

Jesus feeding the 5,000



FRIENDS AND HEROES

Where can our children find heroes?

David Dorrictott, Executive Producer of Friends and Heroes, has found a way!

OVER THE LAST GENERATION the values of our society have shifted and changed, resulting in today's children missing positive role models. Perhaps this is due to the current perception of our traditionally respected public figures. Today's children need to experience heroic deeds, selfless acts and positive behaviour. In the past much of this has come through our shared culture, often from our Judeo-Christian origins.

This need prompted me and my wife Alison to work with a group of highly creative and very experienced film and TV professionals, to produce *Friends and Heroes*, an animated TV series, which aims to provide heroic role models by introducing children to

the traditional stories of the Bible in a modern and relevant way.

Based in a fascinating and turbulent period of history, the first century AD, *Friends and Heroes* is an animated adventure series for children that weaves both Old and New Testament stories into the programmes. It entertains, educates and informs the viewers, introducing them to Bible heroes. This approach, of setting Bible stories in living contexts amongst the people who kept them alive, means that children not only see and hear the stories but also understand their meaning and how they can apply them in their own lives.

Friends and Heroes is the tale of two young people, Macky and



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Friends and Heroes tells stories set in the Roman Empire, and the Christians tell each other Bible stories. It shows me a few things that were in Roman times. It tells me a bit more about Bible stories and helps me count how many there are. Brutacus is funny, and Macky is quite clever. My favourite episode is the first one, with the Samson and Delilah story and the Peter and the sheet story. New films come every month.
Taliesin (10) and Millie (7)

Portia, whose idealism and friendship lead them across the ancient world. They travel from the fabled Egyptian port of Alexandria to the besieged city of Jerusalem and finally to the very heart of the Empire: Rome. As they fight for justice and even survival against the might of the Roman Empire they become friends and then, in turn, heroes. So that children can tell the difference, the fictional adventure stories are told in 2D animation and the Bible stories are all in superb computer-generated 3D animation.

Our heroes, Macky and the gang, appeal strongly to today's children; they are attractive, inspirational, very real characters. They are funny and brave and they don't always get things right! They face similar issues and dilemmas to those faced by youngsters today. Their experiences and the stories they tell help foster respect for, and kindness to, others as well as encouraging tolerance.

Our aim in creating this programme has always been to introduce a new generation of children to the important stories of the Bible and to do that we recognised that our material had to be acceptable to the 'mainstream' broadcasters, not just those broadcasting Christian material. So we set our aims high and worked with an experienced BBC TV

producer in the early days, always hoping that the BBC would choose to show our programmes when finished. It took a long time to persuade them that Series One was appropriate for all children, whatever their faith, but eventually, five years after the project started, they agreed to show *Friends and Heroes* on BBC – but there was a surprise!

We created *Friends and Heroes* to be great fun; we wanted it to entertain children to the extent that they would come back for more. The BBC saw it slightly differently and decided to schedule *Friends and Heroes* as education and show it in their Schools TV programming! Although we hadn't expected that, we soon realised that schools provide a wonderful opportunity to reach children who won't hear Bible stories anywhere else.

Our aim was always to create a programme which would be seen by children all over the world and that's why we are currently dubbing *Friends and Heroes* into many languages including: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Series one is being shown regularly in the USA and Canada and we are expecting broadcasts in the Middle East, Taiwan and Italy to begin soon.

The best news is that we are

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now receiving lots of feedback on the impact the programme has had around the world for children, their parents, educators and even the judges for international awards! I particularly like this comment: "I love it, and want to give it to my grandchildren. It is hard to find Christian programs on TV. Thank you very much, keep more coming." We plan to take a rest after the release of Episode 39 but who knows what might come next?

Lessons for schools and churches

Key Stage 2 school lessons and pupil worksheets are available for each programme. The lessons are easy to use and all of the information is provided, allowing even non-specialist teachers to deliver exciting and interactive RE lessons.

Also available are Bible lessons for use in Sunday Schools, holiday and after-school clubs, family services and other children's ministry situations. Each lesson is based on the Bible stories and themes of the *Friends and Heroes* episodes.

For more information phone 01624 811747
www.friendsandheroes.com

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