

*Get Ready!***From Orphan to Queen**

By: Jennifer Wetzel

**Text**

Esther 2:1-8:17

Key Quest Verse

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Bible Background

The story of Esther takes place between between the return of the first group of Jewish exiles from Babylon, 538 BC, and the second group, which was led by Ezra in 458 BC. Relatively few Jews, less than 50,000, chose to return to their homeland. A majority of the captive Jews had been born in Babylon and had established themselves there. Esther and Mordecai were among the majority who chose to stay with their captors in the Persian Empire. If all Jews had returned to Jerusalem, then this book might not have been written.

At this point in history, King Xerxes was ruling the Persian Empire. Extremely handsome and a great builder, he was a cruel king. For instance, when Vashti refuses to present herself to the king and male guests, the king became a laughingstock. To reclaim his honor and to defend himself, he had the queen deposed. Despite the cruelty of his action, this event paved the way for Esther to become queen. She used her beauty and position to gain the king’s favor and approach him with requests. In light of the king’s treatment of Vashti, Queen Esther’s assertive actions were courageous.

Esther rose to a place of prominence at the right time. Though she concealed her heritage, having a Jew in the palace at the same time as Haman allowed the Jews to be spared annihilation. This seeming coincidence shows God working throughout history. Though the book of Esther does not mention God, it clearly expresses that God is the power behind the actions. Each event has a purpose that leads to another event. It shows us how God works in everyone’s life. He has a plan and purpose for each of us, just as he placed Esther in the right place at the right time.

Get Ready!

Lesson Quest

What I want my students to:

Know: God has a plan for everyone's life

Feel: Security in God's purpose for them

Do: Demonstrate responsibility in working towards God's plan for their lives

Leader's Devotion

Coincidences. The book of Esther appears to be filled with coincidences. The *Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language* defines a coincidence as “a striking occurrence of two or more events at one time, apparently by mere chance.” When we stop to examine the word “coincidence”, we see that it is not an appropriate description for the story of Esther. Was it mere chance that caused the restless King Xerxes to read through the history of his reign and honor Mordecai just as Haman plotted the downfall of Mordecai? Was it mere chance that an orphan girl was placed in a position of prominence just when her people need deliverance? The events in the story of Esther are more than mere chance or coincidence. In this book, we see God's hand moving in all aspects of the story. His purpose for each person's life was fulfilled at just the precise moment He needed them. Though there is no mention of God in the book of Esther, it clearly expresses His power behind events.

In today's society, we hear many people talking about the coincidences that occur in their lives. Is it just mere chance or dumb luck that our lives take a certain direction? No, there is a greater force moving in our lives. God has a plan and purpose for each of us. He guided Esther's life, causing an orphan girl to rise to queen and save her people. Mordecai expressed to her, “And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” And God will work in our lives, directing us towards His purpose for our lives. Perhaps He will place us in specific situations, though at the time we may not know why. Today, let's give thanks that our lives are not ruled by mere chance or coincidence. Doesn't it feel secure to know that your life is called to a greater good and noble purpose? Let's thank God for working in our lives.

Get Set!

Option A



A Sticky Situation

Materials: A sheet of colored dot stickers

Procedure: Prior to class, choose one color of sticker, such as green. Remove all of that color of sticker except one. Thus, you should have multiple stickers of one color and only one sticker of a specific color. When students are arriving, select one student to be your secret volunteer. Explain to them that no matter what happens in class, they must befriend the person that you befriend. When students arrive, let each child take a sticker and place it on their shirt. **“I have been so proud of you guys. To show you how much I like you, I brought stickers in for each of you. Everyone can take one sticker and put it on your shirt to show that you are good students.”** To demonstrate for the students, peel one sticker from the sheet (from one of the colors that has multiple copies) and place it on your shirt. Then, pass the stickers to the students for them to do the same and make sure that someone gets the colored sticker of which there is only one. **“You guys did such a nice job of choosing your stickers. I see that many of you chose your favorite color. Let’s see, who got the (name the odd color) sticker? Since there was only one of that color, let’s have you step outside the classroom for a moment.”** When the student leaves, explain to the remaining students that you do not like people who like that color. Everyone else is better than that person. Convince the students that one that student returns to the classroom, they should treat him or her like an outcast. For instance, they shouldn’t sit next to him or her, talk to him or her, or can throw paper wads at that person. This activity seems callous when you do it convincingly, but it drives home the concept of discrimination, which is something Jews were facing during Esther’s time, to the students. Call the “outcast” student back into the classroom and allow the other students to make an outcast of them. Make sure your secret volunteer tries to help them. Then, tell the students to cease their activity and ask the person what it felt like to be treated in that way. “Today, we discriminated against our friend. Why? Because she had a green dot instead of a blue dot? You allowed an arbitrary factor to separate you from your friend. What if I had selected the red dots to be outcasts? How would you have felt? Many times, people are persecuted for factors beyond their control. In fact, Jews have been persecuted throughout history for their religion. In today’s Bible story, they are almost killed because of their religion. Do you think that is fair? If your friend was Jewish, would you want them killed for something like what they believe? No! Let’s find out why someone would want to persecute the Jews and kill them. In our activity, our persecuted friend had someone who stuck up for them, no matter how difficult it was. In the Bible story, we’ll find out about the Jews’ friend, a brave woman who saves her people from death.”

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!

Option B

Queen (or King) For a Day (adapted from http://nadadventist.org/cm/SS/helps/K0605_99.txt)

Materials: Toy crown

Procedures: Have students sit in a circle. Explain the activity to them. Each child will have a chance to wear the crown and be “king” or “queen.” The first child will wear the crown and say what they would do if they were king or queen for the day. Then, they will choose someone to pass the crown to and that student will do the same. The activity will continue until everyone has the opportunity to say what they would do if they were king or queen for the day. Encourage students to think of answers different from the people before them.

“Isn’t it fun to think of what we would do if we were king or queen for the day? I know of some things that I would like to do! When we are in charge, we feel like we have the power to do great things and change situations we don’t like. If you were king or queen, wouldn’t you go out of your way to help your friends? Would you make things better for them? Most of us would like to do that. In today’s Bible story, one orphan girl did get a chance to become queen. She wasn’t just queen for a day! When she became queen, she faced a difficult situation and helped her friends. This queen saved the lives of the Jewish people. Let’s read our Bible story to read more about the orphan girl who became a queen.”

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!**Bible Story**

Advanced Preparation: Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles.

Have the students divide into groups of two to three people. Distribute a Bible to each group. Then, assign each group a different passage that recounts Esther's story. The passages can be divided as Esther 2:1-18 (Esther's rise from orphan girl to queen of Persia), Esther 2:19-23 (Mordecai saves King Xerxes life), Esther 3:1-15 (Haman's plot to save the Jews), Esther 4:1-17 (Mordecai persuades Esther to help), Esther 5:1-8 (Esther approaches the king), Esther 5:9-14 (Haman's rage against Mordecai grows), Esther 6:1-14 (King Xerxes honors Mordecai), Esther 7:1-10 (Esther saves the Jews), and Esther 8:1-17 (King Xerxes issues an edict to save the Jews).

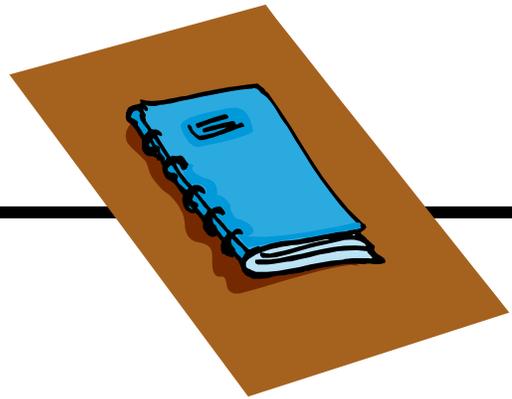
Have each group read through their section on the story of Esther. Ask them to come up with a way for retelling the story to the remainder of the class. For example, they can tell the story, act out the story, sing the story in a song, or any manner that they think the class will learn the lesson. Give each group time to review their story and practice their teaching. Then, have each group present their story to the remainder of the class. Then, summarize the story of Esther for the students.

Go!

Daily Diaries

CREATIVE WRITING

Materials: Paper, writing utensils, stapler



Quest Connection

In the story of Esther, we see God as the force behind each character. Though some of the events seem coincidental, they work together to carry out God’s plan to save His people. In this activity, students will examine a character’s actions to determine how God used their life to further His plan for His people. **We’ve been learning about the story of Esther. Esther was an orphan girl who became a queen and saved her people. Her actions led up to the king’s edict to save the Jewish people. And, Mordecai said to her, “And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” God was using Esther’s life to work with His plan. As we read the story of Esther, we see other moments of God working in people’s lives to further His plan. For instance, King Xerxes not being able to sleep led to Mordecai being honored. God put motions into action. Today, we’re each going to study a character to see how God used their lives in the saving of the Jewish people.** Have each student pick a character from the Bible text. Encourage students to choose different characters so that all are represented. Then, distribute the paper to the students. Explain that they will be writing diary entries for their characters. Using their knowledge of the character’s words and actions from the Bible story, they are to write what might have been that character’s daily diary. They should include that character’s feelings, reactions, and emotions. In the diary, they should also include how that character felt about God and point out how God was working in their life. For instance, their character might ponder if God had placed them in that situation.

Close

Have the students share their diary entries with the class or in small groups. Ask a student to close with prayer.

Go!**Timelines****CREATIVE WRITING**

Materials: Butcher paper, markers

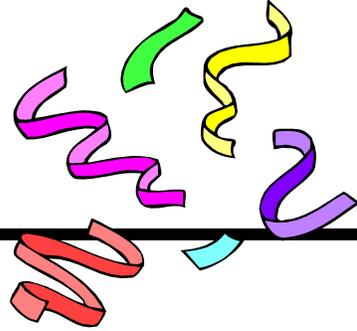
Quest Connection

Students are learning that God has a plan for each person's life. In addition, His works are evident in each person's life. In this activity, students will identify moments in their life when God was working.

Procedure: Prior to this class session, ask students to talk with their parent about important events that have occurred in their lives. Ask them to identify ten events when God was working in their life. For instance, if they have been baptized, then God has forgiven them. Or, maybe they missed an accident by a few seconds or moments. Students should look for situations such as these, when God is protecting them, guiding them in a certain direction, etc. In class, give each student a long piece of butcher paper. Demonstrate to them how to construct a timeline. Using the chalkboard, mark out significant events in your life to show the students how to compile a timeline. Then, give students time to draw the timeline of events when God was working in their lives. Have them illustrate each event. When students are done, ask them to share their timelines with the class and explain at least one of the events to the other students.

Close

Close with prayer. **“Dear Lord, thank you for working in our lives. We know that you have a plan for us and we will work to carry out that plan. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”**

Go!**Purim Festivities****ART/CRAFT**

Materials: Empty aluminum cans, dried beans or small pebbles, masking tape, construction paper, markers

Quest Connection

Procedure: Prior to class, decorate the classroom with streamers, balloons, and other items to give it a festive air. When students arrive, explain that they will be celebrating Purim today. Read Esther 9:18-32 to the students. This scripture explains why Purim is celebrated among the Jews. After reading this scripture, help students research how Jews celebrate Purim. This research can be conducted by using the Internet and accessing Biblical Holidays at http://biblicaltholidays.com/jewish_customs.htm. Or, print off the material prior to class and explain Purim customs to the students. One custom of the Jews during Purim is the construction of “groggers”, or noisemakers. On Purim, adults read the Megillah, or scroll in which the story of Esther is recorded. Each time the name of Haman is mentioned, everyone twirls their groggers, stamps their feet, and boos to block out the name of Haman. When Mordecai is mentioned, everyone cheers. Today, students will review the story of Esther using groggers. Give each child an empty aluminum can. Have them place dried beans in the can, though not too many or the can will not make noise. Then, use the masking tape to cover up the opening of the can. Let the students decorate their “groggers” using the construction paper and markers. When students are done constructing their groggers, reread the story of Esther to them. Have them drown out the sound of Haman’s name and cheer whenever Mordecai and Esther are mentioned.

Close

Close with prayer. **“Heavenly Father, thank you for protecting your people. You sent Esther and Mordecai to use their lives to serve your purpose. Help us to know that you are protecting and using our lives as well. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”**

Go!



The Name Game

GAME (adapted from <http://www.rotation.org>)

Materials: Index cards, markers, masking tape

Quest Connection

As students have been learning about the life of Esther, they learn that God uses our lives to His purposes, such as protecting His people. This activity allows them to review what they have learned throughout the lesson.

Procedure: Prior to class, print each character’s name on an index card. If you have a large number of students in your class, you can use character’s names more than once. Include both prominent and lesser-known characters such as Esther, King Xerxes, Mordecai, Haman, Zeresh, Bigthana, etc.

When students arrive, tape an index card with a name on the back of every student. Using only “yes” or “no” questions, students must determine which character’s name is on their back. Allow the students to mingle, asking each other questions until they have discovered which character they are. Some example questions that the students can ask include:

Am I the wife of King Xerxes?

Did I build a gallows to hang Mordecai?

Did I grow up as an orphan?

Was I tricked into signing an edict to kill the Jews?

Did spies find out that I am a Jew?

Close

Ask each child to share the name of their character and explain that character’s actions to the class. Then, ask the student with Esther’s name to close in prayer.

Go!**The King's Message****OBJECT LESSON**

Materials: Parchment paper, pens, sealing wax, seal or signet ring, kitchen lighter or matches

Quest Connection

Students have learned that God has a plan for every person's life. In this activity, they will have a chance to learn the key quest verse to better understand that God directs our lives.

Procedure: Prior to class, write the key quest verse on the chalkboard as a reference for the students. When students arrive, review with them how King Xerxes sent messages in the story. Read Esther 8:7-10 to the students. **“When King Xerxes wanted to send a message to his subjects, it was written on scrolls. Then, it was sealed with the king's signet ring to make it official. Once the decree was sealed with the king's ring, it could not be revoked. When King Xerxes gave Mordecai and Queen Esther his ring, he gave them permission to write in His name. In this way, they were able to send out an edict for the Jewish people to protect themselves and the Jewish people were saved. God has given us His seal. When we become Christians, we have God's permission to work in His name. We need to send out loving messages to people so that they will know that they can be saved to. Today, we're going to send out messages of love to our church.”** Pass out the parchment paper, pens, and ink. Have students write the key quest verse and reference on the parchment paper. When they are done, have them fold it in three. With a teacher's assistance, they should place sealing wax on the paper and place the stamp in it to seal it. Encourage students to make more than one message of the key quest verse. Then, allow the students time to deliver the messages to other church members. As students give them the messages, they should explain to the person what they are studying in Sunday School class.

Close

Have the entire class repeat the key quest verse together. Then, close with prayer. **“Heavenly Father, help us to remember that you have a plan for our lives. Help us work towards carrying out your work in our lives. Let us be responsible Christians that promote your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.”**

Go!



Purim Tradition

FOOD

Materials: Ingredients from recipe listed in resource pages, gift bags, ribbon, key quest verse printed on slips of paper, hole punch

Quest Connection

The story of Esther explains the origin behind the Jewish holiday Purim. In this activity, students will have an opportunity to celebrate the rescue of the Jews by Queen Esther. In addition, they will be able to explain to others about the story of Esther.

Procedure: Prior to class, prepare the cookie dough according to the recipe below. This dough must be made ahead of time, so prepare the recipe through step four. Read Esther 9:18-32 to the students. This scripture explains why Purim is celebrated among the Jews. After reading this scripture, help students research how Jews celebrate Purim. This research can be conducted by accessing Biblical Holidays at http://biblicaltholidays.com/jewish_customs.htm. Or, print off the material prior to class and explain Purim customs to the students. One main Purim tradition is sending foods to friends. Typically, the Jews make a cookie called Hamantaschens. These triangle-shaped cookies supposedly look like the hat the Haman wore and allow Jews to symbolically destroy Haman by eating! In today's class, students will be able to experience a traditional Jewish food and the custom of sharing it with others. In class, have students use the recipe listed below to make Haman's cookies. While the cookies are baking, students can discuss other traditions of Purim that they learned in their research. After the cookies are cooled, have students bag up little gift bags of cookies. When students tie them shut with a ribbon, they should attach a copy of the key quest verse to the ribbon. Then, students can distribute the cookies to church members, explaining what they have learned in their lessons about Esther.

Close

Close with prayer. **“Heavenly Father, thank you for your protection as you watch over your children. Help us to live our lives for your purpose. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”**

Hamantaschen Cookies
(recipe provided by www.rotation.org)

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup sugar
2 ½ teaspoons double-acting baking powder
2 eggs, beaten
4 tablespoons orange juice
1 cup margarine

Sift or mix well the three dry ingredients.

Mix eggs, margarine and juice.

Add flour mix to egg mixture. If too sticky, add a little more flour and cover.

Refrigerate for a few hours or overnight.

Roll out dough to 1/8 inch thickness. Cut with a 2 ½ inch round cookie cutter.

Put ½ tsp. filling (jam or chocolate chips) in center of circle.

Shape into triangles by bringing two sides up to the center and pinching them and then bringing up third side and pinching it. Pinch dough well so the pastry will not open during baking.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake on greased cookie sheet for 10-12 minutes, until edges are golden brown. Cool on rack. Yield is 4 dozen pastries.



From Orphan Girl to Queen

Directions: Find the words listed below and circle them.

Use the leftover letters to discover the hidden message.

F O R L A E S I H K M N O W T
 E H E P L A N T M B T I S I H
 A S V E J F O O I O C Y R R Y
 O U T E D L R G E C I T T U L
 A R W H C D T E S T D I E H P
 E S L K E H O R D P E L U L A
 N S C C A R T O P R O A Q S P
 E A A N S W O L L A G N N R Y
 S I A H C T A P S I D O A O U
 A D A R A N N N D T N I B O H
 T T O H A A R M E H Y T O U O
 P L A N H S T R A E P A O G N
 I V E P Y O E M U H U N O P O
 X E R X E S A E A N R Q D A R
 F O U T H N U R E P J P X O T

ADAR
 BANQUET
 BIGTHANA
 DISPATCH
 EDICT

ESTHER
 GALLOWS
 HAMAN
 HONOR
 JEWS

MORDECAI
 NATIONA
 ORPHAN
 PUR
 PURIM

QUEEN
 SACKCLOTH
 SEAL
 TERESH
 XERXES

Coloring Sheet

Download and print the “Esther and King Xerxes” coloring sheet at:
<http://www.coloring.ws/bible/esther4.gif>

My Journal Page

God used Esther to save the Jewish people from Haman's rage.

Can you think of ways that God can use your life?

Describe two ways that God could use you.

For example, if you like to sing, then God can use you to bring joy to others.

1.

2.

Esther Saves Her People

Directions: Help Esther find her way to her crown so that she can save her people.

Download and print the maze at:
<http://www.dltk-bible.com/mazes/b-maze-esther.gif>