

A QUESTION OF CHRISTMAS

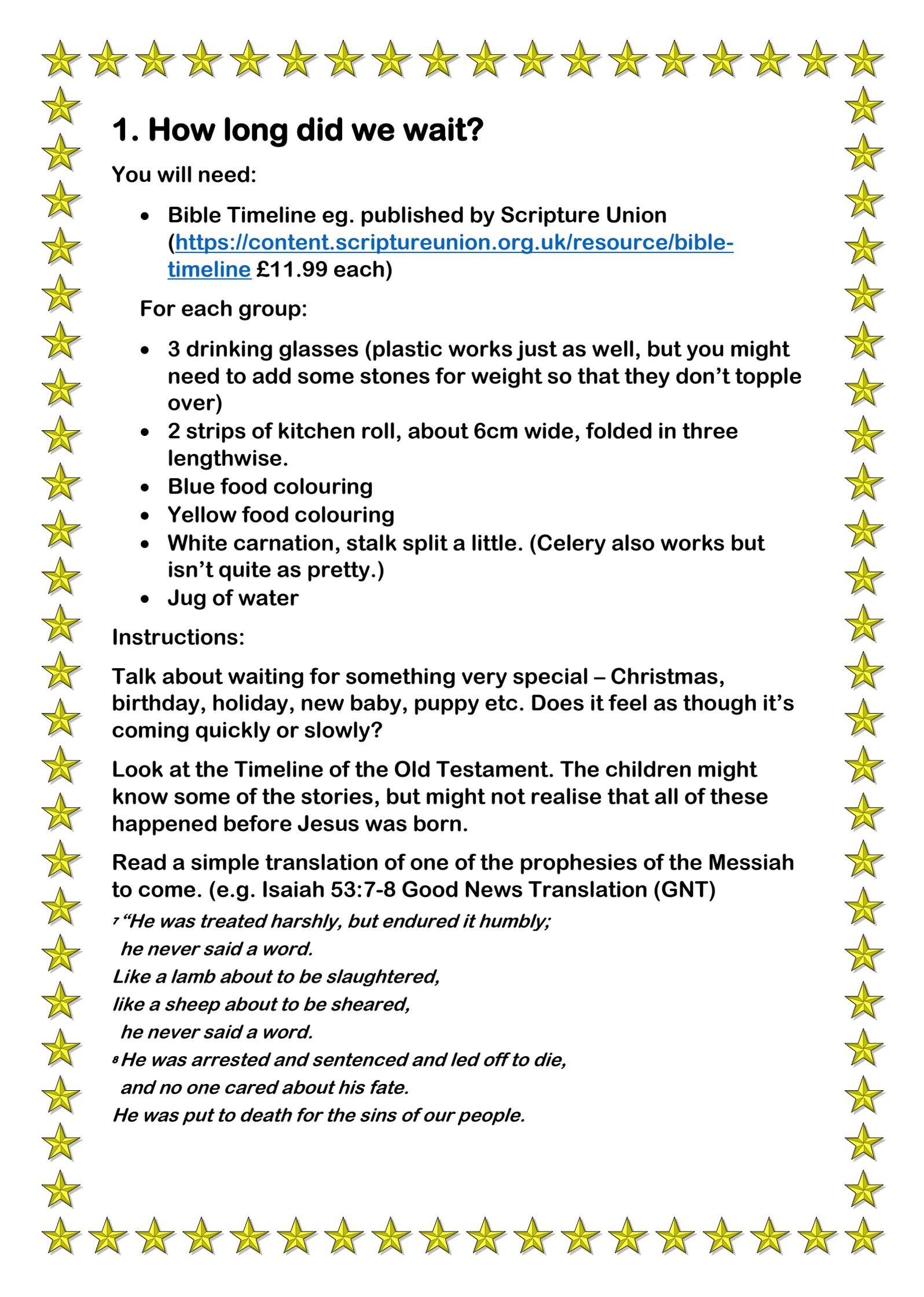
SIX ACTIVITIES TO HELP CHILDREN THINK AND TALK ABOUT CHRISTMAS



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1. How long did we wait?

You will need:

- Bible Timeline eg. published by Scripture Union (<https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/resource/bible-timeline> £11.99 each)

For each group:

- 3 drinking glasses (plastic works just as well, but you might need to add some stones for weight so that they don't topple over)
- 2 strips of kitchen roll, about 6cm wide, folded in three lengthwise.
- Blue food colouring
- Yellow food colouring
- White carnation, stalk split a little. (Celery also works but isn't quite as pretty.)
- Jug of water

Instructions:

Talk about waiting for something very special – Christmas, birthday, holiday, new baby, puppy etc. Does it feel as though it's coming quickly or slowly?

Look at the Timeline of the Old Testament. The children might know some of the stories, but might not realise that all of these happened before Jesus was born.

Read a simple translation of one of the prophecies of the Messiah to come. (e.g. Isaiah 53:7-8 Good News Translation (GNT))

⁷“He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly;

he never said a word.

Like a lamb about to be slaughtered,

like a sheep about to be sheared,

he never said a word.

⁸He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die,

and no one cared about his fate.

He was put to death for the sins of our people.

Now set up the “waiting” experiment.

Fill all 3 glasses with water

Put a good amount of blue food colouring in one and a good amount of yellow in another.

The third glass has no colour.

Put a strip of kitchen roll from the blue water into the clear, and another strip from the yellow into the clear.

Talk about what might happen.

Put the white carnation in the clear water glass.

We might have an idea about what might happen, but we will still need to wait to see if we are right. Sit and wait for a while, and agree that waiting is quite hard!

This takes around 2 hours to work, so start the session with this one and then go off and do other things!



To think and wonder about...

Were you expecting the water and flower to change colour? If you didn't know anything about science, what might you think was happening?

Do you think the people in Jesus' time were expecting God's son to be born? What do you think they might have expected to see when this amazing event happened?

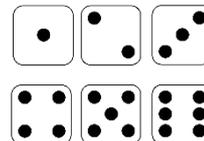
What sort of reasons can you think of to explain why God made people wait so long for Jesus to be born?

2. Who is he?

You will need:

- Six small boxes with lids (eg “The Works” sell two for £1, or re-use card boxes containing cereal bars, turned inside out or covered with plain paper on one side.)

Use a marker pen to draw a dice number on each box, so that you have a box with each of the six numbers.



- At least six chocolate coins – one for each person that you think will be taking part.
- Six names on small pieces of card. Select from this list, (or add your own) depending on the age and experience of those who will be playing the game.

God with us	The first and the last	Redeemer	Lion of Judah
King of kings	Good Shepherd	Mighty God	Light of the world
Saviour	Everlasting father	Prince of peace	Messiah

Put one name and one or more chocolate coins in each box, then hide them around the room. If you have older children, make the places quite tricky and muddle them up so that they can't predict where each number is.

- A hat, scarf (and gloves if your children can manage these)
- A dice in a shaker – a big one is good so that everyone can see.
- A pin board or card and glue so that you can display the names as they are collected.

The game is like the traditional “chocolate game”. The dice is rolled and passed around the circle. When someone rolls a 6, they immediately roll again and remember this second number – this is the box they have to find. Then they must quickly put on the clothes and go and find the box. They return it to the table, pinning the name on the board and eating the chocolate. They then re-join

the game. This continues until all the boxes have been found. When a 6 is rolled, you can keep rolling the dice again until a number that hasn't been collected is rolled – or give someone else a turn so that everyone gets a name and some chocolate.

To think and wonder about...

Do you know anything about your name? Was there a special reason that it was given to you?

These names we've collected seem strange to us, not like Jodie or Ethan and other names from today. But in the Bible people quite often had names which explained something about them. Which of these names do you think explain something about Jesus and what he does?

Are there any of these names which you really don't understand? Lots of people find them hard so don't worry. Ask someone you know what they think about the names.



★
GOD
ROCK
SAVIOR
MESSIAH
IMMANUEL
HOLY • CHILD
MIGHTY • GOD
LORD • OF • ALL
LAMB • OF • GOD
CHRIST • OF • GOD
KING • OF • KINGS
THE • WORD • OF • GOD
ALPHA • AND • OMEGA
PRINCE • OF • PEACE
LIGHT • OF • THE • WORLD
HEAD • OF • THE • CHURCH
SON • OF • THE • HIGHEST
EVERLASTING • FATHER
RESURRECTION • AND • LIFE
JESUS

3. Where was he born?

You will need:

- EITHER lots of boxes of various sizes, cardboard tubes, glue and sticky tape for junk modelling
- OR large sheets of paper or card and various marker pens
- Small plain matchbox (e.g. from <https://www.bakerross.co.uk/craft-matchboxes-3>)
- Small scissors
- Dark coloured felt pens
- Post-it notes and pens or pencils to write.

Depending on space/interests etc of the children, they can either make or draw the most magnificent palace that they can imagine.

When it's finished, they can make a tiny matchbox stable.

Now explain that God's son is going to be born. This is an incredibly important event! Where will God decide that his son will be born? (You might get some surprising answers!) Now talk and/or write on the postits – Why do you think God decided on the stable and not on the palace?



To think and wonder about...

How much do we want to impress people and show off? Maybe about the things we own, or maybe the things we do or know?

Why was showing off not important to God? What can we learn?

4. Who heard the news?

You will need:

- A piece of “mermaid fabric” in black and gold. E.g.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/ShinyBeauty-Mermaid-Stretch-Spandex-Decoration->

(This will be more than you will need, so possibly share with another church)

- **Mobile phone which can take a photo.**
- **Photo (preferably black and white) of shepherds**

Show the children the photo of the shepherds and ask if they know how they are connected to the Nativity story. Read a verse from the Bible account about the shepherds.



⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them...¹³Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

Luke 2:9, 13

What do they think this might have looked like? Start with the fabric all showing black and demonstrate how it changes to gold.

Take up to five photos with the phone to show the scene.

Then, if possible, put these photos into a powerpoint or similar program on a computer so that everyone can see. (see below)

Compare different ideas of what the shepherds might have seen.



To think and wonder about...

Shepherds were thought to be very unimportant people. They lived out in the fields with the sheep, at least for part of the year. They would have worn rough clothes and would definitely not have had a shower recently!

Yet God chose these people to hear about the birth of Jesus first! Why do you think this happened?

5. How did they find him?

You will need:

- Card – shiny, holographic etc.
- Scissors, pencils, glue
- String (attached to something high e.g. window hook and something lower e.g. door handle)
- Blu tak and sharp pencil to make a hole in the star.
- Mini fans and/or balloon pumps
- Stable (as in activity 3) and a mounted and cut out picture of Jerusalem in Jesus' time. Place the stable under the string at the lowest point, and the Jerusalem picture a little way higher up the string.



Make a star of your own design. When it's ready, make a hole in the centre and thread it onto the string at the highest point.

Use the fans and/or pump to make the star move along the string. As it moves, talk about the wise men and what they might think and talk about as they followed the star.

Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him."

And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

Matthew 2

The Magi (wise men) seem to have come from a long way away. Nobody is quite sure where they came from or how long it took them to arrive to visit Jesus.

They stopped in Jerusalem, because they thought God's son might be in the palace! How would you explain to them that this wasn't right? How do you think they felt when they knew that they had to travel even further?

6. Why did he come?

You will need:

- Mirror card rectangles
- Coloured lolly sticks e.g. <https://www.bakerross.co.uk/coloured-wooden-craft-sticks>
- PVA glue and spreaders
- Heart stickers e.g. <https://www.bakerross.co.uk/heart-foam-stickers>

Use the lolly sticks to make a frame around the mirror card.

As you look at yourself, think about WHY Jesus was born.

‘For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

To think and wonder about...

The story that we know so well is about God's plan to show us his incredible love. It doesn't matter if the face in the mirror is old or young, beautiful or ordinary, from any of the countries in the world. It is still true that all of this happened because **GOD LOVES YOU!**

How can you tell someone about this love?

