

THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY AND COURAGE

Bible Basis: Esther 1–9

Key Verse: What if you don't say anything at this time? Then help for the Jews will come from another place. But you and your family will die. Who knows? It's possible that you became queen for a time just like this. —Esther 4:14 NIRV

Bible Point: Esther gets her heart ready for a hard job. God helps me when it's hard.

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 20: "The Queen of Beauty and Courage"

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: Are You Brave? Activity Sheet

As children gather, introduce the subject of being brave. Use the Are You Brave? questions to get the children talking. Have them stand up tall if they would answer a question "yes" and squat down if they would answer the question "no." Ask:

- What's the hardest thing about being brave?
- How do you decide whether to be brave or not?

Say, **The Bible story today is about someone who had to decide whether to be brave or not. Let's find out how she got herself ready for the challenge.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Children*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 20*

Tell the story from *The Story for Children*, Chapter 20. You can also have children find Esther 3 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

ESTHER'S HEART

Assign children to four groups: Esther, Mordecai, Haman, and Xerxes. Teach these responses to the groups.

- When you hear the name **Esther**, say, "Ooooh, pretty!"
- When you hear the name **Mordecai**, say, "Wise fellow."
- When you hear the name **Haman**, say, "Harrumph!"
- When you hear the name **Xerxes**, say, "Your Majesty."

Only the group assigned to a keyword responds, so children have to be on their toes.

The king of Persia needed a queen. His name was **Xerxes**. You might think a king could just call up a woman and go on a date, but that was not the plan for **Xerxes**. Instead, this king held a beauty contest. Women from all over his kingdom entered the contest. He would choose the one he liked best.

The king chose **Esther**. He put a royal crown on her head and made her queen. He even gave a big dinner party to celebrate getting married to **Esther**. He invited all the nobles and officials, including a man named **Haman**.

Now **Haman** was a proud man. He thought he was better than anyone else. He gave an order that everyone should get down on their knees and honor him when he walked down the street. Lots of people did. One man didn't. This man was **Mordecai**, who was the cousin of Queen **Esther**, wife of King **Xerxes**. *Read Esther 3:5–6.*

So **Haman** cooked up a plan and went to King **Xerxes**. *Read Esther 3:8.* The king said, "Do what you want to with those people." So just because **Mordecai** wouldn't bow down, **Haman** was going to kill all of God's people living in Persia.

Mordecai found out about this plan and came up with a plan of his own. He talked to his cousin, Queen **Esther**, wife of King **Xerxes**. He told the queen everything that was going to happen. His plan was for **Esther** to go to the king and tell him. No one knew that **Esther** was one of God's people, not even **Xerxes**.

Now **Esther** was scared. Even the queen was not supposed to talk to the king unless he called for her to come. And **Xerxes** had not called for **Esther** for a long time. If she went to see him without permission, he might kill her! And people weren't supposed to tell the king what to do. She didn't want to do it! It was just too scary.

But **Mordecai** said to **Esther** that maybe God had made her the wife of **Xerxes** just so she could do something about this huge problem. He knew that **Haman** was no problem for God.

Esther decided she would do it, but she would get ready first. *Read Esther 4:15–16.*

So **Esther** spent three days getting her heart ready for this big huge job. She wanted to know that God was close to her and that this was the right thing to do. She prayed and prayed and didn't think about anything else. **Mordecai** and all God's people in Persia were praying with her. Finally, it was time to see **Xerxes**. *Read Esther 5:1–3.*

Esther didn't want to just blurt out the problem. Instead, she invited **Xerxes** and **Haman** to a dinner party. And then she invited them to another dinner party the next day. **Xerxes** asked again, "What do you want? I'll give you anything."

The moment had come. **Esther** had to speak up. It was time to tell the truth about **Haman**. *Read Esther 6:3–6.* **Xerxes** punished **Haman**, and all God's people were spared. When **Xerxes** found out that **Mordecai** was **Esther's** cousin, he gave him **Haman's** old job. The people were safe, and they would never have to bow in the street again.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 20*. Ask the children to look at the picture and tell you about what Esther did that took courage. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- **Why do you think Esther made the choice she made?**
- **How did Esther get herself ready for the challenge of being brave?**

Say, **Life is full of hard times. It's great to know that we can face them with God's help.**

Collect the cards for now. You'll send them home with the children later.

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose from these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

OPTION 1: STORY PUZZLES

Stuff You Need: Story Puzzle Pieces 1 and 2 Activity Sheets, envelopes, markers, safety scissors

Duplicate the activity sheet on card stock or sturdy paper ahead of time. You could also glue the pages to manila folders for extra support. Give an activity sheet to each child. Have children color the lettering of the words that appear on the handouts. Cut the puzzle pieces apart on the heavy lines. Scramble the pieces from both puzzles together. See how long it takes to separate the pieces and put the two puzzles together. Read the words together to review the story. Ask:

- **What did Esther do that took courage?**
- **Tell me something you have to do that takes courage.**

Say, **Esther got ready for her challenge by making sure her heart was close to God. That's good advice for all of us!**

OPTION 2: COURAGE CLUTCH

Stuff You Need: un-inflated balloons, flour, funnels, scoops or large spoons

Sometimes when we have to be brave, we're also nervous. We're going to make a Courage Clutch to have something to squeeze when we're nervous. Have children work in pairs to help each other insert a funnel in the neck of the balloon, then scoop flour into the funnel. Fill the balloon till it's the size of a fist. Tie it closed. As children work, talk about how they might use the Courage Clutch to help them pray when they have to do something hard. Ask:

- **What kinds of situations make you nervous?**
- **What can you learn from Esther about how to handle those situations?**

Say, **Esther is a great example of being brave enough to do something hard. She knew she could help a lot of other people, and she asked God to help her be brave.**

OPTION 3: A HERO LIKE ESTHER

Stuff You Need: A Hero Like Esther Activity Sheet, crayons

Give an activity sheet to each child. Talk to the children about what makes a person a hero and how Esther fits that description. Have the children color the picture of Esther and then draw a picture of another person they feel is heroic. It may be a biblical character or anyone else.

OPTION 4: ESTHER'S SPECIAL PLACEMAT

Stuff You Need: construction paper, glue stick

1. To prep for this activity:
 - Cut a piece of construction paper lengthwise into one-inch strips, making sure to leave a one-inch border along one side so all the strips stay connected. This will be the base of the placemat. Each student will need one.
 - Cut other pieces of construction paper width-wise into one-inch sections. You should have several colored strips when you're done.
2. Have children thread strips of construction paper through their mats. They should go under the first row, then over the next. Repeat until the strip is completely threaded through the placemat.
3. Repeat with another strip. Then another.
4. Make sure to push the strips together so the placemat will not have holes in it.
5. When the last strip is threaded through the placemat, glue down the edges. This will make sure the strips won't fall out of the placemat.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Pray in small groups for courage to do what's right. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 20*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.