

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

18. GIVING IN SECRET

Bible Base: Matthew 6: 1-4

Key Christian Belief: God sees what we do in secret.

Aim: To show that God wants us to share because we care.

You will need:

A charity collection bucket, tin and / or box.

(You can use an ordinary bucket, tin or box with a label 'Please Give' stuck on.)

Introduction

Ask: 'Can you keep a secret?' as if about to reveal one. Then say 'So can I!'

Point out that it can be hard to keep a secret. Tell a personal story of a surprise you were planning for someone and the lengths you had to go to in order to keep it a secret. Keeping secrets (like this) can be great fun - especially if the surprise works. Others are not so good and if you have said or done something you are ashamed of it's probably better to own up and get it over with than try to keep it a secret.

Input

Jesus talked about some things that we should do in secret. One of these was giving what we have to help others. He said that when we give something of ours to help someone else we should do it in secret. Have you ever thought of giving in secret?

We can share what we have with others in lots of ways - but one way is by giving some of our money to a charity that helps poor or sick people either in this country or in another part of the world. Give an example that the children will be familiar with.

Show a charity collection bucket, tin and / or box and talk about where you might see any of these - in a supermarket, in the street, on a shop counter next to the till. By putting money into these, we can do something to help others that are poor or sick.

In Jesus day, when people went to the temple to worship God, there were two ways in which they could give to help others. Outside the temple, there would often be poor people with begging bowls, into which you could put some money to help them buy something to eat. Inside the temple there was a little wooden collection box and the leaders of the temple used any money that was put into this box to see that the poor people who lived in Jerusalem had enough to eat.

However, in Jesus day there were folk who loved to show off about how much money they were giving to help the poor. So, for example, if they were going to put money into a begging bowl, they would wait until there were lots of people about. Then they would draw attention to themselves perhaps by clearing their throats loudly. Finally when everyone was watching they would take out a valuable silver coin, wave it around so everyone could see how much they were giving, and put it into the bowl.

The problem was that these people didn't really care about the poor. If no one had been watching, they would have walked straight past without putting anything into the bowl. All they cared about was what other people thought of them. They loved it when other people noticed and praised them for what they did and when they gave money to help

the poor or sick it wasn't because they cared about them and wanted to help; it was the praise of others that they were really after.

And Jesus told his followers not to be like that. God wants us to share because we care. God is concerned not just with what we do on the outside - but also with what we are like on the inside. He wants us to learn to genuinely care about others. And Jesus is able to help us change so that we have hearts that truly love and care for others as He does.

Exploring Christian Belief

If we truly care about others - we will help them whether anyone else sees or not. It won't matter whether anyone else notices. All that will matter is that you have truly helped the person concerned. So, for example, if you buy a present for someone who is sick, to cheer them up, and they open it in front of others, resist the temptation to say 'I bought him that!' Then your friend will know that you did it just because you care about him. Keep it between you and him. No one else needs to know.

And every now and then, why not think of doing something for another person and keeping it a secret so that even they don't know who did it? Like tidying up or washing the dishes at home - or putting a sweet on everyone's desk in your classroom - without letting on who did it. Only you and God will know; and if you've done it just because you truly care about the people you have helped, Jesus says God will reward you.

The important thing to God is that we have hearts that truly love Him and truly love others. So when you do something to help someone else - keep it a secret. Don't go around boasting and showing off. Then Jesus says your Father in Heaven will reward you; and knowing His love and friendship in our lives is the greatest reward of all.

Prayer

Conclude with a prayer asking God to help the children to do what is right and to help them care for others whether anyone else sees or not.