

## BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

### 70. PAUL AND SILAS IN PHILIPPI

Bible Base: Acts 16: 11-40

Key Christian Belief: We are saved through faith.

Aim: To help children understand that God wants us to put our faith (trust) in Jesus.

You will need

- The PowerPoint presentation attached.

#### INTRODUCTION

Ask the children to think of a time when they wanted something so badly that they were ready to do anything they could to get it. Perhaps they saved up for ages. Perhaps they did lots of jobs around the house in order to earn the money they needed. Perhaps they (or someone they know) queued up all night for a bargain.

Ask some of them to tell you what it was they wanted so badly and what they had to do to get it. In today's story we will hear about someone who saw something he wanted - and asked what he would have to do to get it.

#### BIBLE STORY

Use the attached PowerPoint presentation to tell the following story.

Explain that Saul, whom the children heard about last week, has now changed his name to Paul. Along with his friend Silas he is now doing the very important job that God had chosen him for. Can anyone remember what that was? He was travelling to lots of different countries outside Israel to tell people about Jesus. In today's story Paul and Silas have arrived in a city called Philippi.

First, they found a group of women praying together down by the riverside. They already knew about God but had never heard of Jesus before. So, Paul began to tell them about Him - who He was and what He had done. One of them was a rich lady, called Lydia, who sold expensive purple cloth. As Paul was talking, God helped her in her heart to know that what he said was true and she immediately began to follow Jesus.

'Where are you staying while you are here?' she asked Paul and Silas.

'We don't know yet' they replied.

'Then come and stay in my house for as long as you need to!' she said - so Paul and Silas now had somewhere to stay while they were in Philippi.

One day as they were walking around the streets and market places, a slave girl kept following them. There was an evil spirit inside her who gave her the power to tell fortunes. It often tortured her - but her masters didn't care; they were able to charge people a lot of money to have their fortunes told by this slave girl.

As she followed them, she kept shouting. 'These men are the servants of the most High God. They have come to show you the way to be saved.' But it was more like a screech than a shout. And her mouth was screwed up and her face was twisted out of shape as if she was in agony.

After some time, Paul turned around, looked directly at her and commanded the evil spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus. As it did so, her voice returned to normal and her face relaxed into a smile again and everyone knew she had been set free.

However, her owners weren't at all happy. 'How are we going to make money out of her now?' they said. 'She won't be able to tell fortunes any more. These men have ruined our business!' So, they went to the local magistrates and told them that Paul and Silas were making trouble and teaching people to do things that were illegal. The magistrates believed them and had Paul and Silas arrested.

The shirts were taken off their backs and they were flogged with a whip until their backs were sore and bleeding. Then they were thrown into a prison cell, with their arms chained up and their feet in stocks. At midnight the jailer came to do his rounds. Some of the prisoners were sleeping. Some were grumbling and moaning to themselves. It was just like any other night - but wait. What was that?

'It can't be' he thought. But it was. Two of the prisoners were singing praises to God! He had never heard anything like that in his prison before. He went to find out who these two prisoners were and of course it was Paul and Silas. Their backs were sore, they were chained up, their feet were in stocks - but they were still singing songs of praise to God!

Just then everyone heard a strange rumbling sound. It grew louder and the ground began to shake. 'It's an earthquake!' shouted some of the other prisoners. As the walls around them shook, the prison doors fell open. Their chains fell off and their feet were set free from the stocks. The jailer was terrified - and not just because of the earthquake but because if any of the prisoners escaped, he would be in big trouble!

'Don't worry' Paul shouted. 'Look - we are all here!'

'Sirs' he said, falling to his knees. 'What must I do to be a friend of God like you are?'

'Believe in Jesus' said Paul. 'Put your trust in Him and all the wrong things you have ever done will be forgiven.' So, the jailer and his whole family began to follow Jesus that day too. The jailer took Paul and Silas round to his house and bathed their wounds. Next day, when the magistrates heard what had happened, they ordered Paul and Silas to be released and begged them to leave the city.

So, after they had met with Lydia and her friends one more time they said goodbye and travelled on their way to tell others about Jesus in the next city too...

## **CONCLUSION**

What was it, do you think, that made the jailer ask what he needed to do to be a friend of God like Paul and Silas were? Suggest that he had probably never met anyone like Paul and Silas before. In the earthquake everyone else was scared stiff, but not them. They knew they were safe in God's hands. When their backs were bleeding and they were in chains they kept on singing praise to God because they knew that God was with them and that nothing could ever take His love away from them.

Maybe it was seeing the difference that being a friend of God made to Paul and Silas that made him ask them what he needed to do to be a friend of God like they were. Christians believe this is probably the most important question that anyone can ever ask.

And Paul told him exactly what he needed to do. Can anyone remember what he said? He didn't tell him to try very hard to keep all God's rules. He didn't tell Him to go to church every Sunday. He didn't tell him to give lots of money away to poor people - although these are all good things to do. He told Him to put His trust in Jesus.

As we saw last week, Christians believe that it is only because of what Jesus has done for us that we can be God's friends. The Bible tells us how God showed His grace and kindness to us by sending Jesus to die for us so that, even though we don't deserve it, we can still be His friends. The good news is that if we put our trust in Jesus to forgive us and to help us live God's way, God says we can be His friends for ever.

And if we are God's friends we can be just as sure as Paul and Silas were that He will always be with us and that He will take care of us. Some years after this story took place, Paul wrote to his friends in Philippi - including Lydia, the slave girl, the jailer and his family and we can read what He wrote to them in our Bibles.

In chapter 4 verse 4 of his letter he told them to 'rejoice in the Lord always'. In other words, no matter where you are and no matter what happens, remember that God is with you and that nothing can ever take His love away from you and that will give you something to be joyful about even in the hardest of times!

### **SONG**

Choose a lively praise song that the children know well. For example 'I'm Gonna Jump Up And Down' by Doug Horley (available from iTunes). When Paul and Silas sang praises to God they nearly brought the house down. Let's see what we can do this morning...

### **PRAYER**

Finish with a prayer asking God to help the children to put their trust in Jesus and to know that He is always with them so that they may have the same joy in their hearts that Paul and Silas had, no matter how tough things get.