

God Saved His People Through Esther

BIBLE PASSAGE: Esther 5–10

MAIN POINT: God used Esther at just the right time to save His 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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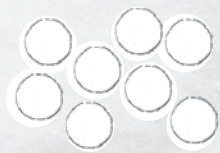
SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 142



LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 144



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 150



Leader BIBLE STUDY

During the time of Queen Esther—more than 450 years before Jesus was born—the Jewish people were scattered around the Persian Empire. The Book of Esther tells the unlikely story of a young Jewish woman who, as the queen of the Persian Empire, saved her people.

After Esther was chosen as the queen of Persia, she received news that an evil man named Haman had a plan to kill all of the Jews. The Book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that never mentions God by name, but God clearly worked through Esther and her cousin Mordecai to save the Jewish people. Mordecai even suggested to Esther that God's hand was in the situation: "Who knows, perhaps you

have come to your royal position for such a time as this” (Esth. 4:14).

Build the tension of the story as you teach. Point out that if Haman was successful in killing all the Jews, his evil plan would put God’s promises in jeopardy. God had promised to bless the world through Abraham’s family and to send a King from the line of David who would rule forever.

Esther had a choice to make. She could do nothing and face destruction (Esth. 4:13-14), or she could risk her life by approaching the king to plead for the protection of the Jews. Esther and the Jewish people prayed and fasted for three days before Esther went to the king.

Esther was welcomed by the king, who offered to give her anything she wanted—up to half of the kingdom. Esther told the king of Haman’s plot against her people. The king ordered that Haman be killed instead!

Emphasize to kids that God was in control despite Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.



Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

God Saved His People Through Esther

Esther 5–10

The Jews in Persia were in trouble. Haman, an enemy of the Jews, was plotting to kill all of them! Esther was queen, and she was also a Jew. She was going to try to help them.

Esther, her cousin Mordecai, and the Jewish people fasted for three days. On the third day, **Esther went to the king. The king** was sitting on his throne. He **saw Esther and held out his golden scepter.** Esther walked toward him and touched the tip of the scepter.

“What is it, Queen Esther?” the king asked. “What do you want to ask me? **I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.**”

Esther said, **“Would you and Haman come to a feast today? I have prepared it.”**

So Haman and the king went to Esther’s feast. As they sat **after eating, the king said, “What do you want, Queen Esther? I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”**

“Please come to my feast tomorrow, you and Haman,” Esther said.

The king agreed. That night Haman went home and had gallows made where he could hang Mordecai. Haman often saw Mordecai sitting outside the palace, and Haman hated him.

The next day, Haman and the king went to Esther’s feast. As they sat **after eating, the king said, “What do you want, Queen Esther? I will give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”**

Esther spoke up, “There is a plan to kill me and

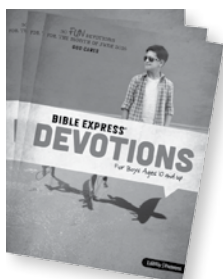
my people.”

The king replied, “Who is responsible for this plan?”

“This evil enemy—Haman!” Esther said.

The king was angry! He ordered for Haman to be hanged on the gallows Haman had built to kill Mordecai. Haman was hanged, and the king was not angry anymore. **He made a law to keep the Jewish people safe from their enemies.**

Christ Connection: God was in control over Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.



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

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that Esther trusted God to keep His promise to hear her when she called for help. (Ps. 17:6) Jesus is God’s answer to our call to be rescued from sin.

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

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: God Saved His People Through Esther

BIBLE PASSAGE: Esther 5–10

MAIN POINT: God used Esther at just the right time to save His 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 imagine that they get to meet a president or king and can ask for one thing. What would they ask for? Why?

SAY • It's not too often that we have an opportunity to approach an important world leader and ask for something. We might be tempted to ask for something for ourselves or something to make our own lives better. But what if you could ask for something that would help a lot of people? That's what happened in the Bible story we will hear today.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Esther's Quest" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Esther's Quest" maze on the activity page. Challenge kids to trace the path from Esther to King Ahasuerus.

SAY • Do you remember Esther and the king from our last Bible story? Today's Bible story is about a time when Esther had to approach the king. Let's find out what happened.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: King, may I?

Guide kids to stand shoulder to shoulder at one side of the room. Designate a player to be the king. The king will stand at the other side of the room, facing the rest of the kids.

One kid will ask the king for permission to take a certain number of steps. (Examples: 5 baby steps, 2 giant steps, 7 jumping steps, and so forth.) The king should reply, “Yes, you may,” or “No, you may not.” Then another kid may ask to take steps. Play until a kid reaches the king.

SAY • Our Bible story today continues the story we heard about Esther becoming queen. Esther learned that the Jews needed her help. She needed to go to the king to save them. Let’s find out what happened!

OPTION 2: Life events timeline

Instruct the kids to draw a brief timeline of their lives highlighting important events. (Examples: starting school, joining a sports team, becoming a big brother or sister.)

Invite each kid to share one or two of the events from his timeline with the group.

SAY • Can you imagine what your life would have been like if you’d been born 100 years ago? Did you know that God planned the exact day that you would be born?

It’s true! God has a plan for every person, and part of that plan includes when they live. [See Acts 17:26.] In our Bible story today, Esther’s cousin reminded her that God had a special purpose for her living in that exact time and place.



- paper
- colored pencils or markers

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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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 rubs his or her neck.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! Last week I started training for a triathlon, and it has been tough! My body has been tired and sore, and some days I felt like there was no way I could keep going. Getting ready for a big race like this is a lot of work, and it takes a lot of endurance.

Does anyone remember what *endurance* is? That's right; it's the ability to keep going even when something is hard. I know all my hard work is going to pay off when race day comes, and it will be so great to accomplish this goal!

Sometimes we have to go through something really difficult in order to experience joy. Have you ever done something that was really hard for you? How

did you feel when all your hard work paid off? [*Pause for volunteers to share.*] That reminds me of the story of Esther.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Last time, we learned that Esther was a Jew who was chosen to be the new queen of Persia. A man named Haman, who was a leader for the king, hated the Jews and came up with an evil plan to destroy them. Esther's cousin Mordecai heard about Haman's plan, and he sent a message to Esther. Mordecai begged Esther to use her position as queen to help her people. That's where our story picks up today.

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we jump into the story, I want to remind you of our big picture question: ***Does God keep His promises?*** Last week we learned that ***Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.*** As we hear the Bible story today, listen for ways that God was faithful to His people.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Esther 5–10. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “God Saved His People Through Esther.”

LEADER • What an incredible story! Esther was so brave to approach the king on behalf of her people. She could have died! But **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.** Isn't it amazing that God uses ordinary people to accomplish His plan on earth? Esther didn't have any special powers or

• Bibles
• “God Saved His People Through Esther” video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster

extraordinary characteristics; she was just a girl who was willing to let God use her for His purposes.

God can use you too! He has a plan for your life and a special job for each of you.

Even though God isn't mentioned by name in this story, He is clearly at the center of it all. At first, it might have seemed like Haman was in control and would use his power to wipe out the Jews, whom he hated. But really, God was in control despite Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews.

Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin and death. Jesus gave His own life to save sinners. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.

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.

Key passage (5 minutes)

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

LEADER • This passage talks about God's mercy. What does it mean that God is merciful? [*Allow kids to respond.*] *Mercy* is when we don't get punishment even though we deserve it. We deserve to be punished for our

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

- Key Passage Poster
- "Your Faithfulness" song

sin, but God shows His mercy by saving us through Jesus' death on the cross. Instead of punishing us, God punished Jesus.

Our key passage says that God's mercies are new every morning. This is a beautiful promise to us that we are safe in Jesus every day! When we trust in Jesus, we don't ever have to worry that our sin is too great for God to forgive. Jesus died for all of our sin—past, present, and future! Let's sing.

Lead boys and girls to sing "Your Faithfulness."

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Do you remember the danger facing the cupcakes in the video we watched last week? They were about to get eaten by a hungry dog, and only one cupcake could help! Let's see what happens.

• "Unit 18, Session 2" discussion starter video

Show the "Unit 18, Session 2" discussion starter video.

Guide kids to discuss the following questions:

- What are you willing to risk to help others?
- How far would you go to tell people about Jesus?

LEADER • God is in control of everything, and He often uses us or other people to help others in need. We can risk everything to help others because we have more to look forward to than this life. Even though we may experience physical death, God promises that we will live with Him forever.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • *Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.* This truth makes me love God and want to worship Him for His goodness and faithfulness. Let's stand and sing together.

• "He Rescues and Delivers" song

Sing together “He Rescues and Delivers.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for the story of Esther in Your Word. In this story, we see Your faithfulness to Your people. Thank You for using ordinary people like Esther—and like us—to work out Your great plans. Thank You for sending Jesus, who willingly gave His life to rescue us from sin and death. He stood in our place so that we could be forgiven. Give us willing hearts to do Your plan in our lives this week. We love You. 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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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Read through the key passage aloud as a class. Then form three or four groups. Assign each group a portion of the key passage and instruct them to come up with movements to represent the key words. Prompt each group to teach its motions to the rest of the class. Then say the key passage together while performing the motions.

SAY • Great job, everyone! Let's keep working on our key passage this week, and by next week we should know it really well!

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

• Bibles, 1 per kid
• Main Point Poster

Guide kids to open their Bibles to Esther 5–10. Choose one child to be the *king* and stand at one end of the room. Direct the rest of the class to line up at the other side. Ask the following review questions. If kids answer correctly, they may take two steps toward the *king*.

1. Whom did God use to save the Jews? (**God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.**)
2. How many days did Esther ask Mordecai and the rest of her people to fast and pray? (*three days, Esth. 4:15*)
3. When Esther approached the king, what did he do?

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

(The king held out his scepter to her, Esth. 5:2)

4. When Esther approached the king, what did she ask him to do? *(She asked the king and Haman to come to a feast she had prepared, Esth. 5:4)*
5. What did Haman build? *(gallows to hang Mordecai, Esth. 5:14)*
6. At the second feast Haman and the king attended, what did Esther tell the king? *(that Haman was plotting to kill her people the Jews, Esth. 7:3-6)*
7. How did the king respond to Esther's news? *(He was angry and ordered for Haman to be hanged on the gallows he had built, Esth. 7:9-10)*
8. How did the king protect the Jews? *(He made a law that kept the Jews safe from their enemies, Esth. 8:11)*
9. **Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.**
10. What books come before and after the Book of Esther? *(Nehemiah before, Job after)*

SAY • Great job! Who can tell me why it was so important that the Jews not be killed? *(God's plan all along was to send the Messiah through Abraham's family, the Jewish people.)* This story shows us that God was in control. Nothing could stop His plan! **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.**

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Stop and go

Play this game like "Red Light, Green Light." Instruct all the kids to stand at one side of the room. You may choose to designate a start line and finish line on the floor using masking tape. Choose a player to be *It*. Explain the game:

1. *It* will stand at the other side of the room, holding a



- pool noodle
- masking tape (optional)

pool noodle “scepter.”

2. When *It* extends the pool noodle toward the kids, players may move toward the finish line.
3. When *It* pulls the pool noodle back to himself, everyone must immediately stop.

If players are still moving when the scepter is pulled back, they must return to the start line. Start a new round when everyone crosses the finish line.

SAY • How does this game remind you of our Bible story today? (*Esther could only approach the king if he held out his scepter.*) When Esther entered the king’s presence, he held out his scepter, giving her permission to speak to him. She invited the king to a feast and asked him to save the Jews. **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.**

OPTION 2: Unintentional outcomes

Remind kids that in today’s Bible story, Haman wanted to kill all the Jews. But Haman didn’t realize that God was in control. **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.** Read the following list of things that seem bad. Allow kids to guess what good thing came from them. Then reveal the answer.

1. In 1853, a customer complained about his thick, soggy potatoes. The insulted chef sliced potatoes very thin and salted them to anger the customer. (*Potato chips were invented!*)
2. In the 1870s, a chemist studying coal tar got chemicals on his hands, which got onto his food. He noticed that his food tasted very sweet! (*He had created saccharin, or artificial sweetener.*)
3. In 1905, a man left a soda outside with a stirring

stick in the cup. That night, the soda froze around the stick. (*Ice pops were invented!*)

4. Wanting to make chocolate cookies, a woman in 1930 broke up pieces of a chocolate bar and mixed it into her cookie dough. (*Chocolate chip cookies!*)

SAY • The outcomes of these events weren't what the person had originally expected. That's what happened to Haman. Instead of destroying the Jews, the king ordered for Haman to be hanged.

Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. The Bible says Jesus came at just the right time to save people from sin. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all.

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. Remind kids that God desires for everyone to be saved, and He uses ordinary people to share the gospel all over the world.

Encourage kids to write about one way God can use them to accomplish His plan.

SAY • **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.** God can also use each of you to share the good news that God saves sinners when they repent and trust in Jesus.

Lead the class in prayer, thanking God for using people like us to share the gospel and help others know Him. Praise God for being faithful even when we are not.

As time allows, challenge kids to complete "Saved from Destruction" on the activity page. Kids should unscramble the mixed-up words to review what the Bible story teaches about Jesus. (Answers: *Haman, Jews, Satan, Jesus, dead, all*)

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Saved from Destruction" 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.