

Esther Became Queen

1

BIBLE PASSAGE: Esther 1–4

MAIN POINT: Esther agreed to help her people.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

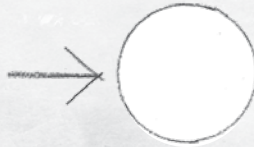
SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 126



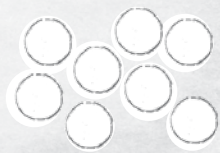
LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 128



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 134



Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Babylonian captivity had ended while Cyrus was king of Persia. Some of God's people—now referred to as Jews (people from Judah)—traveled back to Judah to rebuild the temple, the city, and their lives. Others, however, stayed in Persia where life among the pagans was relatively comfortable.

The king of Persia was now Ahasuerus (uh haz yoo EHR uhs), also known by his Greek name, Xerxes (ZUHRK seez). Esther was a young Jewish girl whom Ahasuerus had chosen to be his queen. The former queen had defied the king and was promptly replaced. Esther did not reveal to the king that she was a Jew.

Esther had been an orphan, so her cousin Mordecai adopted her. Mordecai kept in touch with Esther while she lived in the palace. One day, the king gave Haman the Agagite a very important position in the kingdom. The king even commanded the people to bow down to Haman. But Mordecai refused.

Haman was a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites. The nations of Israel and Amalek did not get along. Haman was angry about Mordecai's defiance, but instead of just punishing Mordecai, he planned to kill all the Jews in the kingdom.

Mordecai turned to Esther for help. After all, she was in a position of power, and the Jews were her people. The stakes were high. Esther could be killed for approaching the king without permission. But Esther was willing to take the chance and explain her people's plight.

Remind kids that the survival of God's people was essential to God's plan. God's plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham's family. Haman's evil plan opposed God's plan, but God was in control. He was working out a plan to use Esther to rescue His people and make the way for His Son, Jesus, to come into the world.



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The BIBLE STORY

Esther Became Queen

Esther 1–4

When Cyrus was king of Persia, he sent some of God's people back to Judah to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. God's people were called Jews because they were from Judah. Though some Jews returned to Judah to rebuild the temple, many Jews were still in Persia when **Ahasuerus** (uh haz yoo EHR uhs) **became the new king of Persia.**

When the king's wife did not listen to him, he decided to not let her be queen anymore. **The king of Persia needed a queen. He chose Esther to be queen. Esther** was very beautiful. She **was a Jew and had been raised by her cousin Mordecai** (MAWR duh kigh). **Esther did not tell the king that she was a Jew.**

One day, Mordecai heard that Haman, a very important leader who worked for the king, was planning to kill all the Jews. Mordecai was upset! He was a Jew; he did not want all the people he loved to be killed. **Mordecai and all the Jews cried.**

Esther did not know what was wrong. She **sent a messenger to ask Mordecai why all the Jews were upset. Mordecai told Esther about Haman's evil plan.**

"You have to do something!" Mordecai said. "You are the queen. **Ask the king to stop Haman. Ask him to save the Jewish people.**"

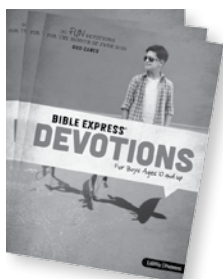
Esther sent a message back to Mordecai. **"No one can approach the king unless the king calls for that person first," Esther said. "The punishment is death—unless the king holds out his scepter; then you may live."**

Mordecai encouraged Esther to think about it. **"You are a Jew," he said. "If you do not stop Haman, he will kill**

you too. **Maybe this is why you are the queen.” Maybe God put Esther in the palace to save her people!**

Esther asked Mordecai to gather the Jewish people and to fast. They would not eat or drink for three days. **They would pray to God for help. Then Esther would go to the king. She was willing to die to save the Jews.**

Christ Connection: God’s plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham’s family. Haman’s evil plan might have stopped God’s plan, but God was in control. He was working out a plan to use Esther to rescue His people and make the way for His Son, Jesus, to come into the world.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that Esther chose to approach the king even if it meant dying. Jesus also faced trouble on earth; He can help us when we suffer.

(Heb. 2:18)

Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Esther Became Queen

BIBLE PASSAGE: Esther 1–4

MAIN POINT: Esther agreed to help her people.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

Welcome time

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

Ask kids to think about what they would do if they were the president or ruler of your country. What would they do with their power?

SAY • Today's Bible story is about Esther, who was in a position of power. Esther had to decide how she would use her power when her people needed help. We will find out today what Esther decided to do.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Who's That?" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Who's That?" on the activity page. Help kids use the clues to match each person in the Bible story with who he or she is and what that person did.

When kids finish, review the answers: Esther (queen of Persia) was willing to die to save the Jews. Mordecai (Esther's cousin) asked the queen for help. Haman (leader for the king of Persia) wanted to kill the Jews.

SAY • Today we are going to learn about Queen Esther and how she used her position to help her people.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: How would you choose?

Display several children's books or DVDs. Ask kids which book they would choose to read or which DVD they would prefer to watch. Encourage the class to agree on a decision.

Ask kids how they decided which book or movie to choose. Then ask them how they would choose a queen or king. What qualifications would that person need to have? What makes someone a good king or queen? Consider listing their ideas on a dry erase board.

SAY • Some decisions are harder to make than others.

Choosing a movie to watch can be simple, but picking a new leader can be tough! We will hear a Bible story today about a king who chose a queen.

OPTION 2: Encouragement posters

Invite kids to suggest tasks or activities that are not easy for them to do. List their ideas on a dry erase board or large sheet of paper. Ask why those things are challenging and what they would need to be able to accomplish those tasks. How can they encourage others to do difficult things?

Distribute construction paper and markers. Guide kids to work in groups of three or four to design posters containing words of encouragement. Display the posters around the room.

SAY • In today's Bible story, we will hear about a man who encouraged his cousin Esther to do something she thought would be impossible to do. But Esther trusted that God would help her.



- various children's books or DVD
- dry erase board and markers (optional)

- dry erase board or large sheet of paper
- construction paper
- markers

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Esther Became Queen

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate a gym or locker room. Position a long bench at the front of the room. Display various equipment such as water bottles, light free weights, a stack of towels, jump ropes, and so forth. You may also choose to project the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- large gym bag

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a track suit and carrying a large gym bag. Leader sets the gym bag on the floor and sits on the bench.]

LEADER • Hey, everyone! I'm so glad you could join me today. I have all my gear ready to start training for a special event. I have my running shorts, swimsuit, and bike helmet.

Can you guess what I'm training for? A triathlon! Does anyone know what a triathlon is? *[Allow kids to respond.]* A triathlon is a really long race. Competitors swim, bike, and run long distances.

Training for a race like that takes a lot of time and requires a lot of endurance. Who knows what endurance is? [*Allow kids to respond.*]

Endurance is the ability to keep going even when something is hard. In fact, that reminds me of our Bible story today. We will learn about Esther, a woman who needed endurance because she lived during a very difficult time. From her story, we will see that God keeps His promises. God doesn't promise that life will be easy; sometimes the path He gives us is long and difficult, much like a triathlon!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • The time in history when Esther's story took place was a difficult time for the Jews. [*Point to the Bible story on the giant timeline or big story circle.*] God's people were in exile, living far away from their homeland. Many of them lived in the country of Persia. God was quiet, but as we will see, He did not forget His people!

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As you listen to the Bible story about Esther, think about this question: ***Does God keep His promises?*** This is our big picture question, and we will try to answer it as we learn what God did in the story of Esther.

• Bibles
• "Esther Became Queen"
video
• Big Picture Question
Poster
• Bible Story Picture
Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Esther 1–4. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Esther Became Queen."

LEADER • Wow! What a story. God’s people were in a really scary situation. You might remember that in a lot of the Old Testament, God’s people were called Israelites. But now, after many of them went home to Judah after the exile, they were called Jews. Some of the Jews did not go back to Judah. They stayed in Babylon, which was taken over by the king of Persia.

The king of Persia needed a queen, and he chose Esther. The king did not know that Esther was a Jew. This shows us that God was in control! God knew that Haman wanted to kill all the Jews. Even Esther’s cousin Mordecai thought that God was going to use Esther to help save His people. Mordecai told Esther, “Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this.” [See *Esth. 4:14*.]

Now Esther had to decide if she would help her people. The king had a rule that no one could go to him unless he called for that person. If Esther went to the king without an invitation, she could be killed. But if the king held out his scepter, that meant he would allow her to live. **Esther agreed to help her people**, even if it meant she might die.

Now, let’s answer our big picture question. ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.*** God’s plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham’s family. Haman might have tried to stop God’s plan with his evil plot, but God was in control. He was working out a plan to use Esther to rescue His people and make the way for His Son, Jesus, to come into the world.

God is in control. Even when life is scary and we are unsure about what the future holds, we can still

trust that our life is in God's hands. Next week we will continue this story and hear how God rescued His people from the evil Haman.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Lamentations 3:22-23.

LEADER • Does anyone know what the word *perish* means?

Perish means “to die.” When this verse says that we won't perish, does that mean we will never die? Unless Jesus comes back first, we will all die a physical death, but God has promised that one day He will raise us from the dead—just like He raised Jesus—to live with Him forever!

Lead boys and girls to sing “Your Faithfulness.”

• Key Passage Poster
• “Your Faithfulness” song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have any of you ever saved someone else's life?

Check this out.

Show the “Unit 18, Session 1” discussion starter video.

Guide kids to share if they have ever been in a situation where someone needed their help.

LEADER • People all around us need help because we are all sinners. Sin separates people from God. How can we

• “Unit 18, Session 1” discussion starter video

help people who don't know about Jesus? [*Allow kids to share their ideas.*] God wants us to share His plan of salvation with others so they can be saved.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "He Rescues and Delivers" song

LEADER • Today's Bible story reminds me that God is faithful; He always keeps His promises. That makes me want to sing His praises! Let's worship God together. Will you sing with me?

Sing together "He Rescues and Delivers."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for the incredible story of Esther and for showing us how faithful You are even when we are not. Thank You for loving us and rescuing us from this fallen world by sending Your Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Hold up the key passage poster and read it aloud as a class once. Then invite the kids to stand shoulder to shoulder in a line. Go down the line, prompting each child to read the next word in the passage.

SAY • These verses are a beautiful reminder of God’s love and faithfulness to us. Let’s work on memorizing them this week, and we will see how much we can remember next time we meet.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

• Bibles, 1 per kid
• Main Point Poster

Invite the kids to open their Bibles to the Book of Esther. Remind them that the Bible story today is from chapters 1–4. Ask the following review questions and call on volunteers to answer:

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

1. Is the Book of Esther in the Old Testament or New Testament? (*Old Testament*)
2. What book comes before Esther? (*Nehemiah*)
3. What book comes after Esther? (*Job*)
4. How many chapters are in the Book of Esther? (*10*)
5. What was the name of Esther’s cousin? (*Mordecai, Esth. 2:5*)

6. Why did the king of Persia need a new queen? (*When the king's wife did not listen to him, he decided to not let her be queen anymore; Esth. 1:15*)
7. What was Haman's evil plan? (*to kill all the Jews, Esth. 3:5-6*)
8. What did the Jews do when they heard about Haman's evil plan? (*They cried, Esth. 4:1*)
9. What could happen to someone who approached the king without first being summoned? (*That person could be killed, Esth. 4:11*)
10. What did Esther ask Mordecai and the Jews to do? (*pray and fast with her, Esth. 4:16*)
11. ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.***

SAY • Great job, everyone! **Esther agreed to help her people** and trusted that God would help her. God's plan for His people (the Jews) was to send the Messiah through them. It was crucial to God's plan that the Jews be rescued!

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Helping pairs

Give each kid three index cards. Instruct kids to number the cards 1, 2, and 3. Kids should turn the cards facedown and find a partner. When you say, "Flip!" kids should each turn over one card.

If the numbers on the partners' cards do not match, they should sit down where they are. If the cards match, the pair may point to a pair of sitting players and invite them back into the game. Play several rounds. Kids may switch partners each round. If none of the partners' cards match, invite everyone to restart the game.



- index cards, 3 per kid
- pens or markers

SAY • Thanks for playing, everyone. How did you feel when you and your partner had a match? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Having a match meant that you were in a position to help another pair of players. How did you feel inviting others back into the game?

This was a fun helping game. In today's Bible story, Esther was in a serious situation. The Jews were in trouble. As queen, Esther was in a position to help.
Esther agreed to help her people.

OPTION 2: Support a community helper

Before the session, identify a church member or someone in the neighborhood who serves the community. (Examples: firefighter, police officer, doctor or nurse, military personnel, missionary, and so forth)

You may choose to invite the helper to visit your class, or provide supplies for kids to write letters to the helper.

If the helper visits your class, introduce him or her and allow kids to ask questions about the helper's duties. You may consider preparing questions beforehand. Consider these:

1. What do you do to help people?
2. How long have you been doing this job?
3. What is the hardest part of your job?
4. What do you like most about helping people?
5. Why do you think God uses people to help other people?
6. How can we pray for you?

If kids write letters to the community helper, provide writing supplies. Explain the helper's role in the community and, if available, share a picture of him or her.

Encourage kids to ask questions about the helper's duties

- stationery
- envelopes
- pens or pencils

and to thank him for his service. Collect kids' letters and deliver them this week.

SAY • Esther agreed to help her people. This wasn't an easy decision! Esther was willing to die to help the Jews. Let's pray for the people in our community who are willing to give up their time, their safety, and even their lives to help those in need.

Lead kids in prayer. Thank God for putting people in our lives who are willing to help. Ask God to help kids recognize needs around them and to be willing to help. Thank God for helping us the most by sending His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from our sins.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to list three ways they can encourage, protect, or help people in their lives this week.

SAY • God cares about His people, and He is faithful to keep His promises. God often uses people like you and me to help others and to show them His love. Let's pray and thank God for always being faithful, even when we are not.

Lead the kids in a short prayer, thanking God for His Word and for reminding us that He always keeps His promises. Praise God for His faithfulness—even when we are unfaithful—and for using ordinary people to bring glory to His name.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Esther Quiz" on the activity page. For each blank, kids should circle the correct word to complete the details about the Bible story.

(Answers: *Esther, Jew, Haman, cried, queen, king, save, fast, pray, help, die, save*)

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Esther Quiz" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.