

Peter and John: standing up for what you believe - a whole school assembly outline

On your marks:

Here's a Bible-based assembly on standing up for what you believe in, with activities for classes to use afterwards in circle time to explore the issues

Get set:

You'll need a balloon and a pin and a rehearsal of the Acts passage

Go!

Use one of these two introductions:

Introduction 1

Imagine this:

Harry and Mark were feeling very small. Big Ian had backed them into a street corner on their way to school. What Ian wanted was Harry's dinner money to buy cigarettes. Now. On that shadowy street corner where no one could see what was going on. And Ian was a very big boy, with a gang of very big mates just behind him. But suddenly Mark saw that he could duck under Big Ian's arm and escape on his own. He had to decide. Should he run for it or stay with his friend in danger?

Sometimes it's very hard to stand up to bullies. We might be scared of getting hurt or losing face. Look what decisions the characters in our stories today made when they were faced with bullies.

Or:

Introduction 2

There are people who try to force someone to do something they don't want to. Not like teachers or mums and dads – teachers and mums and dads usually make us do things we don't want to do, but those things are for our own good, like eating healthy food or going to bed on time or learning our spellings.

The people who are talking about try to take away your freedom. They try to make you do something you know is wrong. They try to stop other people living the good life God wants them to lead. Sometimes we call these people bullies.

They can seem huge, like this: *(blow up a balloon and hold it pinched closed)*.

They can seem so much bigger than me. They might seem much more important, or grown up or strong or cool. *(Hold the balloon high in the air and look at it in a worried way)*.

They might try to force you to do something you know is wrong. *(Knock yourself on the head with the blown-up balloon)*.

But, you know something? Often there's nothing inside that bullying person but a lot of noisy nothing: *(release the air from the balloon with as raspberry-like a noise as you can. Flap the empty balloon around pathetically)*

(Blow balloon up again)

Sometimes you have to be very brave to stand up to someone like this, because on the outside they look so powerful. Sometimes you have to be very brave to stand up for what you know is right. You don't need to be bigger than them. You just need to be braver than them.

(Take a pin) Because we all know what would happen if the huge balloon met this tiny pin!

(Don't pop the balloon, as this will probably terrify half the audience, but leave it to their imaginations as you very deliberately and noisily release the air from the balloon again.)

If you feel someone's bullying you, you should always tell your teacher. And to help you remember to stand up for what you believe in, let's hear the story of Peter and John who were getting bullied by some grown ups who were much more important and rich and powerful than they were.

Tell the story from Acts 4 in a dramatic way with several voices

Cast – Narrator, Peter, John, Man, Priests 1 2 3

NARRATOR: It was after Jesus had died and risen again and gone back to be with God. Peter and John, Jesus's friends, were going about telling everyone how wonderful Jesus was. They were healing people too.

MAN: Yippee! I couldn't walk at all. Then Peter told me to get up in the name of Jesus. And I did! And now I can hop and skip and jump just like anyone else! Praise God!

NARRATOR: But some religious leaders didn't like Peter and John telling people about Jesus.

PRIEST 1: Right, you two. You're under arrest. Into prison with you!

NARRATOR: They kept Peter and John in prison all night. And the next day

PRIEST 2: Right, you two. Come and stand in front of the chief priests and explain what you've been up to.

PETER: Why are you making such a fuss? Don't you like people being healed? Jesus is the one who did it and he's the only one who can save people. He's the only one who can save the whole world!

PRIEST 3: Goodness me. These men are much less important than we are and yet they are not afraid!

PRIEST 1: What shall we do with them?

PRIEST 2: Everyone knows theyâ€™ve done a great miracle. We canâ€™t say they didnâ€™t!

PRIEST 3: But we can tell them not to tell anyone else about Jesus.

ALL: Good idea!

PRIEST 1: Right you two! Donâ€™t say anything else about Jesus and weâ€™ll let you go free.

JOHN: Hold on! Should we do what you want or what God wants?

PETER: We canâ€™t keep quiet! We must speak about what weâ€™ve seen and heard!

NARRATOR: And so the priests had to let them go. And Peter and John carried on telling people how wonderful Jesus was.

Follow up Circle time activities

1 Discussion Starters

- What was it about the people who arrested Peter and John that made them so powerful?
- Were Peter and John afraid, do you think? If so, what of?
- Wouldnâ€™t it have been more sensible to promise not to talk about Jesus again, like they were told to?
- Peter and John didnâ€™t fight anyone, like David did Goliath. Do you think they were heroes, like David or not? Why?
- When is it right to refuse to do what other people tell you?

2. â€˜Iâ€™m a big bully!â€™ Game

With the children sitting in a circle, one player is chosen to be the big bully. Their aim is to make someone smile or laugh. They stomp up to someone in the circle and say, â€˜Iâ€™m a big bully and I want you to laugh.â€™ The person must reply, â€˜You are a big bully but youâ€™re just not funny.â€™ If they manage this without the slightest smile, the bully goes on to someone else. If the person smiles, s/he swaps places and becomes the bully.

Talk about bullies being people who try to make you do something you donâ€™t want to.

3. Stand up for what you believe in

A player is chosen and s/he is given an object e.g. a book, ruler, eraser, pencil. Another player has to try to persuade the player that the object is in fact something completely different. They might say something like, â€˜Wow, thatâ€™s a really nice back-scratcher youâ€™ve got there.â€™

â€˜Itâ€™s not a back scratcher, itâ€™s a ruler.â€™

â€˜A ruler? Of course itâ€™s not! Look! Itâ€™s got a lovely sharp edge, just right for scratching your back.â€™

“It’s got centimeters marked on it! It’s a ruler!”
“No, no, it’s just the right length for putting down your back.”
If either player runs out of convincing arguments and resorts to “It’s a ruler, ok?”-type arguments, the other player is the winner. The teacher is the judge.

4 Re-enact Peter and John’s trial.

Prepare and practise a script, using the actual words from Acts 4

5 Reordering

Write up the following on the board in a jumbled order and ask the children to put them in the right order.

- Peter and John made a lame man walk again using Jesus’s power.
- The religious leaders arrested them and threw them in jail.
- Next day the religious leaders asked who gave them the right to do the miracle?
- Peter answered that Jesus gave them the power.
- The officials were amazed at his answer, because they knew Peter was only a fisherman.
- They told Peter and John not to speak about Jesus again.
- Peter and John said they must obey God, not people.
- The council threatened them and let them go.

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