

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

20. THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

Bible Base: 1 Corinthians 15: 3

Key Christian Belief: Jesus died for our sins.

Aim: To help children understand the significance of Jesus' death for Christians.

You will need:

- the attached PowerPoint presentation
- the attached symbols printed on card and laminated

Introduction

Explain to the children that you are going to show them some symbols. A symbol is a picture with a meaning. Each time you hold up a picture ask any children who know what it means to raise their hands. Then hold up the pictures, commenting as follows:

You might see these inside a building:

No smoking

Telephone booth

Boys' toilets

Girls' toilets

You might see these on a road sign:

Airport

Picnic area

You might see these on a map:

Hospital

Church

You might see this on a weather map:

Snow

You might see this on a bottle:

Poison

Congratulate the children on their knowledge of symbols. Explain that you have one more symbol to show them and hold up the cross. Tell the children that they might see this on a piece of jewellery, on a hot cross bun or in a church somewhere. It is a very important symbol for Christians because it reminds us of the cross on which Jesus died. Today we will be thinking about what this symbol means.

Input

Point out that being nailed to a cross was a horrible way to die. It was the way the Romans put to death anyone found guilty of a serious crime. Jesus had done nothing wrong but the Jewish leaders didn't like what He said and wanted rid of Him. So they told lies about Him and had Him arrested. Eventually He was sentenced to die and nailed to a cross. Jesus' friends couldn't understand it. They thought everything had gone wrong - because they had not yet realised that the cross was all part of God's plan!

Explain that you are going to show the children five different crosses that will help them to understand why the cross of Jesus is good news for Christians. These five crosses each have something to teach us about the cross of Jesus.

There Is Something Wrong

Display the first picture and ask if anyone knows what the cross in this picture means. It means there is something wrong.

The cross of Jesus also reminds us that there is something wrong. Many of the people who watched Jesus die knew that He hadn't done anything wrong. It was not because of any wrong things that He had done that He was nailed to a cross. Instead the Bible says that it was because of the wrong things we have said, thought and done.

I Have Come To Rescue You

Display the second picture and ask if anyone knows what organisation the ambulance with the red cross on it belongs to. Explain that it belongs to the Red Cross - an organisation that helps to rescue people in an emergency - bringing food to those who are hungry and in danger of starving, or first aid to those who have been injured and are in danger of dying. The cross on this ambulance means: 'I have come to rescue you.'

The cross of Jesus also tells us that He has come to rescue us. The Bible says that we are in trouble with God. Because of the wrong things we have said, thought and done, we cannot be His friends or live with Him in heaven. But God has sent Jesus to rescue us. He came to take the blame for the wrong things in our lives so that we can be forgiven.

I Love You

Display the third picture and ask if anyone knows what the crosses in this picture mean. (There are usually some noughts to go with them.) They mean: 'I love you!'

The cross of Jesus also tells us how much He loves us. He didn't have to die on the cross. He could easily have stepped down from it if He had wanted to. But He didn't. He stayed there because He loves us and because He knew that there was no other way for us to be forgiven. Jesus gave His life for us. There is no greater love than this!

There Is Treasure To Find

Display the fourth picture and ask if anyone knows what you would find at the spot marked with a cross on the map. This cross means 'There is treasure to find!'

The cross of Jesus also reminds of the wonderful treasure that can be ours because of what He has done for us. This treasure is even more precious than silver, gold, diamonds or pearls. It is the treasure of God's love. Because Jesus has taken the blame, we can be forgiven for the things in our lives that are wrong. That means that we can know God's love and friendship in our lives every day and be sure that one day we will go to live with Him in heaven forever. What could be more precious than that?

You Have A Choice To Make

Display the fifth picture and ask if anyone knows when a piece of paper like this might be used? Explain that a voting slip like this would be used in an election - when adults are deciding who they want to be in charge of the country - or when you are deciding who you want to be on your School Council. Perhaps John Smith says that if you vote for him he will see that homework is banned from now on while Mary Jones says that if you

vote for her she will see that there are ten extra weeks holiday every year. You have to decide which one you will vote for and put a cross in the box beside his or her name.

The cross of Jesus also reminds us that we have a choice to make. The treasure of God's love is for those who choose to follow Jesus and to put Him in charge of their lives. And Christians believe that this is the most important choice we will ever have to make.

Exploring Christian Belief

Display 1 Corinthians 15: 3 and explain that the good news of Easter is that Jesus died to take the blame for the wrong things in our lives so that all those who trust and follow Him can have a new life as God's friends now and for ever.

Point out that the Easter story doesn't end with the death of Jesus. On the third day God raised Jesus to life again and this is how we know that God is pleased with what He has done for us and ready to accept as His friends all those who put their trust in Him!

Reflection / Prayer

Conclude with a prayer thanking God that he has shown His love for us so clearly by sending His own Son Jesus to die for us on the cross. Ask Him to help the children remember this whenever they may be tempted to doubt His love for them.