

# ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE

## ESTHER



**KEY PASSAGE:** Isaiah 25:9

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** Even though Haman tried to hurt God's people, God was in control and had a plan to save the Jews. Sin hurts us and breaks our relationship with God, but God had a plan from the very beginning to save us through Jesus' death on the cross.

**STORY POINT:** Esther obeyed God, risked her life, and saved her people.



## PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

### LEADER Bible Study

The book of Esther tells a fascinating story of courage and demonstrates how God works to protect His people to carry on His mission. Esther takes place during a time when some of the Jewish people were living under the rule of the Persians. During that time, God elevated a young Jewish woman named Esther to a place in the king's palace that would allow her the opportunity to save her people.

One of the interesting aspects of the book of Esther is that the name of God is not mentioned. Although His name is not mentioned in the book, God is present in every aspect of the story. Perhaps this is most clearly seen in Mordecai's words to Esther. In Esther 4:14, Mordecai, Esther's cousin, tells her that perhaps she has been elevated as queen in the king's palace exactly for this moment. The phrase "for such a time as this" describes how God works seemingly behind the scenes to accomplish His will, proving He rules over every aspect of our lives.

The main theme of the book of Esther is that God is sovereign over all of history. God will deliver His faithful remnant when they face threats from enemies. Even when circumstances seem hopeless, God is at work. God delivered His people in this story by thwarting the plans of Haman, an advisor to the king. Haman's plan was not just a political move but a spiritual attack on the very people of God. But God, in the sovereignty of His will, had placed Esther in the perfect place at the perfect time to defeat the enemies of His people.

The book of Esther points us to the day when Jesus would come at just the right time in just the right place to deliver us from our sins. Help kids see how Romans 5:6 tells us that at just the right time, Jesus came to die for us while we were helpless. Encourage kids to understand that in God's sovereignty, He determined the exact right place and time for Jesus to be born and to die for their sins.



#### PREPARE

##### THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



#### WELCOME

##### 10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



#### LEARN

##### 25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



#### LOVE

##### 15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



#### LIVE

##### 15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



## PREPARE

### PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

## GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



### WELCOME

#### Activity Page

- ☐ "In Control" activity page

#### Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ blindfold
- ☐ pool noodle
- ☐ music

#### Session Starter (Option 2)

- ☐ masking tape or painter's tape



### LOVE

#### Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



### LIVE

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ paper crowns, 2
- ☐ cardstock, 1 per kid

#### Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ dry erase board and marker
- ☐ eraser

#### Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible story coloring page



### LEARN

#### Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

#### Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

#### Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

#### Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Esther Saved Her People" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ gold scepter prop (optional)
- ☐ modern-day map (optional)

#### Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 17, Session 4" Questions from Kids video

#### Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "This Is the Lord (Isaiah 25:9)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ dry erase board and marker
- ☐ sticky notes



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “What do you think it means to be brave? Have you ever had to be brave? When?”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “In Control” activity page.

| **SAY** “Today, we will see how a man named Haman wanted to hurt God’s people, but through Esther, God showed He was in control and greater than evil.”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### ☐ OPTION 1: SPINNING SCEPTER

Form kids into a large circle. Choose one kid to be It and lead him to stand in the center of the circle. Blindfold It and provide him with a pool noodle to represent the “scepter.” While you play music, direct the kids in the circle to move in a clockwise direction. When the music stops, all the kids freeze. Then It will point the “scepter” at someone in the circle. The kid who was pointed at says, “Trust God’s plan!” in a disguised voice. It must try to guess who it is. If It guesses correctly, he stays in the center for another round. If he guesses incorrectly, the chosen kid becomes the new It. Play as time allows.

| **SAY** “How did it feel to not know who was speaking? Was it hard to trust that you’d pick the right person? We don’t always understand what’s happening, but we can trust that God is in control! Today, we will see how God had a plan for His people, even when it was hard to understand. We’ll see how a woman named Esther approached the king on behalf of her people, and how the king extended a scepter, showing that he was willing to listen to Esther. God used Esther’s bravery as part of His plan to rescue His people.”

#### ☐ OPTION 2: SPOT SWAP



Before the session, place two long strips of tape on the floor. Form the kids into two teams and instruct each to stand shoulder to shoulder on a line of tape. Explain that the object of this game is for the kid on the right end of the line to make it to the left end of the line without any kid stepping off of the tape. Repeat until the entire line has reversed. Encourage the kids to work together as a team to help one another switch places, moving one at a time. If someone steps off of the line, the whole team must start over. By the end of the game, each kid should have moved at least once to a new position.

| **SAY** “It was challenging to change positions! Sometimes, being somewhere new brings us out of our comfort zone and requires us to have courage. But God can use us wherever we are to accomplish His plans. Today, we are going to learn how a woman named Esther was placed in a new position as queen. We’ll see how God was working in Esther’s life, and how **ESTHER OBEYED GOD, RISKED HER LIFE, AND SAVED HER PEOPLE.**”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





## INTRODUCE the Bible Story

### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

**SAY** “ Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I’m so glad to see you! Did you bring your Bible? If so, please take it out. [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, our Bible story comes from the book of Esther. Is Esther in the Old Testament or New Testament? [Allow responses.] That’s right! Esther is in the Old Testament.

We’ve seen how God brought His people back to Jerusalem. While some of God’s people returned to Jerusalem, many did not. In the book of Esther, we see that a community of God’s people, also called Jews, were living in Susa, the capital city of Persia. Today, we will learn that **ESTHER OBEYED GOD, RISKED HER LIFE, AND SAVED HER PEOPLE.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let’s pray together: ‘God, thank You that You are in control at all times. Please help us trust You, even when we don’t always understand. Amen.’ ”

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

**SAY** “ Who remembers our big picture question? [Allow responses.] **How did God plan to fix what sin broke?** Do you remember the answer? [Allow responses.] The answer is, **Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.** Let’s say the answer one more time: **Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.**

Did you know that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was born a Jew? The name Jew is used to describe God’s people who were from Judah. In our story, we’ll see how a plot was set to kill the Jews, but God had a plan to rescue His people. We will see that God used the obedience of a young woman named Esther to save the Jewish people. Likewise, God had a plan to rescue people from sin. Those who trust in Jesus, the Messiah, will be saved and receive forgiveness of sins. ”

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** “ God brought His people home, and they began laying the foundation for the temple. The prophet Zechariah encouraged God’s people to obey God. Zechariah shared the promise that a Messiah was coming to build God’s eternal kingdom. While God’s enemies tried to stop the people from rebuilding the temple, we saw how God provided the way for the temple to be finished through the order from King Cyrus. The temple was rebuilt so God’s people could worship God. Today, we jump forward many years to a time when some of God’s people were living in Persia. God used the obedience of Esther to save His people. ”



## LEARN the Bible Story

### 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Esther. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Esther Saved Her People.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

#### ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE

**“ King Ahasuerus (uh haz yoo EHR uhs) was the king of Persia.** Many years earlier, when Cyrus was king, he sent some of God’s people back to Judah to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. So, some of God’s people went to Judah, but some of them stayed in Persia. God’s people were called Jews because they were from Judah.

**Esther was one of God’s people who had not gone to Jerusalem. Esther** was very beautiful, and she **was brought to King Ahasuerus because he was looking for a woman to be his queen. The king liked Esther very much, and she became queen.** They had a great feast for her. **But Esther didn’t tell anyone she was a Jew.**

**An evil man named Haman was a leader in the kingdom, and King Ahasuerus** honored Haman to a higher position. **Everyone was supposed to bow down to Haman, but Mordecai, the person who had raised Esther, would not bow down. This made Haman extremely angry. When Haman found out that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman planned to have all the Jews put to death.**

**Mordecai sent word to Esther and asked her to go to the king and beg him to save her people. Esther said** to him, “Everyone knows that you can’t just go talk to the king. **There is a law that if you go to him without him calling you, you will be put to death unless he chooses to raise his gold scepter.**”

**Mordecai replied,** “If you choose to keep silent, God will save his people another way. But **who knows, maybe you were made queen for this reason!**” Esther asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews together to pray and fast for her for three days.

On the third day, **Esther approached the king, and he extended the gold scepter toward her. He said, “What is it, Queen Esther? I will give you anything you wish!” She invited the king and Haman to a banquet that day.** The king accepted the invitation.

**While they were dining, the king said again, “What do you want, Queen Esther? I’ll give you anything, even up to half the kingdom!” Queen Esther said, “What I want is for you and Haman to come to another banquet tomorrow!”** The king agreed.

**At that second feast, the king asked Esther a third time: “Queen Esther, what can I do for you? I’ll give you anything you desire.” Queen Esther said, “My request, O king, is that you spare my life, and the lives of my people, for this evil Haman has sentenced us to death.”**

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Use a prop:** Create a gold scepter by wrapping an empty cardboard tube in yellow paper. Hold out the scepter when you mention it in the story. Consider holding out the scepter to kids, asking them review questions at the end of the story.

**Map it:** Point to Shush, Iran, on a modern-day map to show where Susa, Persia, was located.



## LEARN

### THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

**The king was very angry with Haman and sentenced him to die.** Once more, **Esther went before the king on behalf of her people and asked him to sign a law protecting her people from their enemies.** The king signed the law, and the Jews celebrated with joy.

Christ Connection: Even though Haman tried to hurt God's people, God was in control and had a plan to save the Jews. Sin hurts us and breaks our relationship with God, but God had a plan from the very beginning to save us through Jesus' death on the cross. ”

## 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** “ Through God's perfect plan, King Ahasuerus made Esther his queen. During her time as queen, a man named Haman made an evil plan. What plan did Haman come up with after he found out that Mordecai would not bow down to him? **[Allow responses.]** Haman wanted to kill the Jewish people. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, urged her to use her position as queen to go before the king and plead for her people's lives. This was a dangerous task because no one could approach the king without being called upon. Esther had to trust God's plan even though she didn't know how everything would turn out.

What did Esther ask the king during the second feast? **[Allow responses.]** Esther bravely approached the king and asked him to save her people. She told the king all about Haman's evil plan. King Ahasuerus listened to her request. In the end, Haman's evil plan failed, and the Jewish people were saved. God used Esther to protect His people, showing that He is always working behind the scenes, even when we don't see it. Just like in Zechariah's time, when God helped rebuild the temple despite opposition, He continued to be faithful in Esther's time, using her obedience to accomplish His bigger plan.

This story reminds us that even when we don't understand what's happening, we can trust that God is good and in control. He had a plan for Esther's life, and He has a plan for ours too! Esther's bravery points us to Jesus, the promised Messiah, who came to save people from a greater danger—sin. Because of Jesus, we can always trust that God is working for our good. ”

## 3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

**SAY** “ Because of sin, we deserve death. But just as the king spared Esther, God provided a way for us to be spared from eternal death. God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. When we trust in Jesus, we can approach God's throne because He has extended His grace to us. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)



LEARN

## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### 4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 17, Session 4” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why doesn't God stop bad stuff from happening if He has a plan, and He is in control?
2. God showed His love for us through Jesus. How does Jesus' death and resurrection remind us that everything will one day be made right?

### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Remind kids that Jim and Jean Leeper served as missionaries in Germany and Turkey. Share how the Leepers were later asked to serve as missionaries to a country now called Bosnia and Herzegovina (Her-tsoh-GOH-vee-nuh).

**SAY** “ When Jim and Jean were asked to serve as missionaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a terrible war had just ended. It was not considered a safe place to be. But Jim and Jean continued to say yes to go where God was leading them.

When they arrived, Jim, Jean, and another couple began working with about 100 new believers in a city called Tuzla. As they began their mission work, the missionaries discovered cities still showing evidence of the war. The missionaries found life challenging, but they didn't let the difficulties stop them from sharing the gospel. Jean said she believed the Lord had been preparing them for this ministry, giving them opportunities to reach out to the Muslim people living in these cities. ”

Pray for missionaries who serve in dangerous areas. Ask God to keep them safe and strengthen their faith in Him, knowing God is in control and has a plan for their good.

### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 25:9 together.

**SAY** “ God used Esther in His plan to help save His people from their enemies. God had a plan to save us from our greatest enemy: sin. Jesus provides the salvation we need! ”

Write the key passage on a dry erase board and use sticky notes to cover one word of the key passage. Instruct the kids to read the key passage aloud, inserting the missing word. Repeat, until all the words are covered.

Lead kids to sing “This Is the Lord (Isaiah 25:9).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “ Dear God, thank You for being in control. Help us trust You at all times, even when we don't understand. Thank You for providing the way for people to be saved. In Jesus' name. Amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





LOVE

THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

## LOVE God by Applying the Story

### 1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Esther 4. Explain that the book of Esther covers the history of the Jewish people in Persia about 100 years after the exile.

Consider pointing out the Tigris River (E12) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Explain that Susa can't be seen on the map but was to the right of the Tigris River. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Esther 4:14-16 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

**SAY** “ Decisions can sometimes be scary, and Esther’s decision was certainly an important one. But as Mordecai reminded Esther, we can trust that our decisions will not change God’s ultimate plan. He does not want His children to worry; He wants us to trust and obey Him.

Esther asked for her people to pray for her as she made her choice. When we feel uncertain about what God wants us to do, we should pray for His guidance and read His Word. We can find comfort in knowing that God is always in control and His plans will succeed! ”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** “ Why was it dangerous for Esther to go before the king? ”

Tell kids that it was dangerous for Esther to go before the king because, in Persia, no one was allowed to approach the king without being summoned. If someone went to the king without an invitation, he or she could be put to death unless the king showed them mercy by holding out his golden scepter. Esther had to trust God and be very brave because she didn't know if the king would listen to her or punish her.

**SAY** “ Esther went to the king on behalf of her people. Who went before God on our behalf? ”

Remind kids that Jesus went before God on our behalf. Like Esther risked her life to save her people, Jesus gave His life to save us from sin. He is our mediator, the one who stands between us and God, making the way for us to be forgiven and have a right relationship with Him. Because of Jesus, we can come to God with confidence, knowing He hears us and loves us.

**SAY** “ How can we trust God’s plans even when we don’t understand them? ”

Encourage kids to know that we can trust God’s plans, even when we don’t understand them, by remembering that He is always in control and loves us. God sees the whole picture, and He promises to take care of His people. We can pray, read the Bible, and look back at times when God has been faithful to help us trust Him, even when things felt uncertain. Remind kids that God showed His plans are for our good when He sent Jesus to die for our sins.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### ☐ OPTION 1: THE BRIDGE TO THE KING

Before the session, create two paper crowns and place each crown at one end of the room. Form kids into two teams. Provide each kid with a piece of cardstock. Line up each team at the end of the room opposite the crowns. Explain that kids will use the papers to create a bridge to their crown.

Tell kids that the first kid will place his paper on the floor and step on it. The next kid will pass his paper to the first kid, who will then place the paper down in front of the one she is standing on. Then she will step on the paper while the other kid steps on the paper she was just standing on. Play continues as kids pass their papers forward, creating a “bridge,” until all kids make it to their crown. The first team to reach their crown wins.

**SAY** “Because of sin, we are separated from God. We cannot reach Him on our own, like Esther’s people couldn’t go to the king without her help. Esther went before the king for her people, and Jesus went before God for us. Jesus is the only way to God. Through Jesus, God had a plan to save people from sin so they can be with God forever.”

##### ☐ OPTION 2: THE WHOLE PICTURE



Provide each kid with a piece of paper and a marker. Tell kids that they are going to draw a picture of something, but they won’t know what they are supposed to be drawing until more and more parts are revealed. Explain that kids must follow what you draw on a dry erase board.

Lead kids to draw a picture of your choosing, such as a cat, house, ice cream cone, etc. Draw one part at a time, trying to slowly add to the picture so kids do not guess what it is right away. As more parts are added, invite kids to guess what they are drawing. Repeat, choosing a new item to draw.

**SAY** “At first, we couldn’t see the whole picture, but as each part of the drawing was added, we began to see more clearly. We won’t always understand God’s plan. Sometimes, God may give us understanding, and other times He doesn’t. But we can trust God no matter what. God always sees the whole picture; He knows everything! And because of Jesus, God’s plans are always for our good.”

#### 2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.