

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

38 THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Bible Base: Luke 10: 25-37

Key Christian Belief: Jesus taught us to love our neighbours.

Aim: To help the children understand that God want us to show the same love to others as He has shown to us.

You will need:

- the PowerPoint presentation attached

Introduction

Divide the children into two groups. If possible, have them seated facing each other. Ask the two groups to imagine that they don't like each other very much and ask each group to show the other, using gestures and facial expressions, what they think of them.

Explain that today's story takes place at a time when there were two groups of people in Israel who did not like each other very much. They were the Jews and the Samaritans.

Display the map from the PowerPoint presentation and tell one group that they are the Jews. They live in the South and their capital city is Jerusalem. Tell the other group that they are the Samaritans. They live in the North and their capital city is Samaria.

Explain that in a few moments each group will have some lines to say. The Jews are to say the words in red, when they appear on the screen, and the Samaritans are to say the words in yellow. Encourage the groups to say their lines to each other with feeling, remembering that the Jews and the Samaritans couldn't stand each other. (Invite each group to show the others again what they think of them.)

But why did the Jews and the Samaritans hate each other so much? Well, for one thing, hundreds of years ago the Samaritans had started marrying people from other nations so that when they had children, their children were only half-Israelite and half-something else. The Jews were horrified and told them: 'You are not true Israelites any more.'

Samaritans: Oh yes we are!

Jews: Oh no you're not!

For another thing, the Samaritans had started to worship other gods as well as the God of Israel. Again the Jews were horrified by this and decided not to let the Samaritans worship God in their temple in Jerusalem any longer. 'You don't belong here' they said. 'You are not God's people any more.'

Samaritans: Oh yes we are!

Jews: Oh no you're not!

As far as the Jews were concerned, it was they who were the true Israelites; it was they who were the true people of God. They hadn't mixed with other nations or worshipped other gods like the Samaritans had. They felt sure that God was pleased with them and that He would be on their side!

But then one day, as Jesus was teaching a large crowd of people, a Jewish teacher who had studied God's law stood up and asked Jesus a question. 'Teacher' he said. 'How can I live a life that pleases God?'

'You have studied the law.' Jesus replied. 'What does it say there?'

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength' the man replied 'and love your neighbour as you love yourself.'

'You are right' said Jesus. 'If you do that, you will certainly live a life that pleases God.'

The teacher was a little embarrassed because although he had got the answer right, he knew he didn't always love God and love his neighbour the way God's law said he should. So to cover up his embarrassment he asked 'But who is my neighbour?' In reply, Jesus told him this story.

Bible Story

Either tell the story using the pictures from the PowerPoint presentation or ask for some volunteers to act out the various parts - the traveller, the robbers, the priest, the temple helper, the Samaritan and the innkeeper - as you narrate. Imagine Jerusalem being at one side of the stage and Jericho (where the inn is) at the other. The robbers might be given somewhere to hide and the innkeeper might be seated at a desk. The robbers should be told to act their part without physical contact!

Ask the other children to remain in their groups and to imagine that they are either the Jews or the Samaritans listening to Jesus telling the story. The 'Jews' should cheer every time they hear the word 'Jewish' and the 'Samaritans' should cheer every time they hear the word 'Samaritan'. Explain also that at the end of the story you will have a question for everyone to answer.

One day, a man went on a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, a journey that would usually take about four hours. The road was rough and hilly and as the traveller walked along, there were robbers hiding in the hills. When they saw him, they jumped out, beat him up, took everything he had and ran off, leaving him lying by the side of the road.

A few minutes later, a Jewish priest came along the road. He was someone who loved God and taught others to love Him too. Surely he will stop and help the man.

But no - he saw the man, but instead of stopping to help him, he crossed over to the other side of the road and walked on past.

Next, a Jewish temple helper came along the road. He was someone who helped out at the temple when people came to worship God. Surely, he will stop and help the man.

But no - he saw the man, but instead of stopping to help him, he too crossed over to the other side of the road and walked on past.

Finally, a Samaritan came riding along the road on his donkey. The man lying by the roadside is his enemy. Surely he won't stop to help him!

But yes - when this Samaritan saw the man lying by the roadside he stopped, got off his donkey and went over to help him. He rubbed some oil into his wounds to take the pain

away and bandaged him up. Then he helped him on to his donkey and took him to the nearest inn. He gave the innkeeper two silver coins. 'Look after this man for me' he said 'and if I owe you any more money, I'll pay you when I come back.'

Jesus turned to the teacher of the law and asked him: 'Which of the three men who saw the traveller lying by the roadside acted like a neighbour to him?'

Ask the children what they think - and why.

'The one who showed him kindness' the teacher replied. 'You are right' said Jesus. 'Now go and do the same.'

Exploring Christian Belief

The teacher of the law in this story wanted to know how to live a life that pleases God. Jesus helped him to see that it's not complicated. He even knew the answer himself! Love God and love your neighbour. Jesus' says that's all there is to it. However, as Jesus' story shows, it may be easy to understand what God wants but it is not always easy to do it.

The Jewish people claimed to love God. They hadn't mixed with other nations or started worshiping other gods as the Samaritans had. They knew all God's commandments inside out. They had built a magnificent temple as a place for people to come and worship Him. They expected to be the heroes in Jesus' story - but they weren't. Imagine how shocking it was for them that the hero in Jesus' story was a Samaritan!

The problem was that although the Jewish people knew what God wanted them to do, often they didn't do it! In this story, the Jewish priest and the Jewish temple helper, both of whom should have known better, walked on past the man who needed help. They knew what God wanted them to do but they hadn't done it. It was the Samaritan who was the hero in this story because he actually did what God wanted him to do and took care of the man, doing everything he could to help him.

Jesus wanted the Jewish people to understand that if you really love God, you will show it by loving others too - because that is what pleases Him. If you say you love God but never lift a finger to help someone else, it shows you don't really love Him at all. That kind of love is useless. It is only empty words. If you really love God and want to show it, the way to do it is by loving others, no matter who they are and no matter what it costs you, as this man did. Christians believe that this is how to live a life that pleases God.

However, it is not always easy to do this! It is easy to make excuses - like the priest and the temple helper did - and just walk on past the people who need our help. That's why the Bible says that loving God comes first. Before we start trying to love our neighbours - especially those who have hurt us - Christians believe that we need to open up our lives to God's love. We need to get to know Him and find out for ourselves how much He loves us, because the more we realise how much God loves us, and the more we grow to love Him, the more we will want to do what pleases Him and the easier it will be for us to show the same love to others as He has shown to us. And this is what pleases God most of all!

Reflection and Prayer

Invite the children to watch out for others who may need their help during the next week and encourage them, with God's help, to be like the Good Samaritan and to do

everything they can to help. Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children realise how much He loves them and to show the same love to others as He has shown to them.