

Hope Game

Materials

- ☐ Timer
- ☐ Small papers with one letter of the alphabet written on each
- ☐ Container for papers

Instructions

Write the alphabet on small pieces of paper (one letter per piece) and place in a container. Have students sit in a circle. Tell them that they will imagine things that they might hope for on their birthday. Have one student choose a paper and announce the letter written on it. Give everyone a few seconds to think of things they could say that begin with that letter. Set the timer and immediately begin with the student who chose the letter. He repeats the line, "It's my birthday, and I'm hoping for . . ." and names an item that begins with the letter he chose. The goal is to get around the circle before time is up, with each student repeating the line, but saying a different item that begins with the same letter. Set the timer according to your class size—the smaller the class, the shorter the time. (Try 30–60 seconds for the first round and adjust as needed.) Play more rounds as you have time, letting a different student choose a new letter each time.

Alphabet Option: Instead of choosing a paper with a letter, have the first student begin with the letter A. For example, "It's my birthday, and I'm hoping for apples." The next student repeats what the last student said and then names an item that begins with the letter B, "It's my birthday, and I'm hoping for apples and a bicycle." Play continues through the alphabet with each student repeating the line and all the previous items and then adding his own item at the end. If someone can't recall all the previous items or can't think of a new item, he goes out of the game. Continue playing until the end of the alphabet or until no one can remember the list.

Suggested Discussion

In this game, you imagined some interesting things to hope for on your birthday. But all of us hope for real things all the time.

- ❓ What are some things you really hope for? Allow discussion. New toys, to go somewhere fun, to make a friend, good health, nice weather, etc.
- ❓ Can you be sure that you will ever get any of these things? No.
- ❓ How is this kind of hope different from the hope Malachi told about in his message? Allow discussion.

When we say we hope for something, it's often for things that we wish would happen, although we can't be sure they will happen. But the hope in Malachi's message was a different kind of hope. This hope came from God's promise that a messenger would come to prepare the way for the Messiah—Jesus—the one who would offer forgiveness of sin.

Hoping in God's promises is different than hoping for other things because we know God is faithful to do what he says. We can trust in him and be sure of the hope of salvation. We know he will save us from our sin when we turn to him!