



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Esther 4:1-17

Matthew 10:16-22

Session Theme:

Decision

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: A Bad Decree

Before class, roll up a sheet of paper like a scroll and tie it with a ribbon or piece of string. When the kids arrive, hold it out for them to see and ask if anyone knows what it is. (*A scroll.*) Ask the class to guess what types of information might be contained in a scroll. (*Historically, scrolls often held official information and decisions — decrees, important documents, etc.*) Ask kids what new rule they would make if they had the power to send out an official decree.

In today's lesson, some bad advisors convinced the king to make a bad decision, and thus a very bad decree. What was it? Let's begin our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Faithful Lord, you are with us no matter what we face. Guide us and inspire us to make wise and faithful decisions, whether the times we live in are favorable or unfavorable. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "Take My Life and Let it Be" (hymn)
- "God of Grace and God of Glory" (hymn)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Return

God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation under leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah. Other Jews stayed in Persia, like Mordecai and Esther.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Esther 4:1-17

1. At this point in the story, what position did Esther hold in the kingdom of Persia? How was she related to the man Mordecai? (See Esther 2:5-7.)

At this point in the story, Esther had been made Queen of Persia (see Esther 2:17). The character of Mordecai had been introduced earlier.

Esther 2:7 says: "He was bringing up ... Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. Mordecai took her as his own daughter." Technically, Mordecai was Esther's cousin. But because of the age difference, he was more of an uncle or surrogate father.

2. Just prior to Chapter 4, Mordecai had found out that Haman, the king's closest advisor, had conspired to have all the Jews in Persia arrested and killed. How did Mordecai respond? What did he do?

Haman was a very arrogant man. Because Mordecai refused to bow down and treat Haman like a god, Haman hated Mordecai. He planned to take revenge on not just on Mordecai, but on all of Mordecai's people, the Jews (God's people). Mordecai knew that the only person in a position to speak out for the Jews was Esther, so he sent a message to her in the palace.

3. Who served as a "go-between" on Mordecai's behalf? How do we serve as a go-between before God on behalf of our neighbors?

Hathach was one of the king's officers who was charged with guarding the king's harem. (The Arabic word "harem" means "restricted" or "forbidden" — referring to the fact that men were not allowed entry into womens' chambers.)

Hathach was allowed to interact with Esther because he was a eunuch (a sexually neutered man). As a harem guard, he served as the "go-between" for Esther and Mordecai.

In a larger sense, the concept of an intercessor, a go-between, is important in Scripture and the life of the Church. We *intercede* for others when we bring their concerns before God in prayer. As believers, we appeal to God on behalf of those in need (whether they are believers or not).

4. According to verse 11, why couldn't Esther just go and tell the king about the danger her people were facing? What was the penalty for disturbing the king without permission?

It was against the law to come into the king's presence without a royal invitation — even for the queen. The king himself needed to initiate a meeting by extending his royal scepter as a signal of entry. For anyone (even the Queen) to enter the king's presence without such an invitation, the penalty was death.

5. In verse 13, what did Mordecai tell Esther? Taking this as an example of the Church, what does this say about us as a family of faith? In what sense are we "all in this together" — for good and for bad?

Mordecai told Esther not to think she was safe just because she was queen. Haman wanted to root out all the Jews to have them killed. Esther herself could easily be found out, and be put to death with the rest of her family and kin.

In 1 Corinthians 12:25-26, Paul says of the Church, "... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."

6. In verse 14, how did Mordecai express his confidence in God? What did Mordecai suggest was the reason Esther had become queen in the first place? Who was behind all this?

Mordecai knew that God had the power to save. The question was whether Esther was going to be a part of God's plan. In fact, he suggested that this was probably the reason God gave her this royal position in the first place. As Martin Luther wrote in the Catechism: "The good and gracious will of God is done without our prayer, but we ask in prayer that it may be done *among us*."

7. In verses 15-16, what did Esther ask Mordecai to do? Why is this a good example for us to follow when we are facing difficult times?

Esther asked Mordecai to have all the Jews pray and fast. When we are in greatest need, we turn to God for help and salvation, trusting in Him, and we ask our brothers and sisters in faith to join us in prayer.

8. Read Matthew 10:16-22. In what way do Jesus' words here reflect the situation that Esther was facing? How is this true in our lives as well? In spite of this danger, what promises does Jesus give to us?

Jesus lets us know that he is sending us out into a dangerous world, just as Esther's visit to the king was known to be dangerous. We will called upon to speak up. But when we do, we need not fear; he promises the Spirit will be speaking through us.

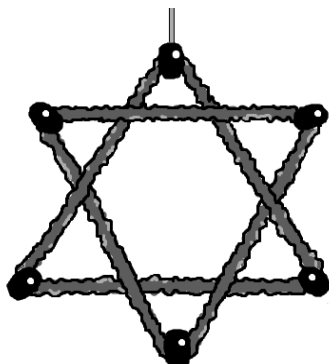
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Star of David Craft

Materials Needed:

- Two blue or white pipe cleaners (chenille sticks) per child
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Pony beads
- Glue (optional)



Instructions:

Give each person two pipe cleaners and six pony beads. Set one pipe cleaner and three pony beads aside.

Take the other pipe cleaner and slide three pony beads onto it. Next, bring the two ends of the pipe cleaner together and secure them in place by wrapping each end around the other. You will now have a basic circle shape.

Gently form the pipe cleaner into a triangle shape. Pinch the corners a bit to give them a sharp edge. Slide one pony bead into each corner.

Repeat the process with the second pipe cleaner and remaining three pony beads. You now have two triangles.

Hold one triangle so the top is pointing up.

This will be triangle #1. Hold the other so the top is pointing down. This will be triangle #2.

Lay triangle #1 on top of triangle #2 so they make a star shape. To secure them in place, slide the top point of triangle #1 under the base of triangle #2. Then, slide the point of triangle #2 on top of the base of triangle #1. This will weave them together somewhat so they stay in place.

If you want the star to be extra secure, put a dot of glue at each spot where the pipe cleaners cross.

You now have a Star of David which is a symbol of the Jewish faith and Jewish people.

Cut a piece of yarn and tie it to the top point of the star. Kids can hang these decorations wherever they like — in a window, from a doorknob, etc. When they see it, they can remember Esther and her brave decision to do what she could to save her people!

Activity 2: King Xerxes' Court Game

Materials Needed:

- Large area to play a game
- Chalk (if playing outside)
- Paper
- Marker
- Tape



Instructions:

This game is like Four

Corners, and can either be played in a large room or outside on pavement.

If playing inside, write the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on different sheets of paper and tape these in each of the four corners (or general areas) of the room. If playing outside, draw a square in each corner of the pavement and number them 1, 2, 3 or 4.

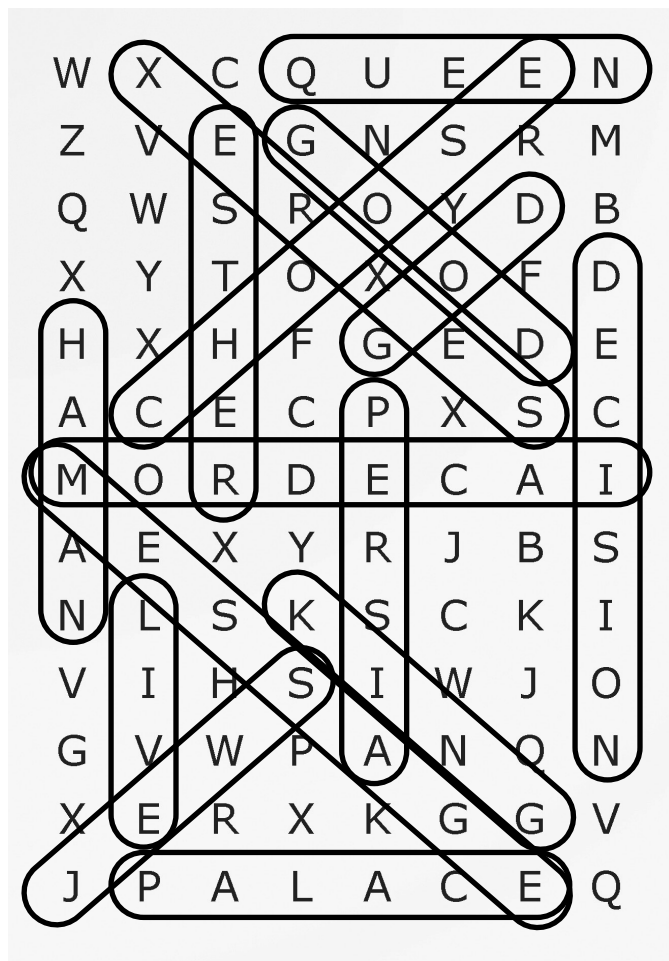
Choose one player to be “King Xerxes.” All of the others are “subjects” in his land.

- The King sits in the middle of the playing area, closes his eyes and counts to ten. (Alternately, if the playing area is small, the King can stand just outside the room, cover his eyes and count loudly to ten). Remind the King not to peek!
- While the King is counting, the subjects tiptoe quietly to any one of the four corners.
- When the King has finished counting, with eyes still closed, he will call out a number from 1 to 4. Any player who chose that corner is automatically out and will go sit down outside the playing area.
- After this, the remaining players leave their corners and stand in the middle again.
- Repeat the process, with the King counting and calling out a corner — a new one or the same one.
- Once again, any players who are in the named corner will be out. Play the game until only one person is left.
- If there is time for a second game, whoever is left can be the next King.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Word Find Answers:



Questions to Talk About:

Spend some time in class discussing the story of Esther, using the questions on the worksheet to help students consider what they might have done in a similar situation.

Map Answer Key

The empire of Persia was so large that the capital shifted from city to city, depending where the king and his court were located. The story of Esther takes place in **Susa**.

Vocabulary Word for the Week:

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary:

Decision

choosing what you will do
and making up your mind to act

*It takes thought to choose what is right
and courage to carry out that decision.*

Reflection for the Week Ahead

Esther risked her life to save her people from harm. That took great courage and spiritual strength. Esther made the right decision, because she knew that God had put her in a position to help.

To be brave and do what is right is not something we can do on our own. That's why faith is so important! The Holy Spirit gives us strength and courage when we feel weak and afraid. God gives us the power to accomplish things we could never do on our own! Like the Bible says: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

- What are some jobs where people put their own life on the line to help others? Do you think you would be able to do a job like that?
- What is one thing you think you couldn't do on your own that you would truly need God's help to accomplish? (Think about situations you see on the news or in the Bible.)
- Talk together about a time you had to make a difficult decision. Did God help you decide what was the right thing to do? How do you know?

The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer thanking God for the strength he gives you in difficult times. Praise him for his power and love and ask him to continue to guide you in his ways.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.