

Don't Give Up!

Purpose:

Children can learn that one of the good character traits of a Christian is to be the kind of person who prays all the time about everything. Children can learn the benefits of praying persistently and of waiting on God to answer according to His will.

Bible Material:

Zechariah and Elizabeth Prayed a Long Time (Luke 1:5-25)

Warm-up

Get-involved Activity
(10 minutes)

Station a coach at the door to give each child a *DGU!* sticker and to help direct the children to an activity. Explain the three activity choices: working together on a 500-piece puzzle (or more), arranging dominoes in a creative pattern, or building a structure from cards. Let children choose, but try to wind up with about the same number in each group.

If children ask about the *DGU!* sticker, don't tell them yet, but ask them to try and figure it out themselves. Other coaches should be available to help with the groups. Make sure everyone has a chance to participate in the groups.

Ask the children: "Based on the activities in your groups, what do you think we're going to talk about in this meeting?" Allow the children to give their opinions, but don't tell them yet.

Ask: "What do the letters *DGU!* on your stickers mean?" Call on children to make their guesses, and if they don't guess correctly, tell them that it means Don't Give Up!

Say: "You'll find out in this meeting how the phrase *Don't Give Up* and prayer go together." Let the children move to the WORKOUT area.

Bible Verse:

Matthew 7:7

Extra Bible Verse:

Psalm 119:105

Provide:

- Puzzle (500 pieces or more)
- Dominoes
- Playing or trading cards
- Blank stickers, 1 per child
- Marker

To Do:

- Set out the puzzle, dominoes, and cards in different areas of the room before the children arrive.
- On each sticker write *DGU!*

Provide:

- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Chalk or dry erase markers

To Do:

- Write the definitions of *persistence* and *patience* on the board.

Persistence: The determination to carry on with something even when it is hard

Patience: The quality of being able to wait, not in a hurry

Provide:

- 4 sheets of poster board
- Markers

To Do:

- Make 4 posters to help children learn Matthew 7:7. Fold each poster in half, like a greeting card. Here’s what needs to be on each poster:

Poster 1: Outside—ASKING or ASK

Inside—(the first phrase)

Poster 2: Outside—SEEKING or SEEK

Inside—(the second phrase)

Poster 3:

Outside—KNOCKING or KNOCK

Inside—(the third phrase)

Poster 4: Outside—Reference

Inside—Matthew 7:7

Workout

Group Study
(30 minutes)

1. Introduce the meeting. Ask: “What do the words *Don’t Give Up!* mean to you?” Affirm the children’s responses. Tell them that two words will help you know how “Don’t Give Up!” and prayer go together. Those two words are *persistence* and *patience*. (See the margin for definitions.)

Make sure the children understand what these words mean. Tell them that applying persistence and patience in their prayer lives will help them develop a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer.

Ask: “How could a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer help you learn about God? How could it help you in using the Bible? How could it help you live for Jesus?” Affirm the children’s responses, and help them see that a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude about prayer would spill over into many areas of their lives. Say: “Developing a strong *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer will strengthen your Christian life.”

2. Learn a Bible verse. Enlist four children to help you teach the Bible verse to the group. Give each of the four children one of the posters you made before the meeting with the outside showing. Tell the group that today’s verse has three key words: *asking, seeking, and knocking* or *ask, seek, and knock*. Instruct the children to hold up the posters with those words at this time.

Introduce the phrase that goes with each key word (see below). Then introduce the key words in the correct order so the children can learn the verse in correct order. Lead the children to say each key word and phrase several times.

<i>Key Word</i>	<i>Phrase</i>
ASKING or ASK	(the first phrase)
SEEKING or SEEK	(the second phrase)
KNOCKING or KNOCK	(the third phrase)
(Reference)	Matthew 7:7

The word *Reference* doesn’t need to be said each time, but the children need to learn that the verse is Matthew 7:7. Practice the key words and phrases separately; then try saying the entire verse together, first with posters, then without. Continue until the children are comfortable saying the verse without the posters. Congratulate them for working on hiding God’s Word in their hearts. Tell them that learning Bible verses helps them develop a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude.

Say: “The Bible story will introduce you to two Bible characters who had a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer.”

3. Tell the Bible story. With your Bible open to Luke 1, tell today's story, which is related as Zechariah might have told it to John the Baptist when John was a child. If you have enlisted a man to tell the story, introduce him at this time.

Zechariah and Elizabeth Prayed a Long Time

Yes, John, I'll tell you the story about how we found out you were going to be born.

When Herod was king, your mother and I wondered if we would ever have any children. We were getting older, but we prayed hard that God would give us a child. I'm in the priestly division of Abijah, and your mother is a descendant of Aaron. We kept all the Lord's commandments and tried to live godly lives, but no children were born to us.

One day when my priestly division was on duty, it was my turn to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. Many worshipers were praying outside at this time. I was inside, standing at the right side of the altar, when suddenly an angel appeared. I was surprised, and I also was scared.

I'll never forget the words the angel said to me. "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayers have been heard," the angel said. "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth."

That's you the angel was talking about, John.

The angel also said, "He will bring back to God many people of Israel. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of righteousness—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

I was so amazed that I asked, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years."

The angel was not very pleased with me and he said, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to tell you this good news. You will be unable to speak until the day this happens because you have not believed my words, which will come true at their proper time."

Let that be a lesson to you, John. If an angel of the Lord tells you something, believe him!

Anyway, the people outside the temple were beginning to wonder why I had been inside for so long. Of course when I finally came out of the temple, I couldn't tell them what had happened. Oh, how I tried to speak! But I just couldn't!

The people knew that something had happened, though. I made signs to them until they realized that an angel had appeared to me in the temple.

Provide:

- A man to play Zechariah
- A boy to play John the Baptist
- Biblical costumes for both

To Do:

- Ahead of time, provide a copy of the Bible story to the man who will play Zechariah so he can prepare.

When my time of service ended, I returned home to my wife, Elizabeth. Not long after that, she became pregnant. For five months she stayed in seclusion. She said, “The Lord has done this for me. In these days he has shown his favor.”

Your mother was very happy, John, just as I was. We had prayed for so long for a child, and God answered our prayers by sending you. John, always pray, and don’t give up on your prayers. God does answer our prayers.

—Based on Luke 1:5-25

Points to Emphasize:

1. God always answers prayer.
2. Because God answers prayer, you need to keep praying.
3. When your prayer is answered, you need to believe the answer.
4. Not only do you need to believe God’s answer; you also need to accept the answer.

Provide:

- Poster board
- Markers

To Do:

- Make a poster entitled “Two steps to a *Don’t Give Up!* Attitude toward Prayer”:
Step 1. Put into action
1 Thessalonians 5:17: (Write the verse.)
Step 2. Recognize God’s answers to your prayers.

4. Review the story. Ask the children to recall the story. Walk through it with them, making sure they remember it well. Tell the children that they have the chance to act out the story. Enlist volunteers to play Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John the Baptist. The other children can play the crowd outside the temple. If time allows, give other children the opportunity to play Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John the Baptist.

As the children are acting out the story, remind them that John the Baptist’s birth was the answer to a prayer his parents had been asking God about for many years. Say: “Even when you don’t immediately get an answer to your prayer, God has heard you and will answer.”

Ask: “What are the two words we talked about earlier?” (*persistence and patience*) If the definitions are still in sight, ask volunteers to read them. Then ask: “How did Zechariah and Elizabeth show persistence in their prayers? How did they show patience?” Let the children respond.

Ask: “Did Zechariah have a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer?” Ask: “What can you learn from this story about developing a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer?” Let the children answer, and emphasize the points in the margin.

5. Develop a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer. Call attention to the “Two Steps to a *Don’t Give Up!* Attitude toward Prayer” poster you prepared. Ask a child to read step 1 aloud. Ask the group to say 1 Thessalonians 5:17 together. Ask: “What does that mean to you?” After the children respond, tell them that following such a verse will help them develop the persistence and patience that will lead to a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude toward prayer.

Ask: “How can you carry out praying continually in your everyday life?” Let children give their opinions. Share the situations in the margin with the children and ask them to tell how praying continually would help in each situation.

Help the children understand that praying continually means applying prayer to every part of their lives, both good and bad. Say: “God is always available and wants to have a relationship with you all the time, not just when you’re in trouble and need to be bailed out. Praying continually doesn’t mean walking around with your eyes closed and bumping into things, but it does mean

being in touch with God about every part of your life. To do that, you need to pray continually.”

Read each of God’s three answers to our prayers. Divide the group into three smaller groups and lead each group to say one of the answers; then switch groups until all the groups have said all the answers. Then say all the answers together. Probe the children’s understanding by asking these questions about God’s answers to their prayers: What does a *yes* answer mean? What does a *no* answer mean? What does a *wait and see* answer mean?

Yes and no are obvious, but you may need to discuss wait and see. The two answers that we like the least, no and wait and see, cause us to build up the persistence and patience which lead to a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude to prayer. To wait and to have a request granted later—or to be able to understand why the request was not granted—can help us grow. Tell the children that they can be sensitive and obedient to God’s answers to their prayers.

6. Pray in small groups. Say: “It’s time to begin praying continually and listening for God’s answers.” Ask a coach to join each small group. Each coach will call on children to pray, then close the prayer for his group. Afterward the children may move to STRETCHING.

Stretching

Activity Page Time
(20 minutes)

Answers for the activity pages are found on the last page of this meeting. You may choose to provide photocopies of this page to the Stretching coaches.

The Tournament

Games and Activities
(20 minutes)

Blow the whistle to start THE TOURNAMENT time. Choose from the following games or activities.

Relay Mania

Divide into equal teams for this full time of active fun.

Crab Relay: Line up the players behind each other by teams, in single file, behind the starting line. At the go signal the first player turns around, sits down, raises her body with her hands and feet, and crawls backward to the finish line. She stands up and runs back to the next player, who follows suit.

Frog Hop Relay: In the same teams, each player gets into a squatting position and hops like a frog to the finish line, then runs

Situations:

1. Your sister or brother was mean to you.
2. A bully picked on you at school.
3. You made a new friend in your neighborhood.
4. Your and some of your friends decided to help a senior adult with yard work.
5. Your parents were angry with you for not doing all your school work.
6. A friend spread a false rumor about you.
7. You were nice to the kid everyone else picked on.
8. You made a gift for your teacher just because you wanted to.
9. Your friend talked to you about a problem he had.
10. A classmate wanted to copy your test answers.

The Answers:

Yes; No; Wait and see

Provide:

- A whistle

Provide:

- Object for boundary line—cone, chair, and so forth

back to tag the next player, who does the frog hop.

Hopscotch Relay: Each player hops on one foot (the same foot) to an object (cone), changes feet, and hops back. The other players do the same.

Crossed Legs Relay: Players are to cross their right leg over their left leg and race to the finish line, turn around, and cross the left leg over their right leg to return to the starting line.

Add One On Relay: The first player races around an object (cone) and returns to the starting line. Two players then hold both hands and race to and around the obstacle and back. All three players hold hands and race. This continues until all players are holding hands and, as a large group, race around the object.

Encourage the players: Say: “Just as you learned today about prayer, *Don’t Give Up*. Some of these relays are hard to do but *Don’t Give Up*. Be persistent.”

Provide:

- Balloons
- Chairs

To Do:

- Place chairs around the room.

Balloon Huddle

Place chairs around the room, one per group. On each chair place several deflated balloons. Compose teams of four to six players. Tell the groups to huddle together, arms around each other’s shoulders. All groups meet in the center of the playing area.

At the signal, each group shuffles its way to a chair. One of the players takes a balloon, inflates it, ties it off, and places the inflated balloon in the center of her huddle. As they move to another chair with the balloons, they must keep the balloon off the floor by pressing it with their stomachs.

When they reach the second chair, two balloons are inflated and added to the group. At the third chair, three balloons are inflated, and so on. The huddle must keep the balloons from falling on the floor. If one falls, the group must stop, pick it up, and place it back within the huddle. A group cannot go to a chair where another group is already working. In three to five minutes, stop the action. The group with the most balloons wins.

Play until the kids get tired. Then ask the children to each find a partner and each say the verse for today (Matthew 7:7) one time.

Cool Down

Refreshments and Conclusion
(10 minutes)

Thank God for the refreshments. As the children eat, call attention to their *DGU!* stickers. Encourage them to have a *Don’t Give Up!* attitude about prayer by praying continually and by recognizing and accepting God’s answers to their prayers. Close the meeting in a circle of prayer for encouragement.

Provide:

- “Persistence food” (chewy candy and/or vegetables)
- Juice
- Paper plates
- Napkins
- Cups

Meeting 5: Answers for Activity Pages

Grades 1–3

Match It Up

1. What promise did the angel of the Lord make to Zechariah? He would have a son.
2. What special work would the child do? Prepare the way for the Lord.

Grades 4–6

Bible People Who Did Not Give Up

Abraham and *Sarah* prayed for years for a son before God gave them Isaac.

(Genesis 21:1-3)

Zechariah and *Elizabeth* prayed for many years before their son, John the Baptist, was born.

(Luke 1:5-25, 57-66)

Simeon and *Anna* prayed all of their lives to see the Messiah. They finally got to see Baby Jesus when Mary and Joseph brought Him to the temple. (Luke 2:25-38)

Paul prayed three times for a problem that caused him pain to be removed.

(2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

God Answers Prayer in Different Ways

yes, no, later, wait