

Esther Helps God's People



Overview

Materials You'll Need

- no extra materials are needed for this lesson



Scriptures

Est. 1-8

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God has a plan for each of us; God will answer prayers when we call upon Him

Behavioral Objective(s)

To identify things children can do to prepare themselves for God's plans

Memory Verse

"Teach me Your way, O Lord." (Ps 27:11)



Bible Knowledge

King Xerxes

Xerxes ruled the 127 provinces of Persia between 486-465 BC. He is also known as Ahasuerus. He was the son of Darius the Great and grandson of Cyrus the Great. When he called his wife, Queen Vashti, to join a banquet he was throwing for the nobles and officials, she refused and was deposed. Before he could find a new queen, Xerxes left to fight the battles of Thermopylae and Salamia (480 BC), in which he lost bitterly. The story of Esther occurred before the events recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

Esther

Esther was a Jewish orphan who had been raised by her godly cousin, Mordecai. She was beautiful and Xerxes favored her. He made Esther the queen of Persia in the seventh year of his reign. Despite being crowned queen, Esther still obeyed Mordecai and did not reveal her ethnicity.

Several years after Esther became queen, Haman rose to power. As per the king's command, all the officials had to pay honor to Haman. Only

Mordecai refused to bow down to him. This made Haman furious. He plotted to kill all the Jews in the land. This constituted all of the Jews in the province of Persia as well as Jerusalem. Probably millions of people throughout the Persian empire faced death because of Haman's pride.

In her fifth year as queen of Persia, Esther asked all the Jews in the city to fast and pray for her for three days. As the law then stood, if anyone went to the king without first being summoned, he would be killed unless the king held out his scepter. Esther knew that in order to save her people, she had to rely in God. On the third day of the fast, Esther wore her finest clothes and stood before the king. He held out his scepter for her. He knew something was important enough to Esther for her to take such a risk to come to him. Instead of revealing the real reason, she invited him and Haman to two banquets. At the second feast, she asked that her people be spared.

The law of the Persians could not be changed, but Mordecai and Esther were able to have the king write an edict allowing the Jews to assemble and protect themselves. They could kill their attackers and plunder their goods should they be attacked on the basis of Haman's decree.



Understanding Your Students

Young children are often afraid of things like the dark or monsters hiding in the closet. This is normal for children in this age group. Rather than brushing aside their fears, we need to acknowledge that they are genuine and common. We can help them overcome their fears with some practical steps.

For example, a dark room can be brightened with a night light that the child picks out. The child can also be rewarded with a prize for being brave over a specified period of time. For monsters, they can hug a stuffed animal to sleep or put a toy superhero near their bed to ward off any scary things.

Teachers can share that Esther was also scared of doing something. She was afraid to see the king. But after talking to Mordecai, she decided to pray to God and then try her best. These are steps we can teach our students too, to strengthen their faith. No matter where they are or what they are doing, they can pray to God about their fears. They can also find a grown-up to talk about their problem. They will feel much better after and have some good ideas they can try to overcome their fears.

It is important to teach children to work out their fears because it is a part of life. Even adults have things they are afraid of. If they can be taught to trust God in all things, they will be one step closer to overcoming their fears.



Vocabulary

Jew

an Israelite

Banquet

a big dinner party

Golden Scepter

a stick the king held to show his power



Before You Teach

In today's story, Esther was afraid to go to the king at first. She was scared that she might be put to death. This is a normal response for most people in her situation. It is one thing to take a risk, but it is something else to lose one's life. Yet in the end, she put her life on the line for her people. What happened to cause such a change in attitude? We can find the answer in her dialog with Mordecai.

After learning of the plight of her people, Esther sent a message to Mordecai, explaining her reasons for not wanting to see the king. Then Mordecai responded by saying, "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Est 4:13-14).

These were brutally harsh words for Esther to hear. Basically she was being accused of being selfish.

But instead of becoming angry or hurt, what Mordecai said actually strengthened her faith.

Esther realized that even if she did not approach the king, she could very well still die with the rest of the Jews. After all, she had been hiding her true identity for years. She had no idea how the king would react, even if Haman was the bad one. Mordecai also reminded her that God's plans will always be accomplished. If it was God's intent to save His people, they would be saved. The last and most striking comment Mordecai made was probably what gave Esther the courage to go before the king. He asked her to think about why she became the queen. She was a Jew, a foreigner. Yet somehow, she was picked to become the queen of Persia. She might have realized that God had prepared her for this very moment in history. Once she summoned her courage, she asked the people of the land to pray and fast with her. She knew it was important to trust in God and not on her own power or beauty.

Today, we may be faced with difficult situations, where the way is not clear-cut. We can learn from Esther's example. We can take time out to examine our faith and ultimately put our reliance in God.



Bible Story

In our last lesson, we learned about two people who loved God very much. They did things to help God's people in Jerusalem. Their names were Nehemiah and Ezra. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city walls. Even though there were enemies who tried to stop their work, Nehemiah prayed to God and the people kept rebuilding the walls. They completed the work in fifty-two days because they trusted in God. After the walls were rebuilt, Ezra read the words of God out loud to the people. When the people heard God's laws, they cried because they knew they had not been following God's commands. They promised to change and do things according to God's way. Nehemiah and Ezra were two wonderful helpers.

Today, we are going to learn about another person who helped God's people. Her name was Esther.

Esther Becomes Queen

Esther was a young Jewish girl, and she was very beautiful. Just like Daniel, Nehemiah, and Ezra, she lived in Persia. Her parents died when she was very young. Isn't it sad that she didn't have parents to take care of her? But she was not left alone. Her older cousin Mordecai looked after her and he taught her about God. So even though she grew up in a land far away from God's chosen land, she knew about God.

After Esther grew up, the king of Persia was called King Xerxes. One day, he invited many people to a grand banquet. It was like a huge dinner party, with a lot of food and drinks. The king was so happy at this party that he asked his queen to come out so that everyone could see how beautiful she was. But the queen did not want to listen to the king. She decided not to go to the banquet. The king was angry with her because she didn't listen to him. So he told everyone that she was not the queen anymore. Since there was no queen, the king had to find a new queen.

After some time had passed, the king's servants brought many beautiful young women to the palace. Esther was also brought to the palace because she was beautiful. Her cousin Mordecai was worried. Esther was Jewish, but the people at the palace were not Jewish. Mordecai told Esther not to tell anyone that she was Jewish. He wanted to make sure she

would be safe. Esther obeyed her cousin and did not say anything.

After the king looked at the women, he decided that Esther was the most beautiful one of all. He made Esther his new queen. Esther was probably happy that she could become the queen. Even though Esther was the new queen, she did not forget what Mordecai told her. She did not tell anyone that she was a Jew.

Mordecai Saves the King

One time, after Esther became the queen, Mordecai sat inside the king's gate. He heard two people talking. They did not like the king and wanted to kill him. Mordecai told Esther right away. Then Esther went and told the king. After the king found out that it was true, the two people were killed. To thank Mordecai for saving his life, the king let Mordecai wear the royal robes and ride on the royal horse around the city. The king wanted everyone to know that Mordecai had saved him.

Haman Wants to Kill All the Jews

The king had many people who served him. One of the people he put in charge was called Haman. Haman did many of the important jobs. After a while, Haman became proud. He thought that since the king liked him so much and gave him important things to do, he wanted everyone to bow down to him whenever they saw him. Most people were afraid of Haman and bowed down to him. But one person did not do that. That person was Mordecai. Mordecai knew that he could not bow down to anyone except for God. Haman became very angry. He thought he was an important person so everyone should listen to him. He wanted to do something to punish Mordecai. After thinking about it, he came up with a plan.

Haman knew that Mordecai was a Jew. He told the king that the Jews were bad. He said they did not follow the king's rules. But this was not true. Haman just said these terrible things because he wanted to get Mordecai into trouble. When the king heard Haman, he believed Haman and became angry. The king ordered all the Jews to be killed. Haman helped the king pick a date when all of God's people would be killed.

Mordecai Asks Esther to Help God's People

Mordecai and all the Jews cried when they

heard this news. What were they going to do? They didn't want to die. They didn't do anything wrong. So Mordecai went to the palace to ask Esther for help. When Esther heard the news, she was scared. She didn't know how to help. The only thing she could do was go and talk to the king. Maybe if she told him she was a Jew, he would not want to kill God's people any more. But there was a special rule about seeing the king. No one was allowed to see the king, even the queen, unless he ordered that person to come before him. Anyone who came to see the king without his command was killed.

Esther wanted to help but she didn't want the king to get mad at her for going to see him. She was scared and didn't know what to do. Mordecai told Esther to be brave for her people. He told her that maybe God let Esther become the queen just for this reason—to save her people.

Esther Goes to See the King

After listening to Mordecai's words, Esther knew he was right. She was scared but she would trust God. Maybe God made her the queen so that she could help her people now. So she asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews who lived in the city to fast and pray for three days and nights. She and her maids would do the same thing in the palace. She knew she had to ask God for help first before going to see the king. On the third day, she would go and see the king. She knew that the king might kill her for going to see him without his command, but she was willing to do it for God's people.

On the third day, Esther prepared herself to go before the king. She dressed in her royal robes and went to the king's throne. Her heart was probably beating fast. What would the king do when he saw her? When the king saw Esther, she looked so beautiful that he raised his golden scepter. When the king raised his golden scepter, it meant that the person could see the king. He was not going to kill Esther.



Check For Understanding

1. **Why was the king angry with the first queen?** (She disobeyed the king by not

Then Esther went before the king. She had a plan. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet that she had prepared. The king agreed to come and Haman was very happy. He thought Esther invited him because he was such an important man.

The king and Haman came to Esther's banquet. After they ate, the king asked Esther what she wanted. He was willing to give her anything she wanted. Esther asked the king to come back the next day to another banquet. She also asked Haman to come. The king said that they would come again.

The next day, the king and Haman went to the banquet. As they were eating, the king asked Esther again what she wanted. This time, Esther knew it was the right time to tell the king about Haman and his plan to kill the Jews. Esther begged the king for her life and the life of her people.

"Please don't kill me and my people," Esther said to the king.

The king was very surprised that Esther was Jewish. Then he became angry that someone wanted all the Jews to be dead.

"Who is the man who dares to do this?" asked the king.

Esther pointed to Haman. Haman became scared. He had tricked the king and now the king found out. The king was angry. He ordered that Haman and his entire family be killed. He also gave new orders so that the Jews did not have to be killed.

Esther was brave. Even though she was scared in the beginning to go and see the king, she trusted in God and prayed to Him for help. In the end, she helped God's people. They did not have to die.

Sometimes, there are things that are hard for us too and we may be scared. But we can learn from Esther to trust in God. He always has His good plans. He will always help us according to His will. Let's remember to trust God and pray to Him for help.

going to the banquet.)

2. **Why didn't Esther tell anyone she was Jewish?** (Mordecai asked her not to tell anyone because the people at the king's palace were not Jewish.)
3. **How did Mordecai save the king's life?** (He

heard some people planning to kill the king and told Esther about this. Then Esther went and told the king.)

4. **How did the king reward Mordecai?** (He let Mordecai put on his royal robes and ride his royal horse around the city.)
5. **Why did Haman want to kill all the Jews?** (He was angry with Mordecai for not bowing down to him.)
6. **Why was Esther afraid to go before the king?** (Anyone who came before the king without an order from him was killed.)
7. **How did Esther find the courage to do something so dangerous?** (God gave her

courage after she fasted and prayed for three days.)

8. **What happened when the king saw Esther?** (She looked so beautiful that he did not kill her.)
9. **What happened to Haman at the second banquet?** (The king found out about his trick and had him killed.)
10. **What did we learn about God's plans for His people?** (We learned that God has plans for each of us. He may use us when we do not expect it, just like He used Esther to save her people.)



Life Application Story

Glad to Help

Julie was at home one rainy afternoon. She was feeling a little sad because she couldn't go outside to play. She had planned to have a tea party with her stuffed animals in the yard. She sighed and looked out the window. As she was about to go into the kitchen, she noticed her neighbor Mrs. Benton getting out of her car next door. She was holding an umbrella and trying to take out two big bags. All of a sudden, Julie thought of going out.

"Mom, I am going out to help Mrs. Benton," called Julie as she put on her raincoat and shoes.

"Hi, Mrs. Benton," Julie said as she ran up to the car. "Let me carry those bags for you."

"Thank you so much, Julie. I was trying to figure out how to hold the umbrella and the groceries," Mrs. Benton said. Mrs. Benton shut the car door and walked next to Julie. Mrs. Benton walked slowly, especially on rainy or cold days, because her bones hurt. Soon, they were inside the house. Julie put down the groceries.

"Thank you very much, Julie," Mrs. Benton said again. "My bones hurt a lot less because I didn't have to carry those bags."

"You're welcome," Julie said. "Do you want me to help you put the groceries away?" Julie often

helped her grandma put away groceries.

"That would be great," Mrs. Benton said.

They went to the kitchen, and soon all the groceries were put away.

"I finished putting away the groceries twice as fast with your help," Mrs. Benton said.

Then Mrs. Benton made two cups of hot chocolate.

"This should warm us up on such a cold and rainy day," Mrs. Benton said.

"Thanks. I was actually a little sad it was raining because I couldn't go out to play. But now I am glad I am having hot chocolate," Julie said.

"It's funny how God works sometimes. I was wondering how to bring all the groceries into the house with all this rain. Then you showed up. God always has His plans. If you had been playing in your backyard, then you couldn't have helped me today, right?" said Mrs. Benton.

"I guess not. Maybe God made it rain so that I could help you out," Julie said as she licked the last drop from her mug.

Just then, the doorbell rang.

"It must be your mother, Julie. Let's go and tell her how much you helped me today," said Mrs. Benton

Questions to Think About:

1. **How did Julie help Mrs. Benton?** (She brought her groceries into the house and put them away.)

2. **Do you know what kinds of plans God has for you?** (Students will probably answer no. Share that even though we don't know, we need to

do our best at everything so that when God needs to use us, we will be ready (e.g. playing the piano, studying, reading the Bible, etc.))



Activity 1

Queen Esther Saves Her People

Review the story by filling in the blanks with words from the word bank.

1. Esther is the queen.
2. Esther prays for her people.
3. Esther prepares a big banquet for the king.
4. Haman is taken away and hanged.



Activity 2

When I Grow Up

What can you do for God when you grow up? How can you get ready now?

1. I can practice my piano.
2. I can do my homework.
3. I can read my Bible.
4. I can exercise and stay healthy.



Activity 3

Look At Who God Can Use

Have the students sit in a semi-circle in their chairs. Ask the students a variety of questions (see below). If the students think that they can do the action being said, then they can raise their hand. The teacher can call on one of the students. Then the student needs to stand up and say, "I can ___ so that God can use me one day." Feel free to add more questions.

Questions:

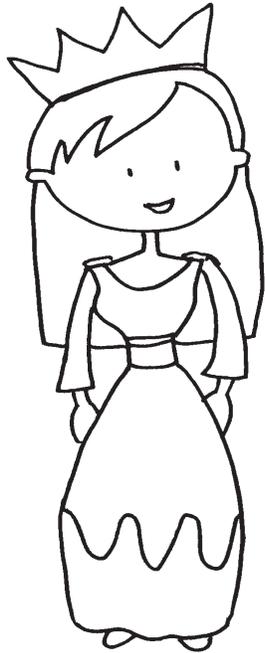
1. Who can practice piano every day?
2. Who can eat healthy foods every day?
3. Who can do his homework?
4. Who can read the Bible at home?
5. Who can pray to God?
6. Who can help his parents?

7. Who can help his teachers?
8. Who can go to bed early?
9. Who can work hard at school?
10. Who can help to keep the class clean?

Activity 11:1

Queen Esther Saves Her People

Review the story by filling in the blanks with words from the word bank.



Esther p _____ for her people.

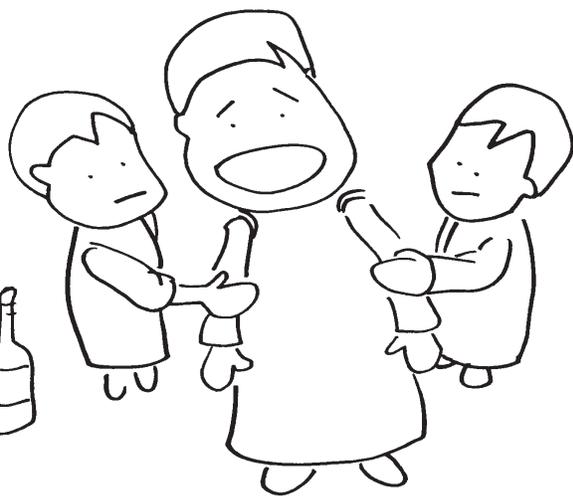


King
Queen
Prays
Haman

Esther is the q _____.



Esther prepares a big banquet
for the k _____.



H _____ is taken away and
hanged.

Activity 11:2

When I Grow Up

What can you do for God when you grow up?
How can you get ready now?



I can practice my
p _____.



I can do my h _____.



I can read my B _____.



I can exercise and stay h _____.