

# Love is a Promise (1)


**Bible verses:**

Luke 1:5-20

Zechariah and Elizabeth


**Aim:**

To know that Zechariah's prayers were answered


**Today's fruit:**

Patience



In today's session we see how God answered Zechariah and Elizabeth's long-awaited prayer for a child.

Even though they had waited for many years, God had not forgotten Zechariah and Elizabeth. Through the angel's message, God promised the birth of John, a baby who would prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah. As we begin Advent, we remember that love is a promise: God hears our prayers, keeps his word, and calls us to wait with patience and hope.

Just like Zechariah and Elizabeth, we need to show patience as we wait for answers to our prayers.

## Each child will need:

- Memory verse wristband
- A clear plastic cup or a jam jar, tracing paper or plain paper, scissors, sticky tape, pens/pencils and a battery tea light
- *Explore It ideas* handout

## You will need:

- Christmas charades clues folded up and placed in a container – see Start It
- Memory verse poster
- Fruit of the Spirit poster: Patience – download from **Salvationist**
- To watch ***Kids' Christmas Craft: Christmas Lanterns*** by DK Books (3:29) for inspiration

 **Start it****Say:**

In our Bible story today, the main character is silenced by God. So we are going to play a game where you are not allowed to speak. We are going to play *Christmas charades*.

Divide the group into two teams and let the children take turns acting out the Christmas clue for the rest of the team to guess. Keep a tally of the scores and see which team can guess the most Christmas words. You could either swap between teams each time or give them a certain amount of time to complete as many clues as possible.

Write a selection of Christmas-themed clues (examples below) prior to the session, fold them up and put them in a container.

- Baby Jesus
- Angel Gabriel
- Three Wise Men
- Shepherd
- Father Christmas
- Elves
- Frosty the Snowman
- Silent Night
- Deck the Halls
- Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
- The Nightmare Before Christmas
- Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
- All I want for Christmas is you
- Ebenezer Scrooge
- How the Grinch Stole Christmas
- Arthur Christmas
- Polar Express
- Home Alone

 **Sing it****Say:**

Our memory verse for this month comes from the Old Testament. It lets us know that the people had been waiting a long time for Jesus to be born.

Display the memory verse in the room where you meet, so that the children can regularly refer to it as they learn the words. Give each member of the group a memory verse wristband.

**Memory verse**

**'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.**

**And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'**

(Isaiah 9:6 NIV)

**Say:**

Over the coming month we will aim to learn Isaiah 9:6 from memory. Today's song will help you get started.

**Song**

'Isaiah 9:6' (memory verse song Nairobi Chapel) by Quest NC (1:15)

**Share it**

Display the *Patience* sign.

**Say:**

Trusting God's timing when we are waiting for him to answer our prayers can be challenging and requires a lot of patience. Our fruit of the Spirit for today reminds us that patience is something that we can grow in our hearts with God's help.

**Say:**

In the Bible God's people had waited a very long time for the promised Messiah. The Christmas story tells how God answered those prayers. Usually we begin with the angel Gabriel visiting Mary, but today we're going to go a little further back in the story to meet Zechariah and Elizabeth.

**Ask:**

What do you already know about Zechariah and Elizabeth?

**Say:**

Let's watch the clip to find out more about them and their story.

**Video**

***Zechariah and Elizabeth*** by Faith Kids Videos (1:42)

**Say:**

Now, let's look more closely at their story in the book of Luke in the New Testament.

**Read:**

**'During the time Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah's group. Zechariah's wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Zechariah and Elizabeth truly did what God said was good. They did everything the Lord commanded and told people to do. They were without fault in keeping his law. But Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children. Elizabeth could not have a baby; and both of them were very old.'**

(Luke 1:5-7 ICB)

**Ask:**

- What do we find out about Zechariah and Elizabeth in these first few verses?
- Zechariah and Elizabeth were very old. What do you think the chances were of them having a baby?

**Say:**

Zechariah and Elizabeth loved and obeyed God but still they had no child. Sometimes we can be doing the right things and still have prayers that feel unanswered. Their story reminds us that waiting doesn't mean God has forgotten us.

**Read:**

**'Zechariah was serving as a priest before God for his group. It was his group's time to serve. According to the custom of the priests, he was chosen to go into the Temple of the Lord and burn incense. There were a great many people outside praying at the time the incense was offered. Then, on the right side of the incense table, an angel of the Lord came and stood before Zechariah. When he saw the angel, Zechariah was confused and frightened.'**

(Luke 1:8-12 *ICB*)

**Say:**

There were around 18,000 priests in Jerusalem at the time and only 14 were chosen each year to burn incense in the Temple.

**Ask:**

- How do you think Zechariah felt about being chosen for this?
- How would you feel if you suddenly saw an angel?

**Say:**

Being chosen to burn incense in the Temple was a once-in-a-lifetime honour. Zechariah's big moment turned out to be even bigger than he expected – God broke the silence with a personal message of hope.

**Read:**

**'But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, don't be afraid. Your prayer has been heard by God. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. You will name him John. You will be very happy. Many people will be happy because of his birth. John will be a great man for the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer. Even at the time John is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God. He himself will go first before the Lord. John will be powerful in spirit like Elijah. He will make peace between fathers and their children. He will bring those who are not obeying God back to the right way of thinking. He will make people ready for the coming of the Lord."'**

(Luke 1:13-17 *ICB*)

**Ask:**

What do we learn about John from the angel's message?

**Say:**

John would be a special child with an important job – preparing people for the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah. God's answer to Zechariah's personal prayer was also part of his huge rescue plan for the whole world.

**Read:**

**'Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I know that what you say is true? I am an old man, and my wife is old, too."**

**'The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand before God. God sent me to talk to you and to tell you this good news. Now, listen! You will not be able to talk until the day these things happen. You will lose your speech because you did not believe what I told you. But these things will really happen."**

(Luke 1:18-20 ICB)

**Ask:**

- Why did God make Zechariah silent until the baby was born?
- Why do we sometimes find it hard to believe that God will answer our prayers?

**Say:**

After so many years of waiting, Zechariah found it hard to believe that God had finally answered his prayers. Sometimes God uses waiting to help us trust and grow closer to him.

**Say:**

The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth shows that God keeps his promises and hears prayer, even when the answer takes time. This Advent, as we wait for Jesus, we can remember that love is a promise, God's promise to send his son and to hear us when we pray.



## Action it

**Say:**

Zechariah and Elizabeth had prayed and waited for many years for a child. At times, it must have seemed as though God had forgotten them. At just the right time, God sent his angel with good news.

Advent is a season of waiting too. We wait for Jesus, the Light of the World, to come and shine into the darkness. Sometimes waiting is hard, but God asks us to trust him and be patient, knowing his promises will come true.

## Christmas lanterns

Explain to the children that they are going to make a lantern to use during their prayer times throughout the Advent season.

## Video

***Kids' Christmas Craft: Christmas Lanterns*** by DK Books (3:29)

Ask the children to cut and stick shapes (stars, angels, words of hope or promise) or use some of the ideas in the clip. Adapt the activity to the resources you have available and the needs of your children.

Ask the children to write or draw something on their lantern that they are waiting or praying for, or a promise of God they want to remember while they wait. Give each child a battery tealight to place in their lantern. The lanterns will be used later during the prayer time.



## Pray it

### Say:

Zechariah had a lot of time to be quiet and listen to God's voice. Sometimes it's important for us to take time to be quiet too, especially when the world around us is noisy and busy.

### Ask:

- Do you ever have times when you are very quiet, maybe thinking to yourself or not wanting to talk?
- Does God ever speak to you, not just through a voice or an angel, but through another person or something you see?
- How might God be answering your prayers today?

### Say:

Advent is about long-awaited promises. Zechariah and Elizabeth had to wait a long time before they were blessed with a child, but God kept his promise to them. The angel's visit to Mary reminds us that hope begins in quiet, faithful waiting. Sometimes we need to wait for things, and when we wait calmly, we show patience.

### Say:

We're going to have our own time of peace and quiet now. Hold your lantern in front of you and switch on the light. As the gentle music plays, close your eyes or look quietly at the light and remember that God is with you as you wait and listen. Think about what you wrote or drew on your lantern. It could be your prayer, your hope, or God's promise.

## Listen

**‘What Child is This’ (piano and electric cello) by The Piano Guys (3:00)**

**Say:**

**Dear God, thank you that you hear our prayers even when we are waiting.**

**Thank you for keeping your promises and bringing hope to us.**

**Please help us to be patient and to trust your timing. Amen.**

## **Explore it**

Remember to send home the *Explore It ideas* for children and families.



## Love is a Promise (1)

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.



**Bible verses:**  
Luke 1:5-20



**Aim:**  
To know that Zechariah's prayers were answered



**Today's fruit:**  
Patience



### Pray

Take home the lantern you made in our session. Each evening during Advent, switch on the light and spend a quiet moment with God.

You could:

- Think about the prayer or promise you wrote or drew.
- Thank God for hearing you, even while you wait.
- Ask God to help you be patient and trust his timing.



### Share

There may be children at your school who don't know the real story of Christmas. Share this clip with them and let them know what Christmas is all about. It's not about presents, Father Christmas, or gifts under the tree. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus.

*The Mystery of Christmas* by Hillsong Kids



### Song for the week

'Isaiah 9:6' (memory verse song Nairobi Chapel) by Quest NC



### Memory verse

'For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

(Isaiah 9:6 NIV)