



A LIFE OF SERVICE: *JONATHAN AND THE ARMOUR-BEARER*

Collective Worship
Spring Term 2021

These teacher notes and the accompanying presentation are designed to support you in exploring the concept of Christian service with pupils. This act of collective worship focuses on the relationship between Jonathan (the son of King Saul) and his armour-bearer in the Old Testament. This act of collective worship could be done live, with each teacher delivering from their own classroom, or it could be recorded by the head teacher or senior leader and shared with each class or bubble remotely.

Collective worship in school should be **inspiring, inclusive and invitational**. Adults leading worship should feel free to adapt these materials so that they are comfortable and they are well-matched to your own context. For guidance on collective worship see:

http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/images/document_library/UDR02852.pdf

Pre-Collective Worship Task:

Talk about best friends in films, books and TV shows. How can you tell they are best friends? What do they do? How do they behave with each other? What makes a good best friend? Make wanted posters to show ideas.

Worship Table: You will need a green cloth on your altar table to show we are once again in 'ordinary time' in the liturgical calendar: green for growing!

You will also need 3 candles to light to represent the 3 persons of the Trinity.

Preparation and Resources: You will need the 3 candles and the PowerPoint presentation.

The Main Content:

Welcome

Show slide 2. Light each of the 3 candles as you say the welcome.

We gather together in the name of:

- *The Holy Trinity, three in one, joined together in the Divine Dance and showing that all are made in God's image- to love, serve and make room for each other.*

Alternatively, you may want to start with a Christian blessing from the Church of England such as:

*May God give to you and to all those you love
his comfort and his peace,
his light and his joy,
in this world and the next
Amen*

or

*The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace.
Amen*

You can also use something simple such as:

*We gather together to meet as our school family
We all come together as important parts of our school community
We gather to meet together with God*

Today we are continuing our focus on serving others. We will learn about the son of a king and his armour-bearer who served him with great loyalty so that he was with him in all he set his mind to do.

Learning

Show slide 3. Did you know that in Christianity God is understood as a Trinity- three in one? There are three persons of the Trinity- God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We can understand the relationship between these three as being a bit like a divine (God) dance. They make room for each other, exist in loving relationship with each other and each has their own specific role. It is like the steps of a dance with each of them following their own steps and staying close and in sync with each other! This image illustrates the three persons of the Trinity in their eternal dance with each other.

The 'divine dance' is a good way for us to think about our relationships with other people. After all, the Bible teaches that all people are made in the image of God, so humans are made for loving, loyal relationships with each other where they can make space for each other to be exactly who God has made humans to be. We can be like God the Trinity in the love we have for others and when we serve each other. It is all about living in partnership with others.

Go to slide 4. Today we are going to learn about a loyal friendship between Jonathan and his armour-bearer. Jonathan was the son of King Saul, the first king of Israel, and it was his armour-bearer's job to carry his battle armour and his sword and to go with him everywhere he went! We have already learned from the story of Ruth and Naomi that being committed to someone and sticking with them no matter what can make great things happen. Let's find out what happens in this story...

King Saul and his army were camped at Gibeah and his son, Jonathan, was with him. The Philistines, the enemies of Israel, were camped on the opposing cliffs at Micmash. You will remember the Philistines from the story of how young David killed their top fighter, Goliath, with his sling shot.

Now Jonathan had an armour-bearer; a faithful servant who would carry his armour and his sword wherever they went so Jonathan was always ready for battle. Jonathan had been watching the Philistines and he had been praying to God about what he should do. He had a plan and he shared it with his armour-bearer:

"Come on! Let's go over to the Philistine camp on the other side of the pass." Jonathan did not tell his father, King Saul, his plan. King Saul was lounging under a pomegranate tree with his army around him and had no idea what his son was planning to do. Jonathan and the armour-bearer went alone.

To reach the Philistine army they would need to climb up the rocky cliff. Jonathan communicated his plan to his armour-bearer.

"Come on! Let's go across to these pagans! Maybe God will work for us. There's no rule saying that God can only deliver by using a big army. He can use us! No one can stop God from saving when He sets his mind to it!" Jonathan had great faith, but what would the armour-bearer say in response? Perhaps he would think Jonathan was crazy!

No, he did not think that. In fact, he matched Jonathan's faith.

"Go ahead! Do what you think is best. I'm with you all the way!"

So, Jonathan continued with his plan. He told his armour-bearer that they would cross over the pass below the cliffs and let the Philistines see them. Then, they would decide what to do depending on what the Philistines said to them. If they said 'Halt! Don't move until we come down to check you out!' then they would stay put and not go up the cliff. But if the Philistines shouted down to them to 'Come up!' then Jonathan decided that he and his armour-bearer would go up and that it was a sign from God that He was with them in their plan.

So, they did what Jonathan had suggested. When the Philistine army saw them, they shouted down to them:

"Look! The Hebrews are crawling out of their holes! Come up here! We've got a thing or two to show you!" and Jonathan and his armour-bearer could hear their laughter rolling down the hills towards them. Jonathan smiled at his armour-bearer. They had faith that God was with them, though they were only two in number. So, Jonathan and his armour-bearer scrambled up the cliff and when they reached the top they easily cut down the Philistines, killing all twenty men in the garrison. It was a great victory for Israel.

[Paraphrase of 1 Samuel 13:16-14:15]

If you want to, you can have pupils act this out, or, if you are doing this as an act of collective worship in a classroom setting, you could use figures to tell the story, perhaps making use of a visualiser.

Reflecting

Go to slide 5. Jonathan had a dream, something in his heart he believed he was supposed to do, he just needed someone to help him with it. The armour-bearer was that someone. We don't even know his name! When Jonathan decided to take on the Philistine garrison, even though he and the armour-bearer were clearly outnumbered, he did not try to achieve his goal alone. He had someone who stuck with him, believed in him and God, and said:

'Do all that is in your heart. I am with you in complete accordance with your heart.'

I wonder what that means, 'I am with you according to your heart'?

Elicit pupil responses. We all have dreams in our hearts. Things that we want to achieve. Ideas about things we think we can do, that we are good at, perhaps for some of us, things that we believe God would want us to achieve. We don't need a whole army to accomplish something we have set our heart on. What are the things you want to do? Are there things that you think God would want you to do?

Invite pupils to think about those things for a few moments in silence.

Responding

Move to slide 6. 'Accordance' means 'in agreement with'. The goal to beat the Philistines was Jonathan's but the armour-bearer completely agreed with him in achieving it. He put his heart in line with Jonathan's so that they were hoping for the same things and working towards the same goal.

Who can help you with your dreams and the things you want to achieve?

What does God say about your dreams and plans?

Whose dreams and plans can you support by aligning your heart with theirs?

Read out this prayer and ask pupils to picture themselves with their own armour-bearer and to imagine themselves as an armour-bearer to another person. If they want to, they can say 'Amen' at the end of the prayer to make it their own, but there is no pressure for them to do this. They may simply want to be quiet and reflect on the power of friendship.

Dear God,

Help me to be an armour-bearer for someone else. Make me generous, kind and loyal so I can help someone else to reach their goal. Show me who my armour-bearers are, the people I can turn to for help, listen to and be grateful for, the people who believe in me and cheer me on. God, help us all as we try to do brave and courageous things as good people in our school community. None of us can do it by ourselves. We all need each other.

Amen

Alternatively, you may wish to end with an Anglican liturgical prayer:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ. Amen.

*Go in the peace of Christ. **Thanks be to God.***

We go into the world to walk in God's light, to rejoice in God's love and to reflect God's glory. Amen

Post-Collective Worship Task:



Spend some time talking about the 'Power of Yet'. Perhaps you have a dream or something you would like to achieve but you can't do it...yet! Maybe you need an armour-bearer to get alongside you (such as someone to help you learn something tricky or meet a target your teacher has set, a partner to work together with on a project, someone who feels similarly about an issue or cause that you can support together) and perhaps you need to spend a bit of time quietly reflecting or saying a prayer to ask God for help to achieve it. Write down your 'Yet' dreams, projects and plans. Draw your armour-bearers and write down your prayers towards your goals. Come back to them next term and see how much further you are towards your dream/goal.

Send home some talk homework for families: *Today we have been thinking about Jonathan and his armour-bearer in the Old Testament. Everyone needs someone alongside them, especially if they are working towards a goal or dream. What are our family's goals? How are we helping each other to achieve them? Do we need to ask God for help?*