

GOD'S BIG PLAN

Esther

Esther 1-8

Supporting Scriptures: Esther 9-10, John 14:1-6

Lesson Goals: To see that God has a big plan.
To see that God isn't surprised by what man does.
To see God as approachable.

Scripture Memory Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding.
Proverbs 3:5 (NIRV)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Tell it as a STORY, not as "He said. . . She said" or read. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let's review what we have learned so far about God's Big Plan. (Review the previous stories, encouraging more and more students to share.)

We have learned that God's people do not always follow God's rules. The Israelites, Abraham's descendants, had moved into the place God promised them. They disobeyed Him by worshipping other gods. They didn't trust and honor the God who had done so much for them. And although God blesses those who love Him and obey Him, He must punish disobedience. So the people who had been given a special place were removed from that wonderful place and carried off as captives. There were some, like Daniel, who even in captivity were faithful to God. Daniel did what was right and he pleased God.

When captivity ended, some of the captives returned home to begin rebuilding. Others stayed in the lands they had lived in or been born in and grown up in. Many of these were well liked by the people of the land, but God's people, the Israelites, were sometimes hated. Some people hated the people of God so much that they even tried to get rid of them. Let's see what happened.

READ: Esther 1:1-5 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)

King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes) decided to show off a little. But during the week long party, his queen refused to come when he asked for her. Because she would not listen to her husband, she was banned from the palace. No more queen! Well, the king needed a new queen. One of his helpers had an idea. "Let's go all over kingdom and bring in all of the beautiful young girls. Then you choose the one you like best." "I like that idea," said the king. And so it happened. Every beautiful young girl in all 127 provinces was brought to the king's palace.

Now, in the capital city, there lived a man named Mordecai. Mordecai's great-grandfather was one of the captives taken from the promised land many years before. Mordecai was one of those who had grown up in this land of captivity and he had chosen to stay. Mordecai cared for his cousin, Esther. She didn't have a mom or dad, but Mordecai treated her like she was his own. Esther was a beautiful girl and in the days when the king was looking for a new queen, she was carried off to the palace. She quickly became the favorite. The man in charge liked her so much that he gave her the best room. And Mordecai was there everyday to find out how she was doing. Esther did well, but she didn't tell anyone that she was one of God's chosen people, an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin. Mordecai had told her to keep it a secret.

The king began meeting all of the girls. Then came Esther's turn. The king loved Esther more than any other. She became his favorite and he gave her a crown and made her queen. Then King Ahasuerus threw a party to celebrate the new queen! But on

that special day, two of the king's helpers were planning to kill him. Mordecai found overheard the plan, warned the king, and saved the king's life. All that Mordecai did was written in a special book the king kept.

Some time after that, King Ahasuerus promoted a man named Haman and commanded that everyone bow down to him. But Mordecai wouldn't do it. Mordecai loved God and remembered God's command to worship and adore Him and no one else. Haman was furious! So he thought and thought until he had a plan. Haman wanted to get rid of Mordecai. But Haman wasn't satisfied just to be rid of Mordecai. Haman had discovered that Mordecai was an Israelite, or "Jew," and that because of his belief in God he wouldn't bow down to another. So Haman planned to get rid of all the Jews! Haman ran to the king and reported, "There are people all over your kingdom who do things differently than we do. They don't obey you and you really shouldn't put up with them. Give the word and we'll destroy them. I'll even give the king some of my own money to help." But what Haman and the king didn't realize was that the queen was also one of these "Jews"!

When the plan was announced, Mordecai and all of the Jews were very upset and sad. They cried a lot and wouldn't eat. Then Mordecai asked his cousin Esther, the queen, to go talk to the king. "I can't do that," she said. There is a rule around here that everyone knows about. If you go to the king, and he hasn't asked for you, you get killed. The only way to be saved is if the king holds out his gold cane. The king hasn't asked to see me for a month." Mordecai reminded Esther, "Do you think you will be safe just because you live in the palace. If you don't do what you can, God will save us somehow, but your family will not be saved. Maybe God made you queen for a time just like this, to save people!" So Esther said, "Talk to all of the Jews in the whole city. For three days, pray, day and night. I will go to the king, even if it is against the rules. And if I die, I die."

After the three days of praying to God, Esther got dressed up and went to see the king. There she stood, waiting. And then the king saw her. Would he send her away as he had the other queen or would he reach out the gold cane? The seconds she waited must have seemed like minutes and hours. And then, God answered their prayers. King Ahasuerus invited the queen in! "What is it you want, my queen. Ask me and I'll give it to you." The queen invited Haman and the king to dinner. At dinner, she invited them back the next day. Meanwhile, Haman had had enough of Mordecai. He built gallows in his backyard to hang Mordecai! But, when they dined with Esther the second day, the king asked Esther again, "What is it you want, my queen. Ask me and I'll give it to you." Esther responded, "Let me live, my king, and all of my people. Someone is planning to destroy us. Let us live, that's what I want." "Who's planning this?" The king waited for Esther's answer. "He's our enemy. It's the evil Haman!" Haman began to shake with fear and beg for his life. But his punishment was the punishment he had planned for Mordecai. The king saved the life of Esther, his queen, and of her people. He even gave Mordecai Haman's place of honor.

Review:

Let's review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

Have you ever thought about why you live where you do or go to the school you attend? Is it such a bad thing to move to another school, another city? Does it all happen by accident?

Esther was taken from the home she shared with her cousin. In a year's time, she became queen in the palace of King Ahasuerus. God put her there. God wasn't surprised by Haman's evil plan. God's plan included having Esther in just the right place, at just the right time. God has you exactly where He wants you. Will you obey him the way Esther did? The safety, and eternity, of someone else depends on what you do. Will you help someone know about God today?

Have you ever thought about needing permission to visit a king? Esther could have lost her life for approaching the king without permission. But her life depended on it. Have you ever come to God before? God is more important than King Ahasuerus was, but we don't have to be afraid to approach Him. Our life depends on it. We are born sinful and very disobedient. But God can be approached by believing in His one and only Son. Jesus is the Way to God. Will you come to Him today? You don't need to be afraid. He will accept you and save you from the sin and disobedience you cannot seem to get away from. He loves you and wants you to come to Him.

Planning for Next Week Lesson 25 • Let's Rebuild Ezra and Nehemiah

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: “God is So Good,” including the verse “God answers prayer. . .”

SHARE: Once there was a king. This king needed a queen. Ladies were brought from everywhere. There was one lady that was brought to the palace. She was beautiful and she loved God. Her name was Esther. The king loved Esther more than any of the other ladies. She became his favorite and he gave her a crown and made her queen.

But, there was a bad man in the kingdom. He didn't like people who loved God. His name was Haman. Haman thought and thought until he had a plan. Haman wanted to get rid of all the people who loved God. So, Haman ran to the king. He said, “There are people all over your kingdom who don't do things the way we do.” Haman talked the king into getting rid of all the people who loved God.

But Queen Esther loved God. When the plan was announced, she asked all of the people who loved God to pray for her. She needed to go see the king but she didn't have permission. Not just anyone could go see the king, not even the queen. It was a rule. So, for three days and three nights they prayed. After the three days of praying to God, Esther got dressed up and went to see the king. There she stood, waiting. And then the king saw her. Would he send her away or would he invite her in? The seconds she waited must have seemed like minutes and hours. And then, God answered their prayers. King Ahasuerus invited the queen in!

What is it you want, my queen. Ask me and I'll give it to you.” Esther said, “Let me live, my king, and all of my people. Someone is planning to get rid of us. Let us live, that's what I want.” “Who's planning this?” The king waited for Esther's answer. “He's our enemy. It's the evil Haman!” Haman began to shake with fear and beg for his life. But the king punished the evil Haman and saved the life of Queen Esther and all of the other people who loved God.

PRAY: Thank you, God, for loving me and protecting me.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Write each word of the memory verse on separate cards. Hide each card around your study area. Encourage your students to find and bring in all of the cards the way the king brought in all of the beautiful ladies from his kingdom. Put the verse in order and practice it many times.
- Make masks of King Ahasuerus, Queen Esther and Haman. Reenact the story.
- Play “Hangman Haman.” Use words, phrases and names from the story.
- Make crowns and scepters to represent King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther.
- Talk about Purim, the Jewish Holiday that celebrates God’s deliverance of the Persian Jews. Celebrate by reading or acting out the story of Esther. Use noisemakers to “drown out” the voice of Haman.
- Make Purim treats like Hamantaschen (Haman’s Hat) and Biscochos. Recipes can be found on the internet.