

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

14. JESUS HEALS A PARALYSED MAN

Bible Base: Mark 2: 1-11

Key Christian belief: As God's Son, Jesus is able to forgive us for our sins.

Aim: To show that above all else, Jesus came to bring us God's forgiveness.

You will need:

- the PowerPoint attached
- a straw mat or palliasse
- a glass of water, jelly and custard in a bowl, a spoon, a baby wipe and a towel
- the audio track or the music score for the song 'Busy Little House' by Ian White*

Introduction

NB: Since this part of the assembly involves a volunteer lying on a mat, it may be hard for some of the children to see. Perhaps the action could take place on the platform or stage, if there is one. Or perhaps the children could be seated along the sides and back of the hall, with your volunteer in the middle. Or perhaps the children in the middle rows could kneel and the children in the back rows could stand. However you do it, try to make sure that, as far as possible, everyone can see.

Hold up your straw mat or palliasse and explain that today's story is about a paralysed man whose friends carried him on a mat like this to see Jesus. We don't know how paralysed the man was - it may be that it was just his legs that would not work. However we are going to imagine that it was even worse than this - that he was paralysed from the neck down so that the only parts of his body that he could move were his head, eyes, mouth and face muscles. If that was the case, then the man would have had no choice but to lie flat on his back all day, every day on a mat like this.

Place the mat on the floor in front of the children and ask for a volunteer to come and lie on it and to imagine that he cannot move anything below the neck. He cannot move his arms or legs. He cannot sit up.

Explain that in order to do anything, the man in our story needed others to help him. Fortunately, he had four good friends whom he knew he could trust. Ask your volunteer to choose four friends that he is sure he can trust to come up to the front.

Explain to the four friends that you would like them to demonstrate some of the things the man in the story needed his friends to do for him. For each of the following scenarios, the volunteer on the mat should choose one or more of his friends to help him. He can talk to them each time as they carry out their tasks.

When he was thirsty he needed his friends to bring him some water...
(One of his friends brings the volunteer some water and helps him to drink it.)

When he was hungry, he needed his friends to feed him...
(One of his friends feeds him a spoonful of jelly and custard.)

When his face was dirty, he needed his friends to wash it for him...
(One of his friends uses a wipe to wash his face.)

When it was wet, he needed his friends to dry it for him...
(One of his friends dries his face for him.)

When he needed to go anywhere, he needed his friends to carry him...
(The four friends should carry him on the mat (e.g.) to the window and then turn him round and bring him back again.)

Ask the volunteer on the mat how it felt having to depend on his friends. Did they do a good job - or did they let him down? Would he trust them again?

Thank the volunteer and his friends and allow them to take their places again.

Story

Use the attached PowerPoint to tell the story as follows.

The man in our story had not been able to walk for a very long time but he had four very good friends that he knew he could rely on to help him. They all lived in a little town called Capernaum. One day the man's four friends noticed that a large crowd had begun to gather in a house near where they lived. When they asked what was going on they were told that Jesus had come to that house and that everyone had come to see Him.

They rushed round to their friend's house and found him lying on his mat as usual. 'We're going to take you to see Jesus!' they said. 'He's been able to help all sorts of people. He's made blind people see and deaf people hear. Maybe he'll be able to help you walk again!'

But by the time they got to the house where Jesus was, it was already overcrowded and they couldn't get in. So what were they to do?

Suddenly one of them spotted the stairs going up the outside of the house to the flat mud roof. 'I know what to do!' he said. The four friends carefully carried the man up the stairs on to the roof and started to dig.

Meanwhile, inside the house, everyone was busy listening to Jesus when some pieces of mud started to fall on top of them from the ceiling above. They looked up and were amazed to see a hole beginning to appear...and four men looking down through it. They were even more surprised when they lowered their friend on the mat through the hole in the roof and down to the floor where Jesus was.

Jesus smiled at the man and said, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' The man's friends were surprised and maybe a little disappointed. This was not what they had been expecting!

And when the religious leaders who had been watching heard Jesus tell the man that his sins were forgiven, they too were very surprised and began to think to themselves: 'Who does this fellow think he is? Only God can forgive sins!'

Knowing what they were thinking, Jesus turned to them and said, 'You are right - but I want you to see that it is God who has given me the right to tell everyone who believes in me that their sins are forgiven. Watch...' At this Jesus turned to the man on the mat and told him to get up and walk. At once the man got up off his mat and began to walk excitedly around the room. 'Look!' he said 'I can walk!'

Everyone was amazed. 'We've seen great things today!' they said as they watched the man leaping and dancing and walking out to meet his friends with his mat rolled up under his arm!

Exploring Christian Belief

When the man's four friends brought him to Jesus that day they were hoping that Jesus would be able to help him walk again. So when they lowered their friend down through the roof in front of Jesus they weren't expecting Him to tell him that his sins were forgiven. Perhaps they were a little disappointed. That was not the reason they had brought their friend to Jesus!

But Jesus wanted the man to realise that, more than anything else, he needed to be forgiven for the wrong things he had said, thought and done. If our legs don't work we can't jump, skip, dance, play sport or go anywhere on our own - and that is bad. But if there are wrong things in our lives the Bible says we can't be God's friends or live with Him in heaven - and that is even worse! And so Jesus wanted the man in our story to know that he needed to be forgiven even more than he needed to be able to walk again.

Christians believe that, like the man in the story, we all need to be forgiven. We have all said, done and thought things that are wrong and need God's forgiveness. Otherwise we can never be His friends or live with Him in heaven.

Jesus also wanted everyone there that day to know that more than anything else, the reason He had come was so that we could be forgiven and enjoy God's love and friendship forever. The religious leaders didn't believe that Jesus was able to forgive the man but by helping him to walk, Jesus was able to show everyone that it was God who had sent Him and that what He said was true. The man's sins really had been forgiven!

And Christians believe that, because Jesus is God's Son, He is able to forgive us too. If we believe in Him, as the man in the story did, we can be sure that all the wrong things we have ever said, thought and done have truly been forgiven! Isn't that good news?

Reflection / Prayer

Ask the children to think silently about anything they need to ask God's forgiveness for. Then lead them in a prayer, asking God to forgive them and thanking Him that He sent Jesus into the world so that we can know for sure that He has forgiven us.

Song*

Either play the song 'Busy Little House' by Ian White, and encourage the children to join in with the words 'busy little house' at the end of each verse, or teach the whole song and encourage the children to sing it with you.

*The audio track for this song is available from iTunes and the music score is attached.