

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

23. PETER AND JOHN ARE ARRESTED

Bible Base: Acts 4: 1-31; 5: 12-42

Key Christian Belief: The Holy Spirit helps us to live God's way.

Aim: To discover that Christians believe that the Holy Spirit helps us to live God's way even when it is tough.

You will need

- the PowerPoint presentation attached

Introduction

Ask the children if they have ever been in trouble at home or at school? What did they get into trouble for? What was the result? If possible, share a time when you got into trouble at home or at school when you were growing up.

Bible Story

Peter and John were in trouble with the Jewish leaders. Last time we heard how a lame man had been healed and they had told everyone that it was the power that comes from Jesus that had healed him. Unfortunately, the Jewish leaders did not like this. They were the ones who had had Jesus sentenced to die on a cross just a few weeks earlier, thinking that would be the end of Him. Now Peter and John were telling everyone that He had come back to life again and that made them furious. There was no other way to explain what had happened to the lame man but still they would not believe it.

So they sent soldiers to arrest Peter and John and lock them up in prison. Next morning, they sent for them and asked them again to explain how the man had been healed.

'It is by the power that comes from Jesus that this man has been healed' said Peter. 'It shows that God has truly raised Him from the dead and that He is the One we must listen to and follow.'

'Nonsense' said the High Priest. 'You are never to speak of this man Jesus again.'

'But we must' said Peter. 'We have to do what God says. We cannot keep the good news about Jesus to ourselves.'

The Jewish leaders were furious but they let Peter and John go. When they got back to the others and told them what the leaders had said, they all gathered together and prayed that God would help them all to be brave and strong. In fact they prayed so hard that the whole building shook!

After that, even though they had been told not to, Peter and John went on telling people about Jesus and many more people started believing in Him. They brought sick people from the nearby villages to them and all of them were healed. Large crowds gathered in the street wherever they went and when they saw this, the Jewish leaders grew angrier and angrier.

'We have to put a stop to this' they said to each other and once again had Peter and John locked up in prison for the night.

Next morning, the leaders gathered together to decide what to do with Peter and John, but before they could send for them a messenger arrived, looking rather embarrassed.

‘Those two men we locked up last night - did anyone let them out?’

‘Of course not’ said the High Priest.

‘Well how come they are in the Temple courts telling people about Jesus right now?’ asked the messenger.

‘What?!’ yelled the High Priest. ‘Who let them out?’

‘No-one’ said the messenger. ‘The gates are still locked and the guards are still outside. They got out without anyone seeing them. We don’t know how they did it!’

What they didn’t know was that an angel had appeared to Peter and John in the middle of the night. He had opened the doors for them and told them to go to the Temple courts and keep right on telling the people gathered there the good news about Jesus.

Once again the Jewish leaders sent for Peter and John.

‘Didn’t we tell you that you were not to speak of this man Jesus again?’ they said.

‘Didn’t we tell you that we would have to obey God rather than you?’ replied Peter.

‘What on earth are we going to do with them?’ the leaders asked each other. Some wanted to lock them up for a long time. Some even wanted to put them to death.

‘But if we do that, the people won’t like it’ said the High Priest. ‘There are too many people on their side. There could be a riot.’

‘I don’t think we should do anything’ said one of the leaders whose name was Gamaliel. ‘Let’s just wait and see what happens. If there is any truth to the story they are telling about Jesus, then we will not be able to do anything to stop it - but if there isn’t, the fuss will all die down sooner or later. This time next week it will all have been forgotten about and everyone will be talking about something else.’

So the High Priest sent for Peter and John and ordered them to be beaten, because they had disobeyed their orders, but then he let them go.

When the followers of Jesus gathered together to pray this time they gave thanks to God because He had given them such wonderful good news to tell and had helped them to keep going even though others had tried to stop them.

Conclusion

Peter and John had a difficult choice to make. They had to choose whether they would do what God had told them to do or what their leaders were asking them to do. Doing what God said would get them into trouble with their leaders.

Can you imagine what that would be like? If you knew that doing what you believed was right would get you into trouble with your leaders?

It does not often happen in this country - but there are some countries around the world where being a follower of Jesus can get you into trouble. In some countries, it is illegal to read from the Bible, to meet with others to worship God or to tell others about Jesus. But there are many followers of Jesus who do so anyhow, often in secret. If they are caught they may be beaten, sent to prison or even killed but like Peter and John they choose to keep on following Jesus anyway - doing what they believe is right, no matter what their leaders say.

They do this because they truly believe that Jesus is God's Son and that because of Him all the wrong things in our lives can be forgiven and we can be friends of God now and forever. They would rather endure prison than stop following Jesus. And if they were here today they would say that the Holy Spirit, along with the prayers of others around the world, helps them to keep going when it is tough.

You are not likely to be arrested for believing in Jesus or for choosing to do what God says in this country. But there might be some who will make fun of you or stop being friends with you if you do. They may even try to persuade you to say or do something that you know is not right and make it hard for you to say no. But Christians believe that, if we ask Him to, the Holy Spirit will help us to keep on doing what God says even when others make it hard for us. And since we know it is what Jesus wants us to do, this is one way in which we can help others to see how special He is to us!

Prayer

Ask God to grant the children courage always to say and do what they know is right. Ask Him also to be with Christians who live in countries where it is dangerous for them to practice their faith or tell others about Jesus.