

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

32. OBED'S FAMILY TREE

Bible Base: Ruth 1-4

Key Christian Belief: God wants His people to love one another.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to be kind to others as He is to us.

You will need:

- a photograph album
- the accompanying PowerPoint presentation - along with some photographs from your family and an outline of your family tree, going back two generations
- simple costumes (optional) and name labels for eight children, as follows: Obed, Naomi, Elimilech, Mahlon, Chilion, Ruth, Orpah, Boaz

Introduction

Show the children your photograph album explaining that you love looking at old photographs from your family album - seeing pictures of people you know as they were long ago - and of people who were part of your family in the past but aren't around any more. If possible, display one or two photographs from your family album on the screen, explain who the people in them are and share a memory you have of them.

Talk about how many people like to try to find out who the people in their families were and what happened to them long ago. Sometimes they use a family tree to help them see how all the people in their families were connected to each other. If you can, show your family tree going back two generations and explain who everyone is.

Now show the title 'Obed's family tree' and explain that today we are going to hear about a young boy called Obed and his family. We will imagine that Obed is looking through an old photograph album, finding out about his family from his mother, Ruth.

Choose eight volunteers to act as the characters in the story and give them each a costume (optional) and a name label. As you tell the story ask them to come to the front as required, act out what happens to them and have their photograph taken for the family album. Ask Obed to sit to one side, as if looking through a photograph album.

Advance the PowerPoint slides as appropriate while telling the story.

Story

Obed's grandparents were called Naomi and Elimilech. *(Ask the children playing these parts to come forward and have their photograph taken, as if on their wedding day, for the family album. You pretend to take the photograph.)* They lived in Bethlehem *(ask them to move to one side of the stage)* with their two boys, Mahlon and Chilion. *(Ask the two boys to come forward and have their photograph taken with their 'parents'.)*

One year, the rains didn't come and the crops didn't grow as they should have done and there was a famine throughout the land of Israel. In order to get food, the family had to move to Moab. *(Ask the four family members so far to move across to the other side of the stage.)* While there, Elimilech died leaving Naomi to look after the two boys all on her own. *(Ask Elimilech to sit down.)* The two boys both married women from Moab - Ruth and Orpah. *(Ask Ruth and Orpah to come to the front take a photograph with Naomi in the middle, Mahlon and Ruth on one side and Chilion and Orpah on the other.)*

Ten years later, however, the two boys died too (*ask Mahlon and Chilion to sit down*) leaving Naomi on her own with Ruth and Orpah. Then Naomi heard that there was food again in Bethlehem and decided to return. Orpah chose to stay in Moab but Ruth chose to go to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law. She told her mother-in-law that she would never leave her. She also told her that she wanted the God of Israel, whom she had learned about from Naomi, to be her God from now on too. (*Ask Orpah to sit down, and ask Naomi and Ruth to move across to the other side of the stage again.*)

Naomi and Ruth arrived back in Bethlehem at harvest time. Ruth went to work in the fields in order to provide bread for herself and her mother-in-law. The person who owned the field in which Ruth went to work was called Boaz. (*Ask Ruth to come to the centre of the stage and ask Boaz to come up and stand behind her a little way off.*)

When he saw Ruth and heard how kind she had been to her mother-in-law, he told his workers to look after her and to make sure there was plenty of barley for her to take home. He also spoke to Ruth and assured her that the God she now believed in would look after her and keep her safe. He promised that he and his men would look after her too. When Ruth got home Naomi couldn't believe how much she had gathered. (*Ask Ruth to go back to Naomi.*) God was taking care of them both through the kindness of Boaz.

However, Ruth still had no husband to look after her and in those days that meant she would always be poor. But some months later Boaz and Ruth fell in love and Boaz asked Ruth to marry him. Can you imagine what a happy day that was? Now Ruth and Naomi would have someone to look after them for the rest of their lives. (*Ask Ruth, Boaz and Naomi to come to the centre of the stage and take a photograph.*)

And even that is not the end of the story because sometime later baby Obed was born to Ruth and Boaz. As you can imagine, his parents and his grandmother were delighted! (*Ask Obed to join them for a final family photograph.*)

Exploring Christian Belief

So this is the story of Obed's family up until the time Obed was born. What a great family to be part of! Did you notice how kind the people in it were to each other? Naomi was kind to Ruth and Orpah - allowing them to choose whether to come back with her to Bethlehem or not. Ruth was kind to Naomi - choosing to stay with her and look after her even though she did not have to. Boaz was kind to Ruth even though she was a stranger - making sure his men looked after her and that she had plenty of barley to take home.

The people of Israel were God's people and this is how He wanted His people to behave. He had taught them to be kind to each other and to any strangers who came to live among them. He had told them to remember that when they were slaves in Egypt, He had been kind to them and now He wanted them to show this same kindness to others.

And God was good to His people in this story too, wasn't He? They had been through some tough times, but through it all, God had been with them, taking care of them.

The story shows how good God is and how good it is to belong to His family. Ruth, Boaz, Naomi and Obed were part of God's family back then - but Christians believe that we can be part of this family too!

The birth of Obed was not the end of the story. Eventually Obed grew up and got married and had a son called Jesse and he was the father of King David. Many years later

someone very special was born into David's family. His name was Jesus and the Bible says that it is because of His kindness to us, coming to earth to show how we can be friends with God, that we can be part of God's family and discover for ourselves how good God is and how good it is to be part of His family, just as Naomi, Ruth and Obed did all those years ago.

Reflection

The one thing that Ruth noticed when she arrived in Israel for the first time was how kind Boaz and his workers were towards her. She was a stranger and yet they welcomed her and made her feel at home. They were generous towards her and made sure she had plenty of barley. I wonder if the first thing someone arriving in our school for the first time would notice is how kind we are to them?

Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for Jesus and for His kindness to them and asking Him to help them show the same kindness to others.