

Waiting for God



An Advent Lesson for Elementary Children



Family Leadership Network
NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

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CONNECT - for Leaders

Read: Luke 1: 5-25, 57-80

Ask: Am I longing for anything? Is that longing tied to anything God has promised? How could I ask God to meet me in that longing?

Consider: Try making a list of promises God has made. Is there a promise that is especially meaningful for me right now? John the Baptist's role was to make straight paths for people to encounter the One who came to fulfill every promise of God. This Advent, how do I plan to make straight paths in my own life or my household's, for Jesus to arrive more fully? Is there someone with whom I could share those hopes, longings and pathways this Advent season?

Pray: Give thanks for the reliability of God's promises, especially his promise to be near even while we wait for the fulfillment of every promise he has made.

PREPARE

Gather: Advent Wreath, matches, 4 copies of dramatic reading (appendix), any simple props for the skits, clip board, paper and marker for John for the dramatic reading

Practice: "Ways of Waiting" Skits for 2 leaders. They are short and can easily be learned well enough for leaders to be off script.

Pray: for the children to long for Jesus. Pray that through your time together, they know they can welcome his arrival now in ways that will help them wait with hope, and be ready for his arrival in the future.



ENGAGE

As kids arrive, think of a way to have them wait for something - maybe outside the door until a leader has everything ready, or make a game of it - no one can say anything or they hold a posture until a certain person arrives.

Chat about it: What kinds of things do you have to wait for? Hard or easy? What helps you when you have to wait? What's the longest you've ever waited for something?

People can be waiting for the same thing, but have very different experiences! Let's check it out!

WAYS OF WAITING SKITS

(After each pair of skits, pause to ask for a volunteer or two to describe what was different between them.)

1 Wishful Thinking

Leader 1: Hi _____. What are you doing sitting here?

Leader 2: Oh, I don't know. I was just wishing someone could take me to the pet store. I really want to get a dog.

Leader 1: Well, are you expecting anyone to come for you? I mean, did your mom even say you could get a dog?

Leader 2: No. Just hoping. I really wish I had one. *(Sigh)* Maybe someday.

2 Waiting Because of a Promise

Leader 1: Hi _____. What are you doing sitting here?

Leader 2: Waiting for my Dad. He promised he'd pick me up and take me to the pet store. I'm getting a new dog!

Leader 1: That's exciting! Have you been waiting long? Are you sure he's coming?

Leader 2: He promised it would be today and, well, he always keeps his promises. He'll be here. I can wait.

3 Waiting Passively

Leader 1: *(monologue)* Those friends have been gone a long time on that trip. Three

months! There hasn't been anything fun to do while they've been gone. I've been super bored. Sure hope they call me when they get back. But then they never bothered to call me the whole time they were gone. I guess they just forgot about me. Not great.

4 Waiting Actively

Leader 1: Hi. You look busy! What are you doing?

Leader 2: (*sweeping or setting a table*) I'm waiting for some friends who might be coming over today. They've been gone for three months. I wrote to them every week while they were gone and I've been waiting and *waiting* for them to get back! I want to make sure I'm ready when they get here, so I am just cleaning up, and I got some food ready that they really like. I bought them some presents to welcome them back too. It seems like such a long time since they were here- it was hard to wait! Gonna be so great to see them again!

5 Waiting Impatiently

(*Set up a couple of chairs for a car, leader 1 driving*)

Leader 1: It's taking a long time to get there.

Leader 2: You're not kidding. I can't stand this anymore. Drive faster. When are we going to BE there?

Leader 1: I don't know for sure how much longer it will be, but hey - it's going to be worth it! It's one of our favorite places.

Leader 2: There's nothing to do in the car. I wish we hadn't even come. Can we just turn around and go home?

6 Waiting Patiently

Leader 1: This has been a much longer drive than I thought it would be. I think we'll be there soon, though. Thanks for not complaining. Hey, how are you doing back there?

Leader 2: Good. Just thinking.

Leader 1: What about?

Leader 2: I'm thinking about how much fun it will be when we get there. I am so glad we get to go.

INSPIRE

Today is the first Sunday of Advent: a new church season, and the beginning of a new church year. So we could be saying, "Happy New Year" to each other!

But Advent is not about celebrating like we'd do at a New Years party on January 1st. It's more about waiting. Can you think of ways Advent is about waiting?

- 1. We remember God's people waiting for the Messiah*
- 2. We are waiting, getting ready to celebrate his coming at Christmas this year.*
- 3. We are waiting for Jesus to come back again, because He promised he would.)*

Why were the God's people waiting for a Messiah (someone to rescue them)? *(They needed one. God had made them a promise; many prophets said he would come.)*

But they had been waiting a long time.

Do you think they would wait so long *without* that promise?

Let's see what it's like to wait: for 4 seconds (no problem); for 1 minute (not too bad) Imagine waiting: for 4 minutes, 4 days, 4 years, 40 years....400 years!

That's how long God's people, the Israelites did not hear anything from God. They had the promise of the Rescuer, but ...I wonder if some people just forgot about it.

And then things began to happen. Very *exciting* things that you will hear about in our story today. When the scene finally opens at the beginning of the New Testament, it's full of waiting people!

Let's light the first candle for Advent and hear God's Story the way Luke told it.

Say: "The people walking in darkness....." *(Light the candle)*...have seen a great light."

Dramatic Reading of Zechariah and Elizabeth's story (appendix)

EXPLORE

~ some possible questions to explore with kids in small groups:

Let's think of all the things that were surprising in the story. (So many!)

What is your favorite part of the story?

Were Zechariah and Elizabeth waiting for something?

Think of some of the skits you saw today. How were Zechariah and Elizabeth waiting for the Messiah? How can you tell? (*actively, patiently and with hope by leading holy lives, serving at the temple, continuing to keep God's ways*)

Is there anyone else in the story who is waiting? (*the people at the temple when Zechariah took so long; Elizabeth for 9 months; neighbors waiting for the child to come; neighbors and all the people in the area waiting and wondering what the child "would be" when he grew up*)

Let's see if what Zechariah said once he got his voice back tells us anything about who John turned out to be when he grew up:

"You, my son, will be called the prophet of God Most High. You will go ahead of the Lord to get everything ready for him. You will tell his people that they can be saved when their sins are forgiven." Luke 1:76-7 (CEV)

So John grows up to be John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, who goes ahead of the Lord Jesus to help the people living at the time to be ready to meet the One they had been waiting for.

COMMIT

Does any of this help me?

Why did anyone even have to wait for Jesus? Can't people just fix their own lives?

So we *really* needed Jesus to come.

Now he's come, are his people still waiting? Longing? For what?

What's a good thing that can happen when you have to wait for something?

What are some of the promises God has made that haven't happened yet?

What are some promises God has made that help us to wait for him? (*For strength, protection, help, comfort, guidance, to be with us always...*)

If Jesus came back soon, do you think you'd be ready to meet him?

What would it even look like to be ready for Jesus return?

(*loving him, trying to follow whatever we know about God, learning about him, listening to him, confessing things we do that are wrong, forgiving other people...*)

Think of some ways you could welcoming Jesus in your own life this Advent .

Another good Advent word is "watch". Pay attention, and watch for the ways Jesus might want to come closer to you in the days ahead.

APPENDIX

The Story of Zechariah and Elizabeth Luke 1:5-25, 57-66 (CEV)

Narrators, Angel Gabriel, Zechariah, Elizabeth, neighbor

Narrator 1: When Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest by the name of Zechariah from the priestly group of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was from the family of Aaron. Both of them were good people and pleased the Lord God by obeying all that he had commanded. But they did not have children. Elizabeth could not have any, and both Zechariah and Elizabeth were already old.

Narrator 2: One day Zechariah's group of priests were on duty, and he was serving God as a priest. According to the custom of the priests, he had been chosen to go into the Lord's temple that day and to burn incense, while the people stood outside praying.

Narrator 1: All at once an angel from the Lord appeared to Zechariah at the right side of the altar. Zechariah was confused and afraid when he saw the angel. But the angel told him:

Gabriel: Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayers. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you must name him John. His birth will make you very happy, and many people will be glad. Your son will be a great servant of the Lord. He must never drink wine or beer, and the power of the Holy Spirit will be with him from the time he is born. John will lead many people in Israel to turn back to the Lord their God. He will go ahead of the Lord with the same power and spirit that Elijah had. And because of John, parents will be more thoughtful of their children. And people who now disobey God will begin to think as they ought to. This is how John will get people ready for the Lord.

Narrator 1: Zechariah asked the angel,

Zechariah: How will I know this is going to happen? My wife and I are both very old.

Gabriel: I am Gabriel, God's servant, and I was sent to tell you this good news. You have not believed what I have said. So you will not be able to say a thing until all this happens. But everything will take place when it is supposed to.

Narrator 2: The crowd was waiting for Zechariah and kept wondering why he was staying in the temple so long. When he did come out, he could not speak, and they knew he had seen a vision. He motioned to them with his hands, but did not say a thing.

Narrator 1: When Zechariah's time of service in the temple was over, he went home. Soon after this, his wife was expecting a baby, and for five months she did not leave the house. Elizabeth said to herself:

Elizabeth: What the Lord has done for me will keep people from looking down on me.

Narrator 2: When Elizabeth's son was born, her neighbors and relatives heard how kind the Lord had been to her, and they too were glad.

Narrator 1: Eight days later they did for the child what the Law of Moses commands. They were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said,

Elizabeth: No! His name is John.

Narrator 1: The people argued and said:

Neighbor: No one in your family has ever been named John.

Narrator 1: So they motioned to Zechariah to find out what he wanted to name his son. Zechariah asked for a writing tablet. Then he wrote,

(Zechariah writes down on the clip board, "**His name is John**" and shows it to the audience.)

Narrator 2: Everyone was amazed. At once, Zechariah started speaking and praising God. All the neighbors were frightened because of what had happened, and everywhere in the hill country people kept talking about these things. Everyone who heard about this wondered what this child would grow up to be. They knew the Lord was with him.

Family



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