

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

9. JOSEPH

Bible Base: Genesis 37-45

Key Christian Belief: God has a plan for our lives.

Aim: To help children understand that God is with us in the ups and downs of life.

You will need:

- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation.
- Costumes (as below).

Introduction

Open the PowerPoint presentation and display the Snakes And Ladders board. Ask if anyone has ever played a game of Snakes And Ladders and briefly remind the how it works. Then ask:

- In a game of Snakes And Ladders what do you want to happen? (Land on a ladder.)
- How does it feel when you do?
- What do you not want to happen? (Land on a snake.)
- How does it feel when you do?

Point out life can sometimes feel a bit like a game of Snakes And Ladders. Sometimes good things happen, we get what we want, everything is working out as we had hoped, and we are happy - as if we had landed on a ladder. Sometimes bad things happen, we don't get what we want, things don't work out as we had hoped, and we are disappointed - as if we had landed on a snake.

Display the picture of Joseph from the PowerPoint. Ask the children if they have ever heard of Joseph - a character from the Bible who had a bright coat of many colours? As Joseph thought about his life, it must have seemed like a game of Snakes And Ladders at times - full of ups and downs.

But as we shall see, God had a plan for Joseph's life. In all the ups and downs, God was with Him, working everything out for good.

Story

Invite four volunteers to help you. Line them up in height order - shortest to tallest. Tell them that, in this order, they will each represent Joseph at a different stage in his life.

Joseph the brother

Dress your first volunteer in a multi-coloured robe.

Joseph's dad, Jacob, loved him more than any of his brothers and showed it by giving him a beautiful coat of many colours. This made his brothers jealous. He also dreamed that one day his family would all bow down to him and this made them very angry.

When his brothers saw Joseph coming towards them one day, they were going to kill him but in the end they decided to make some money out of him instead. So they sold him to some slave-traders who were heading for Egypt. They took his coat, dipped it in blood and told their dad that Joseph was dead.

Joseph the slave

Dress your second volunteer in an apron.

In Egypt Joseph was sold as a slave to a rich man called Potiphar. His master soon saw that he was bright, hardworking and reliable so Joseph was promoted and was soon running the whole household!

Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife fancied Joseph - and wanted him to be her lover. But Joseph stayed loyal to his master and told her 'no'. She was so angry that when Potiphar came home, she told him that Joseph had tried to attack her. Potiphar believed his wife and Joseph was put in prison.

Joseph the prisoner

Dress your third volunteer in a striped tee shirt.

In time, the prison officer too noticed that Joseph was bright, hardworking and reliable and soon put him in charge of all the other prisoners.

Eventually, Joseph met two of the most important servants in the household of King Pharaoh. They had each done something wrong and ended up in prison along with Joseph. They each had a dream and Joseph was able to tell them what their dreams meant. When one of them was released he promised to tell King Pharaoh about Joseph - in the hope that the king would release him too.

Joseph waited for the day to come when he would be set free. But it did not come because the servant forgot about his promise. And Joseph had to stay in prison.

However, one night King Pharaoh himself was having a difficult time sleeping and had some strange dreams. The servant remembered Joseph. Soon, Joseph was with the Pharaoh, telling him what his dreams meant. He told him that after seven years of plenty, there would be seven years of famine and that he needed to save some crops during the years of plenty so there would be enough to eat during the years of famine. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he put him in charge of 'Project Famine'.

Joseph the Prime Minister

Dress your fourth volunteer in a royal robe.

The famine was so severe that Joseph's brothers had to travel all the way to Egypt in search of food. They went to find the person in charge not knowing that it was their brother. What would Joseph do?

He decided to forgive them. He could see that when they sold him as a slave, when Potiphar's wife told lies about him, when he met the king's two servants in prison - it was all part of God's plan. Now here he was in Egypt and was able to make sure that his family, as well as thousands of others, had plenty to eat while food was scarce. God had been with Joseph all along and although what Joseph's brothers did was bad - God had made it turn out for good!

When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had to come to Egypt he invited them, their dad and their families to come and live in Egypt. He gave them somewhere to live in the best part of the land and made sure that they had everything they needed.

Exploring Christian Belief

Joseph's life was full of ups and downs, like a game of Snakes And Ladders, but it was not pure chance, or a roll of the dice, that decided what happened to Joseph. It was no accident that he ended up becoming Prime Minister of Egypt. It was God who had made things turn out this way.

Christians believe that God is in control of everything that happens to us. That doesn't mean that bad things don't happen. He doesn't always take the bad things away or stop them from happening and that can be hard to understand. However, when bad things happen there are two important lessons that we can learn from the story of Joseph.

The first is that **in everything that happens, God is with us**. In the Bible, every time something bad happens to Joseph the narrator says, 'But God was with Joseph.' God was with Joseph in the tough times as well as in the good times. The bad times did not mean that God had forgotten about him or didn't care about him any more. Instead, God had been there with him, helping him to be brave and strong and to get through.

The second is that **in everything that happens God is at work for good**. In the story of Joseph, He even took the bad things that people did and made them turn out for good in the end. This reminds us of a wonderful promise that God has given to all those who love Him. Display and read together the words of Romans 8: 28.

God had a plan for Joseph's life. He was with Joseph all along, working everything out for good, according to His plan. Joseph didn't know what God's plan was, but knowing that God was with him and was working everything out for good helped him to trust God and do what was right even when everything seemed to be going wrong.

God has a plan for us too. Sometimes when we are going through tough times, it can be hard to understand what God's plan is. Sometimes it is only afterwards, when we see the big picture, that it all makes sense. But Christians believe that if we love God and trust Him as Joseph did we can be sure that He will always be with us and will help us to discover His amazing plan for our lives too.

Reflection / Prayer

Ask the children to think of a 'down' time in their lives - e.g. when they were treated unfairly, or when things didn't work out the way they had hoped. How did they react? Conclude with a prayer asking God to help the children keep on trusting Him and doing what is right - even when things seem unfair or don't work out the way they had hoped.