

54. Witnesses



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Acts 13:1-14:28

Paul and Barnabas travel to several different places to tell the people about Jesus.



AIMS

To help the children understand that people respond to the Good News about Jesus in a variety of different ways.

To challenge them to reflect on how they are responding to what they have heard about Jesus.

Paul and Barnabas travelled round different places sharing the Good News about Jesus. There were lots of different responses to this – many people listened and believed, but others opposed them and tried to stop the message from spreading.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passage for this session and reflect:

- What are the different responses Paul and Barnabas encountered as they spread the news about Jesus?
- What responses have you seen as you have shared about Jesus with others?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

▶ **Emoji Game**

You will need: emojis (from additional document: Emoji game), Blu Tack

Before the children arrive stick up the emojis around the room.

Gather the children together, point out the different emojis and talk about what kind of feelings or responses they might represent.

Tell the children that you are going to read out a series of statements and you want

them to run to the emoji that is closest to what their response would be to that statement if it was true.

Suggested statements (feel free to adapt or create your own):

School is going to start at 6.30am tomorrow and go on until 6.30pm.

Next Wednesday your class is going to go on a school trip to watch a football match.

You won't have to wear school uniform all next week... but everything you wear will have to be red.

People with blonde hair will get to go first for lunch all next week.

Ariana Grande will be visiting your school as part of her next tour.

Next week, for school lunch there will be pizza every day, but no other options.

Beginning tomorrow people will be allowed to bring their pets with them to school.

Make the point that they were all hearing the same messages, but sometimes they were responding to the message in different ways.

If you have a very small space, instead of getting the children to run to the different emojis, you could lay them out on a table and get them to point to their responses to the statements.

▶ **Over And Under Game**

You will need: soft balls (one for roughly every six children in your group)

Divide the children into teams of around six people. Get the children at the front of each team to stand in a line side by side and get the rest of their team to line up behind them. Make sure you have some space between the teams.

Give a ball to the first member of each team. When you say "go," they have to pass it over their head to the person behind them. That person then has to pass the ball through their legs to the next person. Each member of the team continues passing the ball back, alternating over and under, until the person at the back of the team has the ball.

Once they have the ball they run to the front of their team and begin passing the ball back again in the same fashion.

Continue like this until the team is back in its original formation with the person who started at the front back at the front again. Get the children to sit down when they reach that point, and the first team to do this wins.

▶ **Going On A Journey**

Get the children to sit in a circle and choose one child to begin. They say, "I'm going on a journey and I'm going to take..." and then complete the sentence with an item of their choice (silly or serious). The next person in the circle repeats the sentence, including the first person's item but also adding one of their own. Continue going round the circle with each child repeating the list of items so far and adding a new one. See how long you can keep going without someone forgetting an item. If you have a small group this may mean going round the circle more than once.

▶ **Vote for Favourite Game**

As next week's session is the final one of One Big Story you could ask the children to vote for the game they've most enjoyed as they've gone through the programme and tell them that you'll give them the opportunity to play that game again next week.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ **Intro/ Recap**

Over the last few weeks we have been learning about what happened to Jesus' followers after he went to heaven. We talked about the Holy Spirit giving the disciples power and how the message about Jesus spread even though there was persecution. Today we are going to continue the story of someone we talked about two weeks ago – a man called Saul.

You could see how much the children remember about the story of Saul.

He had been someone who hated Christians and fought

against them, but then after encountering Jesus as he travelled to Damascus, he was transformed. He put his faith in Jesus and began to tell others.

Although he was known as Saul he was also sometimes known by another name which was Paul. In the part of the story we are looking at today, the Bible refers to him as Paul so that is what we are going to call him today.

▶ **Paul's First Missionary Journey**

You will need: place names (from additional document: Paul's journey place names), pictures printed out, as detailed below, Blu Tack, emojis (from additional document: Emoji Game) - optional

Before the children arrive, stick the names of the places around the room along with the images that go with each part of the story.

Get the children to start standing by the sign for Antioch of Syria and get them to move round with you to the different places as you tell the story. If you have a very small space you could lay the images for each place out on the floor or on a table.

If you want you could give each child one of the emoji pictures from the intro game and get them to hold it up whenever they think it is appropriate as you go through the story.

After Paul had decided to follow Jesus, the main thing he focused on for the rest of his life was telling other people about Jesus so that they could know him too. Paul travelled a lot and today we are going to think about just one of these journeys, which he went on with a friend called Barnabas.

You could show the children the map from slide 3 here:

<http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/bj-paul-maps/> to show the route he took and the different places he visited. You could remind the children of Acts 1:8 and that Jesus told his followers they would spread the news about him in Jerusalem, in Samaria and all over the world.

Paul and Barnabas were some of the first people to travel spreading the news about Jesus to different countries.

Antioch of Syria (slide 9 from <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-cyprus/>)

Paul and Barnabas set out from Antioch of Syria. The Christians there prayed for them and then sent them out to travel round different places telling the people there about Jesus.

Cyprus (slide 16 from <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-cyprus/>)

First they sailed to Cyprus and they went from town to town across the island spreading the good news. In Paphos, they met a sorcerer who tried to oppose Paul and Barnabas and tell others not to listen to them, but many people believed in Jesus, including the governor.

Antioch of Pisidia (slides 6 and 10 from <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-antioch-iconium/>)

They sailed from Cyprus to Perga and then travelled inland to Antioch. They went to the synagogue and after the people heard the readings from the Scriptures (the Old Testament) speaking about Moses and the prophets, Paul and Barnabas spoke explaining how it all pointed to Jesus and that he was the Messiah, the Saviour God had promised. They told the people how Jesus had died and been raised to life and that they could

receive forgiveness by believing in him. Many people chose to follow Jesus and they asked Paul and Barnabas to speak there again the next week.

They did, and many people believed, but some of the religious leaders got angry. They stirred up a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town.

Iconium (slide 14 from <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-antioch-iconium/>)

Iconium was their next stop. Again, Paul and Barnabas spoke to the people about Jesus and God gave them miraculous signs to show that what they were saying was true, but opinion was divided. Many listened and believed, but some of the crowd didn't believe and they tried to attack Paul and Barnabas and stone them.

Lystra (slides 3 and 6 from <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-lystra-derbe/>)

Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra. There, by God's power, Paul healed a man who couldn't walk. Many of the people began to worship Paul and Barnabas because of this, thinking they were gods, but Paul told them to stop. He said, "We are just ordinary human beings like you, who have come to tell you the Good News."

Some people arrived from Antioch and Iconium. They stirred up the crowd against Paul and Barnabas, and, once again, they began to stone them. This time Paul was hurt so badly everyone thought he was dead but when the believers gathered round him, he got up. The next day, he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

Derbe (slide 9 from <http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-lystra-derbe/>)

<http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/paul-lystra-derbe/>

In Derbe, things were good for Paul and Barnabas. The people there listened and they made many new disciples.

After that, Paul and Barnabas began their journey home. They went back to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch on their way. That might be surprising since they were treated so badly by some of the people in these places, but they wanted to visit the new churches there to encourage the believers in their faith and remind them that following Jesus could be hard at times but that they should keep going.

Finally, they arrived back in Antioch of Syria and they reported to the believers there everything that had happened on their travels.



REFLECT & RESPOND

▶ Reflection/ Discussion

You will need: images from additional document: Emoji Game (optional)

There were lots of ups and downs for Paul and Barnabas as they travelled, but everywhere they went, they shared the same message about Jesus.

What did you notice about how people responded to it?

There were lots of different reactions. If you used the emoji game at the start you could refer back to those pictures and talk about how they reflected some of the different responses Paul and Barnabas received.

Some people were happy because they believed in Jesus, while others were not interested. Some people were angry about it and even

wanted to kill Paul and Barnabas.

It's the same today when people hear about Jesus – they respond in a variety of different ways.

If you have a group of mainly Christian children, or those who have attended the SU Group for a while, you could ask how they feel about telling others about Jesus.

Do you think it's important to tell people?

Why, and how can we do this?

You could also ask about different responses they have witnessed as people hear about Jesus and encourage them that, despite the different responses they received, Paul and Barnabas kept on telling people because they believed it was important for them to hear.

▶ Prayer Activity

You will need: paper, pens or pencils

Give the children a moment to think about their response to what they have heard about Jesus so far. Some of them may go to church or may have been part of the SU Group for a long time so they will have heard a lot, while others may only have heard a little bit.

Get the children to draw an emoji that reflects how they are responding at the moment to what they have heard about Jesus. They could copy an emoji from one of the pictures provided or come up with their own.

Give them the option to lay down their pictures together so that everyone can see the different responses, but allow them to keep their response to themselves if they prefer.

Lead the children in prayer.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

▶ God's Story Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This video provides a short (four minute) summary of Paul's story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0p0W_Zbt1s It includes his conversion, his missionary journeys and his letter-writing.