

GOD PROTECTS HIS PEOPLE

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

HELP TRUST REFUGE TROUBLE DIFFICULT TIMES EVER-PRESENT

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Esther 1:1 – 4:17

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students trust God, even in difficult times

MEMORY VERSE

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

The power of our God is incomparable and is what helps, protects and provides us with the courage to follow him. While it is true that God has not called us to be “superheroes,” surely the moment will come when, because of Christ, we have to do something dangerous. However, most Christians have ordinary lives. That does not mean that we do not have to face the danger of sin and the temptations that the world offers.

Elementary children are beginning to discover a world hitherto unknown to them. Television, friends and the media put within their reach a great variety of temptations that want to trap them in sin. It is important that through this session, our children learn to trust God when they feel tempted or in trouble. Queen Esther’s valuable example will help them know that God is willing to help them face the dangers if they humbly ask.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Esther 1:1-4:17. The series of strange events that led Esther to occupy the throne as queen of the provinces of Persia may seem like a mere coincidence. But Mordecai, Esther’s uncle, did not believe that. He was sure that Esther had come to that

position for a particular reason. The Scripture does not give us many details about this story, such as: why Mordecai refused to let Esther talk about her origins, nor do we know why Mordecai allowed his niece to marry a Gentile, as was forbidden by Hebrew laws.

Esther was chosen as a candidate to be the king's wife and had to undergo a beauty regime for twelve months. Finally, she appeared before him and he chose her as queen, instead of Vashti. According to tradition, this process took about four years. The coming events were a combination of evil, envy and hatred of Haman towards the Jews. However, God's faithfulness was in force and he chose to use Esther to protect his people.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Crowns for the king

For this activity you will need: a wide strip (15 cm or more) of construction or thick paper for each child, scissors, glue, tape, colored pencils or markers, and colored pieces of paper. Distribute the materials and place a strip of paper around the head of each child and mark the place where the strip must match so that the crown is properly fitted. Help them join the ends of their crowns with the tape. Give them time to write their name on the crown and decorate it to their liking. As you work, ask them: "Who uses crowns? (Kings and queens.) What do kings and queens do?" (They govern a country, they help people and they make sure everything works well.)

Explain: "Kings and queens serve their people. Their job is to guarantee the safety of the people, provide work sources and administer the resources of the community. At present, many countries no longer have kings and queens, but presidents. However, in biblical times it was kings and queens who ruled. Today we will study about a queen who trusted in God to help her people.

Keep the crowns to use again in the next session.

TEACH THE LESSON

King Xerxes, who ruled Persia and its provinces, decided to hold a large banquet and invite all the important officials of the kingdom. Queen Vashti also organized a party for her friends. The king sent a messenger to tell Queen Vashti, "Come to my party, because I want everyone to see how beautiful you are." She replied, "I'm not coming."

When the queen refused to go, the king became very angry, so he went to his counselors and asked them, "What should I do with the queen? She did not want to obey me and refused to come to my banquet!" "Do not let Vashti remain the queen; it is better to look for another woman to occupy the throne," they replied. The king smiled, thought it was an excellent idea, and began the search to find the future queen.

Mordecai was a Jew who lived in Persia. He had a beautiful niece named Esther. One day the servants of the king came to Mordecai's house and saw Esther. "She is very beautiful!" they exclaimed. "We'll take her to the palace." Esther had no other choice; she had to obey the king's order. But before leaving the house, Mordecai told her, "Do not tell anyone that you're Jewish, and do not worry about anything. I'll take care of it." Esther was taken to the royal palace along with other young and beautiful women. For twelve months, the servants of the king helped them to become even more beautiful. She was well received in the palace; everyone loved her and cared for her a lot. Mordecai did not forget Esther, and every day he went to the palace gardens to ask about his niece. Finally the day came when Esther would meet the king. She dressed in beautiful clothes and did everything the king's servants told her to do.

When the king saw her for the first time, he was delighted with her beauty and chose her as queen. Then, he organized a big banquet in her honor so that everyone would know that she was his new wife. Like every day, Mordecai went to the palace to hear news of his niece. However, that day was different because he heard that two soldiers were planning to kill the king. So he immediately went to see his niece and told her what he had heard. Esther told her husband about the plan, and the plans of the soldiers were revealed. This fact was written in the book of the chronicles of the king.

In the kingdom there was also a mean officer named Haman. However, he won the approval of the king, who gave him a very important position. All the people knelt and worshiped Haman, except one person ... Mordecai. "Why do not you obey the king's command?" the officers asked Mordecai. But he still did not kneel before Haman.

Soon this news reached the ears of Haman, who was very angry and said, "As punishment I will kill Mordecai and all the Jews." Quickly, Haman went before the king and said, "There is a group of people who live in your kingdom but do not respect you and do not obey your laws. Please, take this money and use it to hire men to kill those people." "Save your money," the king said. "Here is this ring that will make official what you and I have spoken of; do what you want with those people." Haman wrote a new law that said: "On the 13th of the 12th month, all people must kill all the Jews they find and seize their property." Then he sealed

the law with the king's ring and sent it to all the provinces.

When Mordecai heard the news, he became very sad, covered his head with ashes, and dressed in old clothes in pain. One day, Esther's servant said to her, "Your uncle Mordecai is outside and wants to see you. He's crying and he's dressed in bad clothes. It seems he's very sad." Esther loved her uncle very much, so she asked the servant to take him clean and comfortable clothes to change. The servant returned immediately with the clothes because Mordecai had not wanted to accept them. His sadness was very great and all he wanted was for the queen to know what was happening.

Mordecai asked the servant to inform his niece about the bad news. "Our people will be exterminated," said Mordecai. "I'm dressed in these clothes because of the sadness I feel." Esther learned what Haman had planned. Her uncle asked her to talk to the king and ask him for help. But Esther said, "I cannot go. The king has not asked to see me for thirty days. If I go without an invitation, he will kill me."

"Do not think that you will escape in the king's house more than any other Jew. Because if you keep quiet at this time, deliverance will come from somewhere else for the Jews; but you and your father's house will perish. And, who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this," answered Mordecai.

When Esther heard these words, she thought of doing something to help. She asked Mordecai and the other Jews who lived in the city to pray for her, not to eat anything for three days, but to just pray. She decided to obey God to save her people and cried out to ask for the help of the Lord. Mordecai, Esther and the Jewish people prayed and fasted for three days. What would happen to them? Could someone stop Haman's terrible plan? Do not miss the end of this exciting story in our next session.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Trust in God

Prepare in advance the materials suggested in Student Activity Sheet #256-A and #256-B. Make sure there is enough for all the children. You will need: paper plates and yarn or wire for each student, colors, markers, crayons, scissors and glue. During the session, help the children to do the craft. As they work, ask: "What characters trusted God in today's story?" (Esther and Mordecai.) Say: "God helped Esther to be brave and do the right thing to help her people. We must also trust God to help us be brave, and we must always do the right thing, no matter how difficult the situation is."

Encourage the children to take their completed work home to share the lesson with their families and friends. Tell them: "The next time you are faced with a difficult situation, look at this figure and remember that you can trust God and ask him to help you be brave."

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Ask your students to sit facing forward and tell them to close their eyes. Write the memory verse on the board. Then the children will be able to open their eyes and read it. Ask them to close their eyes again while you erase some of the words. Then they should open their eyes and say the whole verse. Repeat the exercise until all the words are erased and they can say the full biblical passage from memory.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Form a prayer circle to thank God. Say: "God helps us to be brave and to trust in his power when we face a problem." Give the children opportunity to tell their prayer requests.

Encourage

Encourage the children to trust in God during the week. Tell them to talk to their family about what they learned in today's session.

Invite

Tell the group that in the next session they will study the last lesson of this unit, which will deal with the rest of the story of Esther

and the power of God, so it will be very important for everyone to attend. They can also invite friends to attend.