

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

45. A WITNESSING COMMUNITY

Bible Base: Acts 1: 1-8

Key Christian Belief: The first Christians told others about Jesus.

Aim: To help children understand that the church is a witnessing community.

You will need:

- A bar of chocolate (or similar), costumes and a Tesco bag for the opening scenario
- the attached PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

You will need to have set up the following scenario in advance. Fred and Harry could be played by two friends you have brought with you, two teachers or two older pupils.

Take out a bar of chocolate (or similar) and set it down somewhere prominent. Explain that you need to pop out for a moment and ask the children, while you are gone, to keep an eye on the bar of chocolate and make sure no-one touches it.

Once you have left the room, Fred and Harry enter - each wearing two or three easily identifiable items of clothing such as a baseball cap, a rugby shirt, a coat or a scarf. Harry is carrying a Tesco shopping bag. They look around for a while and then speak:

Harry: Here, Fred... do you see what I see?
Fred: Where?
Harry: (pointing) Over there.
Fred: Yes, Harry, I see it. It's a big bar of chocolate. Yum, yum!
Harry: You could go and get me that chocolate, couldn't you, Fred?
Fred: I don't know, Harry. What if someone sees me?
Harry: There's no one else here. Go on, Fred. I'll share it with you!
Fred: Oh - all right then.

Fred walks furtively over to where the chocolate is, lifts it, takes it back and gives it to Harry. Harry puts it into his shopping bag.

Harry: Well done, Fred! No one will ever know it was us!

They both leave the room. After a few seconds you return and notice that the chocolate has gone. Ask the children if they know what happened and to tell you what they saw.

For example, you could ask them:

- What happened to the chocolate?
- What did the people who stole it look like?
- What were they wearing?
- What were their names?
- Which one stole the chocolate?
- Where did he put it?
- Which way did they go?

Send a teacher off to look for them and thank the children for watching so carefully and for giving you such a good description of the two thieves. With their help, you are sure the thieves will soon be caught.

The teacher brings Fred and Harry back in. Look in the Tesco bag and find your bar of chocolate. Tell Fred and Harry that they have been caught red-handed. After assembly, they will have to face the school principal and he will decide what to do with them.

Now explain that the scenario the children have been watching was just pretend and, if the parts of Fred and Harry were played by older pupils, thank them for playing their parts so well and perhaps award them with your bar of chocolate to share between them. Ask the children to give them a round of applause as they return to their seats.

Bible Story

Point out that, if what the children had seen this morning was real, it is possible that Fred and Harry would be arrested and charged with stealing a bar of chocolate. They would then have to go to court so that a jury could decide whether or not they were guilty and a judge could decide what to do with them. In that case the court would be looking for witnesses to help them find out what really happened.

Ask the children if they know what a witness is and explain that a witness is someone who saw or heard something and tells others about it. The children themselves might be called as witnesses to tell the court what they saw!

Tell the children about a time when you were called as a witness in court or show the picture in the attached PowerPoint presentation and explain that Lisa is on the witness stand answering questions from a lawyer about a website she created.

The Bible tells us that after Jesus had been raised from the dead, and just before He returned to heaven, Jesus and His followers had climbed a little way up the Mount of Olives and were sitting talking together. Jesus told them that He was going to go back to His Father in Heaven. One day He would return and take them to be with Him there forever but in the meantime He gave them a promise and a command. (*Read and display Acts 1: 8*)

He promised that He would send them an invisible helper, the Holy Spirit, to remind them of everything He had taught them and to help them live as His followers and tell others about Him. Then He gave them a job to do. They were to be His witnesses - starting in Jerusalem, and then going into Judea, Samaria and the rest of the world.

They had been with Jesus and had seen and heard everything He said and did. Now they were to tell others what they had seen and heard - helping them to understand who Jesus is and what He has done for them.

And that is what they did - and we can read about it for ourselves in the book of Acts. They went everywhere, telling people about Jesus, just as Jesus had told them.

Not only that, we can also read what they said about Jesus in the Bible. Christians believe that the stories of Jesus that we read in the Bible are not made up but actually come from reliable witnesses - people who saw and heard for themselves what Jesus said and did. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John gathered their stories together and wrote them down for us so that we too can know what happened when Jesus lived on earth.

Christians today weren't there when Jesus lived on earth but we can help people to hear and understand what those who were there said about Him. We can also tell others what we know about Jesus - the difference He makes in our lives as we trust and follow Him.

Share some of the ways in which your church helps to share the Good News about Jesus with others - including the activities you run for kids and perhaps one way in which you support others who have gone to another part of the world to tell others about Jesus.

Christians believe that if we are His followers, Jesus wants each of us to play our part in helping others get to know Him. Suggest that the children themselves can be witnesses for Jesus in school as they show by their lives that they are His followers and tell others what they know and believe about Him.

Reflection and Prayer

Ask the children to think about how they would answer if someone asked them what they believe about Jesus.

Finish with a prayer asking God to help those who don't know much about Jesus yet to find out more about Him and to help those who are His followers to be ready to share what they believe with others.