

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

48. BARNABAS AND SAUL

Bible Base: Acts 9: 26-27; 11:19-25; 13: 1-3

Key Christian Belief: The first Christians encouraged one another.

Aim: To help children consider how they can encourage one another.

You will need:

- the PowerPoint presentation attached;
- a video clip of Jonathan and Alastair Brownlee in Rio. (see below)

Introduction

Ask if any of the children have nicknames. Invite one or two of them to come to the front and explain what their nicknames are and how they got them (if they can). Say what your nickname was at school and mention any other people you know of who have interesting nicknames.

Explain that the story today is about someone in the Bible whose real name was Joseph - but no one ever called him that. He was known to everyone as Barnabas, which means something like 'born encourager'. They called him this because he was really good at encouraging others. This means that he was always looking out for people who were having a tough time and doing what he could to cheer them up and help them keep going.

It is what Andy Murray's fans do when they call out 'Come on Andy!' as they watch him play tennis. They want him to know that they are on his side and they hope that this will help him to find the courage and strength he needs to keep going when the match is hard. Perhaps you have had people cheer for you as you took part in a match or a race of some kind. When things are tough, it helps to know that others are on your side.

The Bible says that we should 'encourage one another'. So today we are going to find out how Barnabas encouraged a young man called Saul and think about some ways in which we can encourage others who are having a tough time.

Bible Story

Imagine you are a group of Christians living in Jerusalem. The last time you heard of Saul he was on his way to Damascus to arrest the Christians there and put them in jail. He has already put some of your friends in jail. He had been there watching while one of your friends, Stephen, was stoned to death just for believing in Jesus.

You have gathered together in someone's house when there is a knock on the door.

'Who is it?' you ask.

'It's Saul' comes the reply.

You freeze. Then you lock the door and tell him he can't come in. You are scared he is going to arrest you and throw you in jail.

'But I believe in Jesus now too,' says Saul.

‘Don’t believe him - it’s a trap!’ your friend whispers to everyone.

Then you hear a voice you know. It’s your friend Barnabas. ‘It’s OK’ he says. ‘It’s true. Saul has changed. He is a follower of Jesus now too.’

Slowly you open the door and when you realise that Saul is telling the truth, and that he really has changed, you welcome him in as your friend.

Barnabas spoke up for his friend when everyone else was against him. Maybe you could be a friend like that to someone? Maybe you know someone who feels that everyone is against them - and you could speak up for them and maybe persuade others to let them join your group? What an encouragement that would be to them!

Some time later Barnabas heard that there were lots of people in Antioch who wanted to know more about Jesus - so off he went to find out what he could do to help. When he got there, however, he discovered that there were so many of them that he would need another helper - so he went to visit his friend Saul.

‘You are just the person I need’ he said. ‘You would be really good at telling others about Jesus. Why not come with me and we can both do it together? I’ll show you what to do and help you if you get stuck. So Saul became Barnabas’s helper. He loved telling others about Jesus and with Barnabas to help him he soon became really good at it.

Barnabas helped his friend do something he wasn’t sure he could do. Maybe you could be a friend like that to someone? Maybe you are good at something and you could take time to help someone who does not find it so easy to learn to do it too. Maybe you could say ‘You can do it!’ when they don’t think they can or ‘Well done!’ when they have done a good job. What an encouragement that would be to them!

Barnabas and Saul made such a good team that their leaders decided to send them both on a long journey to lots of other places so that they could tell people there about Jesus too. Only soon it wasn’t Barnabas and Saul any more - it was Saul and Barnabas! Saul was now the leader and Barnabas was his helper. Barnabas was ready to help his friend in any way he could - even if it meant taking second place.

He was the sort of friend who would give up his own seat or his own slice of cake so that you could have one or give up his own plans in order to help you with yours. Maybe you could be a friend like that to someone? What an encouragement that would be to them!

Here is another example of someone who was willing to take second place in order to help someone else. Jonathan and Alastair Brownlee were competing in a race in the Paralympics in Rio during the summer of 2016. Towards the end of the race Jonathan’s legs wouldn’t work any more. Watch what happened next.

Show the clip of the race from www.youtube.com/watch?v=CS0GkCfljqk

Alastair could have won the race - but he gave up his own chance of winning in order to get his brother across the finish line. What a great encouragement that must have been to Jonathan to know that he had a brother who would do that for him!

Exploring Christian Belief

Saul (who was later known as Paul) went on to be one of the most famous missionaries ever. But he never forgot his friend Barnabas. Without his encouragement and help, he might never have got started and he might never have been able to keep going.

Life can be tough sometimes and the Bible says that we should learn to encourage one another. Maybe you know someone who feels that everyone is against them. Maybe you know someone who is finding it hard to do something you are good at. Maybe you know someone who has an important job to do. What could you do to show them that you are there for them? What could you do to cheer them up and help them keep going?

Reflection and Prayer

Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children look out for others who are finding things hard and do what they can to encourage them in the week ahead.