

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

21. PENTECOST

Bible Base: Acts 2: 1-42

Key Christian Belief: God sent the Holy Spirit to help us.

Aim: To discover that Christians believe the Holy Spirit helps us to live for Jesus.

You will need:

- the PowerPoint presentation attached
- a packet of Maltesers

NB: The paragraphs in italics could be omitted for younger children.

Introduction

Ask the children what they can 'see' in each of the pictures on the first four slides. When someone says 'the wind' ask them what colour it is and what it looks like! Point out that we can't actually see the wind - but we know it is there because we can see what it does - bending the trees, blowing (and drying) the washing on the line, making the kite soar through the air, stirring up the waves.

These pictures show how powerful the wind can be. It has the power to make things move. To demonstrate this, invite several volunteers up to the front. Ask them to lie down. (In a large hall, use the stage so everyone can see - or else have the volunteers seated and ask them to lean their heads back and look up to the ceiling.) Place a Malteser on their lips and see how long they can keep blowing it in the air above their mouths without it touching them. Give them some time to practice - then ask them all to begin at the same time and see whose Malteser stays in the air the longest.

Display the next slide and ask the children what it is. It is a wind farm - a group of wind turbines that use the power of the wind to make electricity. These days we use wind as a source of energy or power.

Long ago we used horses to give us the power we needed to pull heavy ploughs and carriages. Then we discovered how to use flowing water from a river to give us the power we needed to make the machinery in our factories work.

After that we discovered how to burn fuels taken from the ground - coal, oil, gas - to make electricity. However, we also discovered that digging all these things up destroys the environment and the smoke from burning them pollutes the air we breathe.

These days we have found better ways of making electricity. We are learning how to use the sun and the wind to give us the power we need.

So wind is something you can't see but gives us the power we need to make things work.

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He gave His followers a promise. He promised that He would send them a helper known as the Holy Spirit to be with them and to live inside them. Like the wind, they would not be able to see Him but they would know He was there by what they would see Him do. He would give them the power they would need to follow Jesus and tell others about Him.

Bible Story

One day, soon after Jesus had gone back to heaven, His followers, who were now known as the apostles (or messengers of Jesus) were all gathered together in an upstairs room.

Suddenly the sound of a rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house. As it whooshed around them, they also saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that came down and settled on their heads. Then they rushed outside and found themselves praising God in languages they had never spoken before.

Jews from many different countries, who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, heard the commotion and were amazed to hear them all praising God in so many different languages. Each of them heard their own language being spoken.

‘What does this mean?’ they asked. ‘How can they speak all these different languages when they have never heard them before?’

Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’

‘These people are not drunk!’ said Peter, standing up. ‘It’s only nine in the morning! You are seeing what the prophet Joel spoke about long ago. “In the last days” he said, “God will pour out His Spirit on all people.” Today God has sent the Holy Spirit to us just as He promised He would. You can’t see Him but you can see from what is happening around you that He is here! He has come to help us spread the Good News about Jesus.’

‘As many of you know’ Peter continued, ‘Jesus of Nazareth did many amazing things among us as a sign that He was sent from God. But our leaders would not believe this and persuaded us to hand Him over to be put to death. But God raised Him from the dead. We are all witnesses that Jesus is alive and has now gone to be with His Father in heaven. Be sure of this: God has made this Jesus, whom we crucified, King for ever.’

When the people heard this, they were very upset and asked Peter and the others what they should do.

Peter replied, ‘Stop doing what is wrong and start following Jesus. Then God will forgive you, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit just as we have. This promise is for you and for your children and for all who have yet to hear.’

About three thousand people heard Peter’s message that day and began to follow Jesus. They began meeting up each day to learn from the apostles, eat together and pray. They shared what they had and gave to those in need. They continued meeting together in the temple courts and each day more people became Christians and joined them.

Exploring Christian Belief

Christians believe that this is the story of how Jesus kept the promise He had given to His followers to send the Holy Spirit to be with them and to help them. It is the story of how the first Christians began to meet together in what we would now call the church. So the day of Pentecost is like the birthday of the church!

Several weeks before this, Peter and the others had all run away when they saw Jesus arrested and taken away to be crucified. They didn’t want the same thing happening to them so they went and hid in an upstairs room with the doors locked. Peter had been so frightened that three times he had denied that he even knew Jesus.

But now they were standing up in front of everyone telling them about Jesus! What had made the difference? Well - one thing of course was that they had seen Jesus alive. They had some amazing good news to share. But as well as that, they now had the Holy Spirit to help them and they weren't afraid any more.

And Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is still at work today. We can't see Him but we know He is here by the amazing things He does. On the day of Pentecost there was a rushing wind and tongues of fire to show everyone that the Holy Spirit had come. That doesn't usually happen anymore - but we can still know He is here by the way He helps people change. Just as he helped the disciples to be brave and strong instead of being frightened and weak, he gives people today the courage to do what is right even when they are scared. He helps people give up their selfish ways and learn to care for others. He helps people break their bad habits and discover new better ones instead. So if you know of someone who has changed in a remarkable way after starting to follow Jesus - that is a sign that the Holy Spirit has been at work in their lives.

As Peter said, the promise of the Holy Spirit is for everyone who believes in Jesus. He promised His disciples that He would not leave them on their own. He would send them a powerful, but invisible, helper to help them live God's way and bring God's love to others. This story shows us that the helper has come and that is good news for all of us!

Reflection & Prayer

Ask the children to imagine what it would be like to have an invisible helper with them every day - helping them to know and to do what was right; helping them to be brave and strong when they needed to be.

Then finish with a prayer for those who wish, thanking God for sending the Holy Spirit and asking Him to be with them, helping them to know and do what is right and to be brave and strong when they need to be in the week ahead.