

## BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

### 7. THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

Bible Base: Genesis 17: 1-22; 18: 1-15; 21: 1-7

Key Christian Belief: God has a plan for people everywhere.

Aim: To show that God is able to do more than we can ever ask or imagine.

You will need:

- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation.
- The sheet music for the song 'Ho Ho Ho Hosanna'.

#### Introduction

Ask the children what makes them laugh. Invite one or two to share a funny story or a joke that made them laugh.

Talk about what makes you laugh, including:

- funny stories / jokes
- funny people - e.g. Mr Tumble, Mr Bean...
- funny things that happen - e.g. Home Alone...

Talk about (or demonstrate) different kinds of laugh, including:

- a belly laugh (out loud for everyone to hear)
- a nervous giggle (to yourself)
- a burst of laughter (as when trying but failing to keep it in)
- an evil laugh (as when planning a trick on someone)

Today we are going to hear a Bible story that was full of laughs.

#### Story

Abraham was 99 years old. His hair was white, his eyes and ears weren't working as well as they once did and his body was full of aches and pains. One night God appeared to Abraham and told him to go outside, look up into the night sky and count the stars.

So Abraham began to count. 'One, two, three...sixty-four, sixty-five...seven hundred and eighty-two, seven hundred and eighty three...'

'How are you getting on?' asked God

'Fine.' said Abraham. "Now where was I? Er...oh well...one, two, three...'

'It's impossible, isn't it?' said God

'I guess it is.' said Abraham.

Then God told him that he was going to have a family and hundreds of years from now there would be so many of them that, like the stars, they would be impossible to count.

Abraham remembered that God had told him something like this before a long time ago. He had promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. He had promised that He would bless Abraham's family. He would give them a land of their

own, and if they obeyed Him, He would be with them and take care of them always. He had also promised to use them to bless the nations of the world; that because of them people everywhere would get to know God and share in His love.

But Abraham and Sarah still had no children - not even one.

‘Don’t worry’ said God. ‘You and Sarah will soon have a baby son.’

‘But I’m nearly a hundred years old.’ thought Abraham. ‘People of my age don’t have babies!’ He looked down at his shaking hands and tried to imagine using them to change a nappy and burst out laughing. He thought it was the funniest thing he’d ever heard!

Some time later, Abraham was sitting in the shade under a tree when he looked up and saw three strangers coming towards him. They seemed to appear from nowhere and Abraham guessed that they were no ordinary visitors. He thought perhaps that one might be God Himself and the others some of His angels in disguise.

First he ran to find Sarah. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘We have three visitors - bring them something to eat!’ Then he went out to meet the visitors and bowed low before them. He invited them into his tent and they began to talk together.

‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ asked one of the visitors.

‘She is in the other tent getting something ready for us to eat.’ replied Abraham.

‘By this time next year’ the visitor went on ‘Sarah will have a baby son.’

At this they all heard a noise outside the tent. It was Sarah laughing to herself. ‘All these years I haven’t had a single child...and now that I’m nearly ninety I’m going to have a baby son? That’s impossible - don’t be so daft!’

The visitors called to Sarah to come in.

‘Why did you laugh?’ they asked.

Sarah was embarrassed. ‘I didn’t laugh.’ she said - but her face went so red that everyone knew she was telling a lie. She really had laughed.

‘Is anything too hard for God?’ the visitor asked.

And, sure enough, one year later Sarah had a baby son, just as the visitors had said and just as God had promised.

Abraham picked him up in his arms and looked down at him. The baby gave a great big smile and made a gurgling noise.

‘Listen!’ said Abraham ‘He’s laughing!’

‘I know what we should call him.’ said Sarah. Let’s call him Isaac! Do you get it?’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Abraham

'Let's call him Isaac...Isaac means 'he laughed'!'

'Perfect!' said Abraham and they both laughed out loud.

'I can't wait to tell everyone!' said Sarah. 'God has given us such a laugh - and everyone who hears about it will laugh with us too. Who would ever have guessed that we would have a baby son at our age? I guess it's true - nothing is too hard for God!'

### **Conclusion**

At first Abraham and Sarah laughed because they didn't think what God told them could possibly be true - they were far too old to have children!

But in the end they laughed in a different way - they laughed because something they thought was impossible had actually happened. God had done something for them that was far beyond anything they had ever imagined or thought possible. Perhaps you know what it is to have that kind of laugh - e.g. when the team you support are three-nil down at half time and then the impossible happens; they come back and win!

Abraham and Sarah discovered that when God makes a promise, He keeps it no matter how impossible it may seem - because nothing is too hard for Him.

The birth of Isaac was just the beginning of God keeping his promise. Eventually Abraham's family grew so big that no one could count them - just as God had said. One day Jesus was born into this family - and because of Him people everywhere, including us, can know God and share in His love, just as God promised.

As we think of what Jesus came to do for us we can see how amazing God's love is. He kept the promise He gave to Abraham so long ago and now, because of Jesus, we too can be part of God's big family and enjoy His love in our lives just as Abraham did.

And I believe that if we learn to trust God as Abraham did, we too will often want to burst out laughing as we discover that God loves us and keeps His promises to us in ways that are far beyond anything we could ever have expected or imagined!

### **Song**

Teach the children the following actions:

Ho! Ho! Ho! (hands on tummy)

Ha! Ha! Ha! (shoulders back, throw arms open wide)

He! He! He! (move shoulders up and down)

Now invite them to use these actions as they sing the song 'Ho Ho Ho Hosanna!' three times - slowly at first, then faster.

Ho Ho Ho Hosanna!

Ha Ha Halleluia!

He He He loves me!

I've got the joy of the Lord!

### **Prayer**

Conclude with a prayer thanking God for His incredible love and asking Him to help children remember when things are tough that nothing is too hard for Him.