

## BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

### 39 THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Bible Base: Matthew 18: 21-35

Key Christian Belief: Jesus taught us to forgive those who hurt us.

Aim: To help the children understand that God wants us to forgive others as He has forgiven us.

You will need:

- the PowerPoint presentation attached
- costumes and props for the drama (if desired)

#### Introduction

Ask the children if they can imagine a conversation like this taking place at home.

Monday morning: 'Don't forget to take your uniform off and fold it up neatly when you come home from school!'

'Sure mum!'

Monday teatime: 'Have you taken your uniform off yet?'

'Oh sorry, mum. I forgot.'

Tuesday teatime: 'Are you still wearing your school uniform?'

'Sorry mum - I forgot!'

Wednesday teatime: 'Haven't I told you to take your school uniform off as soon as you come home from school?'

'Yes mum.'

'Then why are you still wearing it?'

'Sorry mum - I guess I forgot again.'

Thursday teatime: 'I see you are still wearing your school uniform. HOW MANY TIMES do I have to tell you to take it off as soon as you come home from school?'

Or it might be that you are the one getting exasperated. Imagine you are talking to your brother or sister if you have one.

Saturday morning: 'Please don't touch my brand new colouring pencils. I need them for a school project.'

'OK - I won't.'

Saturday afternoon: 'Have you been using my colouring pencils?'

'Yes.'

‘But I told you not to!’

‘Sorry - I forgot.’

Saturday evening: ‘Didn’t I tell you not to touch my colouring pencils?’

‘Yes’

‘Then why have you got them out again?’

‘Sorry - I keep forgetting!’

Sunday afternoon: ‘I see you are using my new colouring pencils again. HOW MANY TIMES do I have to tell you not to touch them!’

Peter, one of Jesus’ followers, was having trouble with his brother. Perhaps Peter had told him not to do something but he had kept on doing it anyway. ‘HOW MANY TIMES do I have to forgive him?’ he asked Jesus and then, thinking he was being generous, he suggested ‘How about seven times?’

‘No’ said Jesus, looking straight at Peter. ‘More like seventy times seven!’ In other words - forgive him and keep on forgiving him no matter how many times he upsets you.

Peter didn’t say anything but I imagine that in his head he was thinking to himself. ‘But why? Why should I forgive him?’

Just as you might be thinking - for example, when your best friend tells everyone a secret you didn’t want anyone to know, when your kid brother scribbles all over your homework and you have to do it again or when someone borrows your mobile phone and it gets broken. ‘Why should I forgive them after what they have done?’

To help us think about that, here is the story that Jesus told Peter.

### Bible Story

If possible, have a group of children prepared in advance to present the drama attached. With notice, a P6 or P7 class may be willing to take this on. Alternatively, ask for five volunteers to play the parts of the king, the first official, the second official and two other officials who do not speak, while you narrate. Arrange to meet with them for 15 minutes in advance of the assembly to prepare the drama. Provide simple costumes and props - such as a ‘throne’ for the king, a large scroll of paper (like a huge till receipt) to represent the first official’s debt and a much smaller scroll of paper (like an ordinary till receipt) to represent the second official’s debt.

Alternatively, tell the story in your own words, using the pictures from the PowerPoint presentation attached and two scrolls as suggested above to represent the debts owed by the two officials.

### Exploring Christian Belief

If you have used the drama, ask a few questions to ensure that the children have understood the story. For example:

- How much did the first official owe?
- How much did the second official owe?
- Why was the king angry with the first official?

Point out that in this story, Jesus wants us to understand that God is like the King and we are like the first official. Christians believe that God wants us to forgive others as He has forgiven us. This means choosing not to treat those who have hurt us as they deserve. It means choosing not to make them pay for what they have done but instead being willing to forgive them and to treat them as if it had never happened!

This is probably the hardest thing that Jesus ever taught. It is never easy to forgive others who have hurt us. But He is not asking us to do something He wasn't willing to do Himself. As He was being nailed to the cross He prayed for those who were responsible for putting Him there - Father, forgive them; they don't know what they are doing.' Jesus forgave those who were hurting Him and He wants us to be like Him - and to forgive those who hurt us. But why is this so important? Here are three possible reasons why Jesus wants us to learn to forgive others.

First, Jesus wants us to let go of our angry feelings. Anger can cause us to do all sorts of things that we may regret later on and that will only make things worse. Anger can also do a great deal of damage to us - as well as to the person with whom we are angry. Carrying angry feelings around with us, going over and over in our heads what the other person said or did to us, only makes us miserable. Why should we let the other person do that to us? It may not be easy, but it is always better to let go of angry feelings rather than hold on to them or give in to them. And the only way to do that is to decide to forgive the other person and not to make them pay for what they have done.

Second, Jesus wants us to learn to make friends again. It is sad when two people who used to be friends fall out with each other. Sometimes when this happens, the two people concerned are still fighting or refusing to speak to each other years later. They may even have forgotten what it was that caused them to fall out in the first place. The best thing that can happen when two people fall out is for them to become friends again as quickly as possible, and this of course is what Jesus wants. It takes two to mend a broken friendship and if the other person does not want to be friends again, then there is nothing you can do. But Jesus wants us always to be ready to play our part - saying sorry or being ready to forgive whenever we need to in order make friends again.

Finally, Jesus wants us to be forgiven. It is good to remember that all of us at one time or another will need others to forgive us and surely we can't expect others to forgive us if we are not willing to forgive them? This story also shows us that we cannot expect God to forgive us if we are not willing to forgive others. If we want to be forgiven we need to learn to forgive. The Bible says that because of what Jesus has done for us, God is willing to forgive us for all the wrong things we have ever said or done. Surely the least we can do, once we have received God's forgiveness, is to forgive others as He has forgiven us?

#### Reflection And Prayer

Invite the children to think of someone they may need to forgive and make friends with again. Finish with a prayer thanking God for His forgiveness and asking Him to help the children always to be ready to forgive others as He has forgiven them.