

Esther Saves Her People

Esther 2-9



Worship Theme:



God has a purpose for you.

Weaving Faith Into Life:



Children will praise God for his purpose in their lives and commit to following God's plans.

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
1 Let's Praise God! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	Sing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Stand Together" • "All Scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16-17) • "Let Us Bow Down in Worship" (Psalm 95:6-7) • "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11) • "No, Not One" • "Won't Worry 'Bout a Thing" 	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Video equipment, Bibles, photocopy of the patterns at the end of this session, scissors, glue, poster board, tape, jelly beans, jar, index cards, markers

Preschool

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
2 Let's Learn the Point! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	* A Noisy Story Make noisemakers and use them during the story of Esther.	Classroom Supplies: 1 empty soda can and several pennies per child, yarn, glue, stickers, masking tape
	Use Me This Week Color a picture showing how God might use them.	Classroom Supplies: Photocopies of the cartoons at the end of this session, scissors, markers or crayons
	* God's Treasure Hunt Go on a scavenger hunt to learn about following God's plan.	Classroom Supplies: Construction paper, scissors, marker, 5 bags, paper, glue sticks, items of corresponding colors

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
2 Let's Learn the Point! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	* God Can Use Me Anywhere Play a game about God's purposes.	Classroom Supplies: Bible
	Standing on God's Promises Help act out the story of Esther, and discuss the difficulties of following God.	Classroom Supplies: Photocopies of "Esther's Story" script (see activity), crown
	A Purposeful Life Look at Scripture verses about God's purposes in their lives.	Classroom Supplies: Bibles, newsprint, marker, tape

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
3 Let's Pray! <i>(up to 10 minutes)</i>	The Offering Pray for one another, asking God to make his purpose known.	Classroom Supplies: Offering bowls
	"Let's Go!" (Ephesians 2:10) Sing a song about following God's plans.	KidsOwn Worship Kit: <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> Classroom Supplies: Video equipment
	Closing Prayer Take turns praying.	

* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together. Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Section 2. Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.

Esther Saves Her People

Esther 2–9

The story of Esther is peculiar in a couple of ways. There is no mention of the name of God, and there is no direct reference to prayer. In fact, there's really no religious teaching at all in this story. However, Esther is a wonderful example of someone God used because she was willing to stand up and serve God.

Xerxes, the Persian king, wanted to replace his queen, whom he had banished from his presence because she had disobeyed one of his commands. Esther was one of many young virgins brought into Xerxes' harem to be considered for the position. Esther had been raised by her cousin, Mordecai. Under his instructions, she didn't reveal to anyone that she was a Jew. Chosen by the king as the most attractive of all the women brought before him, Esther was made queen.

Commercial and legal affairs were conducted at the king's gate. The fact that Mordecai sat at the king's gate indicates that he held a high position in Xerxes' government. In his station there, he overheard the plot to assassinate the ruler. After reporting the plot to Xerxes through Queen Esther, Mordecai definitely attained a position of favor with the king, but apparently he was given no reward at the time.

Mordecai's refusal to bow before Haman probably stemmed from his insistence on worshipping God alone. He wasn't about to let Haman, an Amalekite and a descendant of ancient enemies of the Jews, take the place of God. Haman apparently hated all Jews and loved to wield the power of his high position in Xerxes' government. When Mordecai refused to bow to him, Haman decided to wipe out all the Jews in the kingdom.

Not everyone in Persia shared Haman's hatred of the Jews. In fact, many of them may have known nothing of the ancient animosity between the Amalekites and the Jews. The people of the city of Susa were "bewildered" when they heard of the slaughter that had been decreed (Esther 3:15).

When Esther realized what the king's decree really meant, her response was to fast and to have all the Jews in the city fast as well. Though prayer isn't mentioned here, the intent of the fast was to seek God's favor and direction. Esther then proceeded with her plan to inform Xerxes of Haman's plan to destroy the Jews.

Certainly it was not a coincidence that Xerxes was unable to sleep the night before the second banquet. And it was not a coincidence that he was reminded that Mordecai had exposed the plot to assassinate him. God was clearly directing these events. All that was needed was for Esther to stand up and tell the king of Haman's plot. After Haman was hanged, there was still a problem: The edict to kill all the Jews couldn't be withdrawn. However, Xerxes commanded Esther and Mordecai to write a new decree superseding the old one. Esther was obedient in serving God where he had placed her, and God used her actions to preserve his people!

Devotion for Leaders

Those who follow Jesus sometimes find themselves serving in unexpected places. He writes the scripts and casts the players, offering us the role of a lifetime!

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Read Esther 4:14. According to the text, what will happen with God's plan if we refuse to participate? What will happen to us? Why does God guide us into specific roles at specific times? Reflect and journal on these three questions. Then pray this prayer: "Lord Jesus, give me the courage to participate in the work you have for me, and thank you for authoring the outcomes!"

Why We Worship for Leaders

God longs to accomplish his purpose through our lives, as he did through Esther's life. He calls each of us to play a role in reconciling the world to him. We can't give in to excuses when God calls us to this great task. Rather, we must remember that he created us to do good works. He has placed us right where he wants us and equipped us with the gifts and talents necessary to carry out his will. Before he went to the cross, Jesus told his disciples they would have troubles and difficulties in this world. But he encouraged them, saying, "Take heart! I have overcome the world." As you follow our Lord Jesus Christ, obeying his purpose for your life, rejoice. He has already won the victory. We are on the winning team! And you are helping build up his team by serving his children!

Easy Prep for Leaders

Let's Praise God!

- Make sure your video equipment is ready.
- Photocopy the heart, flashlight, gavel, and leaf patterns (at the end of this session), and cut them out. Glue patterns down the left side of a piece of poster board, and tape the poster board on the wall where kids can see it.
- Print the words of these Scripture verses on index cards: 1 Kings 8:56; John 14:1-2; Romans 4:18, 20-21; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Peter 1:4.
- Fill a jar with jelly beans, counting the jelly beans as you put them in so you know how many are in the jar.

Standing on God's Promises—Make two photocopies of the "Esther's Story" script (see activity), and find a crown for "Esther."

A Purposeful Life—Tape a large sheet of newsprint to the wall.

Preschool Activities—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

1 Let's Praise God!

Play KidsOwn Worship music videos as children arrive. Greet everyone by name, and say, "Welcome to children's church. God has a special purpose for your life."

As the children arrive, invite them to play Guess the Dream. One child should pick a dream—something he or she would like to do someday, such as sky diving, becoming president, or swimming with dolphins. That child should act out the dream while the other children guess what it might be. Have the children take turns acting out a dream.


When everyone has arrived, begin worship.


Say

Welcome to children's church. Today we'll learn how God used an ordinary girl to save a whole nation. And we'll learn that, just as God had a purpose for that girl, he has a purpose for your life as well. God wants to do great things through us. And he will, if

we let him, because he is good and powerful. So let's sing about how we serve God together.

 Sing "Stand Together."

Say  **Great singing, kids! In the book of Psalms in the Bible, we read, "You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees" (Psalm 119:68). If God is going to do great things through us, we need to know him and his Word. Let's sing about learning from God's Word.**

 Sing "All Scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Ask  **• How does God show us his love?** (He provides for us; he has plans for us; he forgives us.)

Write childrens' answers next to the heart on the poster.

- **What does God's light show us?** (It shows us God's plans; it guides us in life.)

Write answers next to the flashlight.

- **What does God's truth give us?** (It helps us know right from wrong; it helps us know how to tell others about God.)

Write answers next to the gavel.


- **What does God's life give us?** (It gives us hope; it gives us a chance to know him.)

Write answers next to the leaf.

Say  **Let's sing to worship God for all God does for us.**

 Sing "Let Us Bow Down in Worship" (Psalm 95:6-7).

Hold up the jar you filled with jelly beans. Have the children call out guesses about how many jelly beans are in the jar.

Say  **The right answer is [number]. I knew the right answer because I was the one who put the jelly beans in the jar. In the same way, the Bible tells us that God made us and even knows how many hairs are on our head. But more important, God made each of us so that we could do something special for him with our lives. He has a plan for every single one of you. And because God is good and loving, his plans for us are the best. This is God's promise for you in Jeremiah 29:11.**


Read Jeremiah 29:11.

 Sing "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Ask  **• Who is your favorite sports star?** (Answers will vary.)

Say These athletes didn't become superstars by quitting practice early, being lazy, or eating unhealthy food. Every day they have to practice their hardest. On game day, they have to play their very best.

Every day is game day for followers of Jesus. Every day we can be telling friends about Jesus. God gave us his best when he sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus is the best friend we can have, and we can be his friends.

 Sing "No, Not One."

Pass out the cards with the Scripture verses printed on them. Have kids read the promises aloud.

Say Those are promises that God gives to you because he loves you and has a wonderful purpose for your life. Think about these verses as we sing "Won't Worry 'Bout a Thing."

 Sing "Won't Worry 'Bout a Thing."

Pray Dear God, you are a good and powerful God who loves each and every one of us. We praise you because you have a special purpose for every single person in the room today. You promise to be with us and give us the strength we need to follow you. We love and worship you. In Jesus' name, amen.

2 Let's Learn the Point!

Preschool Activities, pages 157-158

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let's Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

Elementary Activities

** God Can Use Me Anywhere*

Read Ephesians 2:10 from an easy-to-understand Bible translation, such as the New Living Translation.

Say This verse tells us that God has a purpose for each of us. God has planned for us all to do good works. When we follow the instructions God gave us in the Bible, we are fulfilling his purpose for us. To help us learn how to do this, we're going to play a game.

Help kids form groups of five or six, and have the groups line up on one side of the room.

Say I'll read about some situations and ask what you would do. If your team can give an answer that shows how you would follow God's plan, every person on your team can take a step forward.

Read each of the following situations aloud. Give each group a chance to respond to each situation. Play until all the groups have reached the other side of the room.

- There's a new student in your class at school. You like sitting by your friends at lunch, but you see that the new student is sitting all by himself. What would you do?
- You're having fun playing at the playground, and you hear your mom call you to come home. What would you do?
- You've been running errands with your mom all morning. Finally, you're at the last store where you're buying the groceries. You see your favorite candy bar and ask your mom if you can have it. She says "no." What would you do?
- You have a neighbor who doesn't know Jesus. What would you do?
- You played your best during the soccer game, but your team still lost. What would you do?
- You think your soccer coach is letting other kids play more than you do. What would you do?
- You've played all afternoon in your room and made quite a mess. What would you do?
- You spilled paint on the floor during art class. What would you do?
- You're worried about a test you have at school. What would you do?
- You brought your jump-rope to the playground. Now you can't find it. What would you do?

When everyone has reached the far side of the room, have kids sit down.

- Ask**
- **What do you think God's purpose for your life is?** (To do things his way; to please him; to help others know him.)
 - **When can you fulfill God's purpose for your life?** (Any time; right now; when God wants me to do something.)
 - **What kinds of things can you do to fulfill God's purpose for your life?** (I can become a missionary; I can tell people I know now about Jesus.)

Esther Saves Her People

Esther 2–9

Worship Theme:



God has a purpose for you.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Use Me This Week—Make enough photocopies of the cartoons at the end of this session to have at least one for every four children. Cut out the squares. Set out markers or crayons.

God's Treasure Hunt

- Cut squares from construction paper. On each square, print a word from the phrase *God can use me*, using a different color of paper for each word. For example, write "God" on red paper, and write "can" on green paper. Make enough squares of each word so that each child will have one.
- Glue a piece of construction paper on each of four paper bags so that each bag has one of the four colors used for the squares. Scatter the bags around the room.
- Assemble four items that correspond in color to the word squares, and place them in a separate paper bag. (For example, use a red apple if you used red paper, a yellow stuffed animal if you used yellow.)

Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have Theo encourage the children to shake noisemakers when Haman's name is mentioned during "A Noisy Story."
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today's worship session.



* A Noisy Story

Give each child an empty soda can. Set out glue, pieces of yarn, and stickers. Have each child decorate the can using yarn and stickers. Place several pennies inside each child's can. Place masking tape over the open hole.

Say Every year Jewish people have a special holiday called Purim. Purim celebrates God using Queen Esther to save the Jewish people. Today, as I read the story, you must keep your noisemakers completely quiet until I say "Haman." When I say "Haman," shake your noisemakers so no one can hear his name. Cheer when you hear me read Queen Esther's name.

Long ago in the country of Persia, there was a sad, sad king named King Xerxes. He was lonely because he didn't have a queen. So he sent out his servants to search for the most beautiful young women they could find. The servants searched...and searched...and searched.

The servants found a young girl named Esther (pause). She was taken to the palace to see if the king would want her for his queen. Before Esther (pause) left her home, her cousin, Mordecai, told her to tell no one that she was a Jew because many people did not like the

Jews. The king liked Esther (pause) and chose her for his queen.

The king also had a special helper who was almost as powerful as the king. His name was Haman (pause). Haman (pause) did not like the Jewish people. He was sneaky and bad. He tricked the king into passing a bad law. This law said that on a special day all the Jews would be killed.

When Mordecai learned about the new law, he began to cry—very loudly. He was so sad he tore his clothes. Then, he sent a message to his cousin, the queen. He told Queen Esther (pause) that she must go to the king and ask him to change the law and save the Jews. But no one was allowed to go see the king unless the king invited that person. Queen Esther (pause) was scared. She was terrified. Oh no, what should she do?

Mordecai told her not to be afraid. He said God allowed her to become queen so she could save her people. So, Queen Esther (pause), her servants, and all the Jewish people prayed and fasted for three days.

* A Noisy Story (continued)

Then Queen Esther (pause) walked to the king's throne room. What would happen? If he held out his scepter, she would live. But if he didn't, she would die. She walked...slowly...toward the king. One step. Then another step. Closer and closer to the king she came. Would she live or die?

Then Queen Esther (pause) saw the king hold out his scepter. Whew! The king promised to give her whatever she asked for. She invited the king and Haman (pause) to a special feast. At the feast, Queen Esther (pause) told the king about Haman's (pause) evil plan. The king was angry. Haman (pause) was killed, Mordecai became the king's special helper instead, and all the Jews were saved. Collect the noisemakers.

- Ask**
- What was the special job God wanted Esther to do?
 - Was Esther scared to go to the king? Why?
 - Would you have been scared if you were Esther?
 - What did Esther, Mordecai, and all the Jews do before Esther went to the king?
 - How do you think she felt when God used her to save her people?

Say Just as God had a job for Queen Esther, God has made you for a special purpose. Every day God has in mind things you can do to share his love with people around you.

Use Me This Week

Say Here are some pictures that show different ways God can use children. When we obey God and do what he asks us to do, we are sharing his love with the people around us.

Explain each of the four pictures you cut out to the children.

- Ask**
- Do you want God to use you this week?
 - Do you want to follow his plan this week?

Say Choose one picture that shows something you can do for God this week. Color the picture, and write your name on the back.

Help each child choose a picture and put his or her name on the back. You'll need to help younger children spell their names. While the children are coloring the pictures, talk about when they can do the good deed that's on the picture and how God will feel when they do the good deed.

Say Take your pictures home to remind you that God has good things planned for you to do.

* God's Treasure Hunt

Say God had a purpose for Queen Esther. When she followed God's plan, the Jewish people were saved. God wants to use each of you, but you must follow his plan. We're going to go on a treasure hunt to find God's message for you. I'm going to pull something out of my bag. After you see what color it is, you need to find the bag that has the same color on the outside. Inside each bag we're going to find a word that is part of God's message.

Give each child a piece of paper and a glue stick. As children find the words, have them glue the words on their papers.

When the hunt is completed, gather the children around you. Read the phrase aloud to the children.

- Ask**
- How can God use you?
 - What do you think God wants you to do?
 - If you had not followed the clues, would you have found the message?
 - Where do we find God's clues so we know how to follow him?
 - What clues do you know that God has given us in the Bible?

Say God gives us all kinds of messages in the Bible. God tells us how much he loves us, God tells us how he wants us to behave, and God tells us how to help others. God has a purpose for us. That means he's got work for us to do. God wants to use you to do great things just as he used Esther to help her people.

(continued from page 156)

Say ➤ **God created each one of us on purpose, and he has jobs for all of us to do. The Bible tells us that we were created to do good works. Let's find out about the good work God planned for Esther to do.**

Standing on God's Promises

Ask for volunteers to be Queen Esther and Mordecai. Give the volunteers photocopies of the "Esther's Story" script. Give "Queen Esther" a crown.

Say ➤ **We read in the book of Esther that God used two people to save the Jews. The book begins by telling us about King Xerxes. His kingdom stretched from modern-day India to Ethiopia. King Xerxes had almost complete power over his kingdom. Whatever he wanted to happen happened.**

The next most powerful man in the kingdom was a man named Haman. Only the king had more power than he did. But Haman hated the Jews and wanted to kill them all. With the king's approval, Haman passed a law that all the Jews would be killed on one specific day. At that time, almost all the Jews lived within King Xerxes' kingdom.

Ask ➤ **• What would have happened to the Jewish people if Haman had carried out his plans? (They would have all been killed; they would have died.)**

Say ➤ **God used two people to stop Haman's evil plan. The first person was Mordecai. The Bible tells us he was Jewish and an adviser to the king. The second person was a girl named Esther. Esther was an orphan who was raised by her cousin, Mordecai. When she was a teenager, she was taken to the palace to live. Once she went to live in the palace, she was not allowed to go outside the palace walls. Let's see how Esther and Mordecai responded to Haman's evil plan.**

Help kids form two groups, and have groups go to opposite sides of the room. Tell kids in one group that they're servants, and have the volunteer Esther join them. Kids in the other group will be "Jews"; have "Mordecai" join them.

Read the part of Esther's servant in the "Esther's Story" script as your volunteers read their parts. As you go from group to group to relay messages from Mordecai and Esther, speak quietly so only the group you're speaking to can hear.

Esther's Story

Mordecai: *(to Esther's servant)* You are Esther's servant. You must tell her to beg the king for mercy. She must ask the king to save us.

Esther's servant: *(to Esther and her servants)* Mordecai says that you must go before the king and plead for mercy.

Esther: Go tell Mordecai that it is against the law for me to go to the king unless he invites me to come. I will be killed if I go to him and ask him to save the Jews.

Esther's servant: *(to Mordecai and the Jews)* Esther says that it is against the law for her to go to the king unless he invites her to come. She will be killed if she goes to him to ask him to save the Jews.

Mordecai: Tell Esther that it was for the purpose of saving the Jews that she became queen.

Esther's servant: *(to Esther and her servants)* Mordecai says that it was for this very purpose of saving the Jews that you became queen.

Esther: Go tell Mordecai to gather all the Jews in the city. Have them fast for me for three days and nights. I will do the same thing.

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Have kids return to their seats.

- Ask**
- **What made it hard for Mordecai and Queen Esther to follow God?** (They could have been killed; they had to break the law.)
 - **What makes it hard for us to follow God?** (We could get in trouble; we could get made fun of.)

Say **Sometimes it's hard to follow God. But God has a purpose for us just as he had a purpose for Esther. And God promises to help us. Let's see what God promises to do for us.**

A Purposeful Life

Help kids form pairs. Give each pair one of the following references: Psalm 34:19; Isaiah 43:2; John 14:1; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Peter 4:12-13; Mark 9:23; Mark 11:24; Luke 17:6; John 14:12; Luke 11:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; and James 4:7.

Have pairs look up the passages in their Bibles and decide how God will help them fulfill his purpose for them. Give pairs two or three minutes to discuss. Then have them share their discoveries with the rest of the group. Use a marker to write each pair's discovery on the large sheet of newsprint taped to the wall.

Say **God does have a purpose for each one of you. And God promises to be with us and help us fulfill that purpose. We serve a great and mighty God who makes good plans for his people. Let's thank him right now.**

3

Let's Pray!


The Offering

Say ▶ Throughout our lives, we discover more about God's purpose for our lives. Right now, we know for sure that God plans for us to do good. As time goes by, you'll discover the specifics of God's purpose for your life. God has important things for each person in this room to do. As we take the offering, look around the room. Pray for each person here, and ask God to make his purpose known to that person.

Take the offering.

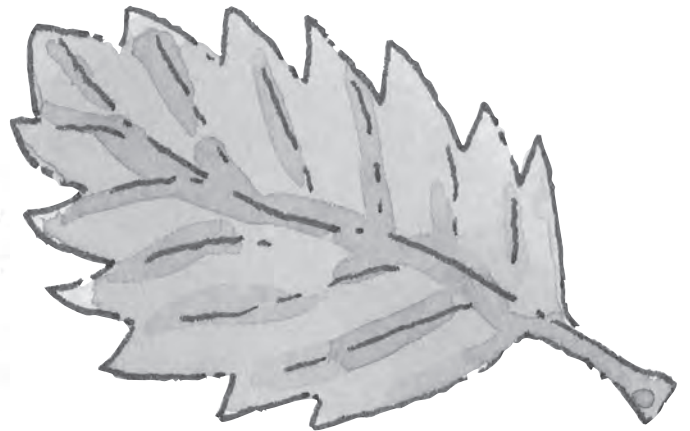
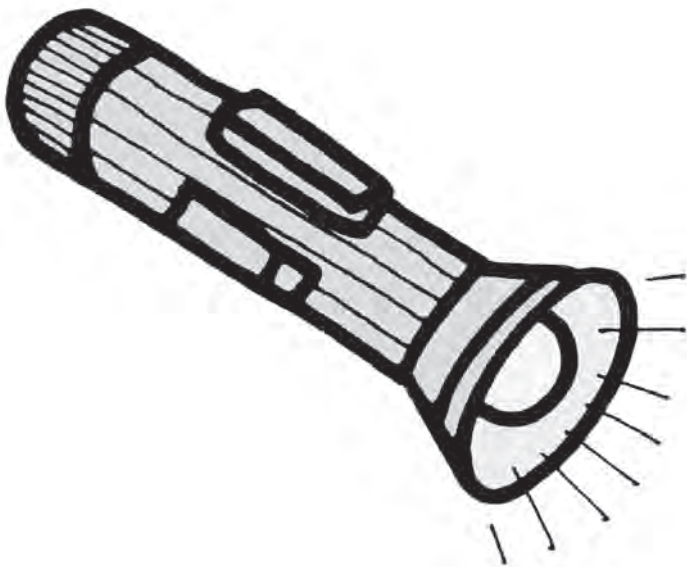
"Let's Go!" (Ephesians 2:10)

Say ▶ God has a purpose for your life. God created you to do good works for him. God has placed you in your neighborhood, in your school, and in your family for a special reason—just as he placed Esther in the position of queen. God wants you to share his love with people you know. Let's sing this song to Jesus to tell him we're ready to go and follow his plan for us this week.

 Sing "Let's Go!" (Ephesians 2:10).

Closing Prayer

Invite one or more of the children to close the worship session in prayer.



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