

WEEK ONE

## ZECHARIAH GLIMPSES GOD'S PROMISE OF THE MESSIAH

### BIG IDEA

*Sometimes we must*

# WAIT FOR GOOD THINGS TO HAPPEN

*We learn patience and can even feel joy and excitement as we wait*

### PREP: (Kids can help!)

- Cut short strips of wool or string – one for each person. Make one longer than the others.
- Find a balloon.
- Write “I saw an angel” on a piece of paper and fold it.
- Buy an incense stick or a scented candle.
- Buy or find a notebook and pencil.

### WHAT GOES IN THE BOX?

- The strips of wool
- A balloon
- The folded piece of paper with “I saw an angel”, written on it
- The candle or incense stick and matches
- Notebook and pencil
- A plate



### INTRODUCTION

The beginning of December marks the beginning of the season of Advent. Advent is four weeks of waiting for Christmas. But we can look forward to it because we know it is coming, and as we wait patiently, we usually find we can even feel joy and excitement.

Today's story is about God's people who had to learn to wait. Between the Old Testament and the New Testament there were 400 years with no prophets and no special messages for them. God had promised that he would send his Messenger – the Rescuer – and had told them to get ready. It was a long time of waiting for God to do something. But when God finally spoke, it was in an extraordinary way.

How does it feel to have to wait for Christmas especially when you see gifts under the tree?

It takes a lot of patience not to peek! Well the couple in today's story had to have patience for a long time also. Their names were Zechariah and Elizabeth. They lived when Herod the Great was the King of Judea, and they had been waiting for a Messiah (a Saviour) to be born for many years.

### OUT OF THE BOX

#### Drawing lots

- Take out the pieces of wool and have mum or dad hold all the pieces so only the ends are showing and they look the same length.
- The person with the closest birthday chooses first... then everyone takes one length of wool.

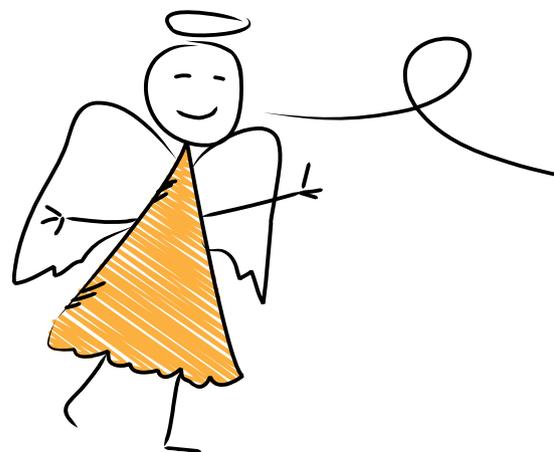
- Whoever has the longer piece of wool is the one chosen to be the 'special priest'.

## PLAY

**Explain that the special priest's name is 'Zechariah'.**

- Give him/her the piece of paper from the box.
- The 'priest' must act out the words on the paper without talking (as in charades) and everyone else must guess what he/she is telling them.

The priest then takes the incense or perfumed candle out of the Faith Box and chooses an assistant to light it before the reading.



## READ

“ Zechariah was a priest and he worked at the temple. He and Elizabeth were older people who had no children even though they had longed for a baby.

One day Zechariah was chosen, by drawing lots, to be the special priest to go and burn some incense in the centre of the temple, the very holy place. By placing the incense on the hot coals, a cloud of perfume would rise up, along with the priest's prayers of thanks and for peace on their land. There were about 20,000 priests, so it was very special to be chosen. Many people waited outside the temple for him to come out and bless them.

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to him, and Zechariah

was scared and fearful. But the angel told him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness... for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord, and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.”

Zechariah couldn't believe what he was hearing, so he asked, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in God's presence. I was sent to bring this good news to you. Know this: What I

have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn't believe, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen.”

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, wondering why he was taking so long. When he finally did come out of the sanctuary, he couldn't speak. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he had seen an angel.

Sure enough, Elizabeth became pregnant – and for months and months, Zechariah couldn't utter a sound. He must have learned to be very patient! ”

*Luke 1:5-25 and 57-80*

WEEK ONE

EXPLORE

Lighting the incense/candle was a very special task for Zechariah.

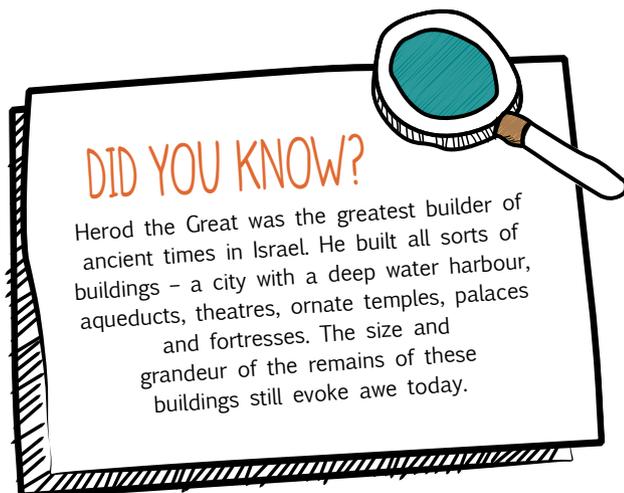
The smell of the incense was a symbol of the people's prayers being a lovely perfume for God. Our lives and our words today can also be like a sweet smelling fragrance to God.

- Everyone try being silent for 1 minute while someone times it.

Imagine being silent for months and months!

Zechariah had all that time to think about what had happened, to listen to others and listen to God.

- Take turns being Zechariah acting out other things he may have wanted to communicate to Elizabeth at home: (e.g. I'm hungry; When is dinner?; I am going to bed; Can I borrow your pencil? The dog is barking outside).



READ

- Nominate someone to blow up and tie the balloon during this reading.

“ In those days parents always chose their children's names because of what they meant. Zechariah and Elizabeth had special names. Zechariah means “Remembered by God” and Elizabeth means “One who gives loyalty to God.”

Finally the baby was born and everyone expected Zechariah to name him after himself. But instead he wrote in his notebook, “His name is John”. It surprised everyone. The name John means “the grace or mercy of the Lord”. As Zechariah acknowledged God's grace, he was suddenly able to speak again! Their baby boy John grew to be a special person who helped to prepare the way for Jesus.”

**Do you know what your name means?**

Ask your parents to share how you were named, and everyone share what their name means (or look it up on the internet).

PLAY

**Balloon Memory Game**

- Take turns, starting from the youngest person, patting the balloon upward to keep it in the air. If anyone lets it drop to the floor, they must remember a part of the story. If the player cannot remember any more of the story they are out.

It takes patience to play with a balloon, waiting for it to fall.

**Who in the story needed patience?**

**Who can share a time when you needed patience?**

“ WE COULD NEVER LEARN TO BE BRAVE AND PATIENT, IF THERE WERE ONLY JOY IN THE WORLD. ”

- HELEN KELLER -

Sometimes it takes a long time before God answers our prayers – maybe even so long that we have given up. But God is listening and knows the best timing to answer us.

### PRAY

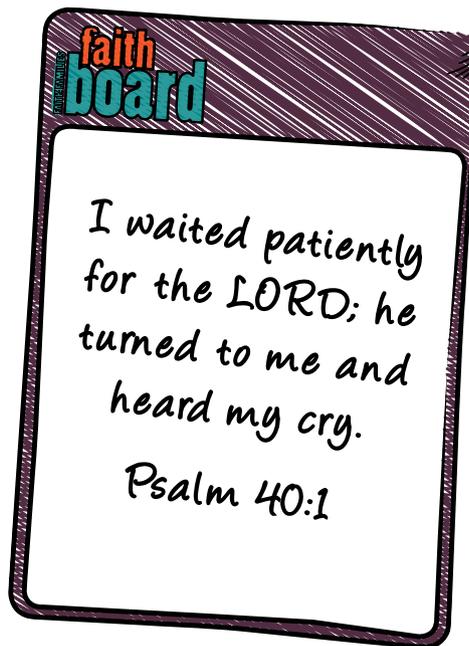
- Thank you God for listening to our prayers. Thank you that our prayers are like a lovely perfume to you.

Please God help us be patient this week.

- Spend some time in silence.

### LIVE

- Put the notebook and pen from the Faith Box somewhere everyone can see it, and let everyone write messages to share.
- Parents may also note down when children have done things that are like a sweet smelling fragrance to God.



### OTHER IDEAS

- Try spending a meal time where no one talks, but instead everyone uses a notebook and pen to communicate.
- Secret “Kristkindl” (means ‘Christ child’ and is a German custom of preparing for Christ’s coming by seeing Him in others and serving them in special ways): Draw family member’s names out of a hat & keep it secret. Every day during Advent, do something special for your “Kristkindl” (say a prayer, run an errand, give a little gift). Then once each week, leave them a note telling them what you appreciate about him/her. On Christmas eve, write a final note that tells ways you have seen the Christ child in him/her and wrap a small gift. Everyone try to guess who your “Kristkindl” has been and then exchange the gifts with notes!

CHECK OUT WHAT YOU NEED FOR NEXT WEEK...

