

WEEK 3 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

God gives us support behind the scenes.

BIBLE

Scene III. Mordecai Asks Esther to Help:
Esther 3:8-4:17; Colossians 1:9-17

LARGE GROUP TIME

This is our third week *Behind the Scenes*! We've been diving headfirst into our own exclusive play, *The Epic Events of Esther and the Empire*!

Tensions between Mordecai and Haman are rising quickly, and today, we're going to see what evil plots are being hatched against Mordecai, Esther, and the Jewish people living in Persia. It's showtime!

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

MUSIC | Worship

- **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!](#)
 - "God is Real" (Vineyard Kids)
 - "Thank the Lord" (Ark Kids)
 - "In You Alone" (Lifetree Kids)
 - "Raise a Hallelujah" (Community Kids)

ACTIVITY | Production Party

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** In this food-services-themed relay race, kids will be the servers, and the leaders will be the hungry stage crew waiting for lunch. Divide kids into teams and line each team up and assign one leader to be at the end of each line. Have individually-wrapped items — like wrapped sandwiches, bags of chips, water bottles, Jell-O cups, and spoons — mixed up inside a bin. The first kid in the line will select an item from the bin, put it on a tray, then pass the tray down the line from one kid to the next, until it reaches the leader. Have the last kid rush to the front of the line with the empty tray, place a new food item on it, then pass the tray down the line again. The first team to give their designated leader a complete meal wins.

✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Instead of using real food, use play food so that kids don't feel left out when only the leaders are given food. If it's close to snack time, consider having them help you put snack packs together for the group.*

- It's another day of rehearsal of our awesome play, *The Epic Events of Esther and the Empire!*
- The only thing left to do is to supply our set with food and drinks for everyone who'll be working behind the scenes and onstage.
- The first team to supply their leaders with fully-assembled lunch trays wins!

ACTIVITY | Susa Support

- Today, we have a simple game for you all to play. You'll all be winners, I'm sure. The thing is, you'll need help from your teammates to win.
- All you have to do is take these three cups and stack them like this. No problem, right? Well, you have to use this contraption to do it!
- Let the race begin!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Divide kids into groups of three. Each team has three plastic cups that will start on the floor or on a table. Teams will use a contraption of three pieces of string tied to a rubber band (like [this](#)) to move the cups. Teams must put the rubber band over the cup and hold the ends of the string to move and stack the cups. Ask two volunteers to help you demonstrate how to put the rubber band over the cup and move the cup around.*

✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Give each group the same number of cups and ask them to build the tallest tower with the sturdiest foundation. You can discuss with kids afterward about how having support is like a structure with a solid foundation.*

- **Does anyone know the name of the city where Esther's story takes place?** It's a city called Susa.
- We're going to find out today how many of the residents of Susa were about to get some terrible news and to get through it, they'd need each other.

QUESTION | Who is your supporter?

- Today, we're talking a lot about how others are there for you and you can be there for others. We call that supporting each other!
- **Who's someone who has supported you big time this year? How did they do that?**
 - Did they show up to a game or event of yours?
 - Did they cheer you on and encourage you?
 - Did they help you out of a sticky situation?
 - Did they teach you something new?
 - Did they pray for you when you were sick?
 - Did they give you something you really needed?
- ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Once they have an answer for someone who has supported them, have them construct a thank you note to that person.*

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

SCRIPTURE | Esther 3:8–4:17 (Scene III. Mordecai Asks Esther to Help)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Set up your Bible story space like you're rehearsing a play with a director's chair in front of the stage area and the audience behind you. Choose kids and volunteers to pantomime the instructions you call out as you tell the story. Pick a few kids to be the story's characters: Xerxes, Haman, royal scribes,*

a messenger, Esther, and Mordecai. As you tell the story, pause occasionally to tell the actors to stand in a certain spot or move in a certain way.

- Well, hello! You're in for a treat with yet another exclusive, behind-the-scenes experience. In today's installment of our play, we're going to witness how Haman hatched an evil plot to destroy his archnemesis, Mordecai, and his people.
 - *Optional:* The scene we're rehearsing today is a dramatic retelling of the Bible story found in Esther 3:8-4:17. I'm going to read it before we dive into our artistic interpretation. *[Read the entire passage or selected verses.]*
- And now without further ado, I present to you . . . *The Epic Events of Esther and the Empire*, Scene III: Mordecai Asks Esther to Help.
- Places, everyone! And . . . action!
- Haman was a high-ranking member of the king's court. In fact, he was like the second most powerful man in the kingdom.
 - That's why whenever Haman entered the room, everyone around him would bow.
 - But not Mordecai. Mordecai loved and worshiped God only.
 - And every time Mordecai didn't bow, Haman got angrier and angrier until one day, he decided he needed to get rid of Mordecai. And not just Mordecai — all of Mordecai's people, too, who were called the Jews.
- So, Haman sought an audience with the king. King Xerxes listened. He nodded his head a lot. Haman made the Jewish people sound like an absolute menace to the kingdom.
 - So, the king took off his ring and gave it to Haman, which meant Haman could create and enforce any laws he wanted.
 - Haman took the ring, smiled a villainous smile, then skipped off to set his plan in motion.
- Soon after that happened, the royal scribes were summoned and they all wrote out the order Haman made up and these notices were delivered all throughout the land.
- And the order was this: In less than a year, on the date of the decree, all the Jewish people would be rounded up and destroyed — men, women, children, and probably their pets, too.
- Cut!
 - *[Turn to audience.]* This is your cue to gasp because this is awful news! Everyone give me a big gasp.
 - One more time, only this time, louder and clap your hands to your mouth, too, like you can't believe it! Good. Now, you're all part of the play! Okay, let's move on.
 - And . . . action!
- When Mordecai heard this, he did more than gasp. He was so anguished, he tore his clothes and wept aloud and dressed in sackcloth along with the rest of the city.
 - Don't really tear your clothes, though, Mordecai, this is just a play. Just act it out. Show me some real pain. Excellent work, you're a natural.
- Mordecai's cousin, Esther, who was now the queen, was in the palace when she found out he was dressed in sackcloth and mourning at the gates.
- So, she sent a messenger to find out why.
 - The messenger ran from the palace to the gate where Mordecai was.
- Mordecai told the messenger, Hathak, to tell Esther about what Haman had done. He gave the messenger a copy of the decree that was posted everywhere that contained the order. He told the messenger to tell Esther that she needed to go talk to the king and ask him to cancel this order.
 - So, the messenger ran from the gate back to Esther.

- When she heard Mordecai's message, Esther crossed her arms. There was no way she could do what Mordecai was asking. Esther knew she had to talk to the king, but no one was allowed to go to him without an appointment. If she just showed up unannounced, she could be in really big trouble!
 - So, the messenger ran back to Mordecai with Esther's reply.
- And this is what Mordecai said back to her, "Just because you're the queen, don't think that will save you from what Haman has ordered for the Jews. I don't doubt that our people will be rescued somehow, but what if the relief was meant to come because of you? What if you became queen for this very reason?"
 - The messenger, now thoroughly out of breath and getting very tired, ran back with Mordecai's message to Esther.
- Hearing this, she sent back one final message. She said, "Get everyone together. Don't eat. Just pray. After that, I'll go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I die trying, then I die trying."
- Starting that moment, Esther, Mordecai, and all the Jewish people in the city of Susa began to pray.
- And . . . scene! Bravo, everyone!
- Wow, talk about a cliffhanger! I wonder how they're going to get out of this terrible situation . . . or if they'll get out of it at all. Find out next time as we wrap up our play!

BIG IDEA | God gives us support behind the scenes.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have someone acting as a director walk in with a megaphone and yell, "Cut! It's time for the Big Idea! Who has today's Big Idea?" Every week, the Big Idea, written on a piece of paper, will be placed at a different part of the stage. Choose a kid volunteer to find and read it aloud.
- **God gives us support behind the scenes!** Not only does God work behind the scenes and helps us do good for others, but God also gives us all the support we need. It's the best kind of support that gives us both strength and courage to do what's right.
- Let's say the Big Idea together to make sure we don't forget: **God gives us support behind the scenes.**

VIDEO | Behind the Scenes, Episode 3

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

STORY | Someone Helped Me

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a short story about a moment growing up when you really needed support. Why did you need help? Who supported you? How did they know you needed extra care? How did God use that person or group to change the way things were going for you? Invite kids to imagine how God provides support for them.
- There was a time when I needed support and there was someone there for me.
- In the same way, God always wants the best for us and wants us to feel loved in all that we do.
- **God gives us support behind the scenes.**

OBJECT LESSON | Background Support

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play two clips from Encanto's "We Don't Talk About Bruno" The first [clip](#) is the song without the accompanying instruments, the second [clip](#) is the original recording. If you don't want to show the entire thing, feel free to play just a section, but make sure you show the same section from both videos so kids can compare and contrast. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- One popular form of theater is musical theater. Can you guess why it's called that? It has both talking and singing. **Can you think of any examples of movies or shows that are also musicals?** (Allow kids to respond.)

Some of their answers might include: *Frozen*, *Over the Moon*, *Tangled*, *Moana*, *The Princess and the Frog*, *High School Musical: The Musical*, *Vivo*, *Descendants*, *The Lion King*, etc.)

- Those are great examples. One way I like to think about support is through music. So, let's take a look at one of these: *Encanto*! We're going to listen to the same song twice, once with the instruments in the background, and once without any music at all.
- That's what it's like to have support. It still sounded great without any music — some music is made that way on purpose, which is called a cappella. But once the music came in, didn't the entire song just sound so much fuller?
- There are many things in our lives we can do just fine on our own, while there are other things that seem impossible to do by ourselves.
- But for anything we face, big or small, God is always there for us. We can do everything even better because **God gives us support behind the scenes.**

SCRIPTURE | Colossians 1:9–17

- When Mordecai and all the Jews heard about the decree Haman had issued on behalf of the king, they were frightened . . . they didn't want to die! So, they came together and did something very important: They prayed.
- And prayer is something God's people everywhere throughout time have always done.
- Many years later, Paul wrote a letter to followers of God living in a place called Colossae. In the letter, Paul reminds them that he and his team were praying for them nonstop.
- Let's read what he wrote.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Colossians 1:9–17. Then, spend some time praying with the kids.
- Paul prays that the people in Colossae would have God's wisdom, but not only that, he prays they would also have the strength and patience to keep going.
- Paul reminds the Colossians that Jesus is above everything and everyone. Even kings and queens, presidents, and officers all answer to Jesus.
- And that's why we pray! That's why the Jews living in Persia prayed to God when they were afraid for their lives. They trusted God would support them because they knew God was more powerful than Haman or even the king.
- **Do you sometimes feel alone or scared? Do you ever feel like nobody really understands you?** Well, there is someone who knows you so well and loves you. We can always pray and ask God for the support we need.
- **Why don't we do that right now?**

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

REFLECTION | Soliloquy Bubble

- It's time for another soliloquy reel! Remember, a soliloquy in theater is a speech that a character gives to oneself — it's kind of like talking to yourself!
- Today, let's get into either Esther or Mordecai's head. You just heard what Haman had done, and now, your life is at risk. **If you were this character, what might you be saying to yourself as the story is happening?**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use the dry erase thought bubbles from the previous weeks. Seat the kids in a circle and take turns sharing responses to today's question. Give the kids a few hints by going first. Write on the thought bubble with a dry erase marker, then take a photo of it. Wipe it off and pass the bubble to the next person for a response and picture. At the end of the series, use these thought bubble photos as cue cards to make a video (TikTok, Reel, or similar style. Post only with parent permission.) or use an instant camera to snap photos to put up in your environment.
- ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Select a few snippets from the Bible passage to create caption slides and play a reverse "Caption This" game with preteens where they act out the "caption" given to them. For example, you can give them "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16) and have them pose in a way that fits that caption.
- It's wonderful to imagine what behind-the-scenes thoughts these characters might've been having. But no matter what they might have been thinking on the inside, on the outside, they prayed and asked for God's help. They knew what we know today — **God gives us support behind the scenes**, especially when we ask!

RESPONSE | Break a Leg

- Because we know **God gives us support behind the scenes**, we can do the same for others!
- **Has anyone ever heard the expression used in theater, "Break a leg?" What do you think it means?**
 - It's an odd saying, but it comes from a long time ago when audiences would bang their chairs on the ground when they liked a performance. If the leg of the chair broke, that meant the actor did a good job!
 - So, when we tell performers to "break a leg," it's like saying, "Good luck! I hope you do really well!" It's a wonderful way of supporting fellow thespians — which is a fancy word for actors.
- Giving support is as easy as saying "Break a leg!" We can support others in many different ways, like saying kind words, giving them something they need, helping them with a chore or assignment, or even just sitting with them and listening.
- Take a minute to think about how someone has supported you in the past and who you might want to support from now on.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid four popsicle sticks and a piece of cardstock paper. On each popsicle stick, have them write the name of someone who has supported them or someone they can support. Then, have them glue the sticks to the paper to look like the side view of a chair (roughly resembling a lowercase "h").
- ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Have preteens make an origami chair and write their responses on it. Check out a tutorial like [this one](#) to learn how to fold a paper chair.

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."**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Divide kids into groups of five or six and give each group a copy of the memory verse graphic (located in your Programming folder). This week, have each team member practice the verse and tell them they should know it really well. After some practice, announce each team to come up to the front with trumpet sounds, either from the rest of the class or play [this](#). Have the team line up and point to one person to say the first word of the verse, then point to another person in the group to say the next word. Keep pointing at random until the team recites the entire verse. Then, have everyone say, "Hear! Hear!"
- **(Don't forget to also check out the memory verse signs — a combination of SEE and ASL — available in your Programming folder or at growcurriculum.org/Philippians2-13.)**

PRAYER

- God, thank you for always being there behind the scenes and giving us support. Sometimes, we feel alone or afraid, but you cheer us on and give us everything we need. Thank you for also giving us others we can lean on. Help us to be good supporters, too, and let them know how much you love us all. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- What happened that made Mordecai and all the Jews in Susa weep and become afraid?
- Why was Esther afraid to do what Mordecai asked her to do?
- What kind of support did Esther ask Mordecai for?
- Read Colossians 1:9. How did Paul support the people who were living in Colossae?
- How has God given you support in the past? How do you know?
- Is it possible to support someone you don't get along with? Why do you think that?
- What is one way you can support someone you know this week?

ACTIVITY | Playbill Prayers

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give each kid a playbill printable and have kids write prayer requests in each other's books. Use the blank version if you want kids to decorate their own cover.
- A playbill is a program that's passed out at theater performances. It contains information like the names of everyone who worked on the play, the names of the actors, the titles of the scenes, and advertisements.
- We're going to use our playbill to show how we can support each other. Write or draw one thing you want to ask your friend to pray for and also one way you're going to pray for them! Let's fill our playbills with as many prayers to remember that **God gives us support behind the scenes!**