

WEEK 1

LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

God works behind the scenes.

BIBLE

Scene I. Esther Becomes Queen:
Esther 2:1-18

WELCOME TIME

MUSIC | Showstoppers

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** You can lead kids in worship with any songs of your choice, but here are some suggestions that go along with this month's theme. Make sure you have purchased any licenses required to play or perform these songs. For more information, [read this!](#)
 - "Praise You With My Song (Esther's Song)" (Little Big Heroes)
 - "This Little Light" (Ark Kids)
 - "God is So Good" (Yancy & Little Praise Party)
 - "Strong and Courageous" (Justin Graves Band)

ACTIVITY | Scene Beans

- Actors have to be comfortable with doing all sorts of actions, including silly actions! Let's all practice being stage actors!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have kids stand in a big circle or in a straight line. When you shout the name of a bean, have kids do some or all of the following actions with you:
 - String beans (stretch up as high as you can)
 - Broad beans (make yourself as wide as you can)
 - Runner beans (run on the spot)
 - Jumping beans (jump on the spot)
 - Jelly beans (shake your whole body like jelly)
 - Baked beans (wipe your brow and say, 'Phew!')
 - Beans on toast (lie flat on the floor)
 - Chili beans (shiver as though you're very cold)
 - Mr. Bean (shrug your shoulders and make a confused face)
 - Beanie Baby (pretend to rock a baby)
 - Human beans (exclaim, 'To bean or not to bean!')
 - Bean bags (huddle in a ball on the floor)

ACTIVITY | Director Says

- Have you ever watched a play where actors tell a story? They spend time getting ready by practicing behind the scenes. Let's get ready like they would!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Line the kids up front and play this version of the game, "Simon Says." When you say, "Director says..." give the kids a stage-themed command (like go stage left, go stage right, go backstage, stand upstage, and take a bow). Make sure you point which way kids should go.*
 ✨ **TODDLER HACK:** *Show the kids what the different movements are multiple times. Then, call out the stage-themed commands and see how much they remember on their own!*

STORY TIME

SCRIPTURE | Esther 2:1–18 (Scene I. Esther Becomes Queen)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Make three simple [stick-figure marionettes](#) for Xerxes, Esther, and Mordecai (refer to your Shop & Prep List for more details). Recruit one or two volunteers to help you as you tell the story behind a [cardboard theater](#). Use the puppets as you read Esther 2:1–18 (using a preschool Bible or kid-friendly Bible translation) or you may choose to use the script below.*
- **Narrator:** Welcome, everyone, to the Behind-the-Scenes Theater! Today, we're going to look at the very beginning of the story of a girl named Esther. Esther's life is about to change in a big way. Let's see what happens.
- *[Enter Esther.]*
- **Esther:** Hello! I'm Esther. I live in a place called Persia.
 - Me and my family are called Jews. We are originally from Israel, but due to some sad things that happened, our family ended up here.
 - I live with my cousin, Mordecai. Have you met him? Mordecai! Where are you?
- *[Enter Mordecai.]*
- **Mordecai:** Oh! Hi, I'm Mordecai. I know, that's not an easy name to say. Wanna say it with me? Mor-de-cai. Wonderful!
- **Esther:** Hi, cousin Mordecai!
- **Mordecai:** Esther! Did you hear?
- **Esther:** No, what's going on?
- **Mordecai:** I heard the king is looking for a new queen!
- **Esther:** A new queen? Well, what's that got to do with me?
- **Mordecai:** Well, people from the palace are going around the neighborhood to find a new queen. They might call you to go to the palace, too. The king is going to choose someone to be queen out of all the women who come to the palace.
- **Esther:** Wow, can you imagine? Me, the queen of Persia? That sounds like a big, important job.
- **Mordecai:** It is! Now, listen, Esther. If anyone who works for the king asks you about your family . . . uh, don't tell them you're a Jew, okay?
- **Esther:** What? Why not? Our whole family is Jewish and has been for many, many years. Why should I keep it a secret that I love and follow the God of Israel like I was taught my whole life?
- **Mordecai:** It's hard to explain. Some people out there just don't like when people are different. Just trust me, okay?
- **Esther:** Okay, I'll do as you say.
- *[Make trumpet sounds.]*
- **Mordecai:** Oh, the people from the palace are here! Quick, Esther! Go! And good luck!

- **Esther:** Thanks, Mordecai!
- *[Mordecai and Esther exit the stage in opposite directions. Enter Xerxes.]*
- **Xerxes:** I never thought finding a new queen would be this hard. There are so many to choose from, but I just haven't found my queen. I'm so tired.
- *[Enter Esther.]*
- **Esther:** Good day, King Xerxes.
- **Xerxes:** *[Sounding bored and facing in the opposite direction of Esther.]* Ah, yes. Yes, it is. And what is your name?
- **Esther:** My name is Esther, your majesty. Your palace is beautiful.
- **Xerxes:** Esther, you say? That's a— *[Turns around and freezes.]* . . . that's a, uh, a . . . Esther, wow . . . um . . .
- **Esther:** Yes?
- **Xerxes:** That's a lovely name.
- **Esther:** Thank you, your majesty.
- **Xerxes:** And where are you from?
- **Esther:** Um, I'm from, well, over there—
- **Xerxes:** How would you like to be from here?
- **Esther:** Excuse me?
- **Xerxes:** Marry me! Be my queen! Be the queen of Persia!
- **Esther:** Oh! Well, I'd be honored.
- **Xerxes:** Yay! This is the best day of my life! *[Runs off stage.]*
- **Narrator:** So, King Xerxes found his new queen. And just like that, Esther became Queen Esther. She doesn't know this yet, but God is getting her ready to help others in a special way. We'll find out more next time!

BIG IDEA | God works behind the scenes.

- We saw how Esther went from living a normal life to becoming a queen very quickly.
- God had a plan for Esther because **God works behind the scenes** in our lives.
 - "Behind the scenes" is something we say to talk about what goes on in the background, which we normally can't see. When we see something on the stage, we might only focus on the people performing, but there are a whole bunch of people who help control the light, sound, music, and all sorts of things. Those people work behind the scenes.
- It might seem like Esther was just lucky to get chosen to become the queen, but we know God was behind the scenes and making it happen. And God works behind the scenes for us, too.
- Let's learn these motions to help us remember that God works behind the scenes.
 - **God works** (*point up with both pointer fingers twice*)
 - **behind** (*thumbs point back behind*)
 - **the scenes** (*spread arms out in front of you*)
- God's story for Esther was to become a queen and God has a story and a plan for you!

VIDEO | Behind the Scenes, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Cali's World](#).

ACTIVITY | Our Lovely Helpers

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask kids to sit in a circle and take turns calling out names of loved ones.
 - ✳ **TODDLER HACK:** Seat younger kids in a circle and have them go around and say who lives in their house and how they're helpful to them.

- Esther's cousin, Mordecai, helped her meet King Xerxes. Esther's cousin helped her become queen.
- **Is there anyone you know who helps you?** Let's get in a circle and say our names and the name of a cousin, sibling, or friend we love and who helps us.
- God works in our lives through people who love us!
- **God works behind the scenes.**

PRAYER

- Dear God, thank you for knowing us and knowing our families. Even though we can't see you, we know you are there. Thank you for being with us like you were with Esther. Amen.

SHARING TIME

SNACK | Intermission!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pass out crackers, cookies, or another snack of your choice on plates or napkins for kids to enjoy. For added fun, give kids play money to "buy" their snacks from the concession stand.*
- Intermission is a short break during a play. During intermission, the performers rest, the stage crew changes the scenery, and the audience can go grab a snack!
- Let's try our own intermission snacks now!

ACTIVITY | Circle Time

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pass a plastic crown around the circle for the kids to look at or place on their heads. Make sure to have the puppets available from the Bible story.*
- Let's review the important people we met in our story today.
 - **What is the name of the woman who became the queen?** *(Hold up the Esther puppet.)*
 - **Do you remember who Esther's cousin is?** *(Hold up the Mordecai puppet.)*
 - **What is the name of the king who made Esther a queen?** *(Hold up the King Xerxes puppet.)*
- God is working in this story. These are the people we will keep watching each week as we hear more and more about Queen Esther.

ACTIVITY | Paper Crown Craft

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Cut paper plates into the shape of a crown (check out [these](#) instructions for a tutorial) before kids arrive. Give kids stickers, crayons, markers, paint, gems, and other items to decorate their crowns.*
- ✂ **TODDLER HACK:** *Limit decorating supplies to just crayons or stickers.*
- Put this crown on your head to help you remember today's story about Queen Esther! Even though God was nowhere to be seen, we know that God was there all along. And guess what? **God works behind the scenes** in your life, too!

MEMORY VERSE | Philippians 2:13 (NIV)

- **"For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."**
- This is a big verse! Let's begin learning it together by repeating after me a few phrases at a time. When I point at you, you repeat after me:
 - **For it is God** *(point at kids to repeat)*
 - **who works in you** *(point at kids to repeat)*
 - **to will and act** *(point at kids to repeat)*
 - **in order to fulfill** *(point at kids to repeat)*

- **his good purpose** (*point at kids to repeat*)
- **Philippians 2:13** (*point at kids to repeat*)

PLAY TIME

ACTIVITY | Coloring Page

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Print and distribute the coloring page along with crayons or markers. As the kids color, you can review today's Bible story, Big Idea, and memory verse.*

ACTIVITY | Queen Esther's Crown Jewels

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Fill a sensory table with large beads with wide openings and some pipe cleaners. Encourage kids to free play with the pipe cleaners and beads, making them into bracelets, rings, crowns . . . anything fit for a queen!*

ACTIVITY | Cardboard Puppet Theater

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Lay a large cardboard box on its side with the flaps open and have kids decorate their own puppet theater. Provide a variety of toys and help kids retell today's story. Here's [an example](#) of what that might look like.*