

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

50. DAVID AND JONATHAN

Bible Base: 1 Samuel 18: 1-12; 20: 1-42; 2 Samuel 9: 1-13

Key Christian Belief: God chooses a king who keeps his promises.

Aim: To help children understand that Jesus can be trusted to keep His promises.

You will need:

- three medals to be awarded to the winners of a competition;
- a pair of crutches;
- a spear;
- a 'royal' robe;
- a crown.

Introduction

Ask the children to think for a moment about what makes a really good friend. Give some examples. E.g. A good friend is someone who:

- is fun to be with;
- likes doing the same things you do;
- is kind and helpful;
- sticks by you;
- shares what they have with you;
- encourages you;
- puts you first;
- sets you a good example;
- can be trusted.

A really good friend is one of the best things anyone can ever have. Talk about one of your friends and something they did for you that showed you how much they care about you and explain that if there were a competition to find the Best Friend In The World you would nominate your friend to win.

Now explain that you are going to have a competition to find out who here this morning is the best friend in the school. You are looking for some volunteers to nominate their friends for this and to explain to everyone why they think their friend deserves to win. Explain that they will need to think of something really special that their friend did for them if they want them to win.

Choose three volunteers and give them thirty seconds each to bring their nominees up to the front and explain why they deserve to win the 'Best Friend In The School' award.

Take a vote - but give medals to all three, explaining that you think they all deserve to be winners. Then explain that in today's story we are going to hear about someone who was a really good friend to David.

Bible Story

Choose four volunteers to represent Mephibosheth, Saul, Jonathan and David and have them stand in a line, spread out across the front of the stage. Explain that you will give them each a prop to hold, to remind everyone of their part in the story.

The nurse looked at the boy. He was just five years old. His father, the prince, had just been killed in battle and now his enemies would be trying to find him so that they could kill him too. She picked him up and ran but in her haste she tripped and fell. Both of the boy's legs had been broken and they had never mended. And so for the whole of his life Mephibosheth, for that was his name, had had to use crutches to get around.

Give Mephibosheth a pair of crutches to hold.

His nurse had taken him far away from the capital city to a place called Lo Debar so that his enemies would never find him and that was where he was living now. As a young man he had been unable to get a job and, with his father's money all gone, he was now very poor. However, although he didn't know it yet, he was about to become rich beyond his wildest dreams. It all went back to a promise that King David had made to his father a long time ago.

Give Saul a spear to hold.

Back then David was a hero and everyone was singing songs about him. 'Saul has killed his thousands' they sang 'but David has killed his ten thousands!' King Saul heard their songs and he wasn't happy. Everyone seemed to think David was a better soldier than him and he became jealous of David's success and popularity. The more he thought about it the angrier he became and he was often in a bad mood because of it.

Now it happened that David was a skilful musician and before all this trouble began he had been chosen as one of the musicians who would come to play in the royal court from time to time. After killing Goliath, David had come to live in the palace and when Saul was in a bad mood, David would play the harp for him and he would calm down.

But one day when Saul looked up and saw that it was David playing the harp he suddenly became very angry. He picked up his spear and hurled it at David. Fortunately it whizzed past David's ear and he was able to escape.

Give Jonathan a robe to hold.

'Your father is very angry with me' David told Prince Jonathan. Ever since David had come to the palace he and Jonathan had become good friends.

As Jonathan thought about how David had defeated Goliath, and then heard about some more amazing victories that David had won since he joined the army, he began to suspect the truth. God was with David now and was no longer with his father. 'David will be king one day instead of me' he thought. But unlike his father, he wasn't jealous. He simply accepted that that was what God wanted and began to help David prepare for the day when he would become king.

One day he brought out his royal robe and gave it to David along with his tunic, his belt, his sword and his bow. (*Have Jonathan give David the robe.*) 'These are yours now' he told him. 'You will need them more than I do. Only remember me and my family when you become king.' And David promised that he would.

Saul's angry temper grew worse and soon David realised that it was no longer safe for him to stay in the palace. His friend Prince Jonathan tried to reason with his father, asking him what David had ever done to deserve to be treated this way.

‘So you are on his side too, now are you?’ his father snapped back angrily.

Jonathan realised then that David was right. It was not safe for him to stay in the palace any longer. He would have to go. Now David was hiding in the woods when Jonathan came out to give him the news. They both wept and hugged each other. Jonathan made David promise again that he would take care of him and his family whenever he became king. And then David was gone. They would never see each other again.

Give David a crown and ask him to wear it along with the robe.

Now, many years later, David was king. His best friend Jonathan had been killed in battle along with his father, King Saul. David mourned and grieved for his friend for many days. And then he asked his advisers what had happened to Jonathan’s family.

‘All of them gone’ he was told. ‘Except for one son, who was crippled when he was five years old and now lives in a place called Lo Debar.’

‘Send for him’ David commanded.

Mephibosheth was probably very nervous about going to the palace to see King David. Whatever could the king want with him?’

‘It’s good to see you’ said David as Mephibosheth stood before him, leaning on his crutches.

‘Your father and I were great friends’ he went on. ‘I promised him that I would take care of him and his family whenever I became king and so here I am. Your father Jonathan was killed in battle - but you are his son, aren’t you?’

Mephibosheth nodded, not sure what was coming next.

‘Well’ said David. I want you to go and pack up all your things. From now on you will be living here in Jerusalem with me, and dining at the royal table every night. I will give you back everything that once belonged to you and will see that you have everything you need.’

Mephibosheth did not know what to say. Instead of hiding away and living in poverty, from now on he would be living like a prince with the king to look after him and to provide him with everything he needed. It was the best day of his life. All his wildest dreams had come true - and all because the king had made a promise to his father!

Exploring Christian Belief

Review the story with the children. In what ways was Jonathan a good friend to David? What did David promise to do? How did he keep his promise?

Jonathan could see that David was going to be king one day. God had clearly chosen him for this. So Jonathan showed David that he understood this and was willing to serve and be loyal to David - even though it meant that he himself could no longer be king.

David made a wonderful promise to Jonathan to look after him and his family when he became king and although many years had passed and Jonathan had died, David still

kept his promise. He welcomed Mephibosheth into his family and treated him like a prince because of the promise he had made to his best friend, Jonathan.

As we saw last week, the Bible teaches us that Jesus is the one whom God has chosen to be our king. When He was on earth it was clear that God was with Him. Otherwise He could not have done the amazing things He did.

Once Jonathan knew that David was God's chosen king he did the right thing. He gave up his own right to be king and showed that he was ready to serve and be loyal to David instead. Christians believe that if we are willing to do the same with King Jesus - accepting that He is the one God wants us to listen to and follow, and showing that we are ready to do so, then just as David gave Jonathan some wonderful promises - so King Jesus gives some wonderful promises to us too. He promises that He will always be with us and that He will take care of us. And, like David, Christians believe He is a King who keeps His promises.

He is also a king who treats us as His friends. Even after he became king, David still thought of Jonathan as his friend. And because Jonathan was his father, he thought of Mephibosheth in the same way too.

Isn't it great that King Jesus wants us not just to be His servants but His friends? I believe He is the best friend anyone could ever have. He is certainly my best friend...

Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for friends and especially for Jesus, the best friend of all. Ask God to help the children to be good friends to others.