

Short Talk

(SHT182)

**What are you like
when life squeezes
you?**

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SHORT TALK: “What are you like when life squeezes you?”

- Aim of Short talk:** To encourage people to think about their attitudes when life is difficult, and their characters are “squeezed.”
- Use of Short talk:** This is a short All Age talk picking out one issue from the Lectionary Gospel reading of the Sunday main service. The talk stands alone and assumes that the Gospel Bible reading may not yet have been read to the congregation. It could be used for example, for the whole congregation before the children go out to their age specific groups, leaving the adults with a full sermon later.
- Main themes:** Joseph, Trials, Attitudes, Character
- Biblical references:** Matthew 1:18-25
- Lectionary:** Year A – The 4th Sunday of Advent
- Props:** You need a table set up at the front of the church. You also need:
- An orange
 - A lemon
 - A sharp knife and plate
 - A hand juice squeezer¹
 - 2 small glasses
- Before the service:** Before the service you need to choose your 2nd volunteer (N2), who will be your juice taster. Brief them to say, “yes” to the question about the orange and “no” to the 1st question about the lemon, and “yes” to the 2nd question about the lemon.

.....

I have two pieces of fruit today;

- a beautiful looking orange,
- and a beautiful looking lemon!
- I wonder what kind of juice they will produce when we squeeze them.

Who has got strong muscles and would like to squeeze my lemon and orange? *(Receive a volunteer – N1)*

- Would my official juice taster also come forward now? *(Receive volunteer N2)*

¹ You can purchase a hand juice squeezer from Amazon, if you don't have one, at www.amazon.co.uk by putting “hand juice squeezer” into the search bar.

In order to make this easier and less messy, I will cut the orange and lemon in half, then you can use my hand juice squeezer to extract the juice. *(Using the sharp knife, cut the orange and lemon in half on the plate, then hand the orange to N1 to have the juice extracted.)*

Let's see how much juice you can get out of this orange. *(N1 squeezes juice out of orange)*

- Now our official juice taster will try this orange juice. *(Pour juice into glass and give to N2)*

Is it delicious and sweet? *(N2 says, "Yes")*

- Our orange, when squeezed, gives delicious, sweet juice.

Let's see how much juice you can get out of this lemon. *(N1 squeezes juice out of lemon)*

- Now let's see what our official juice taster thinks of this lemon juice. *(Pour juice into glass and give to N2)*

Is it delicious and sweet? *(N2 pulls a face and says, "No")*

- Or is it rather sour? *(N2 says, "Yes")*
- Our lemon, when squeezed, gives rather sour juice.
- Thank you juice squeezer and taster.....do sit down. *(N1 and N2 return to their seats)*

It is hard to tell looking at the outside of the orange and the lemon that one fruit gives sweet juice when squeezed, whilst the other fruit gives sour juice when squeezed.

So, what has squeezing an orange and a lemon got to do with the Christmas story? Hmm.

- I want you to imagine for a moment that when something bad or difficult happens to you, it is a bit like your character is squeezed, like squeezing our fruit.

Some people when their characters are squeezed by a difficult life event can react with courage, kindness, forgiveness, and love;

- a bit like the sweet tasting juice from an orange.

Other people when their characters are squeezed by a difficult life event can react with self-pity, grumbling, bitterness and revenge;

- a bit like the sour tasting juice from a lemon.

Our Bible reading today tells us that Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, had to deal with an extremely difficult life event.

- Mary told him that she was pregnant, and Joseph knew that he wasn't the father.

This terrible news squeezed Joseph's character.

- In the Old Testament law, Mary could have been punished by stoning to death and Joseph knew that.

But, instead of choosing to get his revenge on Mary or cause her public disgrace, Joseph decided to quietly release her from the promise to marry him.

Joseph showed kindness and love;

- a bit like the sweet tasting juice from an orange.

Having made that decision, an angel spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him that the baby had come from the Holy Spirit and not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife.

- When Joseph woke up, he did just that.

So today, let me encourage you to be like Joseph.

- The next time your character is squeezed by something happening that you don't like or is difficult, ask Jesus to help you react well;
- with the sweet juice of courage, love, kindness and forgiveness.