

Space Man Sketch: Christmas and waiting times

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Standard entrance (Compere responds to banging on the door) *That must be Pod.* (Spaceman enters)

Hello BCC! Don't worry I'm here now.
Everything will be all right.

Hello Pod. It's been a while since we saw you; a whole year in fact.

Yes, that's right. It's a long way from my planet. If I came back every week, I'd have to turn around before I'd even got home. And when I'm flying at the speed of light, I might just meet myself coming backwards... and that would be very confusing.

Anyway, what did you mean by "everything will be alright?" I didn't know there was anything wrong.

But there's something desperately wrong, with Christmas. So I'm here to save it!

I'm sorry Pod, but I've not heard about a problem. Unless you mean that people have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas.

That's exactly it. You've hit the nail right on the blunt bit there, Rudolf.

Yes, I suppose it's a shame that so many people don't understand the gift of baby Jesus as the way back to God.

What are you talking about? I mean the true meaning of Christmas... presents! I've heard that something called the 'credit crunch' means that people aren't buying as many. And the most important thing about any Christmas is that it's bigger and better than the year before. So you can't be buying less presents. It's a disaster!

Oh Pod, I know the credit crunch is a problem, but you should have learnt by now that Christmas isn't just about presents. Anyway, do you even know what caused the credit crunch?

Yes, I do actually. I heard it was because the banks were collecting all the money up and burning it. So there's only coins left now. And if there's only coins, the only place to spend them is in one of those Christmas pound shops. That's why Christmas is going to be rubbish this year.

No Pod, that's not right. The credit crunch started because people were buying what they couldn't really afford and borrowing extra money from banks, especially at Christmas. If the credit crunch takes some of the accent off presents it could even make Christmas better this year. Anyway this isn't our 'credit crunch service'. It's our 'Christmas service' and it's also the last Sunday service we are going to have.

No! But that's even worse news. We must start a campaign to raise funds. We could put one of those big progress thermometers up outside the Vyne.

No, Pod. It's really not about money. It's just that God is telling us to do Church differently.

It's because people have been leaving isn't it? We can stop that. Lock all the doors! And all of you stay right there. Don't move a muscle.

Wrong again Pod. It's not because people are leaving. It's more that people aren't joining. There are plenty of good churches around if people want to do the Sunday thing. But most people in our country aren't interested in the Sunday thing, even if they might be interested in God. We're starting to understand that, for us, Sunday's have actually become a barrier to people getting to know Jesus.

So what are you going to do instead then?

To start with, we're not going to do anything.

You are joking?

No, I'm not. But we are going to carry on meeting and praying and we'll see what God tells us next.

But that sounds a bit flaky. Isn't that a bit like 'failing to plan is planning to fail'?

That might be true in some cases, Pod, but there is a plan; God's plan. And that's what we want to follow. It's more important that we follow His plan than human reasoning. That's what the church is meant to be about. But it needs some faith and trust in our Heavenly Father. And anyway we're not the first church to stop everything and wait on God.

No? Well I'll bet it never got them very far.

It was quite the opposite actually, Pod. I'm thinking of the very first church. Jesus' original disciples.

Oh yes, Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem didn't He? Until, until ...

Until they received the gift of His Holy Spirit.

I knew that. Yes, I see. But what were they doing whilst they were waiting?

Meeting together to pray, just like we're going to. It's exciting isn't it?

Well if you put it like that, I suppose it is. But isn't God at work all the time, why do you need to wait for him?

Two reasons I can think of: The first is timing, whilst God is getting everything into place. And second is that God has something to teach us in the waiting process. Can you think of any bible stories where waiting was involved?

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Well, David had to wait a long time to become King. *That's right. And Abraham has to wait a long time for the son God had promised him.*

And, and Moses spent years as a shepherd before God called him back to Egypt to lead the people out.

And the Israelites waited 40 years before they could get into the Promised Land. And there are others too. Noah, Joseph, Job...

Wow, there's loads.

That's right. Even Jesus had to wait.

No. I can't believe the son of God would have to wait for anything!

But think about it. 40 days in the desert without food?

Oh, yes.

And actually that brings us neatly back to why we're here this morning

Christmas?

Yes Pod. If I tell you the story of the first Christmas would you like to see if you can spot the waiting bits?

Now that sounds fun. Maybe these short ones could help me in case I miss any.

I'm sure they would. You just shout 'wait' when you spot a wait.

Right-O.

In the Old Testament there were lots of prophecies about the coming Messiah, some specifically about his birth. For example Isaiah said: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Which means 'God is with us')

Wait!

No, too soon, Pod. – Many of the great prophets spoke of Jesus. But then suddenly all the prophecies stopped; until just before Jesus was born.

Wait!

(to the children) *What is the 'wait' that Pod has spotted, anyone?... Yes, and it was a long one: 400 years! And then an angel appeared separately to both Mary and Joseph telling them that Mary was going to have a baby. And when it was nearly time to have the baby they had to travel to Bethlehem... (looking at Pod and waiting)*

Is it my go?

Have you missed one?

No.

(to the children) *Can anyone see the wait that Pod's missed? ... I think 9 months of pregnancy counts as a wait – (Isn't that right Sheri?) – Then Jesus was born in a stable and the*

shepherds and the wise men came to worship him: Then when he was about 30 he started teaching and healing people.

Wait!

(to the children) *What's the wait this time? ... Yes, it was a 30 year wait until Jesus started the work that God had sent him to do.*

Wow, it's easy to miss all those gaps when you read the story, isn't it?

And that is where faith is very important, to believe that God is still in charge even when nothing seems to be happening. After all what would have happened if Noah had given up waiting for the rain? Or if Jesus had given up waiting for God to start him in his work? ... he would have died a carpenter!

Yes. I see. You know I've learnt some important things on this visit that you're not stopping things on Sundays because of money, or people leaving, but because God is leading you into something else. And that the Christmas story had waiting times in it too. And that faith in God is needed to make it through any wait that he leads you through.

Well it's time I was going now, but how will I know where you are in future?

Oh, that's a good point, Pod. How are we going to stay in contact?

We could use the internet.

You have the internet, Pod? We could send you Jungle Drums.

But that's no use. Jungle Drums is you talking to me. How do I get to talk to you? It's just email. It's so 'Old School'.

Well, have you got a better idea?

You need to use the 'BCC Net', that way you can carry on a conversation with people in between actually seeing them. I use it all the time. This week I've been talking to Niki Methold and she's in Abu Dhabi! ... You have heard of the 'BCC Net' haven't you?

Just about, I've not seen it though. You seem to know more about it than I do!

You should really get into it. It's great. But hey! It's not just about talking to me. You could use it to stay in touch with each other. You'll need something to help you stay connected if you're not meeting on Sundays any more. Anyway, I must be on my way. But I know how I can stay in touch now. Goodbye everyone, merry Christmas to you all.

Goodbye, Pod.