story

Either tell the story using the pictures from the attached PowerPoint presentation or choose volunteers to act out the story as below.

Choose volunteers to act as the blind man, his parents, his neighbours, Jesus and some Pharisees. Have the blind man sit in the centre of the stage with a cap or begging bowl in front of him. Have the man's neighbours off to one

side and the Pharisees off to the other. Ask those playing Jesus and the man's parents to wait off stage until they are needed. Then ask all your volunteers to act out the story as you tell it.

One day, as Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been born blind. (Enter Jesus.) Jesus went up to him, spat on the ground, made some mud and rubbed it gently on the man's eyes. Then He told him to go and wash in a nearby pool. The blind man made his way slowly to the pool. (Jesus leaves the stage. The blind man moves slowly to the front of the stage, kneels down and pretends to wash his face.) All of a sudden he jumped up excitedly and ran over to his neighbours shouting 'I can see! I can see!'

'Is this the man who used to sit by the roadside and beg?' some of his neighbours asked.

'It can't be him' others said. 'How could someone who was blind suddenly be able to see? This must just be someone who looks like him.'

'No – it's me!' said the man who had been healed. 'But how did you get your sight back?' they asked.

'The man named Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes' he answered. 'Then he told me to go to the nearby pool and wash. So I went and washed, and now I can see.'

'Where is this man?' his neighbours asked. 'I don't know' he answered.

So they took the man to the Pharisees and he told them the same story. (The neighbours take the blind man over to the Pharisees.) 'Jesus made some mud, put it on my eyes and told me to wash in the nearby pool. So I did - and now I can see!'

'Impossible!' said the Pharisees. 'This man Jesus is a sinner. He can't possibly make blind people see. He could only do that if He had come from God. And we know He hasn't come from God because He doesn't keep our rules.'

So they sent for the man's parents. (The neighbours go get the man's parents and bring them over to the Pharisees.)

'Your boy was never really blind at all, was he?' the Pharisees said. 'He was just pretending to be blind so he could trick us into believing that Jesus healed him.'

'No – he was born blind' insisted the man's parents.

'Well how come he can see now?' asked the Pharisees.

'We don't know' said his parents. 'He's a big boy now - ask him and he'll tell you.'

'Come now' said the Pharisees to the man who had been born blind. 'Stop all this nonsense. Jesus is a sinner. He couldn't possibly have given you back your sight.'

'I don't know whether he is a sinner or not. The only thing I know is that I was blind and now I can see. And it seems to me that if Jesus weren't from God He couldn't have given me back my sight. It's obvious. He must have come from God.'

'Nonsense' said the Pharisees and they threw him out of their meeting place angrily. Later that day, Jesus found the man again.

'Do you believe in the One God has sent?' He asked.

'Who is He?' asked the blind man.

'I am the One' said Jesus.

'Lord, I believe' said the blind man and he knelt down to worship Jesus.

'I came to help blind people see' said Jesus 'but some people prefer to remain blind!'

Exploring Christian Belief

Jesus gave this blind man back his sight. Now he was able to see for the very first time. But Jesus had helped him to 'see' in another way too.

When you can't understand something and someone explains it to you, you might say 'Oh I see!' You don't mean that your eyes have started working again – you mean that you now understand something that you didn't understand before.

Because of what Jesus did for the blind man he had come to 'see' that Jesus was God's Son, the one God had sent to rescue His people and to reign forever.

The Bible says that Jesus came to help us 'see' in that way too. He told His followers that He had come to be the 'light of the world'. Just as light helps us to see what there is around us and find our way to wherever we want to go, so Jesus came to help us 'see' what God is really like and how to live as His friends – so that we can find our way safely through our lives and be with Him in heaven forever some day.

However, if we want to see, we need to open our eyes. No matter how much light there is around us, if we keep our eyes shut we won't see a thing. And that is what the Pharisees were doing. They wouldn't believe that Jesus was who He said He was. It was like they had shut their eyes to the light that Jesus had come to bring.

The blind man in our story was blind because he couldn't see. The Pharisees were blind because they wouldn't see. They refused to accept the truth that Jesus came to bring them. They had made up their minds that Jesus could not possibly have come from God and nothing would convince them otherwise.

The Bible says that Jesus came to help us 'see' the truth about God and find our way safely to be with Him in heaven. Christians believe that he wants us to 'open our eyes' to the truth He came to bring us. He wants us at least to be ready to allow Him to show us who He is. And once we have 'seen' who He is He wants us to listen to what He says and follow Him.

Otherwise, He says, it is as if are walking around with our eyes shut - and that's a very dangerous thing to do.

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to open the children's eyes so that they can 'see' who Jesus really is and believe the Good News of God's love that He came to bring.



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

62. THE LOST SHEEP

Bible Base: Luke 15: 1-7

Key Christian Belief: Jesus came to rescue the lost.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus has come to our rescue.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

EITHER: Display the first PowerPoint slide and ask if anyone has seen 'Thunderbirds Are Go' or 'Paw Patrol' on television. For those who may not have seen it, explain that their mission is to rescue people who are in trouble - wherever they are. If you have seen the programme, talk about any episodes you can remember, or ask the children to tell you about any they can remember.

OR: Display the second slide and ask if anyone knows what the vehicles in these pictures all have in common. (They are used to rescue people who are in trouble.) Talk briefly about how each of them is used and perhaps refer to a real life rescue story that was in the news recently or that the children may be familiar with.

It's always great when someone who was in danger is rescued. Today we are going to hear a rescue story that Jesus told and think about what we can learn from it.

Telling The Story

Once there was shepherd who had a hundred sheep. He was a good shepherd and knew every single one of his sheep by name...Spotty, Grimy, Snowy, Fluffy and so on...

Every day he would lead his flock to fresh, juicy green pasture and then take them down to the stream where there would be cool clean water for them to drink. Every night he would take them to the sheep pen where they would be safe from the wild animals that prowled around in the hillside.

One night he was counting his sheep into the pen: '1, 2, 3... 44, 45, 46... 97, 98, 99... oh...' It looked like one of them was missing so he counted again and sure enough there were only 99 sheep in the pen that night.

'Oh dear' thought the shepherd. 'One of my sheep is missing! Which one could it be?' He looked around. 'Snowy' he thought. 'Where's Snowy?' But Snowy wasn't there.

We don't know how Snowy had gone missing. Perhaps he had been nibbling on a nice piece of grass and was enjoying it so much that he hadn't noticed that the other sheep and the shepherd had gone on without him, leaving him behind.

Or perhaps he had been thinking to himself: 'I'm fed up following the same shepherd day after day around the same old fields. There's a hill over there he never takes us to. I want to see what it's like over there!' And so he waited for his chance and when the shepherd wasn't looking he set off on an adventure of his own.

Either way, when night came and he heard the wolves howling in the distance, Snowy knew he was in big trouble.

Christians believe that we are like this lost sheep. We don't always do what God says. Sometimes we do what He says we shouldn't. It is as if we have wandered away from Him – and now we are in trouble. Because of the wrong things in our lives the Bible says we cannot be His friends or live with Him in heaven. We have been separated from Him.

There were other shepherds in those days who might have thought to themselves 'Oh well - at least I've got 99 sheep safe and well. There's only one sheep missing. Who cares about just one?' But not this shepherd. Every single one of his sheep mattered to him. So now he had to decide what to do. Perhaps he remembered a nursery rhyme he had learned as a boy that had some advice for shepherds who had lost their sheep:

'Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep and doesn't know where to find them. Leave them alone and they'll come home...' Wait a minute! That's not very good advice is it?

'If I leave Snowy alone he'll end up as a wolf's dinner!' thought the shepherd. 'I can't just sit here and do nothing! I'm going to do everything I can to find him and bring him back home safe and sound before it is too late!'

Christians believe that Jesus is like this good shepherd. He knows every one of us by name and every single one of us matters to him. He hasn't left it to us to get out of the trouble we're in all by ourselves because He knows we can't. Instead He came from heaven to rescue us and to bring us back to God, where we belong.

So the shepherd set out in the darkness calling 'Snowy! Snowy! Where are you, Snowy!' Up into the hills and down into the valleys he went – across fields, rivers and swamps until eventually he heard a faint cry. It was Snowy, stuck on a ledge of rock. The shepherd ran up to him, picked him up in his arms and carried him on his shoulders all the way back to the sheep pen.

'It's all right' he whispered. 'You're safe now – I've got you!'

And when the shepherd arrived back at the sheep pen he went round all his friends and neighbours to tell them the good news. It was three o'clock in the morning – but he didn't care. He wanted everyone to know how happy he was!

Exploring Christian Belief

Christians believe that like this good shepherd, Jesus has come to our rescue. The Bible says he took the blame for the wrong things we have done so that we can be forgiven. This means that we can be God's friends now and forever. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who came to bring us back to God, where we belong. I believe that, if we choose to trust and follow Him, we can be sure that He will take care of us always, and one day bring us to be with God forever.



And Christians believe that this good news is for everyone. The shepherd in the story cared about every single one of His sheep and in the same way, Christians believe that everyone matters to Jesus.

No one is excluded from His love and friendship, no matter who they are or what they have done.

If we are His friends, Jesus wants us to show His love to others in all we say and do. He wants us to include everyone in our love and friendship and make sure no one is left out!

Reflection and Prayer

Then finish with a prayer thanking Jesus for His love and asking Him to help us show the same love to everyone as He has shown to them.

Song (optional)

Hey! Jesus Loves Me, Shout Praises Kids

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

63. THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

Bible Base: Luke 18: 9-14

Key Christian Belief: Jesus came to bring us back to God.

Aim: To encourage children to come humbly to God.

You will need:

- the words SORRY and PLEASE written on separate sheets of card
- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Begin by reading the following poem and asking the children to think about what kind of person would say something like this:

They say my reading's wonderful
My maths beyond compare;
I know my art is very good
And my writing's more than fair.

At PE I'm a whizz kid -
At most sports I excel;
At Music I beat all the rest
And in Science I do well.

I'm handsome and charming;
I'm graceful through and through.
I'm glad that I'm like I am
It must be awful being you!

Point out that this is clearly someone who likes to boast and show off a lot; someone who thinks they are always better than everyone else; someone who is very proud of themselves.

Explain that we are going to meet someone like this in today's story. It's a story Jesus told to show how it can be dangerous to be proud, like this, in the wrong kind of way.

Point out that it is, of course, perfectly OK to be proud in the right kind of way. Every time they hand in a piece of homework, they should be proud of it – knowing that it is the best they could have done. They should never have to hand in anything that they are ashamed of! But when we boast and show off and start to think that we are better than everyone else it is then that we are being proud of ourselves in the wrong kind of way. This is the kind of pride that God hates – and that Jesus says can be dangerous.

Ask the children to show you what a proud person might look like - e.g. nose in the air, chest out, arms folded. Choose the child with the best pose to come out to the front. Explain that as you tell the story you want him / her to stand at the front of the stage in the centre adopting this pose. He / she is to represent the Pharisee in the story.

Explain that in the days when Jesus lived the Pharisees were very proud of themselves; they were proud of the way they kept all God's rules and were always boasting and showing off about it.

Ask the children if they know what the opposite of being proud might be? Explain that in this case the answer is being humble. A humble person is someone who thinks of others as more important than themselves and is always willing to help in any way they can. A humble person is someone who is willing to listen and to learn – because they realise that they don't know everything. A humble person is someone who is willing to own up to it when they have been wrong. A proud person would never do any of those things!

Ask the children what a humble person might look like – e.g. head down, hands clasped together. Choose one child to stand off to the back and to the side of the stage adopting this pose as you read the story. He / she is to represent the tax collector in the story.

Explain that in the days when Jesus lived tax collectors were often greedy and dishonest. They took more money from people than they should have, and kept some of it for themselves instead of giving it to the people in charge as they were meant to do.

Finally explain to everyone else that you would like them all to join in with the story as you read it from the Bible. When they hear the word 'Pharisee'

they are to point to themselves and say proudly 'Oh look at me!' because that is the kind of people the Pharisees were. When they hear the word 'tax collector' they are to rub their fingers together greedily and say 'money, money, money' because that is the kind of people the tax collectors were. Finally when they hear the word 'pray' or 'prayed' or 'praying' they are to put their hands together and chant a loud 'Amen'.

Telling The Story

Read the story straight from the CEV version of the Bible and encourage the children to join in as above.

Exploring Christian Belief

Ask your two volunteers to remain in their positions for a few minutes longer. During this part of the assembly, ask all the children to adopt a 'proud Pharisee' pose each time you stand beside the Pharisee and a 'humble tax collector' pose each time you stand beside the tax collector.

Point out that in the story both men went to the Temple to pray and invite the children to think with you for a moment about what they each said to God.

Stand beside the Pharisee and remind the children that his prayer went something like: 'God you must be really pleased with me. I'm not greedy and dishonest like that tax collector over there. I say my prayers every day. Two days a week I go without eating so that I can pray for longer. And as well as that I give lots of money away to the poor.'

As a Christian I believe it is good to spend time talking to God each day and it is good to share what you have with others. But strangely, it was not this man who pleased God. His was not the prayer that God listened to. He was not the one that God said could be His friend.

Now stand beside the tax collector and explain that his prayer really meant that he was telling God that He was sorry for the wrong things he had done and was asking God to forgive him and to help him change. And Jesus said that he was the one who pleased God. He was the one whose prayer God listened to. He was the one that God said could be His friend.



This reminds us that a Christian, a follower of Jesus, is not someone who is better than everyone else. That's not what makes you a friend of God. The Bible says that a real friend of God is someone who knows they have said and done wrong things but who has put their trust in Jesus and asked God to forgive them and to help them to change.

Stand beside the Pharisee again and explain that the problem with him was that there were two important words He would not say. (Hold these up as you talk about them.)

He would not say sorry. He thought to himself: 'Why should I say sorry – I haven't done anything wrong!' But the Bible says that if we think like that we are kidding ourselves. All of us, whoever we are, at times need to say sorry to our friends, to our parents, to our teachers and especially to God. This Pharisee was so proud of himself that he would not admit that he had done anything wrong – and it kept Him from being a friend of God.

He would not say please. He never asked God to help him in any way. He thought: 'I don't need anyone to help me. I'm doing perfectly well by myself!' I don't know about you but the more I find out about the way God wants me to live, the more I know I need His help. I can't do it on my own! This Pharisee was so proud of himself that he wouldn't admit that he needed help from anyone – and it kept him from being a friend of God.

Now stand beside the tax collector again and explain that, according to Jesus, if we want to be God's friends this is the way to come to Him - saying sorry whenever we need to and asking Him to help us every day to do what is right.

So let's not be so proud of ourselves that we never say sorry to God. Let's not be so proud of ourselves that we never ask Him to help us. Instead, let's come to him like this tax collector did because I believe the good news is that if we come to God like this He will hear us. He will forgive us. He will help us. And best of all He will accept us as His friends!

Thank your two volunteers and ask everyone else to give them a round of applause as they take their seats again.

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to think if there is anyone they have been too proud to say sorry to, or anything they have been struggling with because they have been too proud to ask for help. Encourage them to say sorry and to ask for help whenever they need it.

Finish with a prayer on behalf of the children saying sorry to God for anything they may have said, thought or done that they knew to be wrong and using the word please to ask Him to help them do what is right, no matter how hard it may be, in the week that lies ahead.

Song (optional)

Pupils could listen to You forgive me, Lifetree Kids during a time of reflection

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

64. ZACCHAEUS

Bible Base: Luke 19: 1-10

Key Christian Belief: Jesus came to give us a new start.

Aim: To encourage children to consider ways in which Jesus might help them change.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Ask the children if they have ever needed to make a new start. Tell a real or imaginary story along these lines:

Imagine you are doing your homework at home with the television switched on and a glass of orange juice sitting on the table beside you. After a while you look down at the page and realise that your writing has gone off the lines. You try rubbing some of it out but the rubber leaves a dirty mark. Then your pen starts leaking and leaves a blotch in the middle of the page. You spill your orange juice. Finally you realise that the only thing to do is to turn over a new leaf and start again – this time with the television switched off, a pen that does not leak and the orange juice well away from you.

Explain that today's story is about someone in the Bible who needed to make a new start. Ask for five volunteers to help you tell the story. One should be smaller than the others – so perhaps choose one younger and four older children.

Ask the rest of children to imagine that they are in the crowd watching as this story takes place and that they each have a camera with them (although of course they would not have had cameras in the days when this story takes place). At certain points in the story you will say 'Let's take a picture!' When they hear this they should pretend to hold a camera in front of them and look into the viewfinder. You will then say 'One! Two!' and they should say 'Click!' and pretend to take a picture. Or you could plan ahead and a staff member could take pictures using the school camera or iPad.

Telling The Story

Bring the smallest of your volunteers into the centre, beside you, and explain that he is to play the part of Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus lived in a city called Jericho where he was a tax collector. It was his job to collect money from the people of Jericho and give it to the people in charge of the country who at this time were the Romans. Let's see what this might have looked like.

Bring three more of your volunteers into the centre. Ask them to line up diagonally opposite Zacchaeus (so that all can be seen). Ask Zacchaeus to put his hand out as if demanding money from them and to put on his meanest, greediest face. Ask the three volunteers to look totally disgusted as they search their pockets for some money to give him. Ask all four to 'freeze' in this position. 'Let's take a picture...'

Zacchaeus was very rich. He lived in the nicest house in town and had loads of money. However, sadly, Zacchaeus had no friends. No one ever called round to ask him how he was. No one ever asked him round to their house for tea. In fact most people when they saw him in the street would cross to the other side to keep out of his way.

That was because they all knew something about Zacchaeus that wasn't very nice. When he came to collect their money, he often took far more than he should have done and instead of giving it to the people in charge, he put some of it in his own pocket and kept it for himself. He wasn't supposed to do that. But Zacchaeus was greedy, selfish and mean. He was dishonest. He was a thief - and nobody liked Zacchaeus.

One day, Zacchaeus noticed that a crowd had gathered in the street outside his house. So he opened his door and asked what was going on. 'Is there a circus coming to town?' he asked.

'No - there is no circus but Jesus is coming this way. He'll be here any minute now' they said.

Now Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus. One of his friends, Matthew, had left his job as a tax collector to go and follow Jesus and Zacchaeus wondered why

anyone would do that. 'What's so special about Jesus?' he wondered. So he decided to find out for himself.

Unfortunately, Zacchaeus wasn't very tall and when he tried to join the crowd, everyone in front was bigger than him, and they wouldn't let him through.

Ask the three volunteers used previously to form a tight line, shoulder to shoulder, facing the audience. Ask Zacchaeus either to stand behind them trying to peep out between their shoulders or round the side. Then take an imaginary picture again...

'This is no good!' thought Zacchaeus. "I can't see a thing from here. What am I going to do?' He tried standing on tiptoes and jumping up and down but nothing worked.

'I know!' he thought. 'There's a tree up the road here. I was always getting into trouble for climbing it when I was a wee boy. But I don't care anymore. I'm going to climb that tree! I'll be able to see everything from up there!'

So that's what Zacchaeus did. And sure enough, soon he could see Jesus in the distance coming along the road. The crowd were clapping and cheering and Jesus was coming nearer and nearer. Then Zacchaeus got the surprise of his life. Jesus stopped under the tree where Zacchaeus was hiding. He looked straight up at Zacchaeus and said 'Zacchaeus! Come down! I'm coming round to your house today!'

Place a chair in the centre of the stage. Ask the three volunteers to stand in front of this, squeezed tightly together with their backs to each other and to make tree branch shapes with their arms. Ask Zacchaeus to stand on the chair and to peer through the 'branches' of the 'tree'. Ask your fifth volunteer to play the part of Jesus and to stand close to the tree, pointing up at Zacchaeus. Ask Zacchaeus to look amazed and to point to himself as if asking 'Who - me?' Then take another imaginary picture.

Zacchaeus could hardly believe it. 'How did Jesus know I was here?' he thought. 'How does He know my name? And He's coming round to my house? No one ever comes to my house!'

He scrambled down the tree at once and took Jesus round to his house where he made Him something to eat and they both sat down for a chat.

Meanwhile the crowd mumbled to themselves. 'What on earth does Jesus want to go to his house for? Doesn't he know what sort of person Zacchaeus is?' Some time later, however, the door opened and out came Zacchaeus with Jesus by his side.

'Listen everyone' he said. 'I know that when I have collected money from you in the past I have often taken far more than I should have and I want you to know today that I am really, really sorry. So if I have stolen money from you, I promise to give you back four times as much as I stole. And what's more I am now going to give half of everything I own away to people who don't have all the nice things that I have.'

In the next few days, that is exactly what Zacchaeus did.

Ask Zacchaeus and the original three volunteers to stand in the same position as in the first picture – only this time ask Zacchaeus to smile and to hold both hands out open wide as if giving money back. Ask the three volunteers to look totally amazed! Ask Jesus to stand beside Zacchaeus with his thumb up. Then take a final imaginary picture.

Well the crowd could not believe it. 'What has happened to him? they said. It seemed to them as if one Zacchaeus went into the house and a completely different one came out.

'I'll tell you what has happened to him' said Jesus. Today Zacchaeus has made a new start with God. It's like he was lost and far away from God but now he has been found and is back with God where he belongs. This is why I have come - to bring lost people like this back to God.'

Exploring Christian Belief

We don't know what Jesus and Zacchaeus talked about while they were alone together. But I imagine that Jesus told Zacchaeus that God loved Him and wanted Him to be His friend. No one had ever told him that before.



Everyone told him that he didn't deserve to be a friend of God because of all the bad things he had done.

But Jesus told Zacchaeus that He was willing to take the blame for all the wrong things he had done. Because of this, God was ready to forgive him and now, if He wanted to be, even he could be a friend of God.

Zacchaeus knew that in order to be a friend of God, he would have to change. He couldn't go on cheating and being dishonest if He wanted to be a friend of God. He would have to learn to live God's way instead. Perhaps he thought he couldn't do it; he would never be able to change.

But Jesus would help him bit by bit to become a different person and somehow Zacchaeus knew that with Jesus help he could change and become the person that deep down inside he always wanted to be.

So Zacchaeus made up his mind that with Jesus help he would make a new start and he showed that he was sorry for the way he had behaved and was ready to change by starting to put things right.

Christians believe that this good news is for everyone. If Jesus were to come round to your house, I believe he would want to say exactly the same to you as he did to Zacchaeus. With Jesus help – anyone can be a friend of God. The Bible says that because of what he has done for us we can be forgiven and with his help we can make a new start with God any time we need to!

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to imagine Jesus has called them by name and has come round to their house to chat to them. What might he want to talk to them about? In what ways would they like to ask Jesus to help them change?

Finish with a prayer asking God to help those who may need to, and would like to, to make a new start. For example, you could say sentences like...

'If we have been selfish and greedy and have failed to share what we have with others...' 'If we have been dishonest, and perhaps have hurt others by the lies we have told...'

'If we have been mean, grumpy and rude...'

'If we have been lazy and have not helped others as we could...'

The children could then join in with: 'Please forgive us and help us to change.'

Song

'Little Zac' from the album 'Songs That Jesus Said' by Keith and Kirstyn Getty would fit well with this assembly.

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

65. JESUS CALLS PETER TO FOLLOW HIM

Bible Base: Luke 5: 1-11

Key Christian Belief: Following Jesus means accepting His invitation.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus invites everyone to follow Him.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- costume and props (see below)

Introduction

Dress as Peter for this assembly – e.g. in a woolly hat, thick woollen jumper, jeans and fishing boots – and pretend to be Peter throughout. For added effect use props such as a net or a needle and thread as you tell the story.

Good morning everyone. My name is Peter and it's lovely to be here in your school this morning. I come from a little fishing village called Capernaum on the shores of Lake Galilee. Practically everyone in our village has something to do with fishing – we either catch them or we sell them! My father was a fisherman and his father before him. My brother Andrew and I have been catching fish ever since we were little.

Usually we go out fishing in one of our boats late at night – that's when the fish come up near the surface. We drag our nets through the water and try to catch as many of them as we can. On a good night we might catch a couple of hundred fish. When we get back to the shore again we pull up our boat and sell the fish to the market traders for a good price. Then we spend a little while most mornings mending any holes there are in our nets – well we don't want the fish swimming through them, do we? After that it's off to bed and up in time to go fishing again the next night.

I'm here this morning to tell you my story. But before I do, I want to know if any of you have ever been chosen to play for a sports team, sing in a choir or act in a play in your school? If so, would any of you be willing to come up to the front and tell me about it?

Choose one or two volunteers and ask them questions such as:

What were you chosen for?

How were you chosen?

How did you feel when you were chosen?

What is it like playing for the team / singing in the choir / acting in a play?

What does it involve?

What do you enjoy most about it?

What is the hardest thing about it?

Thank your volunteers and perhaps reward them with a chocolate fish (see Amazon) that you caught yourself!!

Telling The Story

I want to tell you this morning about how I got to be on Jesus' team. In the next couple of weeks you'll be hearing more about what it was like to be on Jesus team and how I got on. But today I want to tell you how it all began.

It was one of those nights. Andrew and I had been out fishing all night and we hadn't caught a thing. Not a single fish. When we finally pulled up our boats on the shore we were tired, disappointed and fed up. But we began to mend our nets anyway as we usually did, hoping that the next night would be better!

After a while we noticed that a large crowd had gathered by the shore that morning and Jesus was with them. He had come to live in Capernaum – quite near where I live as it happens. I knew he was someone special because I had heard him teaching people about God. He said the time had come for Him to start gathering people into God's Kingdom.

I invited him round to my house one evening and when he arrived my mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. So he just walked up to her, told the fever to get lost and next thing you know she was up out of bed, bright as a button and cooking supper for us all!

Anyhow, Jesus came up to me that morning and asked to borrow my boat. 'No problem' I said. 'What do you need it for?'

'Can you push it a little way out from the shore, so that I can stand in it and teach the people here about God? I want them to be able to see and hear me clearly.'

So although I was tired I did what he said and he spent the rest of the morning teaching people about God – from my boat. It sounded so interesting and exciting that I hardly even noticed the time going by.

Anyway, towards lunchtime, he turned to me and said 'Row the boat out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.'

'But sir' I said. 'We've been out fishing all night and haven't caught a thing. We're hardly going to catch anything now!'

'He doesn't know anything about fishing' I thought 'or he wouldn't have asked me to try catching anything at this time of day. There won't be any fish about! He's a carpenter; He knows all about making things with wood. I'm a fisherman; I know everything there is to know about fishing. He should stick to His job and leave me to get on with mine.'

But I didn't say any of that. Instead I said 'Alright then – if you say so.'

So I rowed the boat out into deeper water and let the nets down, not expecting to catch anything. But then I got the biggest surprise of my life. I could feel an enormous tug on the nets and when I looked they were full to bursting with fish! There were so many of them I had to call over to my friends James and John to help me get them into the boat.

I knew then that Jesus was more than just a carpenter – and more than just a teacher. I knew God had sent him.

'Go away from me' I said. 'You wouldn't want anything to do with me if you knew what I was really like. I'm not the sort of person you are looking for.'

I used to curse and swear a lot – and I had a very bad temper. I thought Jesus wouldn't want anything to do with me if he knew what I was like.

But he didn't go away. Instead he turned to me and said 'Don't be afraid – from now on you will be gathering people into God's kingdom instead of gathering fish into your nets.'

I was amazed that Jesus actually wanted me on his team. I didn't think I was good enough. But he told me that if I was ready to join his team, he would help me become the sort of person he wanted me to be. Soon I'd be telling others about God's love and helping them to see the difference it made in my life. It sounded amazing!

So right there and then both Andrew and I made up our minds to join Jesus' team. We packed up all our fishing gear, left it all behind and went and followed Jesus!

And do you know what? It was the best decision we ever made.

Exploring Christian Belief

I'm sure you all know that if a complete stranger came up to you and asked you to go with them you shouldn't. Instead you should say a firm 'no' and report them to your parents or teachers as soon as you can.

So why was it that, when Jesus asked me to follow him, I left everything at once and went with him?

I accepted Jesus' invitation first of all because of who he was. Jesus wasn't a stranger. I already knew something about him. And that day on the boat I discovered that when you do what Jesus asks you to do amazing things happen. I didn't think there was any point in letting the nets down for a catch but I did it because Jesus said so and I couldn't believe what happened as a result. It was beyond anything I had ever thought possible.

When I saw what he had done I knew at once that Jesus had come from God. That meant that when he asked me to follow him I knew it was what God wanted me to do. It was like God Himself was asking me to join Jesus' team. And when God asks you to do something, you don't refuse, do you?

So I accepted Jesus invitation because of who he was. I knew he had come from God and that amazing things would happen if I did what He said.

We also accepted his invitation because of what he promised. I didn't think I was good enough to be on Jesus' team but Jesus promised me that with his help I would soon become the sort of person he wanted me to be and that he could use me to help him gather others into God's Kingdom.

Imagine (insert name of well known football manager) invited you to play for (insert name of football team). You might not think you were good enough – but suppose he told you that with his help you would soon be playing premiere-class football. It would be the opportunity of a lifetime – an opportunity to learn how to play football from the greatest manager ever and to play for the best team in the world! You would be mad to refuse!

That's how I felt when Jesus invited me to join his team. Without his help I knew I couldn't do it but he had invited me to join his team and had promised to help me do everything he wanted me to do. It was an opportunity to be part of God's forever kingdom and to help others become part of it too. I would never have thought that someone like me could be on Jesus team - but because he had invited me and given me this promise I decided to say 'yes'. It was too good an opportunity to miss!

I knew it would mean leaving everything to follow Jesus. I would have to give up my own plans to follow his but to me it was worth it because now I belong to the best team and I am doing the best job in the world!

Reflection and Prayer

Christians believe Jesus invites everyone to follow him. If you would like to more about what it means to be on Jesus' team why not pop along to the Scripture Union group in your school or to a kids club in one of your local churches.

Finally, invite the pupils to join you in a prayer thanking God that Jesus invites everyone to join his team. Ask Him to help everyone think carefully about this. Ask Him also to help those who have already made up their minds to follow Jesus to play their part in helping others come to know Him too.

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

66. WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Bible Base: Mark 8: 27-33; 9: 2-13

Key Christian Belief: Following Jesus means listening to Him.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to listen to Jesus.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Explain to the children that you are going to play a game of 'Who Am I?' They have to guess who you are pretending to be from the clues given in the attached PowerPoint presentation. You will give them six points if they guess correctly after the first clue, four after the second and two after the third. (Answers: Woody from Toy Story: He is a toy, he has several catchphrases- one is 'There's a snake in my boots', he has a friend called Buzz. Minions: They love bananas and apples, you can't understand most of what they say, they are yellow. Elsa from Frozen: She has a younger sister, she lives in a kingdom called Arendelle, she has power over snow and ice. Change the PowerPoint to ensure that characters in the game are still relevant and current).

Now ask the children to imagine that you have amnesia and are asking everyone to tell you who you are. There are a number of different answers people might give.

Some might tell you your name and where you are from. 'Your name is... You come from...' Others might tell you what you do. 'You work for... You come into our school to take assemblies...' Still others might tell you how you are related to them. 'You are my brother... husband... dad... friend.' They would be telling you what they know about you.

Telling The Story

Jesus once asked his friends 'Who do people say I am?' He was not asking this because he had amnesia but because he wanted to find out if they knew out who he really was yet. They had heard the amazing things he said and

seen the amazing things he did and now Jesus wanted to know who they thought he was. He had given them lots of clues!

(Display the 'clues' from the PowerPoint presentation one at a time as you share.) They had heard Him teach people about God and were amazed at the way he seemed to know what he was talking about. They had seen him cast out an evil spirit and were amazed to see that he had such power over evil. They had seen him cure people with all kinds of diseases. They had heard him tell someone that their sins were forgiven. His disciples had seen him calm a storm and were amazed to see that even the winds and waves obeyed him. Everyone had been wondering about who Jesus was. They wanted to know how he could possibly know so much about God and do the amazing things he did.

And so Jesus wanted to know what they were saying. Who did they think he was?

'They say you are a messenger from God' His friends told him. 'Maybe even Elijah or John the Baptist come back from the dead!'

'But who do you say I am?' Jesus asked them. As usual, Peter was the first one to speak.

'You are the Christ – the Son of the living God!'

The word 'Christ' means promised King. Peter was saying that Jesus was the king God had promised to send; the One who would rescue His people and reign for ever and ever.

'Well done, Peter' said Jesus. 'God has helped you to understand who I am.'

According to Jesus, Peter hadn't just listened to what everyone else was saying. He hadn't even tried to work it out by himself. He had thought about what he had seen and heard and had asked God to help Him understand who Jesus really was. And that was how he had discovered the truth and got the answer right.



Peter must have been as pleased as punch when Jesus told him he had given the right answer. He had been the only one to speak up and out of all the disciples he was the only one to get the answer right.

Unfortunately for Peter, the story doesn't end there. Next Jesus went on to explain that very soon he would be arrested and sentenced to death.

'Never!' said Peter. 'We won't let that happen to you. There is no need for you to have to suffer and die!'

'Get out of my sight!' Jesus said to Peter. 'That idea comes from Satan, not from God.' Having got it so right the first time, how could he have got it so wrong this time?

There are lots of ideas out there about what to believe and how to behave and we usually have lots of ideas in our own heads too. Some of these ideas come from God and I believe it is wise to listen to them. Some come from God's enemy, Satan, and it can be dangerous to listen to them. But how are we to know which ideas come from God and which don't? That was Peter's problem – he couldn't tell. On this occasion something that seemed right and made perfect sense to him apparently wasn't right at all!

Peter knew who Jesus was now – but he hadn't yet understood why Jesus had come. There was still lots more for him to learn.

Shortly after this Jesus invited three of his friends – Peter, James and John - to climb up into the mountains with Him. While they were up there a strange and wonderful thing happened. All at once Jesus began to glow with the brightest light his friends had ever seen. As they watched, two people from long ago appeared on either side of him. One was Moses – the one to whom God had given the ten commandments. He was reminding Jesus that He had been sent to take the punishment for those who had broken God's law.

The other was Elijah, one of God's messengers. He was reminding Jesus that he was the one they had all written about - the one who would rescue His people and reign as king for ever and ever. But as part of God's rescue plan, he would have to suffer and die.

Then a cloud descended and a voice spoke - this time to Peter, James and John. 'This is my Son' said the voice. 'Listen to Him!'

This was the answer to Peter's problem. How would he know what to believe or how to behave in a way that was pleasing to God? The answer was to listen to Jesus! Peter had been acting as if he knew better than Jesus. Now he realised that he didn't. He still had lots to learn – especially about why Jesus had come – and he needed Jesus to teach him. So from now on, no matter what anyone else said and no matter what his own ideas were – he would listen to Jesus and be willing to learn from him.

Exploring Christian Belief

Jesus wanted His friends to see for themselves who he really was rather than simply take his or anyone else's word for it. People were saying lots of different things about Jesus but instead of just listening to what others said, Peter had thought carefully about what he had seen and heard and had asked God to help him understand who Jesus was. And I believe that if you read or listen to the stories of Jesus and ask God to help you understand who Jesus really is, he will help you to do so, just as He did for Peter.

And once we have understood who Jesus is, the Bible says that he wants us listen to him. There are lots of voices around us telling us what to believe and how to behave. Following Jesus means listening to what he says even when it is different from what others say or from what we might think ourselves. We all have lots to learn and, like Peter, we need Jesus to teach us. That's why the things that Jesus said and did are written down for us in the Bible - so that we can find out for ourselves what Jesus taught about why he came, the difference this makes to us and how we can play our part in bringing God's love to others.

I believe Jesus has lots of important things to teach us. But are we listening to him? Or instead are we just going along with what others say? Or trying to work things out by ourselves? Remember what the voice from heaven said. 'This is my Son. Listen to Him!'

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for Jesus and asking God to help the children listen to and learn from him.

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

67. PETER WALKS ON WATER

Bible Base: Matthew 14: 25-33

Key Christian Belief: Following Jesus means learning to live God's way. Aim: To show that Jesus can help us live God's way.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Ask the children to stand. Explain that when you count down from three you want them to jump up in the air and touch the ceiling. Assuming no one succeeds ask them to gather all their energy together and try again. Then ask them all to sit down again.

Point out that some things are just impossible. No matter how hard you try, they can't be done. If time permits ask the children to see if they can lick their own elbows. Tell them that there are, apparently, one or two people who can do it but for most of us this too is impossible!

Today's story is one of many stories in which Jesus friends saw him do something that they would have thought was absolutely impossible.

Telling The Story

The story below has been adapted with permission from an original story by Bob Hartman in Telling The Gospel published by Kingsway.

Explain to the children that when they hear them in the story, they are to say the following words with you, as follows:

Blew	(with both hands cupped around your mouth)
Wooh	(sounding and acting like a ghost)
Phew!	(wiping one hand across your brow, relieved)
Canoe	(pretending to paddle a canoe)
You	(pointing to someone straight ahead of you)
Two	(holding up two fingers - like a peace sign)
Shoe	(touching one of your shoes)
Oh pooh!	(shrugging shoulders, sadly)
Wahoo!	(with a fist pump, joyfully)
True	(with one finger pointing up)

Explain that at the end of a busy day, as night was falling, Jesus had sent his disciples back home across the lake of Galilee by boat while he Himself went a little way up into the mountains to pray. Invite the children to rock gently from side to side, as if they are on the boat with the disciples, as you tell them what happened next.

Peter and his friends were sailing one night
Peter and his friends were sailing one night
Peter and his friends ere sailing one night

When the seas grew rough and the strong winds blew.
When the seas grew rough and the strong winds blew.
When the seas grew rough and the strong winds blew.

They were straining at the oars with all of their might
They were straining at the oars with all of their might
They were straining at the oars with all of their might

When they thought the saw a ghost. (Wooo!)
When they thought the saw a ghost. (Wooo!)
When they thought the saw a ghost. (Wooo!)

'That ghost looks like Jesus' said Peter to his friends
'That ghost looks like Jesus' said Peter to his friends
'That ghost looks like Jesus' said Peter to his friends

And all of his friends were relieved. (Phew!)
And all of his friends were relieved. (Phew!)
And all of his friends were relieved. (Phew!)

'But if it's Jesus' said Peter 'He's walking on water.'
'But if it's Jesus' said Peter 'He's walking on water.'
'But if it's Jesus' said Peter 'He's walking on water.'

'He hasn't got a canoe!'

'He hasn't got a canoe!'

'He hasn't got a canoe!'

'If you're really Jesus' said Peter to the ghost man

'If you're really Jesus' said Peter to the ghost man

'If you're really Jesus' said Peter to the ghost man

'Tell me to come walking on the water to you!'

'Tell me to come walking on the water to you!'

'Tell me to come walking on the water to you!'

'Step out of the boat!' said Jesus to Peter.

'Step out of the boat!' said Jesus to Peter.

'Step out of the boat!' said Jesus to Peter.

'There's room out here for two!'

'There's room out here for two!'

'There's room out here for two!'

So Peter stepped out and started walking to Jesus

So Peter stepped out and started walking to Jesus

So Peter stepped out and started walking to Jesus

With nothing but the sea under his shoe.

With nothing but the sea under his shoe.

With nothing but the sea under his shoe.

When Peter saw the waves He stopped trusting in Jesus

When Peter saw the waves He stopped trusting in Jesus

When Peter saw the waves He stopped trusting in Jesus

And he began to sink. (Oh pooh!)

And he began to sink. (Oh pooh!)

And he began to sink. (Oh pooh!)

So Jesus helped Peter back into the boat

So Jesus helped Peter back into the boat

So Jesus helped Peter back into the boat

And everything was calm again. (Wahoo!)
And everything was calm again. (Wahoo!)
And everything was calm again. (Wahoo!)

'You're somebody special' they all said to Jesus.
'You're somebody special' they all said to Jesus.
'You're somebody special' they all said to Jesus.

'The Son Of God – it's true!'
'The Son Of God – it's true!'
'The Son Of God – it's true!'

Exploring Christian Belief

So what was the impossible thing that Jesus friends saw Him do in this story?
They saw him walking on water!

Out on the lake Jesus' friends were having a hard time. They were struggling against the wind – and starting to think they were never going to make it to the other side. Then they saw what they thought was a ghost coming walking towards them. Imagine how relieved they must have been to see that it was Jesus!

Even though Jesus had not been in the boat with them, he had known exactly what was happening to them. And when he had seen the difficulties they were having he had immediately come walking across the water to be with them and to help them.

Jesus friends learned that night that nothing is impossible for Jesus. They knew now that no matter how tough things got, they could always count on him to be with them and to help them. Nothing could ever separate them from him. In this case there was a big lake in the way - but the lake was no problem for Jesus. He just walked across it!

And Christians believe that the same is still true today. We can always count on Jesus to be with us and to help us when things are tough. He has promised in the Bible that he will be with us. And wherever Jesus is, things always seem to calm down again - just as they did in this story.

So if you are ever struggling with something – thinking you're never going to be able to make friends with someone in your class who annoys you, you're never going to be able to learn how to do something or you're never going to get through a tough time you are having - instead of panicking, why not talk to Jesus about it? Remember he knows all about it. He has promised to be there with you. And nothing is too hard for him!

But Jesus wasn't the only one in this story who walked on water. Peter did it too! How come Peter was able to walk on water? It was because he trusted in Jesus.

Peter reckoned that if Jesus could do it, he could help him to do it too and he was right! In this case, Jesus invited Peter to step out of the boat and when he did so, Jesus helped Him to walk on water. But this does not mean that Jesus wants everyone to walk on water - so I don't recommend trying it next time you are at your swimming pool!

However, I believe there is one other impossible thing that Jesus did that he does want us to do now too. Jesus was the only person who ever pleased God perfectly and now he wants us to learn to live God's way as he did. And Peter was right – if Jesus can do it he can help us do it too!

And what is the secret? I think the secret is to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. For as long as he did this, Peter was able to walk on water. For us it means thinking about the kind of person Jesus was and asking him to help us day by day to become more like him.

Think what an adventure this was for Peter. When he stepped out of the boat, he found himself doing things he had never been able to do before. And I believe that is what following Jesus is like. As we learn to trust him we may often find ourselves doing things we have never done before or maybe we even thought were impossible. Maybe you'll find yourself forgiving someone who has hurt you, tidying up your room without having to be asked or giving the last piece of cake to someone else instead of grabbing it for yourself! And this will be a sign that you are growing more and more like Jesus.



Christians believe that nothing is impossible for Jesus. No matter what we are going through, we can always trust him to be with us and to help us. And best of all, if we ask him to, he can help us learn to live God's way – and do things we have never been able to do before. What adventures will you have with Jesus this week?

Prayer

Thank God that nothing is impossible for him, if appropriate you could pray for specific and current situations that are difficult from around the world or locally.

Song (optional)

Nothing is Impossible, Planetshakers or My God is powerful, LifeTree Kids

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

68. A PICNIC ON THE BEACH

Bible Base: John 21: 1-19

Key Christian Belief: Following Jesus means being forgiven.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus is always ready to forgive us.

You will need:

- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation
- a chair centre stage for Peter to sit on
- six chairs arranged in a boat shape to one side of the stage some netting draped to the side of the 'boat' for added effect

Introduction

Hands up if you don't always get things right the first time and have to start again. (You could tell a personal story and share pictures/photos of a time when you got something wrong and had to start again e.g. learning to ride a bicycle)

It is good to be able to start again if you have got something wrong the first time. For example, if you have been doing your homework, or writing a letter to someone and made a mess of it, often you can just rub it out or take a new page and start again.

But life is not always like that. You don't always get a second chance. Often life is more like live TV – where if you say or do something wrong, everyone sees and hears it and you can't go back and change it no matter how much you might want to.

Telling The Story

(Either use the pictures from the PowerPoint presentation attached to tell the story or choose some volunteers to act it out as below.)

Peter wished that he could go back and start again but he couldn't. It was too late. He had messed up and everyone knew it. He had had his chance to stand up for Jesus and he had blown it. He had let everyone down.

Choose a volunteer to act as Peter and have him sit in the centre of the stage with his head in his hands.

If you can imagine what it would be like to have a chance to score a goal for your team and miss in full view of everyone or to forget your lines in the middle of a school play with everyone watching, you will know what Peter felt like. Jesus and the others had been depending on him but he had let them all down badly.

The worst thing was that Jesus had said it would happen. 'Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning you will have said three times that you don't know me.'

'Never!' Peter had said - and he had meant it. 'I will stand by you whatever happens.'

But then Jesus had been arrested. The Jewish leaders had sent a whole squad of rough looking soldiers to arrest him and bring him to the High Priest's house where the charges against him were to be read out. All the other disciples had run away in terror – but at least Peter had been brave enough to follow at a distance, being careful not to be seen.

Choose three volunteers to act as servants. As you tell the story, have them walk up to Peter one at a time and point at him accusingly. Have Peter shake his head 'no' more and more forcefully each time.

But then in the courtyard a servant girl recognised him. 'You're one of His followers' she said. 'No - I'm not' Peter replied nervously. Later on, two others recognised him. 'You are one of His followers, aren't you?' they said. But Peter was so scared of what would happen to him if anyone found out that he was a friend of Jesus that he swore blind he wasn't. Just then the rooster crowed and Peter remembered what Jesus had said. He hung his head and wept bitterly. He knew he had let Jesus down badly.

Next day Jesus was crucified. Now he was dead and as far as Peter knew it was all his fault. If only he had spoken up for him – maybe he would still be alive!



On the third morning, some women started telling people that the tomb was empty and that Jesus was alive again. Peter had gone to the tomb to see for himself - and sure enough it was empty. Jesus' friends were confused. How could someone who had died and been buried come back to life again?

'Even if He is alive' thought Peter to himself. 'He won't want anything to do with me again – not after what I have done.'

So Peter decided to go fishing that night – and some of his friends came with him.

Choose five volunteers to act as Peter's friends. Ask them to sit in the 'boat' along with Peter and act out what happens in the story. (You should play the part of Jesus.)

So they started rowing out across the lake. They stayed out all night but caught nothing. Not a single fish. By the time it was morning, they were tired, grumpy and fed up.

Then they heard a voice coming from the shore. They couldn't quite see who it was but in the early morning stillness, they heard his voice loud and clear.

Stand on the opposite side of the stage and pretend to call to the disciples in the boat.

'Have you caught anything?' he asked.

'Not a thing!' they replied.

'Let down your nets on the other side!' shouted the stranger.

They shrugged their shoulders and decided to give it a go even though they were sure there would be nothing there. But all of a sudden their nets were so full that they began to break and they had to call out to others on the lake to come and help them.



'It's Jesus!' Peter called out excitedly and without waiting for his friends he splashed through the water as fast as he could to get to the shore.

And sure enough, Jesus was there waiting. He had cooked a delicious breakfast of bread and fish for his friends and once they had pulled their boat up on to the shore they all sat down and began to eat.

After breakfast, Jesus signaled to Peter to follow him and together they walked along the shore. 'This is it' thought Peter. 'This is when Jesus tells me off for letting him down and tells me that there is no place for me on his team any more.'

But that wasn't what happened.

'Peter' said Jesus. 'Do you love me?'

'Yes' Peter answered.

'Do you really love me?' Jesus asked again. 'Yes – of course I do.' Peter said again.

'Do you love me more than anything?' Jesus asked for the third time. 'You know everything' Peter replied. 'You know that I love you.'

'Then' said Jesus 'I have a job for you to do. I want you to take care of the others for me when I'm gone.'

Three times, Peter had denied knowing Jesus. Now three times he had told him that he loved Him. Jesus had given Peter a second chance. He had forgiven him completely. And not only that – now he was putting him in charge! Peter could hardly believe it.

Exploring Christian Belief

Even followers of Jesus, like Peter, sometimes let Jesus down by the things they say and do.

But Christians believe the good news is that if we love Him, Jesus is always ready to forgive us and to welcome us back as His friends again. No matter how many times we let him down he is always ready to give us a new start.

As far as Jesus is concerned, the important thing is that we love him. Peter wasn't perfect but he loved Jesus. That's why he cried when he knew that he had let Jesus down. That's why he jumped into the water to get to be where Jesus was as fast as he could. That's why whenever Jesus had a job for him to do he was ready to do it.

Peter loved Jesus - and so Jesus was able to help Peter change and become the person he wanted him to be. And he was able to use Peter to do amazing things for him as you can read in the book of Acts in the Bible.

The followers of Jesus aren't perfect. We often get things wrong. But Jesus never stops loving us and if we love him and truly want to be His friends he is always ready to forgive us and to welcome us back. Not only that but we believe that He is able to change us – and to use us to do incredible things for him just as he did for Peter.

Reflection and Prayer

Suppose Jesus were to ask you by name as he asked Peter, 'Do you love me?' I wonder what your answer would be? If, like Peter, you can honestly say 'yes' then why not tell him so and ask him to show you what he wants you to do for him?

If not, and if you are willing, you could ask him to help you get to know him better so that you can learn to love him like Peter did.

Allow a few moments of silence and then finish with a prayer asking God to help the children learn to love Jesus most of all, like Peter did, and to show it in their lives.

Song (optional)

I'm Gonna Clap My Hands from 'Great Big God' by Vineyard UK

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

69. SAUL'S CONVERSION

Bible Base: Acts 9: 1-19

Key Christian Belief: We are saved by grace.

Aim: To help children understand that it is only because of what Jesus has done for us that we can be friends of God.

You will need:

- a glass of clean water
- a glass of dirty water (as if it has come from the loo before you flushed it...)
- a means of dressing up as Saul (a robe and head dress?)
- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

NB: If it is possible, this assembly could be delivered by two people – one as the presenter and one to act as Saul (Paul). Otherwise, you could go behind a screen, do a quick change and come out the other side as Saul...and vice versa at the end.

Introduction

Show the glass of clean water and ask if anyone would like a drink? If so, invite someone to come and take a sip – or take a sip yourself.

Now show the glass of dirty water – saying that you took this from the loo before you flushed it this morning. Would anyone like a drink? No way!

Now ask what would happen if you poured a tiny amount of water from the dirty glass into the clean glass. Would anyone want a drink from the 'clean' glass now?

It doesn't matter whether there is a lot of toilet water in the glass or only a little – you still wouldn't want to drink it!

The Bible tells us that all of us say, do and think things that are wrong – and that these things spoil our lives and keep us from being God's friends. Most of us in this room are probably like the glass of water that only has a tiny amount of toilet water in it. Most of the time we are kind, thoughtful, helpful



and good. We don't rob banks, plant bombs, kill or steal like some people do. So, compared to them, we are actually pretty good.

Every now and then, though, we say or do something we know is not right. It just seems to slip out. It may not seem like very much, but the problem is that it doesn't matter whether there are lots of wrong things in our lives (hold up the glass of dirty water) or only a few (hold up the glass of 'clean' water) – the Bible tells us that none of us deserve to be friends of a God who hates all wrong things.

Today we are going to meet someone who knew all God's rules and had always done his best to keep them. He thought he deserved to be a friend of God. But God had something important to teach him. Here he comes now...

Telling The Story: Part One

NB: Dress up and act this out as if you are Saul.

Those followers of Jesus make my blood boil. How dare they say that Jesus has come back from the dead when they know it can't be true? How dare they say that God wants us all to follow Jesus? Why would anyone need to follow Jesus when we have God's rules to show us how to be His friends? It makes me so angry!

Oh, hello there. My name is Saul. I come from a place called Tarsus and I am from a very strict Jewish family. My father was a Jew, and his father before him was a Jew and so on going right back to the time of Moses. Back then, God chose us, the Jewish people, or the children of Israel as we were known at that time, to be His special people. So as a Jew I'm one of God's people all right – no doubt about it.

What's more, I know the Books of the Law and the writings of the Prophets inside out – they are all part of what we call the Scriptures, God's special book. I've been studying these and learning them off by heart since I was a child. And I've been very careful to obey all the rules and do everything our religion says we should do if we want to be friends of God.

So how dare these people – the followers of Jesus say that I'm not good enough to be a friend of God? I come from a Jewish family, I keep the law, don't I? What more do I need?



And the things they say about Jesus are just ridiculous. They say He is the Son Of God. Nonsense – I say. If He was the Son of God He wouldn't have hung around like He did with people who have no respect for God's law. And telling people like that that God loved them and wanted them to be His friends - I've never heard anything like it in all my life.

We thought we'd got rid of Jesus – our leaders had Him put to death on a cross - but now His followers are going around telling everyone that He's come back from the dead.

They just won't give up, will they? How on earth do they expect anyone to believe that?

We've got to put a stop to this. We got rid of Stephen – now it's time to get rid of the others as well. Have you heard about that? Stephen was one of the so-called followers of Jesus – but some of our leaders made sure everyone knew he was saying things about God that weren't true. We got a big crowd together, tied him up and threw stones at him for hours until he was dead. Serves him right, I say. I'd do the same to the lot of them if I could.

I'm on my way right now to the city of Damascus with permission from our leaders to arrest all the followers of Jesus and lock them up in jail. That'll teach them.

Jesus? Son of God? Risen from the dead? Nonsense. The sooner we put a stop to all this nonsense the better...oh it makes me so ANGRY!

If possible, leave the room. Have the words: SOME DAYS LATER displayed on the screen or have them written on a card and have someone carry this from one side of the stage to the other.

Telling The Story: Part Two

Enter the room again and continue acting as Saul – much more sober this time.

I can hardly believe it...it's incredible. I never thought for one moment that it could be true, what they were saying about Jesus, but it turns out they were



right all along. It is true – He is alive; He is the Son of God – and He has made a way for people everywhere to be friends of God. Not just Jewish people and not just really good people – but everyone!

I was on my way to Damascus when all of a sudden, a bright light shone down from heaven. It blinded me, and I fell to the ground, terrified. Then I heard a voice saying: 'Saul, Saul 'Why are you so determined to fight against me?' I knew at once it was Jesus. He was alive, just as His followers said He was, and now He was speaking to me from heaven. 'What do you want me to do, Lord?' I asked.

He told me to go into Damascus. There I met a follower of Jesus called Ananias. He had heard of me and knew that I was coming to Damascus to arrest people like him, but he came to see me anyway because somehow or other he knew it was what God wanted him to do.

'Brother Saul' he said. A few days ago, I was his worst enemy - but now he was talking to me like I was his brother, showing me that he had accepted me as if I was one of the family, as if I'd never said or done anything to hurt them. I certainly didn't deserve that!

'God has sent me to tell you' Ananias continued, 'that you are the one He has chosen to take the Good News about Jesus to the countries outside of Israel where people have not heard about Him yet.'

I could hardly believe it. After all I have said and done to hurt Jesus and His followers, God has forgiven me and welcomed me into His family as if it never happened. And now He has given me an important job to do as well. I don't deserve any of that!

If there is one thing I've learned it is that it is only because of God's grace that we can be His friends. Grace is when someone does something really kind and good for you even though you don't deserve it. For example, when you have insulted someone and said all kinds of terrible things about them and next day they come around to your house with a big packet of sweets they have bought for you and offer to help you with the homework you have been struggling with. That's grace!



And God has been incredibly kind and good to us. Even though often we ignore Him and try to live our lives without Him, even though sometimes we disobey Him and deliberately hurt others by the things we say and do – God still sent His Son Jesus to take the blame for the wrong things in our lives so that we could be His friends and one day live with Him forever.

Everything has changed for me now. Now I know that being a friend of God isn't about trying to be as good as you possibly can in the hope that one day, if you have been good enough, God will accept you as His friend. No - the truth is that even though none of us deserve it, God offers us His love and friendship through Jesus. If we trust and follow Him, God says we can be His friends forever. I've got to tell everyone this Good News!

Leave the room or go behind the screen again and come out from the other side as the presenter.

Exploring Christian Belief

Saul made an important discovery that day. Christians believe that no one is good enough to be a friend of God. But the good news is that you don't have to be! The Bible says that God in His grace – kindness that we don't deserve - sent His Son Jesus to die for us. And because of what Jesus has done for us, Christians believe that anyone can be a friend of God! All we have to do is to believe this good news and put our trust in Him to forgive us and to help us live God's way. And then God says we can be His friends for ever. It's all because of God's grace; isn't it amazing?

Reflection and Prayer

Lead the children in a prayer thanking God for His grace – that He sent Jesus to die for us so that even though we don't deserve it, we can still be His friends forever. Ask Him also to help the children show the same kindness to others as He has shown to them – even when they don't deserve it!

Song (optional)

Every Move I make, Vineyard Kids as a reminder of the difference that God made to Paul's life that day- he wanted to follow God's ways every moment of his life.



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

70. PAUL AND SILAS IN PHILIPPI

Bible Base: Acts 16: 11-40

Key Christian Belief: We are saved through faith.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to put our faith (trust) in Jesus.

You will need

- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Ask the children to think of a time when they wanted something so badly that they were ready to do anything they could to get it. Perhaps they saved up for ages. Perhaps they did lots of jobs around the house in order to earn the money they needed. Perhaps they (or someone they know) queued up all night for a bargain.

Ask some of them to tell you what it was they wanted so badly and what they had to do to get it. In today's story we will hear about someone who saw something he wanted - and asked what he would have to do to get it.

Telling the Story

Use the PowerPoint presentation to tell the following story.

Explain that Saul, whom the children heard about last week, has now changed his name to Paul. Along with his friend Silas he is now doing the very important job that God had chosen him for. Can anyone remember what that was? He was travelling to lots of different countries outside Israel to tell people about Jesus. In today's story Paul and Silas have arrived in a city called Philippi.

First, they found a group of women praying together down by the riverside. They already knew about God but had never heard of Jesus before. So, Paul began to tell them about Him – who He was and what He had done. One of them was a rich lady, called Lydia, who sold expensive purple cloth. As Paul



was talking, God helped her in her heart to know that what he said was true and she immediately began to follow Jesus.

'Where are you staying while you are here?' she asked Paul and Silas. 'We don't know yet' they replied.

'Then come and stay in my house for as long as you need to!' she said – so Paul and Silas now had somewhere to stay while they were in Philippi.

One day as they were walking around the streets and market places, a slave girl kept following them. There was an evil spirit inside her who gave her the power to tell fortunes. It often tortured her – but her masters didn't care; they were able to charge people a lot of money to have their fortunes told by this slave girl.

As she followed them, she kept shouting. 'These men are the servants of the most High God. They have come to show you the way to be saved.' But it was more like a screech than a shout. And her mouth was screwed up and her face was twisted out of shape as if she was in agony.

After some time, Paul turned around, looked directly at her and commanded the evil spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus. As it did so, her voice returned to normal and her face relaxed into a smile again and everyone knew she had been set free.

However, her owners weren't at all happy. 'How are we going to make money out of her now?' they said. 'She won't be able to tell fortunes any more. These men have ruined our business!' So, they went to the local magistrates and told them that Paul and Silas were making trouble and teaching people to do things that were illegal. The magistrates believed them and had Paul and Silas arrested.

The shirts were taken off their backs and they were flogged with a whip until their backs were sore and bleeding. Then they were thrown into a prison cell, with their arms chained up and their feet in stocks. At midnight the jailer came to do his rounds. Some of the prisoners were sleeping. Some were grumbling and moaning to themselves. It was just like any other night – but wait. What was that?

'It can't be' he thought. But it was. Two of the prisoners were singing praises to God! He had never heard anything like that in his prison before. He went to find out who these two prisoners were and of course it was Paul and Silas. Their backs were sore, they were chained up, their feet were in stocks – but they were still singing songs of praise to God!

Just then everyone heard a strange rumbling sound. It grew louder and the ground began to shake. 'It's an earthquake!' shouted some of the other prisoners. As the walls around them shook, the prison doors fell open. Their chains fell off and their feet were set free from the stocks. The jailer was terrified – and not just because of the earthquake but because if any of the prisoners escaped, he would be in big trouble!

'Don't worry' Paul shouted. 'Look – we are all here!'

'Sirs' he said, falling to his knees. 'What must I do to be a friend of God like you are?'

'Believe in Jesus' said Paul. 'Put your trust in Him and all the wrong things you have ever done will be forgiven.' So, the jailer and his whole family began to follow Jesus that day too. The jailer took Paul and Silas round to his house and bathed their wounds. Next day, when the magistrates heard what had happened, they ordered Paul and Silas to be released and begged them to leave the city.

So, after they had met with Lydia and her friends one more time they said goodbye and travelled on their way to tell others about Jesus in the next city too...

Exploring Christian belief

What was it, do you think, that made the jailer ask what he needed to do to be a friend of God like Paul and Silas were? Suggest that he had probably never met anyone like Paul and Silas before. In the earthquake everyone else was scared stiff, but not them. They knew they were safe in God's hands. When their backs were bleeding and they were in chains they kept on singing praise to God because they knew that God was with them and that nothing could ever take His love away from them.



Maybe it was seeing the difference that being a friend of God made to Paul and Silas that made him ask them what he needed to do to be a friend of God like they were. Christians believe this is probably the most important question that anyone can ever ask.

And Paul told him exactly what he needed to do. Can anyone remember what he said? He didn't tell him to try very hard to keep all God's rules. He didn't tell Him to go to church every Sunday. He didn't tell him to give lots of money away to poor people – although these are all good things to do. He told Him to put His trust in Jesus.

As we saw last week, Christians believe that it is only because of what Jesus has done for us that we can be God's friends. The Bible tells us how God showed His grace and kindness to us by sending Jesus to die for us so that, even though we don't deserve it, we can still be His friends. The good news is that if we put our trust in Jesus to forgive us and to help us live God's way, God says we can be His friends for ever.

And if we are God's friends we can be just as sure as Paul and Silas were that He will always be with us and that He will take care of us. Some years after this story took place, Paul wrote to his friends in Philippi – including Lydia, the slave girl, the jailer and his family and we can read what He wrote to them in our Bibles.

In chapter 4 verse 4 of his letter he told them to 'rejoice in the Lord always'. In other words, no matter where you are and no matter what happens, remember that God is with you and that nothing can ever take His love away from you and that will give you something to be joyful about even in the hardest of times!

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children to put their trust in Jesus and to know that He is always with them so that they may have the same joy in their hearts that Paul and Silas had, no matter how tough things get.

Song (optional)

You could sing God is for me, Lifetree Kids or I'm gonna jump up and down, Doug Horley or Shine (from the inside out), Nick Jackson as reminders that God is with us in the challenging times and we can still be joyful and like Paul and Silas impact those around us with our joy.



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

71. PAUL SPREADS THE GOOD NEWS

Bible Base: Acts 19-27

Key Christian Belief: God offers His love and friendship to everyone.

Aim: To discover that Christians believe the Good News about Jesus is for everyone.

You will need:

- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation (including your own pre-recorded videos acting out the scripts below).
- Audio cable and speakers

Introduction

Ask the children if they know anyone who has ever taken part in a marathon. Perhaps they went to watch someone run. What was it like for them and how did they get on? Share your own experience or that of anyone you know.

Talk about how much training is involved and how far in advance it begins. Talk about the pain and exhaustion the runners face during the race and how hard it can be to keep going. So why do they do it? Why does anyone want to put themselves through all that?

Suggest that they probably have a goal in mind - to complete the race, or to do it in a certain time. It is something they want to achieve and they are determined to succeed no matter how difficult it may be. Perhaps they dream of the moment when they burst through the tape or maybe even stand on the podium and this helps them to keep going.

Paul often said that following Jesus was a bit like running in a marathon. It can be hard sometimes and you might feel like giving up. But the thought of meeting Jesus at the finish line and going to be with Him for ever makes it all worth-while and helps you keep going when things are tough.

Telling The Story

Paul's life was certainly like a marathon. His goal was to take the good news



about Jesus into every part of the world and especially to people who had never heard of Him before.

It was the job Jesus had given him to do and he was determined to succeed.

But it was hard and Paul must often have felt like giving up! He travelled to lots of different places, sharing the Good News about Jesus wherever he went. He has already been on two different journeys (show maps) and now he has set out on his travels for the third time. Let's imagine that he has sent us a video diary from some of the places he visited on this journey. What might he have said?

Introduce each video in turn and then play it from the PowerPoint presentation attached. (The scripts are in italics below.)

Greetings From Ephesus

The first video diary we have is from a big city called Ephesus.

My dear friends: I have spent nearly two years here in Ephesus and seen some amazing things happen. I started off speaking to people in the synagogue where Jewish people meet to worship God. Many of them believed the Good News and started to follow Jesus but others did not and they are the ones who have been making trouble for me.

Every time I speak they heckle me, making as much noise as they can to stop people from listening to me. Afterwards they say all kinds of things about me to try to turn everyone against me. They won't allow me to speak in the synagogue any more. But thankfully my good friend Tyrannus allows me to use a big lecture hall he owns to speak to the people about Jesus and explain the Good News to them and in spite of the trouble-makers a large number of people have now started to follow Jesus.

My dream, however, is to make it all the way to the big city of Rome, to teach people there about Jesus. People from all over the world come to visit Rome. If they could hear about Jesus while they are there, they could take the Good News back with them to their own countries and soon people all over the world would come to know about Jesus and what He has done for them!



In the meantime it looks like there is trouble brewing here. A silversmith called Demetrius is complaining that no-one buys the images of the goddess Artemis that he makes any more. He says it's my fault because I've persuaded so many people to follow Jesus and they don't believe in any of these so-called gods any more. He's gathered a big crowd together and it looks like there's going to be a riot. Must go. I'll be in touch again soon. Paul

Greetings From Caesarea

There was a riot in Ephesus but Paul managed to escape without being hurt. After that he started making his way back to Jerusalem. Many people warned him not to go to Jerusalem but Paul wanted to see his friends there and pass on a gift to them. The next video diary we have is from a place called Caesarea.

It was great to catch up with all my friends in Jerusalem again. Lots of people warned me not to go there. They told me that those Jews who don't believe in Jesus were out to make trouble for me again. And sure enough, they did. I'd only been here a week when they gathered a big crowd together to accuse me of all sorts of things. They started throwing stones at me and would have killed me if the soldiers hadn't turned up to stop them from rioting. Even so, the soldiers assumed I was the trouble maker and had me arrested and locked up.

Two days later my nephew – my sister's boy – came to see me in jail and warned me that the Jews were plotting to kill me. They were planning to ambush me on my way to the courts. I told him to tell the commanding officer what he had told me and fortunately the commanding officer believed him. That night, with 200 soldiers to guard me, he had me secretly moved to a place called Caesarea.

Here they put me on trial before Felix the judge. He had me kept under guard for two whole years while he tried to decide my case. Then a new judge was appointed and I was tried before him and then before King Agrippa. They both listened to what the Jews had to say and then to what I had to say but they couldn't decide what to do with me. I told them that this was no way to treat a Roman citizen – which is what I am.



'In that case' they said 'you can go to Rome and we'll see what the emperor Caesar has to say when he hears your case.'

So here I am on my way to Rome along with some other prisoners. Our ship is due to sail tomorrow. It's not quite the way I imagined it but at least I'm going to Rome, just as I've always believed one day I would. God bless for now. Paul

Greetings From Malta

So Paul is now on his way to Rome. The next time we hear from him, he is on a tiny little island in the Mediterranean Sea called Malta.

Well what a journey this has been! We left Caesarea and docked for a short time in Sidon where I was allowed to go offshore and visit some friends. I had a Roman guard with me the whole time. When we set sail again, there were strong headwinds that made it difficult for the sailors to steer the ship. We passed by Cyprus and sailed along the coast, landing safely at Myra. There we changed ships and after a few more days we finally arrived at Fair Havens on the island of Crete.

The weather was growing worse. I warned the ship's captain not to go any further. I told him our lives were in danger if we went out to sea again in that wind. But the crew wanted to sail on to Phoenix which was a more sheltered harbour so we set sail again. Unfortunately the gale-force winds blew us off course and the sailors couldn't steer the ship against it. We had to go wherever the wind took us. The storm continued to rage and the waves kept tossing the ship about. The sailors did everything they could to make it secure but they were all very frightened. Then one night God spoke to me in a dream and told me to tell them that none of us would lose our lives.

When the sun came up next day we saw a sandy bay on the coastline in the distance. The sailors tried to sail towards it but the ship's bow hit a sand-bar and stuck fast. The force of the waves began to break the stern apart. Those who could, jumped into the water and started swimming for the shore. The rest had no choice but to cling to pieces of wood and allow



the water to carry them. Miraculously every single one of us – passengers and crew - made it safely on to the beach.

It turns out that we had arrived on the island of Malta. We have had to spend the whole winter here. The islanders have been very kind to us and given us food and shelter. However there is a ship setting sail from here for Italy tomorrow and we will all be on board. Hoping to be in Rome very soon! Your friend, Paul.

Exploring Christian Belief

It wasn't easy for Paul, travelling from place to place. Often he was cold and hungry and had nowhere to stay. Often there were storms and floods that made it difficult for him to get anywhere. Sometimes on the lonely roads there were bandits and robbers lying in wait. As well as that the Jews who didn't believe in Jesus did everything they could to stop him from telling others about Him. They had him put in jail. They had him stoned, whipped and beaten. Several times they tried to kill him.

But Paul didn't give up. This was the job that Jesus had given him to do and he was determined to succeed. He was ready to put up with anything in order to finish the job and make sure that everyone had a chance to hear the Good News about Jesus and what He had done for them. For Paul, there was nothing more important than that.

And although it was hard, the thought that Jesus would be there waiting for him at the finish line and that he would go to be with Him for ever made it all worthwhile.

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children why they think Paul thought it was so important that everyone had a chance to hear the Good News about Jesus. Do they know what this Good News is? What difference does it or could it make to them?

Finish with a prayer thanking God for the Good News that because of what Jesus has done for us, we can be friends of God and know His love in our lives each day. Thank Him that this Good News is for everyone and ask Him to be with all those who, like Paul, have gone to different parts of the world

to share it with others who have never heard it before so that they can know God's love in their lives too.

Song (optional)

Shine (from the inside out), Nick Jackson



BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

72. THE GIFT OF GOD

Bible Base: Romans 6: 23

Key Christian Belief: God offers us His love and friendship as a gift.

Aim: To help children understand that God offers us His love and friendship as a gift.

You will need a large box wrapped on all sides in plain gift-wrap paper and the words below printed, one section on each side of the box, so that the box can be turned several times, either vertically or horizontally, to reveal the complete verse.

The gift / of God / is eternal / life through / Jesus Christ / our Lord. / Romans 6: 23

You will also need:

- four packets of Smarties
- a skipping rope
- a whistle and a means of timing 30 seconds
- four cards each with one of the following statements written on it (optional)
- the accompanying PowerPoint:
 - I won it.
 - I earned it.
 - I bought it.
 - I accepted it.

Introduction

Place four packets of Smarties somewhere so that everyone can see them. Explain that you will not be taking any of these packets of Smarties home with you. Each of them will belong to someone else in the assembly hall before the assembly is over. Keep watching and listening to find out how one of them could be yours...

Display your gift-wrapped box and explain that it is not what is on the inside of the box that is important this time but what is on the outside. Turn the box



round and invite the children to read with you what is written on it. If time permits, do this several times.

Explain that this is the Bible sentence we will be exploring this morning. Eternal life means living as a friend of God forever. Our verse tells us that because of Jesus we can be friends of God forever and that this is God's gift to us. It is something that Paul wrote to help others understand the Good News about Jesus, But what does it mean?

Telling The Story

Lift your first packet of Smarties and explain that you will give it to the winner of a competition. Show the skipping rope and ask for two volunteers to see how many skips they can do in 30 seconds. Have someone blow a whistle at the beginning and end of the time and count the number of skips aloud for everyone to hear. Give a round of applause to both volunteers but award the packet of Smarties to the winner.

As you do so say, 'This packet of Smarties is yours - you have won it!' Give them the card with 'I won it' written on it and explain that you will ask them to hold it up later on to remind everyone of how they got their packet of Smarties.

Lift your second packet of Smarties and explain that you are going to give it to someone who really deserves it. Choose one of the adults (the one who played the piano for the opening song, the one who led the assembly, the one who organises assemblies every week...) and commend them for the wonderful job they do and say how much everyone appreciates it. (Big this up as much as you can!) Give them the packet of Smarties as a way of saying thank you to them for all that they do.

As you do so say, 'This packet of Smarties is yours - you have earned it!' Give them the card with 'I earned it' written on it and explain that you will ask them to hold it up later on to remind everyone of how they got their packet of Smarties.

Lift your third packet of Smarties and explain that you are going to sell this one to the first person who can either hold up a 10p coin or put a 10p coin in your hand. Check with the person concerned that they genuinely want to

buy the Smarties. Then take the 10p coin and give them the packet of Smarties.

As you do so say, 'This packet of Smarties is yours - you have bought it!' Give them the card with 'I bought it' written on it and explain that you will ask them to hold it up later on to remind everyone of how they got their packet of Smarties.

Point out that there is still one packet of Smarties left and explain that you will come to it in a moment but first you want to remind them of what happened to the first three. Bring those who were given them up to the front and ask them to hold their cards up.

Now ask if anyone can remember the Bible verse that was written on the box. Read it one more time together. The Bible says that God offers us a new life as His friends, a life that will last forever, to us as a gift. Were any of the three people up here now given their packet of Smarties as a gift? Refer to each of the cards one at a time and comment as follows.

If you win something it isn't a gift...it's a prize. We don't need to win God's love by being better than everyone else. Otherwise it would be a prize, not a gift.

If you earn something it isn't a gift...it's a reward. We don't need to earn God's love by doing lots of good things. Otherwise it would be a reward, not a gift.

If you pay for something it isn't a gift either. We don't need to pay for God's love by giving lots of money away to help others. If you have to pay for something it's not a gift.

So how does a gift work? Ask if it is anyone's birthday today? Or this week? Choose the person whose birthday is nearest to today and ask them to come up to the front. Ask if they would like the last packet of Smarties? If so, give it to them and say, 'Happy Birthday! This packet of Smarties is yours because I offered it to you and you accepted it.' Give them the card with 'I accepted it' written on it and ask them to hold it up.



That's how a gift works, isn't it? Someone buys it for you, maybe wraps it up nicely and then offers it to you. And, especially if it's something good, you accept it, say 'Thank You' and it's yours!

Exploring Christian Belief

Our Bible verse is telling us that we don't have to win, earn or pay for the new life that God wants us to have as His friends. Christians believe that God offers us His love and friendship as a gift - through Jesus. The Bible says that it is Jesus who makes it possible for us to be God's friends. That God sent Him be our rescuer, our teacher, our leader and our friend. Jesus is God's gift to us. The Bible says that if we simply accept Him into our lives and are ready to trust and follow Him, we can be His friends forever. This is the Good News that Paul wanted everyone to know about.

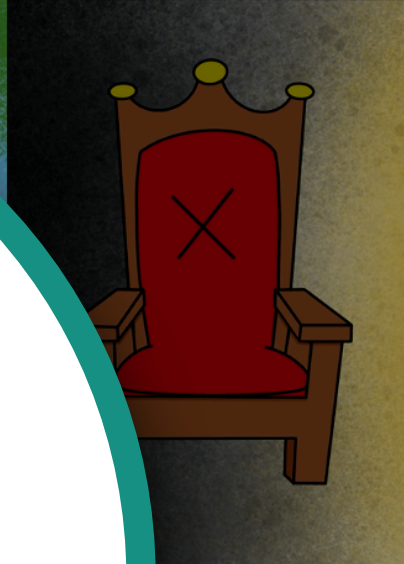
And Christians believe that if we are His friends, then God wants us to get to know Him. He wants us to spend time talking and listening to Him. He wants us to learn to trust Him and to show our love for Him by doing what pleases Him. And the more you do, the more I think you will discover how wonderful the gift of God's love and friendship is.

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to reflect silently on what it means, or could mean, to them to be a friend of God. Then lead them in a prayer thanking God that He offers His love and friendship freely to everyone. Ask Him to help the children to know in their hearts that God loves them and to show it by choosing to live in ways that are pleasing to Him.

Song (optional)

My Best Friend, Hillsong Kids as a reminder of the gift of friendship God offers us through what Jesus has done.



Scripture Union Northern Ireland