

# 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 before rising again.



#### 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

- "That's Not Right" activity page

#### Session Starter (Option 1)

- inflated balloons, 1 per pair

#### Session Starter (Option 2)

- pool noodles, 2
- painter's tape



### LOVE

#### Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set



### LIVE

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- dry erase board
- dry erase marker

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- variety of objects such as paper towels, cardboard tubes, craft sticks, tape, newspaper, etc.; several per group
- apple

#### Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- "All Scrambled" activity 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
- dry erase board and marker (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)



## 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** “Have you ever had to do something that scared you, even a little? What was it? Were you able to do it?”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “That’s Not Right” activity page.

**SAY** “Today, we will see how a man named Haman wanted to hurt God’s people. But God gave a queen named Esther the courage to save her people.”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: CONTROL IT



Form kids into pairs and provide each pair with an inflated balloon. Challenge pairs to keep the balloon off the ground by hitting it back and forth to one another. When a balloon falls to the ground, the kids are out. Play as time allows or until only one pair of kids remain.

**SAY** “Could you always control where the balloon went or if it would hit the ground? [Allow responses.] This reminds me of how we are not in control of all things like God. Even when it may not seem like it, God is ruling over everything according to His good plans. Today, we will see how God was in control of how His people would be saved from an evil man named Haman. While Haman formed a plan against God’s people, God had a greater plan to save them through a woman named Esther. We’ll see how **ESTHER OBEYED GOD, RISKED HER LIFE, AND SAVED HER PEOPLE.**”

#### OPTION 2: TIME IT RIGHT

Use painter’s tape to create a start line at one end of the room. Choose two kids to be It and give each one a pool noodle. Lead kids who are It to stand in the middle of the room, spread apart from one another. Direct both Its to spin in a circle with their pool noodles. Lead the rest of the kids to line up behind the start line. Then challenge them to go from one end of the room to the other without getting hit by a spinning noodle. Tell kids they need to time it just right to get past the noodles. If they are hit, they are out. Play again as time allows, allowing different kids to be It.

**SAY** “You needed to time your run just right to get past the noodles. Today, we will see how God placed Esther in a position at just the right time to save her people. God’s people were in danger, but God was in control, and He would save them through Esther’s courage and obedience.”

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 in the Old Testament. The book is named after a woman named Esther who was chosen to be queen in Persia. Even though Esther was queen of Persia, she was a Jew, which is a name for God’s people who came from Judah.

In the book of Esther, some of God’s people were living in Susa, the capital city of Persia, while many of God’s people returned to Jerusalem. During this time, a man named Haman plotted to destroy God’s people. 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** “ What is 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.**

God is in control, and His plans will always succeed. He planned to send Jesus, the Messiah, into the world, and His plan came true. 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 faithfully brought His people out of exile, and they began laying the foundation for the temple. While they were building, God used the prophet Zechariah to encourage His people. 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 decree from King Cyrus. The temple was rebuilt so God’s people could worship God. Today, we jump forward many years to Persia, where some of God’s people were living, as we see how God used the obedience of Esther to accomplish His plans. ”



## 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

**Write it out:** As you share the people’s names in the story, write them on a dry erase board.

**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** “ God was with His people in Persia, and He had a plan to save them. God allowed Esther to be chosen as King Ahasuerus' queen. During Esther's time as queen, a man named Haman made an evil plan. What was Haman's plan? Look at Esther 3:5-6. [Ask a volunteer to read Esther 3:5-6 aloud.] Haman hated Mordecai because he would not bow down to Haman. So, Haman formed a plan to destroy all the Jews.

Who helped Esther understand that God had given her the position as queen as an opportunity to save her people? Look at Esther 4:13-14. [Ask a volunteer to read Esther 4:13-14 aloud.] Mordecai encouraged Esther to trust God and plead for her people to the king. Mordecai helped Esther understand that God made Esther a queen to protect His people.

Even when Esther didn't understand God's plans or know what would happen, she bravely went to the king on behalf of her people. She knew this meant he might put her to death if he chose not to raise his royal scepter. What did Esther tell the king? Look at Esther 7:3-6. [Ask a volunteer to read Esther 7:3-6 aloud.] She told the king all about Haman's evil plan. In the end, Haman's evil plan failed, and the Jewish people were saved. **ESTHER OBEYED GOD, RISKED HER LIFE, AND SAVED HER PEOPLE.** God used Esther to protect His people, showing that He is always in control and His plans will never fail. ”

## 3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

**SAY** “ 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. God invites us to repent of our sins, trust in Jesus, and be saved. ”

(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.)

## 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?



## LEARN

### THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

#### 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 had a plan to save His people living in Persia. God had a plan to save us from sin. God deserves all the praise for being in control and providing the way to be saved through Jesus.”

Form kids into groups of three or four and provide them with a piece of paper, a pen, and a Bible. Challenge kids to form a plan for how they will take turns writing down the key passage on their paper. Tell groups that their goal is to be the first to write down the entire key passage, allowing everyone to write down part of it.

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, we praise You for always being in control, even when we don’t understand. Help us obey You, knowing You love us and are working for our good. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

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





## 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 2. Explain that the book of Esther covers the history of the Jewish people in Persia about 100 years after the exile. After the Babylonian exile, some Jews returned to Jerusalem, but some remained in Persia. The Persians had conquered the Babylonians. Tell kids Esther is found in the History division of the Old Testament.

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 5:2 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

**SAY** “ It was dangerous to approach the king without first being summoned. But Esther knew her people’s lives were in danger, and she needed to act. By trusting in God’s plan for her to become queen to help her people, Esther bravely went before the king.

Like Esther, we can trust in God’s plans for our lives. We may not know all God is doing, but we can know God loves us and wants what’s best for us. As we trust God, we obey Him—even when it’s hard. God honors our obedience, and our obedience glorifies God. ”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** “ When have you trusted God during a challenging time? ”

Answers will vary. Discuss how we will all face times when we face challenges or uncertainty, but God is ready and willing to help us trust Him. It may mean we trust Him when we stand up for what is right or choose to believe He will provide what we need.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jer. 17:7-8.)

**SAY** “ How do Esther’s actions for her people point us to Jesus? ”

Lead kids to recognize that God raised up Esther to save His people. Mordecai urged Esther to take action, and she was willing to face death for them. In a greater way, God sent Jesus at just the right time, and Jesus willingly died on the cross to save sinners. One day, He will come back to rule as King forever. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 12:2.)

**SAY** “ God’s plan was greater than Haman’s evil plan. How will God defeat evil and sin once and for all? ”

Explain that through Jesus’ death on the cross, evil and sin has been disarmed—they hold no power over those who trust in Jesus. One day, Jesus will return to defeat evil and sin once and for all. Those who trust in Jesus will be saved and will live with God forever. Those who do not will be separated from God forever. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 2:13-15.)

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





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### OPTION 1: TRUE COURAGE

Invite kids to think about what the word courage means. Prompt kids to share their ideas by raising their hands. Then write their responses on a dry erase board.

Then provide each kid with a Bible. Invite kids to look up and read the following verses: Joshua 1:9; Psalm 112:7; John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 5:6-7. Then invite kids to share how the Bible defines courage. Discuss how courage isn't about not being afraid but about trusting in God, even when we are afraid. Tell kids that the Bible reminds us that God is with us, we can trust Him, Jesus has overcome the world, and we walk by faith not by sight.

**SAY** “ True courage is trusting in God. Esther chose to trust God. **ESTHER OBEYED GOD, RISKED HER LIFE, AND SAVED HER PEOPLE.** Through faith in Jesus, God promises to be with us, helping us trust Him as we walk by faith, and reminding us that Jesus has overcome the world. In Jesus, we have nothing to fear! ”

##### OPTION 2: GOD'S PLANS SUCCEED



Form kids into groups of three or four. Provide groups with a variety of objects such as paper towels, cardboard tubes, craft sticks, tape, and newspaper. Challenge kids to form a plan and use their materials to build a bridge that can hold up an apple. Kids can create a bridge of any design, but the suspension part of the bridge needs to be raised up. Invite kids to share their bridge and then test it to see if it can hold up an apple.

**SAY** “ Did your plan work? Was your bridge able to hold up the apple? Sometimes, our plans will succeed, and other times they won't. But God's plans always succeed. Today, we saw how God planned for Esther to be queen at just the right time so His people could be saved. **Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.** We are invited to trust in God's plan for salvation by placing our faith in Jesus. ”

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

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, praising God for always being in control and making the way for people to be saved. As time allows, lead kids to complete “All Scrambled” on the activity page.