

LARGE GROUP: Story (25 minutes) • Worship (10 minutes)

Engage kids' hearts through a dynamic and interactive Bible story, worship, and prayer experience in a Large Group setting.

Today's Bible Story: Stand Up (Esther) • *Esther*

Today's Bottom Line: You can do what you should even when you don't know what will happen.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go.* Joshua 1:9b (NIRV)

Monthly Virtue: Courage—Being brave enough to do what you should do, even when you're afraid

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Video (Media Package): Countdown (30- or 60-second version)

Video (Media Package): Theme

OPENER

LEADER: "Hello, fun people! We've had a great month here at [your environment's name]. We've faced some of our fears. We've found out how we can still stand tall and do what we should, even when we feel scared or uncertain. That's what courage is all about!"

Video (Media Package): Theme Transition to Virtue

"Courage is being brave enough to do what you should do, even when you're afraid."

Video (Media Package): Virtue Transition to Theme

"The biggest reason we can have courage is that we know we're not standing up to our fears alone! God is with us, and we know that **[Basic Truth] we can trust God no matter what.**"

"Speaking of standing up to our fears, I've got an idea for a game. And I've brought something that we can use to play it."

Pull out the two sets of bucket stilts.

"Does anyone know what these are? (*Pause to let them respond.*) These are called bucket stilts. Any idea what fear these might be associated with? (*Pause to let them respond.*) Yes! Fear of heights."

Put one set of stilts in front of you. If the buckets will support your weight, try to stand on the buckets while holding the cords.

"You see, when you stand on these, you get pretty tall. And that can be a little scary. But today, you'll need to push past any fear of heights to help your team, because we're doing a relay race on these stilts! Raise your hand if you want to play."

Divide the kids into two even teams, unless you only have a very small group of kids, in which case, you may want to race against the clock instead.

Note: Make sure you only pick kids that are raising their hand and “opting in.” If kids don’t want to play, they can cheer for their friends instead.

Have both teams line up behind the starting line and show them the halfway line, too. Put a set of stilts in front of each team.

“When I say, ‘Go,’ the first person will get on the stilts, walk over to this line, then turn around. That part can be tricky! Then they’ll head back to their team. After they cross the starting line again, the next person in line gets the stilts, and so on. The first team to have everyone complete the race, wins!

“Is everyone ready? On your mark, get set, GO!

AUDIO: Upbeat music

Cheer for both teams. If possible, have adults walk next to the kids on the stilts to “spot” them and catch them if they start to fall over. Celebrate the winning team when the race is over.

SLIDE: Theme Loop (to stop music)

“Amazing! I don’t know if any of you have a fear of heights, but if you do, you sure pushed through to help your team. I salute you! Such bravery! Such courage! Now let’s keep the fun going as we worship God together!”

WORSHIP

LEADER: “It was hard to know how to walk on those stilts! Life can be like that. Sometimes it’s hard to know which way to go or which turn to take. But it helps to remember that God is with us wherever we go. God can be trusted! Let’s sing about that truth together.

Video: “Over and Over” / track 8 from Everything to Me

SLIDE: Theme Loop

“Before we keep singing, let’s watch this.

Video (Media Package): Live Loud Video from Get Reel

SLIDE: Theme Loop

“We can have courage because we know that God is with us every step of the way! It’s like we read in our memory verse, Joshua 1:9. Say this with me.”

SLIDE: Memory Verse

LEADER and KIDS: *“Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go.” (Joshua 1:9b, NIV)*

LEADER: “Yes! We can do what we should, no matter what we’re afraid of. We can be brave because God is with us and we’re never alone! Let’s lift our voices and worship God now.”

Video (Media Package): “Brave” Dance Moves Music Video

SLIDE: Theme Loop

“I’m so glad that God is bigger than all of our fears. God is bigger than ANYTHING we will ever face! I love worshipping God with you. You can have a seat.”

BIBLE STORY

SETTING UP THE STORY

LEADER: *(Hold up Bible.)* “As we keep going through God’s Big Story, today we’ve made it to the book of Esther, the 17th book of the Bible!

“Let’s recap how we got to this point.

If you’re using a Bible timeline on your wall, you can reference it here as you recap.

“God made a plan to bless the whole world through Abraham’s family, the Israelites. God rescued the Israelites from being enslaved and led them to a new land. But the people didn’t always choose to follow God. Over and over, people turned away from God and tried to live their own way.

“Things got so bad that God allowed the Israelites to be captured by other nations. But even though the Israelites had to live in a faraway land, some of them still loved and honored God—like a young woman named Esther and her older cousin Mordecai.”

SLIDE: Story Image #1: Esther and Mordecai

ESTHER AS QUEEN

LEADER: “Years before, the Jewish people—the Israelites—had been captured and taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. But then Babylon was conquered and became part of the Persian Empire, with the city of Susa as its capital.

“So Esther grew up in a land that was not her own. And when her parents died, her cousin Mordecai raised her as his own daughter.

“One day, a new king named Xerxes came to power in Persia.

SLIDE: Story Image #2: King Xerxes

Hold up the king’s crown.

"Let me tell you, King Xerxes was a CHARACTER. He threw a crazy, wild party.

Put on the party hat. Blow the kazoo.

"Then he FIRED his own queen for refusing to show up!

Blow the kazoo softly, then release it slowly in a "bah-humbug" response. Take off the party hat.

"When King Xerxes finally calmed down, he realized he didn't have a queen anymore. So he decided to look for a new one. After a year-long search through the entire kingdom, Xerxes chose Esther to be queen!

SLIDE: Story Image #3: Esther as queen

Hold up the queen's crown.

"Mordecai wanted to keep Esther safe, so he told her not to tell anyone that she was from a Jewish family."

SLIDE: Story Image #2: King Xerxes

HAMAN'S EVIL PLAN

LEADER: "We've already seen how King Xerxes didn't bother to think much before he made his decisions. The king decided to promote an official named Haman to take charge of all the other nobles in the kingdom.

SLIDE: Story Image #4: Haman forcing others to bow

"Haman wanted to feel powerful and important. He loved to make all the other officials outside the palace bow low to him.

"But Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman. This made Haman extremely angry! Haman came up with a plan to not only punish Mordecai, but ALL the Jewish people in the country!

SLIDE: Story Image #5: Haman presenting his plan to King Xerxes

"Haman went to King Xerxes. He asked the king to make an order to destroy the Jewish people, because they lived differently and didn't obey the king's laws.

"Haman said . . .

Open the Bible to Esther 3:8-9 (NIRV) and read.

"Certain people are scattered among the nations. They live in all the territories in your kingdom. They keep themselves separate from everyone else. Their practices are different from the practices of all other people. They don't obey your laws. It really isn't good for you to put up with them. If it pleases you, give the order to destroy them. I'll even add 375 tons of silver to the king's officials for the royal treasures.

“Awful, right? And get this. King Xerxes actually went through with Haman’s plan!

Hold up the rolled-up piece of paper.

“He sent a letter all over the kingdom declaring that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, all Jewish people were to be killed.

“When Mordecai and the other Jewish people discovered this horrible news, they dressed in rough cloth and wept bitterly.

Hold up the burlap.

SLIDE: Story Image #6: Mordecai writing to Esther

“Mordecai sent a message to Esther in the palace, telling her what Haman had done.

Hold up the “To Esther” envelope.

“He said that she must approach the king and ask him to save her people.

“Esther was devastated. She sent a response to her cousin . . .

Hold up the “Mordecai” envelope.

“. . . and explained that no one could come before the king unless he sent for them. She could die if she approached the king, unless the king reached out his golden scepter to her.

“Mordecai immediately wrote Esther back.

Hold up the “To Esther” envelope.

“Listen to what he said.

Open the Bible to Esther 4:14 (NIRV) and read.

“What if you don’t say anything at this time? Then help for the Jews will come from another place . . . Who knows? It’s possible that you became queen for a time just like this.”

“Esther knew that Mordecai was right. She sent him one more message.

Hold up the “Mordecai” envelope.

“She asked him to gather the Jewish people together and not eat or drink anything for three days. Esther would do the same; then she would approach the king.”

SLIDE: Story Image #7: Esther about to enter the king’s hall

PLAY BIBLE VIDEO TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS FROM HERE....

Video: Bible Story

SLIDE: Theme Loop

ESTHER'S BRAVE PLAN

LEADER: "Esther entered the king's hall. And to her great relief, the king reached out his golden scepter.

SLIDE: Story Image #8: King holding out scepter

Hold up the golden scepter.

"Then the king spoke. He asked what Esther wanted. But instead of making her request right away, Esther asked the king to attend a special banquet, along with Haman.

SLIDE: Story Image #9: King Xerxes, Esther and Haman at the banquet

Hold up the white tablecloth and lay it on the table with a flourish. Set out the vase with the fake flower.

"At the banquet, King Xerxes told Esther once more that he would give her anything, up to half of his kingdom! But instead of telling him what she wanted, Esther invited the king and Haman to come to ANOTHER feast the next day. Then she would answer his question.

Clear off the tablecloth and flower.

"The next night, King Xerxes and Haman joined Esther at a second festive meal.

Set out the tablecloth and flower again.

"At this second feast, the king again asked Esther what she wanted. Esther took a deep breath and put it all on the line. She said . . .

Open the Bible to Esther 7:3-4 (NIRV) and read.

"Your Majesty, I hope you will be pleased to let me live. That's what I want. Please spare my people. That's my appeal to you. My people and I have been sold to be destroyed. We've been sold to be killed and wiped out.

"The king asked who had done such a thing. When Esther told him it was Haman, Xerxes was so angry that he had Haman put to death. The king also created a new order that would allow the Jewish people to be saved!"

Hold up the rolled-up piece of paper.

SLIDE: Story Image #10: Crowd of Jewish people celebrating

Put the props away and move to the front of the stage as you wrap up.

SLIDE: Theme Loop

WRAPPING UP THE STORY

LEADER: “Esther must have been so scared to go to the king and ask him to save her people. She knew it was a big risk and that she was putting her life on the line. She truly had no idea what would happen next!

“But she also knew that she HAD to speak up. God had put her in her position as queen for that very moment, so that she could save the Jewish people from Haman’s plan.

“With God’s help, you can be courageous like Esther. You can be brave, even if you don’t know what will happen next.

“That’s what we need to remember today.

SLIDE: Bottom Line

[Bottom Line] “You can do what you should even when you don’t know what will happen.

LEADER: “If you’ve heard this story before, it might not seem so scary, because you knew Esther would be okay and the Jewish people would be saved. But think about it what it actually felt like for Esther when she went to speak to the king.

SLIDE: God’s Big Story Timeline

SLIDE: Week 4 Timeline Image

If you’re making a timeline of printed images on your wall, take this moment to place today’s timeline image on the clothesline.

“She didn’t know how things were going to go. The king could have refused to see her. He could have accused her of lying. She could have been in real danger, and she didn’t have any idea what would actually happen!

“Esther trusted God and took a big step to try to save her people. She believed that God had made her queen for that very reason, just like Mordecai had said.

“It’s important for us to trust God and do what’s right, even when we feel scared or uncertain.

“Let’s pray and ask God to help us be brave.”

SLIDE: Theme Loop

PRAY

LEADER: “Dear God, it’s so amazing to hear Esther’s story and think about how You protected her and all of her people! You gave her the courage to approach the king and speak up so she could put a stop to Haman’s plan. This week, please help each of us trust You and be brave enough to do what we SHOULD, even when we don’t know what will happen. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”