

## BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

### 72. THE GIFT OF GOD

Bible Base: Romans 6: 23

Key Christian Belief: God offers us His love and friendship as a gift.

Aim: To help children understand that God offers us His love and friendship as a gift.

You will need a large box wrapped on all sides in plain gift-wrap paper and the words below printed, one section on each side of the box, so that the box can be turned several times, either vertically or horizontally, to reveal the complete verse.

The gift / of God / is eternal / life through / Jesus Christ / our Lord. / Romans 6: 23

You will also need:

- four packets of Smarties
- a skipping rope
- a whistle and a means of timing 30 seconds
- four cards each with one of the following statements written on it:
  - I won it.
  - I earned it.
  - I bought it.
  - I accepted it.

#### **Introduction**

Place four packets of Smarties somewhere so that everyone can see them. Explain that you will not be taking any of these packets of Smarties home with you. Each of them will belong to someone else in the assembly hall before the assembly is over. Keep watching and listening to find out how one of them could be yours...

Display your gift-wrapped box and explain that it is not what is on the inside of the box that is important this time but what is on the outside. Turn the box round and invite the children to read with you what is written on it. If time permits, do this several times.

Explain that this is the Bible sentence we will be exploring this morning. Eternal life means living as a friend of God forever. Our verse tells us that because of Jesus we can be friends of God forever and that this is God's gift to us. It is something that Paul wrote to help others understand the Good News about Jesus, But what does it mean?

#### **Bible Discovery**

Lift your first packet of Smarties and explain that you will give it to the winner of a competition. Show the skipping rope and ask for two volunteers to see how many skips they can do in 30 seconds. Have someone blow a whistle at the beginning and end of the time and count the number of skips aloud for everyone to hear. Give a round of applause to both volunteers but award the packet of Smarties to the winner.

As you do so say, 'This packet of Smarties is yours - you have won it!' Give them the card with 'I won it' written on it and explain that you will ask them to hold it up later on to remind everyone of how they got their packet of Smarties.

Lift your second packet of Smarties and explain that you are going to give it to someone who really deserves it. Choose one of the adults (the one who played the piano for the opening song, the one who led the assembly, the one who organises assemblies every week...) and commend them for the wonderful job they do and say how much everyone appreciates it. (Big this up as much as you can!) Give them the packet of Smarties as a way of saying thank you to them for all that they do.

As you do so say, 'This packet of Smarties is yours - you have earned it!' Give them the card with 'I earned it' written on it and explain that you will ask them to hold it up later on to remind everyone of how they got their packet of Smarties.

Lift your third packet of Smarties and explain that you are going to sell this one to the first person who can either hold up a 10p coin or put a 10p coin in your hand. Check with the person concerned that they genuinely want to buy the Smarties. Then take the 10p coin and give them the packet of Smarties.

As you do so say, 'This packet of Smarties is yours - you have bought it!' Give them the card with 'I bought it' written on it and explain that you will ask them to hold it up later on to remind everyone of how they got their packet of Smarties.

Point out that there is still one packet of Smarties left and explain that you will come to it in a moment but first you want to remind them of what happened to the first three. Bring those who were given them up to the front and ask them to hold their cards up.

Now ask if anyone can remember the Bible verse that was written on the box. Read it one more time together. The Bible says that God offers us a new life as His friends, a life that will last forever, to us as a gift. Were any of the three people up here now given their packet of Smarties as a gift? Refer to each of the cards one at a time and comment as follows.

If you win something it isn't a gift...it's a prize. We don't need to win God's love by being better than everyone else. Otherwise it would be a prize, not a gift.

If you earn something it isn't a gift...it's a reward. We don't need to earn God's love by doing lots of good things. Otherwise it would be a reward, not a gift.

If you pay for something it isn't a gift either. We don't need to pay for God's love by giving lots of money away to help others. If you have to pay for something it's not a gift.

So how does a gift work? Ask if it is anyone's birthday today? Or this week? Choose the person whose birthday is nearest to today and ask them to come up to the front. Ask if they would like the last packet of Smarties? If so, give it to them and say, 'Happy Birthday! This packet of Smarties is yours because I offered it to you and you accepted it.' Give them the card with 'I accepted it' written on it and ask them to hold it up.

That's how a gift works, isn't it? Someone buys it for you, maybe wraps it up nicely and then offers it to you. And, especially if it's something good, you accept it, say 'Thank You' and it's yours!

### **Exploring Christian Belief**

Our Bible verse is telling us that we don't have to win, earn or pay for the new life that God wants us to have as His friends. Christians believe that God offers us His love and

friendship as a gift - through Jesus. The Bible says that it is Jesus who makes it possible for us to be God's friends. That God sent Him be our rescuer, our teacher, our leader and our friend. Jesus is God's gift to us. The Bible says that if we simply accept Him into our lives and are ready to trust and follow Him, we can be His friends forever. This is the Good News that Paul wanted everyone to know about.

And Christians believe that if we are His friends, then God wants us to get to know Him. He wants us to spend time talking and listening to Him. He wants us to learn to trust Him and to show our love for Him by doing what pleases Him. And the more you do, the more I think you will discover how wonderful the gift of God's love and friendship is.

### **Prayer**

Ask the children to reflect silently on what it means, or could mean, to them to be a friend of God. Then lead them in a prayer thanking God that He offers His love and friendship freely to everyone. Ask Him to help the children to know in their hearts that God loves them and to show it by choosing to live in ways that are pleasing to Him.