

Esther Pleads For Her People

Esther 4:1-17

MEMORY VERSE

ESTHER 4:16

“...And so I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Chalk, paper, and tape.

One 9” x 9” square piece of burlap for each child, gray or black construction paper or confetti, string or ribbon, paper, markers, and a hole punch.

Chalk and a chalkboard.

ATTENTION GETTER!

What’s My Line?

God has a wonderful plan for all of our lives. Before class, take three sheets of paper and tape them onto your class chalk/dry erase board. The papers should be in a row approximately 6 inches apart. Choose two or three children from your class and ask the question, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” Do not have them answer just yet. Have your first “chosen” child come up and sit at the front of the class. Have them whisper into your ear what their future profession will be. Write it on the chalkboard, concealing it with a piece of paper and tape.

Have the rest of the class, one at a time, ask a question to try to guess. They can ask anything except, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” Have the child in the front answer the questions. Play until either the profession is guessed or everyone has asked a question. If it is not guessed remove the paper from the chalkboard to reveal what it is.

Allow the next one or two children to play. Explain to all of the children that no matter what we do in life, God has a wonderful plan for us. No matter where He places us, we can be used for His glory just like Esther was used.

LESSON TIME!

The situation seemed out of control. Haman, in a wicked plot of revenge against Mordecai and all of God's people, had persuaded the king of Persia to issue a decree—in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, all the Jewish people were to be annihilated! But, God had a plan. He would deliver His people. Remember Esther, who was made Queen of Persia? She was in the right place at the right time. She will be called upon to help in this time of crisis; but, it will not be easy! Will she choose to be a part of God's plan? **God has a purpose for our lives.**

ESTHER 4:1-3

When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

When Mordecai heard the king's decree stating the Jews were to be killed, he went throughout the city mourning and lamenting, even to the king's gate. He cried bitterly, tore his clothes, put on sackcloth (a rough, hairy garment), and spread ashes upon his head as a sign of deep grief. He came to the king's gate but did not enter, since there was a law that no one should enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. Everywhere, the Jews fasted, wept, wailed, and wore sackcloth and ashes.

Imagine how the Jewish people must have felt. Not only would they have felt a great sense of rejection (from the King of Persia, himself), but their very lives were threatened. It seemed they had only days to live. It must have *seemed* hopeless! Yet God was still in control. He had a plan.

We may face difficult and seemingly hopeless situations. May we not look at our circumstances and despair; may we, instead, look to our God! He has a plan. A turn of events never surprises Him; though perhaps silently and behind the scenes, He is, indeed, working. He will help us in our time of need and weave the circumstances of our lives together for His good purpose.

ESTHER 4:4-9

So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them.

Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.

So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate.

And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.

He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.

So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Esther's maids and attendants told her of Mordecai's appearance in sackcloth and ashes (deep mourning) before the gate of the palace. Esther was filled with grief and sent Mordecai regular clothes to put on instead of his sackcloth. Perhaps, she did that so he would enter the palace and explain to her what was wrong. He refused the new clothes, perhaps to make her aware of the extent of his grief and persuade her to question the reason for his attire.

Then Esther sent Hathach, one of her attendants, to Mordecai to learn the cause of his mourning. When Hathach came to him, Mordecai told him all that had happened and the amount of money that Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasuries to acquire the king's permission to destroy the Jews.

Mordecai also gave Hathach a copy of the decree published in Susa to show it to the queen. Mordecai then told Hathach to command Esther to go in to see the king, to entreat him, and to make request before him for her people.

Sackcloth and Ashes

In Old Testament times, whenever people were sad or mourned, they would put on sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was very rough material that would scratch against the skin. They would put ashes in their hair as a sign of sadness. In our lesson, today, Mordecai, and many of the Jews wore sackcloth and ashes because of their sadness over the king's decree.

For a craft, you will make a sackcloth pouch filled with ashes. You will need one 9" x 9" square piece of burlap for each child, gray or black construction paper or confetti, string or ribbon, paper, markers, and a hole punch. Begin by laying out the burlap square. Tear several strips of black or gray construction paper into tiny pieces or use confetti and place in the center of the square. Pull up each end of the square and tie the top with string or ribbon. This will make a small pouch. On a small strip of paper, approximately 1" x 4," write "Sackcloth and Ashes" and today's memory verse or theme. Write the child's name on the back of the paper. Punch a hole in the paper and tie to the pouch with string or ribbon.

Remind the children that sometimes we can find ourselves in bad situations, like Queen Esther and the Jewish people did. At those times, let us remember that He will be our strength and help; He will deliver us. He may even want to use our lives, like He did Queen Esther, to bring about that deliverance. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

ESTHER 4:10-14

Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law:

put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days."

So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "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?"

After Hathach told Queen Esther all that Mordecai had instructed, she sent her response back to Mordecai by Hathach. She told him that she could not--without endangering her life--go to the king and talk to him. There was a law that stated that whoever came to the king without being summoned (asked to come) could be put to death if the king so desired. If the king was pleased to see an uninvited visitor, he would hold out the golden scepter and the visitor would be allowed to enter his presence. Queen Esther had not been summoned to him for thirty days. Realizing the danger—it could cost her life—Esther was afraid of such a bold action.

When Mordecai heard of Queen Esther's reluctance, he sent her back a very sober message. "Think not that you will be saved in the king's house above all the Jews." Mordecai wanted Queen Esther to realize her life was also in danger. Haman's intent was to destroy *all* Jews. In other words, if she does not die because she does not go to the king, she could still die as a result of the decree.

Mordecai displayed great confidence in the Lord. He *knew* that if Esther did nothing, God would deliver the Jews some other way. He knew that the Jewish nation would not perish because for lack of God's protection. But, he also saw that it was, perhaps, God's plan to use Esther as the one through whom deliverance would come. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Mordecai encouraged Esther, "...Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Perhaps, Esther had been placed as Queen of Persia for this very purpose—to be God's instrument in protection of His people. Esther had a choice to make. Would she choose to be used by God?

ESTHER 4:15-17

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai:

"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Esther resolved to go to the king without being asked to come. She urged Mordecai and all the Jews to unite in a three day fast, during which she and her maidens would also fast. God's gracious help was needed in the bold step she was to take. Fasting is when God's people take a period of time to go without food to pray and to seek Him. Fasting allows us to keep our focus on the Lord without distractions. Esther wanted as many people as possible to keep her lifted up in prayer during this very important time.

Esther concludes, “If I perish, I perish.” These are not words of despair, but the voice of one who has surrendered completely to the will of God. Esther made the right choice. She yielded her life to God, though she was faced with much uncertainty.

Let us consider our own lives. God has a plan and purpose for us as He did for Esther. He places us in the right places at the right times, orchestrating the events of our lives so that His purposes may be accomplished. Perhaps, He has placed us in a certain school so that we can be a witness for Him. Maybe there is someone in our family that needs to see an example of Jesus. Maybe God will use us to pray for and help a neighbor in their time of need.

As a result of Esther’s decision to yield to God and do His will, His plan and purpose in the deliverance of His people will begin to unfold. God has everything under control! We, too, will make a choice. May we choose, like Esther, to be His vessels, yielded to His will, that we may see His plan and purposes accomplished in our lives. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Fruit of the Spirit Tic Tac Toe

If we live a Spirit-controlled life, we can certainly be useful to the Lord. Do our lives display the fruits of a Spirit-controlled life? Draw a large Tic Tac Toe graph on the chalk or dry erase board. In each square put a small number beginning with 1 and going through 9. Each of these boxes will represent a fruit of the Spirit.

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Longsuffering
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self-control

Split up your class into two teams, the “X”s and the “O”s. Have each group take turns choosing which square they would like to take by choosing a number. After choosing the number, in order to capture the square, they will need to get together as a group and “act out” that fruit of the Spirit. They can do anything to demonstrate that fruit. You as the teacher will be the judge if they are accurate and should qualify to receive the square.

Continue playing until someone gets Tic Tac Toe. If you feel they did not earn the square then the other team can try to earn the square. Play the game a few times and have fun. As we yield to God’s control, these fruits of the Spirit will be evident in our lives.

PRAYER

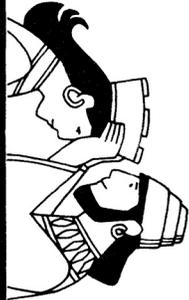
Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to seek God’s will for their lives, understanding He has a plan and a purpose for them. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

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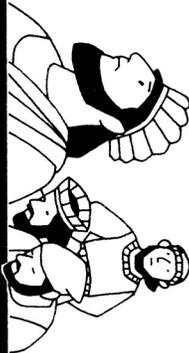
WASHTI



ESTHER



HAMAN / MORDECAI



FEAST OF PURIM

