

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

30. THE TWELVE SPIES

Bible Base:

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to trust Him.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to rely on His promises.

You will need

- the PowerPoint presentation attached
- items such as false moustaches and cardboard glasses for 12 children

Introduction

Ask the children if they have ever been excited and scared at the same time. For example, they may have been going on an overnight trip and they were excited about all the things they were going to do - but scared because they would be spending the night away from home for the first time and weren't sure if they would be able to cope.

Or maybe they had been given a part in a school play - they were excited to be on stage in front of everyone, but scared that they would not be able to remember their lines.

Show the pictures of the fun fair rides, the zip line and the abseiling from the attached PowerPoint and talk about how these can be both exciting and scary at the same time.

Share an example of a time when you really wanted to try something like this but were too scared. Everyone told you it was safe; you had seen other people do it but you let your fears put you off - so now you will never know what it might have been like. Or alternatively, share an example of a time when you took part in something like this, even though you were scared, and describe what it was like.

Bible Story

The people of Israel were feeling excited and scared at the same time. They had been traveling through the desert towards the land that God had promised He would give to them. He had told them that it would be a land filled with good things. And now they were nearly there. They would soon be moving into this new land.

Moses decided to send some spies into the land to check it out - to see if it was as good as God had said it would be and to see what the people living there were like. He chose twelve men and sent them off to travel through the land and bring back a report.

Choose twelve children to act as the spies and, for added effect, give them each a false moustache or a pair of dark (cardboard) glasses to wear. (*Send them all off to one side.*)

The spies set off on their mission but finally after forty days they returned and Moses gathered the people together to hear what they had to say. (*Bring the spies back again.*)

Ask the children to imagine that they are the people of Israel and that they have come together to hear from the spies. They have been living in tents in the desert where water has been scarce and they have had nothing but manna to eat every morning and roast meat every evening. Once they have heard what the spies have to say, they will have to decide whether to stay in the desert or move into the Promised Land.

The spies told them that the land was just as good as God had said it would be. There were beautiful mountains covered in snow in the winter. There were lovely green valleys with rivers flowing through them. The cows grazing in the rich farmland produced the creamiest milk they had ever tasted. The bees buzzing in the flowers produced the sweetest honey. The whole place was full of the most delicious fruit - clusters of grapes, pomegranates and figs.

But the spies also told them that some of the people living there were as tall as giants. There were lots of them and they lived in cities with big strong walls, which were guarded by soldiers night and day.

Ask the children now what they think. How many of them would vote to stay in the desert and how many would vote to move into the land? Ask one or two in each case to say why they would vote this way.

Moses asked the spies whether they thought the people of Israel would be able to go in and take over the land. (*Divide the spies into two groups - two on one side, ten on the other. Ask the two to put their thumbs up and the ten to put their thumbs down.*)

Ten of the spies thought there was no way the people of Israel could take over the land. The people who lived there were big and strong and there were too many of them. If they decided to fight them, the people of Israel would have no chance against them. They should just stay where they were.

Two of the spies, however, Joshua and Caleb, reminded everyone that this was the land that God had promised to give to them. They were not alone. God was with them. With His help they could certainly take over the land.

Sadly, the people listened to the ten spies and decided to stay where they were. They let their fears put them off moving in to the land that He had promised to give to them.

God was angry with the people because they would not believe His promise. He told them that all the grown ups who were there that day, except Joshua and Caleb, would grow old and die in the desert without ever seeing the Promised Land. However, once their children had grown up, they would enter the land, along with Joshua and Caleb, and see all the amazing things that God would do for them.

And that is exactly what happened. After forty more years of wandering around in the desert, the time finally came for the children, who were grown up by now, to move into the Promised Land. The Bible tells us how Joshua, who had been one of the spies, led them into it and how God helped them to settle there. It was tough and there were many battles to face - such as the battle of Jericho - but in the end, Joshua was able to look back and remind the people that not one of God's good promises had failed. He had promised them a new land of their own and now they were living in it. It was every bit as good as God had said it would be. God had kept His promise.

Exploring Christian Belief

God had an amazing plan for the people of Israel - but most of them never got to see it because instead of believing God's promise, they let their fears get in the way. They would not do what God had told them to do because they were afraid.

Christians believe that God wants us to enjoy His love and friendship and discover His amazing plans for our lives. However, in order to do so, we need to be ready to do what God says and sometimes we can be like the people of Israel and let our fears put us off doing what we know God wants us to do.

For example, there may be times when we want to do what is right but we are scared of what others will think of us. Perhaps we think they will laugh at us and make fun of us if we make friends with someone no-one else likes, do what our parents have told us even when they are not watching, or tell the truth about something even it means getting into trouble. There may be those who try to persuade us to do something we know is not right and say they will not be friends with us any more unless we do what they say.

Christians believe that if we let our fears put us off doing what God wants, we will never discover for ourselves how good God is or how good His plans for our lives are. Instead, when we feel scared, we should remember that God is with us and that He has promised to help us. We should trust God, as Joshua and Caleb did and, if we do, we will discover God's amazing goodness and love for ourselves.

Songs

The songs 'Be Bold! Be Strong!' or 'Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho' would be appropriate for this assembly.

Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to give the children courage and strength always to do what they know to be right.