

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

16. THE HUNGRY CROWD

Bible Base: John 6: 1-13

Key Christian Belief: As Son of God, Jesus is able to use us.

Aim: To show that Jesus wants to use us to bring God's love to others.

You will need:

- a packed lunch
- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

Apologise for this - but tell the children that you have some sums for them to do.

The first is for anyone from P2 or P3. Display the first sum:

$$2 + 2$$

and choose a child to answer. Point out that the + sign in this sum means 'add'. If you have two sweets and you add two more, you will have four sweets altogether.

The next is for anyone from P4. Display the second sum:

$$3 \times 4$$

and choose a child to answer. Point out that the x sign in this sum means 'multiply'. If three people each have four sweets, there are twelve sweets altogether.

The third is for anyone in P5. Display the third sum:

$$2x = 8$$

and ask what the value of x is in this sum - or what it stands for. Two fours are eight so the value of x is four.

The fourth is for anyone in P6. Display the fourth sum:

$$\frac{5 + 4}{3}$$

and choose a child to answer. Explain that in this case the line means 'divide'. If you have nine sweets to divide them among three people, they will have three sweets each.

The final one is for anyone in P7. Display the fifth sum:

$$3^2$$

and choose a child to answer. Ask if anyone knows how to say this - i.e. three squared. The little ² means 'squared' and this means that you need to multiply the bigger number by itself. Three threes are nine.

Story

Congratulate the children on their brilliant answers so far and tell them that you have one more sum for them to look at. This time it is Bible story written out as a sum. Invite the children to look carefully and see if they can work out what Bible story it is.

$$\frac{5l + 2f}{5000p} = 1m^2 r 12b$$

Tell the children that you are going to look at the various parts of the sum, one at a time, to see if the children can work out what each of the different letters stand for.

5000 people

Ask the children what they think the 'p' stands for? It stands for people of course. In this story there was a large crowd of 5000 (and more) people. They had spent the whole day with Jesus. They were so interested in what He had to say that no one had noticed that it was well past teatime (just like no one in your class notices when the lunch bell goes because you are so engrossed in what you are doing...) and now they were all hungry.

'Send the people away so that they can get something to eat' said Jesus' helpers.

'No' replied Jesus. 'You feed them.'

'But where will we get enough food to feed all these people?' His helpers asked.

'Go and see what you can find!' Jesus told them.

5 loaves and two fish

Eventually Andrew, one of Jesus' helpers, found a boy who had brought a packed lunch with him and hadn't eaten it yet. Ask what sorts of things the children have in their packed lunches and show them what is in yours. Now ask them to look at the sum and see if they can tell what the boy had in his packed lunch. Five loaves and two fishes!

'What use will this one packed lunch be?' muttered Andrew. 'This will never be enough to feed all these people!'

Imagine your lunch was all there was to feed the whole school. It would never be enough, would it?

Jesus

Even so Jesus asked for the five loaves and two fishes to be brought to Him and the boy gladly gave them to Jesus. So of course the J in our sum stands for Jesus. But what does our sum tell us that Jesus did with them? He multiplied them!

He made the people sit down in groups and then in front of them all He gave thanks to God for the loaves and fishes and broke them into pieces. Then He gave them to His helpers and asked them to pass them round. (Mime going round the hall offering bread and fish to everyone.) And somehow or other it just went on...and on...and on...until everyone had had enough to eat and no one could eat another thing!

One square meal

Can anyone really clever work out what the m stands for in our sum? Jesus divided up the loaves and fishes so that everyone had...one...square...meal! The m stands for meal!

The Bible tells us that everyone ate and was satisfied. No one was hungry any more.

12 baskets full of crumbs

Afterwards, Jesus' helpers went around gathering up the crumbs. Can anyone see from our sum how many crumbs were left over? There were twelve baskets full of crumbs! Everyone was amazed. The boy's lunch had fitted into one basket and now, after everyone had eaten, there were enough crumbs left over to fill twelve baskets!

Exploring Christian Belief

In this story there was a large crowd of hungry people and the same is still true in our world today. Jesus cares about them - just as He cared for the people in this story. And He wants us, if we are His friends, to care about them too.

At first His friends thought the hungry people were nothing to do with them. They wanted to send them away so that they could look after themselves. But Jesus said 'No - you feed them.'

Jesus wants us to do what we can to see that people around the world who are hungry have enough to eat. This means that, like the little boy in the story, we have to be willing to share what we have with others. If the little boy had kept his lunch to himself, the hungry people would never have been fed.

On his own, however, the little boy would not have got very far. Instead of sharing his lunch with others by himself, he first gave it to Jesus and discovered that Jesus was able to do far more with it than he would have ever thought possible.

In the same way, we may not think that we can do very much to help others, or that what we have won't make much difference, but Christians believe that if we give our lives to Jesus asking Him to use us to bring God's love to others, we will often discover that He is able to use us far more than we would ever have thought possible.

Jesus could have turned stones into bread to feed hungry people - but instead He chose to use his followers to feed them. Jesus cares about hungry, sad, tired and lonely people and wants to use us to bring God's love to them. He was able to use this one boy's lunch to feed a whole crowd of people. If you are willing to give what you have to Jesus, who knows what He will be able to do with you!

Prayer

Invite the children silently to think about what they could give to Jesus - their time, their treasures, their talents. Invite them silently, if they wish, to offer these things to Jesus. Then pray, asking Jesus to take what they have offered to Him, and anything they may give to Him in the future and use it to make a difference to others.

Song

If you have access to it, you could use the song '5000+ Hungry Folk' which is included on Ishamael's CD 'I Know Jesus Loves Me Too'. The individual track can be purchased for download from the online shop at www.ishmael.org.uk.