

The story of Bilal - Whoosh! script



Note

At the time of this story, as Islam was emerging, the people were worshipping idols (an image or other representation of a god). Muhammad strongly disagreed with worshipping idols so Muslims avoid images or other visual depictions of Allah, Muhammad and the other prophets. You may decide to tell the children during this session that you will not ask anyone to act the part of Muhammad because of this.

Long, long ago in the hot, dry desert of Arabia, there lived a very wealthy but cruel man called Umayya. Now Umayya lived in a grand house with soaring towers, sparkling fountains and palm trees waving gently in the breeze. He was master to many slaves, who worked hard at their tasks all day long, although they were not paid a single penny. When the day's work was done, the exhausted slaves would accompany their master as he went to worship statues of the many gods that he followed.

Amongst the slaves was one who had come from Africa, and who served his master well. His name was Bilal. One day, Bilal accompanied his master to the bustling marketplace, where many people had gathered to buy and sell their goods. Before long, they noticed an eager crowd gathering in one corner. Curious, they drew closer to see what was happening. They discovered that a Muslim preacher was visiting the area to spread a new message; there is only one God, Allah, and all people are equal. Bilal's master was furious at the idea—imagine a slave being equal to him, the greatest and the richest of men! He seized the preacher and ordered Bilal to whip him severely.

But Bilal was a brave man. He had listened

with astonishment to the preacher's message and as he was handed the whip he shook his head and turned away, whispering to himself with delight, 'I believe that this is the truth. I believe that there is only one God who loves us all equally no matter who we are.'

At this, Umayya became even angrier. He turned the whip on Bilal, but still Bilal stood firm, repeated the words and refused to be quiet. Eventually, his master was so full of rage that he ordered the worst punishment he could think of.

He told his slaves to take Bilal out into the scorching desert at the hottest part of the day and to lie him down on the sand. Then he ordered them to stretch Bilal out and tie down his arms and legs, and finally to put a boulder onto his chest. Poor Bilal lay there in the boiling heat, with no cool air and no water but still his voice was heard; 'There is only one God, Allah'.

As he lay there, certain of death, the distant image of a camel appeared on the horizon. As it grew closer, the exhausted slave could see that it carried a man dressed in the finest clothes. No doubt this wealthy man had come to trade slaves with Umayya and would

agree wholeheartedly with the severe punishment of such a disobedient slave. Suddenly, the heavy stone was removed from his chest and Bilal could breathe again. Looking up, he saw a kind face gazing down at him with concern.

'My name is Abu Bakr,' said the man, 'and I have been sent here by the Prophet Muhammed, who has heard of your misery. I have been asked to set you free.'

Of course Bilal was overjoyed, but when Abu Bakr approached Umayya the reply was, 'No! This is my slave and I will not sell him so that you can release him.'

But the Prophet Muhammed had known that this would happen so he had sent Abu Bakr with a heavy bag of gold to release Bilal. The greedy master's eyes lit up when he saw the money and Bilal became a free man.

From that day on, Bilal followed Muhammad wherever he went. Stone by stone, his followers set about building a beautiful mosque in the city of Medina, and all who saw it were astonished by its loveliness.

As they stood back to admire their work,

somebody asked, 'But how will we call people to come to pray?'

Immediately, Muhammad's followers began to think of ideas.

'I know,' said one, 'we can ring this bell.'

'No, no,' argued another, 'blowing a trumpet would be much better.'

'Here, try this drum,' suggested a third.

As the followers were deep in discussion, somebody spoke up.

'I had a dream, and in that dream a loud, clear voice was calling the people to prayer.'

This was the solution they had all been looking for! But who was the person with the strong voice? Why, Bilal, of course, the man with the voice that had kept on calling out despite all his terrible punishments.

Proudly, Bilal climbed the steps to the very top of the shining mosque. No longer was he a slave with no right to praise Allah. With a happy heart, he took a deep breath and opened his mouth to let his voice ring out pure and true to the excited crowds waiting below.