

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

46. A LOVING COMMUNITY

Bible Base: Acts 2: 42-47; 4: 32-35

Key Christian Belief: The first Christians loved one another.

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

You will need:

- A PowerPoint presentation with pictures of your local churches and pictures illustrating the life and activities of your church.

Introduction

Show pictures of some local churches and ask the children if they know what they are called. Ask if anyone belongs to, or has been to any of the activities in these churches. Ask if they know anything about what happens in them.

Now explain that the pictures you have shown are church buildings - but when Christians talk about a church, they do not usually mean the building but the people who meet in it. The church is made up of people who love Jesus and want to follow Him. They are the church. The building is really only the place where they meet.

Show pictures illustrating the variety of people who belong to your church, and the things they do together. Highlight especially, but not exclusively, any activities in which children can be involved. The church is the people, not the building.

Bible Story

Soon after Jesus returned to heaven, Peter stood up in front of a large crowd and told them all about Jesus and what He had done for them. Lots of people became Christians that day and started to follow Jesus. These first Christians had no church buildings to meet in - but they still met together, along with Jesus' disciples, sometimes in the Temple and sometimes in each other's homes. They became the very first church.

In Acts 2: 42-46 Luke describes what they did together and what it was like to belong to the first church. Read extracts from these verses (as below) from the ERV and ask the children to listen out for the sorts of things the followers of Jesus did together.

'The believers spent their time listening to the teaching of the apostles. They shared everything with each other. They ate together and prayed together. All the believers stayed together and shared everything. They sold their land and the things they owned. Then they divided the money and gave it to those who needed it. Every day they spent much of their time together in the Temple area. They also ate together in their homes. They were happy to share their food and ate with joyful hearts.'

Ask children what they noticed about the followers of Jesus from these verses. Comment that they seemed to spend a lot of time together. They got together to learn from their leaders and from each other, they ate together and they prayed together.

But notice also that they also shared everything they had with each other. In those days, people who were sick or disabled, widows whose husbands had died and children who had no parents to look after them often didn't have any money and couldn't afford to

buy food and clothes for themselves. So those who could sold their land and possessions and the money was used to provide food and clothes for those who needed them.

The first Christians were like a family to each other. They looked out for each other and did what they could for those who were in need. So much so that later on someone wrote: 'See how these Christians love one another.' And this of course is exactly what Jesus wants His followers to do. While He was with them He had told them: 'This is my command - that you love one another as I have loved you.'

The Bible teaches us that we are not meant to follow Jesus on our own. Jesus wants us to be part of His family - a family that learns, prays and works together for Him and that loves, helps, encourages and cares for each other as we do so. This is what the church is meant to be like.

Share some of the ways in which your church cares for those in need in your fellowship, in your community and perhaps in the wider world.

Suggest that the children in their classes might think of ways in which they can be like a family and care for each other in school. For example, they might make sure that no one is left on their own in the playground, watch out for others and offer a helping hand to anyone who needs it and be kind and thoughtful in the way they speak to each other.

Reflection and Prayer

Ask each child to think of something thoughtful they could do for someone else in school this week. Finish with a prayer thanking Jesus for His love and asking Him to help the children be like a family together and show the same love to others as He has to them.