

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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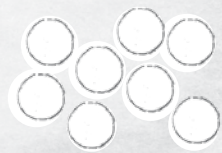
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Leader BIBLE STUDY

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.



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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
ADVENTURE!**

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

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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. As kids arrive, ask them about a time God used them to help someone else with a problem. Be prepared to share an example from your own life.

SAY • We will learn today how God used Esther to help His people with a big problem. He had a plan to save His people, and she had a special part to play.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Approach the King” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Approach the King” activity page. Challenge them to complete the maze to help Esther get to the king.

SAY • Esther knew what God wanted her to do, but that doesn’t mean it was easy! Esther was risking her life to approach the king without being called. We will find out in large group how the king responded, and if Esther was able to stop Haman’s plan.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Raise the scepter

Select one child to be the king or queen. He will stand at one end of the room, holding a broomstick (or other staff-like item) as a scepter. The other kids will stand at the far end of the room, approaching whenever the king has the scepter raised and stopping when he puts it down. When a kid reaches the king, she becomes the next queen. Consider adding a rule where a half-raised scepter allows the kids to move but only in slow motion.

SAY • If Esther approached the king without being called, she could have been killed! However, if the king raised his scepter, she would be allowed to enter the king's presence. What do you think happened? We will find out!

OPTION 2: Perfect timing

Play a series of games with your kids to test their reflexes. Hold a yardstick over the open hand of a kid. Drop the stick so that it passes between her fingers and thumb and see how fast the kid can grab it. Measure where her hand is when she catches it. The fewer inches up the stick, the faster she reacted.

Another option would be to use a medicine dropper to drip water steadily. Challenge kids to pass their hand through the path of the drops without getting wet.

SAY • Your timing was impressive. God's timing is perfect. He placed Esther where He needed her to save His people. We will learn more about how she did so in large group.



- broomstick or other staff-like object

- yardstick
- medicine dropper (optional)
- water (optional)

Tip: Make sure each kid gets a turn playing at least one of the games. Search online for other reflex-testing games or create your own.

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
• 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! Welcome back to the gym.

I've been training for a special race. Does anyone remember what it's called? *[Take responses.]* That's right! A triathlon. It's a race with three parts: swimming, biking, and running.

Competing in a triathlon can be a difficult task. It's certainly a battle against yourself. Triathlons can even be dangerous at times if you don't train well to prepare. But at the end of the race, after months of training, the feeling of accomplishment when you cross the finish line is amazing.

That's the way many things in life are. You have to work very hard to do something very difficult, but

when you finally achieve a special goal, you feel great! In a way it reminds me of what we talked about last week, the story of Esther.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Remember from last week [*point to last week's story*] that the king of Persia had chosen Esther to be his new queen. In reality, we know that it was God's plan to make her queen. An evil man named Haman wanted to kill all of God's people, so God made Esther queen to stop Haman. [*Point to this week's story*].

This week our story is called "God Saved His People Through Esther." We will learn what happened when Esther entered the throne room without permission and how God used her in His plan.

• Giant Timeline

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Our big picture question is the same as last week. ***Does God keep His promises?*** Does anyone remember the answer? [*Take responses.*] ***Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.*** Our unit is long, like a triathlon, so we are going to use this question to help us maintain focus through the whole thing!

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."

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

LEADER • It took incredible courage for Esther to approach the king on behalf of her people. She could have been killed, but **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.** I find it so amazing that God uses ordinary people to accomplish His plan on earth. Esther may have been a queen, but she didn't start out that way. Esther was just a girl who was willing to let God use her for His purposes. And that's exactly what God did!

God can use each of us in mighty ways too. He has a plan for all of us. He can use us to do incredible things no matter what skills or talents we have. He is all powerful, which means we don't have to be.

Do you want to hear something crazy? God isn't mentioned by name in the Book of Esther—not even once. He is clearly at the center of it all though, isn't He? At first, it seemed like Haman was in control. Haman planned to use his power to wipe out the Jews. But even in the midst of that, God was in control over Haman's evil plan. God positioned Esther perfectly to make her queen and give her influence over the king. God positioned Jesus, His Son, perfectly too.

Satan wants to destroy believers just like Haman wanted to destroy the Jews. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God planned Jesus' death to pay for our sin. God raised Jesus from the dead, showing that Satan could not stop God's power. When we trust in Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit, so we can have God's power in us to help us live for Him!

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 • This passage talks about God's mercy. What is *mercy*? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Mercy is when we are not punished even though we deserve it. Our sin earns us death, but God shows His mercy by saving us through Jesus' death on the cross. Instead of punishing us, God punished Jesus. Just as the key passage says, God's mercy is new every morning. That means it will never run out because each day it's refreshed and starts again! Sometimes I wish my running shoes were like God's mercy!

Lead the kids to sing "Your Faithfulness."

- Key Passage Poster
- "Your Faithfulness" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Last week we saw some cupcakes that were in danger, and one cupcake had the chance to save them. What do you think will happen? Let's watch!

Show the "Unit 18, Session 2" discussion starter video. Discuss situations where we might need to risk something to help someone else. Ask the kids what they would be willing to risk to help someone who didn't know about Jesus hear the gospel.

- "Unit 18, Session 2" discussion starter video

LEADER • God is in control of everything, and He is faithful even when we are not. He has promised everlasting life to those who trust Jesus. That means we can risk everything to tell others about Jesus because, in the end, we will live forever with God. We can't gain anything better than that, and it can't be taken from us no matter what else we might lose!

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • We serve a great God who loves us. I want to sing His praises forever! Will you join me to worship Him right now?

Sing together “He Rescues and Delivers.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • *Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.* Before we dismiss back to small groups, I want to pray to our faithful God.

Lord, thank You for the story of Esther. 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 plan. Thank You for sending an extraordinary Savior to rescue us from sin. Give us courage to risk everything to be part of Your plan this week, because in Jesus You have given us eternal life that cannot be taken from us. 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

Form small groups of two or three kids. Assign each group a word or phrase of the key passage. Invite each group to develop hand motions to help them remember the key passage. Consider researching some sign language words to help kids with ideas. Then, invite all the groups back together to teach the whole class the motions to each phrase. Say the verses all together, using the motions developed by the different teams.

SAY • God showed His goodness to Esther and the Jews by saving them from Haman's plan. God did not want His people to die. God doesn't want us to die either, but our sin makes it so we deserve death! God sent Jesus to show His goodness to the whole world. When we trust in Jesus, we are saved from sin, and live forever with God.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

• Bibles, 1 per kid

• Main Point Poster

Form two teams of kids. Instruct each team to choose a representative. Team members will work together to help their representative give the correct answers to questions. The representatives will be approaching the front of the

room, taking one step for each correct answer and one step back for each incorrect answer. The team whose representative reaches the front first wins. If no kid reaches the front, the team whose representative is closest to the front wins. Direct kids to find Esther 5–10 in their Bibles. They should use their Bibles to answer the questions.

Questions:

1. When did Esther approach the king? (*after three days of fasting; Esth. 4:15-16; 5:1*)
2. Did the king raise his scepter? (*yes, Esth. 5:2*)
3. What did Esther ask for at first? (*She invited the king and Haman to a feast, Esth. 5:7-8*)
4. What did Haman do after the first feast with Esther? (*He built a gallows to hang Mordecai, Esth. 5:14*)
5. Whom did the king want to honor? (*Mordecai, because he had uncovered a plot against the king; Esth. 6:2-3*)
6. Whom did Haman think the king was planning to honor? (*Haman thought the king planned to honor him, Esth. 6:7-9*)
7. When did Esther reveal that Haman's plot was against her too? (*after a second feast that she prepared for Haman and the king, Esth. 7:9-11*)
8. What did the king do in response? (*killed Haman and issued a new order to protect the Jews, Esth. 7:9–8:8*)

SAY • Esther risked her life by going before the king, but **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people.** In a similar way, Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and God raised Him from the dead. Through Jesus, we can all be saved from the penalty of sin.

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Royal scepter

- empty paper towel tubes, 1 per kid
- yellow construction paper
- tape
- glitter glue, adhesive jewels, or other craft supplies

Provide each kid with an empty paper towel tube, yellow construction paper, and tape. Help them wrap their tubes in the yellow paper. Then allow each kid to decorate her scepter with glitter glue, adhesive jewels, or other craft supplies.

SAY • The king held out his scepter to show that Esther was welcome in his presence. We are welcome in the presence of our King too! Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin. Now we can go before God's throne without fear. [See *Heb. 4:16*.] When we trust in Jesus, God sees us as clean and pure, like Jesus! That means we can be in God's presence!

OPTION 2: Bible story mural

Use a large sheet of paper to make a mural with the kids. Allow the kids to draw scenes from the story of Esther. Remind them of the events from last week so they can capture the full story. Ask someone to draw some pictures of the ways this story points us to Jesus.

SAY • **God used Esther at just the right time to save His people**, but God was in control the whole time. We can read the story of Esther and remember how good and trustworthy God is. We know that even now He is working His plans in the world to make sure people from every tribe and nation have the chance to hear about Jesus. We can be a part of God's plan too, just like Esther was, when we trust in Him and obey Him. We can tell other people about Jesus everywhere we go!



LOW PREP

- large sheet of paper
- pencils, pens, markers, or crayons

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture showing how God can use them to bring glory to His name and spread the gospel.

SAY • God has had a plan from the very beginning. Each of us play a part in God's plan when we trust Him and obey Him. Esther did not know what would happen to her, but she trusted that God wanted to protect His people from harm. We also may not know what will happen to us when we trust in God and follow Jesus, but we know that God wants us to bring glory to His name by spreading the gospel.

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, praising God for being a good Father who loves His children. Ask Him to move in the lives of each kid in your group, drawing them close to Him and using them to glorify His name and spread His kingdom. Thank Him for sending Jesus to make us new!

- 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.