

ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE

Esther



Esther was one of God's people who had not gone to Jerusalem. Esther was very beautiful. She was brought to the king because he was looking for a woman to be his queen. The king liked Esther very much, and she became queen. Esther didn't tell anyone she was a Jew. An evil man named Haman was a leader in the kingdom, and King Ahasuerus honored him to a higher position. Everyone was supposed to bow down to Haman, but Mordecai, the person who had raised Esther, would not bow down. This made Haman extremely angry. When he found out that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman planned to have all the Jews put to death.

Mordecai sent word to Esther and asked her to go to the king and beg him to save her people. Esther said to him, "Everyone knows that you can't just go talk to the king. There is a law that if you go to him without him calling you, you will be put to death unless he chooses to raise his gold scepter."

Mordecai replied, "If you choose to keep silent, God will save his people another way. But who knows, maybe you were made queen for this reason!" Esther asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews together to pray and fast for her for three days. On the third day, Esther approached the king, and he extended the gold scepter toward her. He said, "What

is it, Queen Esther? I will give you anything you wish!" She invited the king and Haman to a banquet that day. The king accepted the invitation.

While they were dining, the king said again, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I'll give you anything, even up to half the kingdom!" Queen Esther said, "What I want is for you and Haman to come to another banquet tomorrow!" The king agreed. At that second feast, the king asked Esther a third time: "Queen Esther, what can I do for you? I'll give you anything you desire." Queen Esther said, "My request, O king, is that you spare my life, and the lives of my people, for this evil Haman has sentenced us to death."

The king was very angry with Haman and sentenced him to die. Once more, Esther went before the king on behalf of her people and asked him to sign a law protecting her people from their enemies. The king signed the law, and the Jews celebrated with joy.

Christ Connection: Even though Haman tried to hurt God's people, God was in control and had a plan to save the Jews. Sin hurts us and breaks our relationship with God, but God had a plan from the very beginning to save us through Jesus' death on the cross.



① WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

- **Have you ever had to do something that scared you, even a little?**
- **What was it? Were you able to do it?**

② SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: CONTROL IT



Form kids into pairs and provide each pair with an inflated balloon. Challenge pairs to keep the balloon off the ground by hitting it back and forth to one another. When a balloon falls to the ground, the kids are out. Play as time allows or until only one pair of kids remain.

SAY Could you always control where the balloon went or if it would hit the ground? [Allow responses.] This reminds me of how we are not in control of all things like God. Even when it may not seem like it, God is ruling over everything according to His good plans. Today, we will see how God was in control of how His people would be saved from an evil man named Haman. While Haman formed a plan against God's people, God had a greater plan to save them through a woman named Esther. We'll see how **ESTHER OBEYED GOD, RISKED HER LIFE, AND SAVED HER PEOPLE.**

OPTION 2: TIME IT RIGHT

Use painter's tape to create a start line at one end of the room. Choose two kids to be It and give each one a pool noodle. Lead kids who are It to stand in the middle of the room, spread apart from one another. Direct both Its to spin in a circle with their pool noodles. Lead the rest of the kids to line up behind the start line. Then challenge them to go from one end of the room to the other without getting hit by a spinning noodle. Tell kids they need to time it just right to get past the noodles. If they are hit, they are out. Play again as time allows, allowing different kids to be It.

SAY You needed to time your run just right to get past the noodles. Today, we will see how God placed Esther in a position at just the right time to save her people. God's people were in danger, but God was in control, and He would save them through Esther's courage and obedience.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about how Esther saved her people. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Esther.

•What does this story teach us about God?

Mordecai encouraged Esther to trust God and plead for her people to the king. Mordecai helped Esther understand that God made Esther a queen to protect His people. God is in control, and He had a plan.

•What happened when Esther obeyed God?

In the end, Haman's evil plan failed, and the Jewish people were saved. **Esther obeyed God, risked her life, and saved her people.** God used Esther to protect His people, showing that He is always in control and His plans will never fail.

Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

2 MISSIONS MOMENT

Remind kids that Jim and Jean Leeper served as missionaries in Germany and Turkey. Share how the Leepers were later asked to serve as missionaries to a country now called Bosnia and Herzegovina (Her-tsuh-GOH-vee-nuh).

When Jim and Jean were asked to serve as missionaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a terrible war had just ended. It was not considered a safe place to be. But Jim and Jean continued to say yes to go where God was leading them. When they arrived, Jim, Jean, and another couple began working with about 100 new believers in a city called Tuzla. As they began their mission work, the missionaries discovered cities still showing evidence of the war. The missionaries found life challenging, but they didn't let the difficulties stop them from sharing the gospel. Jean said she believed the Lord had been preparing them for this ministry, giving them opportunities to reach out to the Muslim people living in these cities.

Pray for missionaries who serve in dangerous areas. Ask God to keep them safe and strengthen their faith in Him, knowing God is in control and has a plan for their good.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

Even though Haman tried to hurt God's people, God was in control and had a plan to save the Jews. Sin hurts us and breaks our relationship with God, but God had a plan from the very beginning to save us through Jesus' death on the cross. God invites us to repent of our sins, trust in Jesus, and be saved.

4 PRAY

Dear God, we praise You for always being in control, even when we don't understand. Help us obey You, knowing You love us and are working for our good. In Jesus' name, amen.

THE GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news—the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.



Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.

Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.

Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.

Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.



1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- Why doesn't God stop bad stuff from happening if He is in control?
- God showed His love for us through Jesus. How does Jesus' death and resurrection remind us that everything will one day be made right?

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Esther 5. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Esther 5:2.

Remind preteens that it was dangerous to approach the king without first being summoned. But Esther knew her people's lives were in danger, and she needed to act. By trusting in God's plan for her to become queen to help her people, Esther bravely went before the king. Like Esther, we can trust in God's plans for our lives. We may not know all God is doing, but we can know God loves us and wants what's best for us. As we trust God, we obey Him—even when it's hard. God honors our obedience, and our obedience glorifies God. Lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. When have you trusted God during a challenging time?

Answers will vary. Discuss how we will all have times when we face challenges or uncertainty, but God is ready and willing to help us trust Him. It may mean we trust Him when we stand up for what is right or choose to believe He will provide what we need. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jer. 17:7-8.)

2. How do Esther's actions for her people point us to Jesus?

Lead kids to recognize that God raised up Esther to save His people. Mordecai urged Esther to take action, and she was willing to face death for them. In a greater way, God sent Jesus at just the right time, and Jesus willingly died on the cross to save sinners. One day, He will come back to rule as King forever. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 12:2.)

3. God's plan was greater than Haman's evil plan. How will God defeat evil and sin once and for all?

Explain that through Jesus' death on the cross, evil and sin has been disarmed—they hold no power over those who trust in Jesus. One day, Jesus will return to defeat evil and sin once and for all. Those who trust in Jesus will be saved and will live with God forever. Those who do not trust in Jesus will be separated from God forever. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 2:13-15.)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

How did God plan to fix what sin broke?

Before He created the world,

God planned to send the Messiah



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Isaiah 25:9. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together.

Remind preteens that God had a plan to save His people living in Persia. God also had a plan to save us from sin. God deserves all the praise for being in control and providing the way to be saved through Jesus.

Form kids into groups of three or four and provide them with a piece of paper, a pen, and a Bible. Challenge kids to form a plan for how they will take turns writing down the key passage on their paper. Tell groups that their goal is to be the first to write down the entire key passage, allowing everyone to write down part of it.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, praising God for always being in control and making the way for people to be saved.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

GOD'S PLANS SUCCEED

Form kids into groups of three or four. Provide groups with a variety of objects such as paper towels, cardboard tubes, craft sticks, tape, and newspaper. Challenge kids to form a plan and use their materials to build a bridge that can hold up an apple. Kids can create a bridge of any design, but the suspension part of the bridge needs to be raised up. Invite kids to share their bridge and then test it to see if it can hold up an apple.

Ask kids if their plan worked? Was their bridge able to hold up the apple? Sometimes, our plans will succeed, and other times they won't. But God's plans always succeed. Today, we saw how God planned for Esther to be queen at just the right time so His people could be saved. Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah. We are invited to trust in God's plan for salvation by placing our faith in Jesus.