

BIBLE TIME LINE ASSEMBLIES

67. WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Bible Base: Mark 8: 27-33; 9: 2-13

Key Christian Belief: Following Jesus means listening to Him.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to listen to Jesus.

You will need:

- the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Introduction

Explain to the children that you are going to play a game of 'Who Am I?' They have to guess who you are pretending to be from the clues given in the attached PowerPoint presentation. You will give them ten points if they guess correctly after the first clue, eight after the second, six after the third, four after the fourth and two after the fifth.

Now ask the children to imagine that you have amnesia and are asking everyone to tell you who you are. There are a number of different answers people might give.

Some might tell you your name and where you are from. 'Your name is... You come from...' Others might tell you what you do. 'You work for... You come into our school to take assemblies...' Still others might tell you how you are related to them. 'You are my brother... husband... dad... friend.' They would be telling you what they know about you.

Bible Story

Jesus once asked his friends 'Who do people say I am?' He was not asking this because he had amnesia but because he wanted to find out if they knew who he really was yet. They had heard the amazing things he said and seen the amazing things he did and now Jesus wanted to know who they thought he was. He had given them lots of clues!

Display the 'clues' from the PowerPoint presentation one at a time.

They had heard Him teach people about God and were amazed at the way he seemed to know what he was talking about. They had seen him cast out an evil spirit and were amazed to see that he had such power over evil. They had seen him cure people with all kinds of diseases. They had heard him tell someone that their sins were forgiven. His disciples had seen him calm a storm and were amazed to see that even the winds and waves obeyed him. Everyone had been wondering about who Jesus was. They wanted to know how he could possibly know so much about God and do the amazing things he did.

And so Jesus wanted to know what they were saying. Who did they think he was?

'They say you are a messenger from God' His friends told him. 'Maybe even Elijah or John the Baptist come back from the dead!'

'But who do you say I am?' Jesus asked them.

As usual, Peter was the first one to speak.

'You are the Christ - the Son of the living God!'

The word 'Christ' means promised King. Peter was saying that Jesus was the king God had promised to send; the One who would rescue His people and reign for ever and ever.

'Well done, Peter' said Jesus. 'God has helped you to understand who I am.'

According to Jesus, Peter hadn't just listened to what everyone else was saying. He hadn't even tried to work it out by himself. He had thought about what he had seen and heard and had asked God to help Him understand who Jesus really was. And that was how he had discovered the truth and got the answer right.

Peter must have been as pleased as punch when Jesus told him he had given the right answer. He had been the only one to speak up and out of all the disciples he was the only one to get the answer right.

Unfortunately for Peter, the story doesn't end there. Next Jesus went on to explain that very soon he would be arrested and sentenced to death.

'Never!' said Peter. 'We won't let that happen to you. There is no need for you to have to suffer and die!'

'Get out of my sight!' Jesus said to Peter. 'That idea comes from Satan, not from God.'

Having got it so right the first time, how could he have got it so wrong this time?

There are lots of ideas out there about what to believe and how to behave and we usually have lots of ideas in our own heads too. Some of these ideas come from God and I believe it is wise to listen to them. Some come from God's enemy, Satan, and it can be dangerous to listen to them. But how are we to know which ideas come from God and which don't? That was Peter's problem - he couldn't tell. On this occasion something that seemed right and made perfect sense to him apparently wasn't right at all!

Peter knew who Jesus was now - but he hadn't yet understood why Jesus had come. There was still lots more for him to learn.

Shortly after this Jesus invited three of his friends - Peter, James and John - to climb up into the mountains with Him. While they were up there a strange and wonderful thing happened. All at once Jesus began to glow with the brightest light his friends had ever seen. As they watched, two people from long ago appeared on either side of him. One was Moses - the one to whom God had given the ten commandments. He was reminding Jesus that He had been sent to take the punishment for those who had broken God's law.

The other was Elijah, one of God's messengers. He was reminding Jesus that he was the one they had all written about - the one who would rescue His people and reign as king for ever and ever. But as part of God's rescue plan, he would have to suffer and die.

Then a cloud descended and a voice spoke - this time to Peter, James and John. 'This is my Son' said the voice. 'Listen to Him!'

This was the answer to Peter's problem. How would he know what to believe or how to behave in a way that was pleasing to God? The answer was to listen to Jesus! Peter had been acting as if he knew better than Jesus. Now he realised that he didn't. He still had

lots to learn - especially about why Jesus had come - and he needed Jesus to teach him. So from now on, no matter what anyone else said and no matter what his own ideas were - he would listen to Jesus and be willing to learn from him.

Exploring Christian Belief

Jesus wanted His friends to see for themselves who he really was rather than simply take his or anyone else's word for it. People were saying lots of different things about Jesus but instead of just listening to what others said, Peter had thought carefully about what he had seen and heard and had asked God to help him understand who Jesus was. And I believe that if you read or listen to the stories of Jesus and ask God to help you understand who Jesus really is, he will help you to do so, just as He did for Peter.

And once we have understood who Jesus is, the Bible says that he wants us listen to him. There are lots of voices around us telling us what to believe and how to behave. Following Jesus means listening to what he says even when it is different from what others say or from what we might think ourselves. We all have lots to learn and, like Peter, we need Jesus to teach us. That's why the things that Jesus said and did are written down for us in the Bible - so that we can find out for ourselves what Jesus taught about why he came, the difference this makes to us and how we can play our part in bringing God's love to others.

I believe Jesus has lots of important things to teach us. But are we listening to him? Or instead are we just going along with what others say? Or trying to work things out by ourselves? Remember what the voice from heaven said. 'This is my Son. Listen to Him!'

Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God for Jesus and asking God to help the children listen to and learn from him.