

## Esther Became Queen

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**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  
ADVENTURE!**

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](http://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.

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## 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. As kids arrive, ask them what they would do if they were a teacher, president, or other authority figure.

**SAY** • Today we will learn about a woman who became queen. Then she had to decide what to do as queen. What she chose to do was very dangerous, but God used it to further His awesome plan to send Jesus.

## Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Quirky Queen” activity page. Ask them to look at the pictures and circle which objects are out of place.

**SAY** • Can you imagine being a regular person and then suddenly being chosen to rule as king or queen? You might feel a little out of place, like the objects that didn’t belong in our picture! Today we will learn about a woman chosen to be queen who was exactly where God wanted her.

- “Quirky Queen” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

## Session starter (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Questions for a queen

Select one child to be the *queen* or *king*. She will stand at one end of the room, facing away from the rest of the class. The other kids will take turns asking for permission to move toward the queen (as in “Mother, May I?”).

The queen may grant requests or deny requests and offer alternative options. When the queen offers a different option, the player must comply. When a kid reaches the queen, he becomes the next king.

**SAY** • In our story today, we will learn about an unexpected queen named Esther and how God planned to use her to rescue His people.

### OPTION 2: Good queen, bad queen

Talk to your kids about what would make a good queen or king and what would make a bad queen or king. Use a chalkboard or poster board to write down their responses.

**SAY** • Today we will learn about a woman named Esther. She was selected to be queen of Persia by King Ahasuerus; but he didn’t make a list of the qualities that make a good queen, he just picked a woman based on her appearance! Thankfully, even in that choice, God was working to protect His people. We’ll learn more in large group.



- chalkboard or poster board
- chalk or marker

## Transition to large group

# Large Group LEADER

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- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

**Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas:** Decorate the room to look like a gym. Place a stationary bike to one side of the stage and hang a sign that says *Pool* with an arrow pointing out of the room. Use a shelf to stack towels and display a rack filled with dumbbells or free weights. You may choose to display 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
- sweatbands
- swimming goggles
- bike helmet

*[Large Group Leader enters wearing appropriate active wear, sweatbands, a pair of swimming goggles around his or her neck, and a bike helmet on his or her head. Leader begins to stretch and run in place.]*

**LEADER** • Hey, everyone! As you can see, I have all my gear ready to start training for a special event. You may be wondering what kind of event needs goggles, sweatbands, and a helmet.

I'm training for a triathlon! Does anyone know what a triathlon is? *[Allow kids to respond.]* A

triathlon is a special race. Just like a *triangle* has three corners, a *triathlon* has three parts! Competitors swim, bike, and run long distances. A race like that takes a lot of time and requires a lot of endurance.

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 God gave her a very difficult task to complete.

## Giant timeline (1 minute)

**LEADER** • As we look at our timeline, you'll notice that many of God's people had already returned to Jerusalem. However, not all of them went back. [*Point to today's Bible story.*] Today we will hear about a woman who stayed in Persia. Her name was Esther, and God planned to use her for a very important job. The first part of God's plan for her was to make her the queen of Persia!

• Giant Timeline

## Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • As we listen to our story, “Esther Became Queen,” think about this question: ***Does God keep His promises?*** Try to figure out the answer from the story! This will be our big picture question for this unit! Don't forget it! We have five more sessions after today that will answer the same question.

• 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** • What a story. God’s people were in a really scary situation. Haman hated Mordecai and all of his people, the Jews. *Jew* is another name for God’s people, and it comes from the name *Judah*.

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

Esther’s choice to help God’s people was not easy. 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, he could have her 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.

So what is the answer to 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’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.

Even when life is scary and we are unsure about the future, we can still trust that our life is in God’s hands. Just as God worked to protect His people

from Haman's plot, He sent Jesus to protect us from sin by dying on the cross and rising again on the third day.

## **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)**

**LEADER** • This key passage reminds us that God's love never ends. Each day His mercies are renewed, just as fresh as the day before. We see this in the story of Esther when God provided a way for her to be queen and stand up for God's people. We see it too at the cross, where Jesus laid down His life to save us from sin. Then He rose on the third day to conquer death!

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Lamentations 3:22-23. Then sing "Your Faithfulness."

- Key Passage Poster
- "Your Faithfulness" song

## **Discussion starter video (4 minutes)**

**LEADER** • What do you think it might feel like to save someone's life? Think about that as you check out this video.

Show the "Unit 18, Session 1" discussion starter video. Discuss what the cupcake on the counter should do. Ask kids if they have ever been in a situation where they saw someone who needed their help. What did they do?

- "Unit 18, Session 1" discussion starter video

**LEADER** • Sin separates people from God; the result of which is spiritual death forever. Only Jesus can rescue people from sin. Each person you know who doesn't trust Jesus for salvation is a person who needs help. Just as Esther needed to take action to save God's people, God wants us to take action to tell people about God's plan for salvation so they can trust in Jesus too.

### **Sing (4 minutes)**

**LEADER** • God is always faithful. All His promises are trustworthy, and He never fails. Let's take some time to sing a song to Him, worshiping Him for all He has done.

Sing together "He Rescues and Delivers."

### **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

**LEADER** • Father, You are faithful and good. Nothing You plan can be stopped. Thank You for reminding us of that through the story of Esther. Thank You for sending Jesus to save us from sin. Help us to see the ways You have specially placed us in this time and place to tell people in our lives about Jesus. Amen.

### **Dismiss to small groups**

• "He Rescues and Delivers" song

## 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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## Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- yellow construction paper
- scissors
- “Your Faithfulness” song (optional)

Cut out a simple crown shape from yellow construction paper. Invite the kids to sit in a circle and pass the crown while you play the “Your Faithfulness” song (or other music). When the music stops, the person holding the crown must read the verses aloud for the other kids. As the game goes on, cover words on the poster to see if the kids can still say the verses.

**SAY** • Our key passage reminds us that God is good and protects His people. He is merciful, and His mercy never runs out. God worked in Esther’s life to protect His people from Haman’s evil plot. Later, God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins to provide the way to be saved. Jesus showed us the ultimate example of mercy and grace. Those who trust in Jesus will live with Him forever.

## Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- pool noodle

Use a pool noodle as a makeshift scepter. Ask the kids questions, and hold out the scepter to kids who want to answer. That kid will take the scepter and attempt to answer the question. Then she will select the next kid to pass the

scepter to, who will answer the next question. If a kid answers incorrectly, he will simply pass the scepter to a new kid who thinks she knows the correct answer. Make sure each kid gets at least one turn.

Questions:

1. Who was queen before Esther? (*Vashti, Esth. 1:10-11*)
2. Why did King Ahasuerus send Vashti away? (*She would not obey his request; Esth. 1:12-13, 19*)
3. Who replaced Vashti as queen? (*Esther, Esth. 2:9*)
4. Who wanted to kill the Jews? (*Haman, Esth. 3:5-6*)
5. Why did Haman want to kill the Jews? (*Haman hated Mordecai because he would not kneel before Haman, Esth. 3:2-5*)
6. Why were the Jews sad? (*Mordecai told them about Haman's plan, Esth. 4:3*)
7. Why was Esther afraid to talk to the king about Haman's plan? (*If the king did not call for Esther, she could be killed for coming to him; Esth. 4:9-11*)
8. **Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.**

**SAY** • Esther knew that she was risking her life if she tried to save her people. However, she also believed that God made her queen for just such a purpose. **Esther agreed to help her people** because saving the Jews was more important than her own safety.

In a similar way, Jesus gave up His life to rescue us and make us God's children. He was willing to die on the cross so that we could live. God's timing and plans are perfect. When we trust in Jesus, we are protected from the penalty of sin and will live forever with God.

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

**LOW PREP**

- robes, 2
- chairs, 2

Tip: If possible, use costume robes designed to look like a king or queen's robes.

## Activity choice (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Royal robe relay

Form two teams. Instruct each team to line up single file at one end of the room. At the other end of the room, place two chairs a few feet apart and drape robes over the chairs. When you say “go,” the first kid on each team will race to his team’s robe, put it on, and race back. At his line, he will take off the robe, hand it to the next kid, and she will put it on and run back to the chair. She will take it off and leave it, returning to tag the next teammate. The team that completes the relay first wins.

**SAY** • Esther became a queen unexpectedly, and God used her to save His people from Haman’s evil plan. Jesus gave up His royal place in heaven to come and save us. Both Esther and Jesus were willing to die for God’s people, but only Jesus actually did. Jesus died on the cross and rose again to be the perfect sacrifice to cover sin. When we trust in Jesus, we live forever with God, who gives us everything we need and makes us more and more like Jesus!

### OPTION 2: Royal crown

Give each child a paper plate. Help the kids fold their plates in half. Kids will need to make three cuts (like pie slices), each starting from the center and reaching just to the edge of the plate’s inner circle. Then ask the kids to unfold their plates and bend the prongs upward, making a crown. Provide glitter, adhesive jewels, markers, or other craft supplies for the kids to decorate their crowns.

**SAY** • God always has a plan. God knew about Haman’s plan before Haman did, so God planned for Esther to be queen. **Esther agreed to help her people.**

God also knew about our sin before we ever sinned. God's plan to rescue us from sin was fulfilled when Jesus came to earth to die on the cross. When Jesus rose again, He defeated sin and made the way for us to be made new and holy. When we trust in Jesus, we are transformed from the inside out to love and live the way God wants us to.

### **Journal and prayer (5 minutes)**

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture showing how it makes them feel to know that God is always working to bring about His perfect plan.

**SAY** • God is good and always knows the right thing to do to make His plans work. He is all powerful and loves us. He promised to send Jesus through Abraham's family and did exactly that. He even stopped other evil plans to make His plan succeed. We can always trust God's promises.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for His faithfulness even when we are unfaithful. Ask Him to help us remain faithful to Him and to use us as a part of His perfect plans.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring 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.*