

Esther Pleads For Her People

Esther 4:1-17

MEMORY VERSE

ESTHER 4:16

“And so I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Chalk, paper and tape.

One 9” x 9” square piece of burlap for each child, gray or black construction paper or confetti, string or ribbon, paper, markers and a hole punch.

Chalk and a chalkboard.

ATTENTION GETTER!

What’s My Line?

Today we will be learning that God has a wonderful plan for all of our lives. Before class take three sheets of paper and tape them onto your class chalk/dry erase board. The papers should be in a row approximately 6 inches apart. Choose two or three children from your class and ask the question, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” Don’t have them answer just yet. Have your first “chosen” child come up and sit at the front of the class. Have them whisper into your ear what their future profession will be. Write it on the chalkboard, concealing it with a piece of paper and tape.

Have the rest of the class, one at a time, ask a question to try to guess. They can ask anything except, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” Have the child in the front answer the questions. Play until either the profession is guessed or everyone has asked a question. If it is not guessed remove the paper from the chalkboard to reveal what it is.

Allow the next one or two children to play, then explain to all of the children that no matter what we do in life, God has a wonderful plan for us. No matter where He places us, we can be used for His glory just like Esther was used.

LESSON TIME!

Esther's story is one that almost sounds like a fairy tale. She is a young and beautiful orphan who becomes queen of the land. We find though, in the midst of all the good things that happen in the life of Queen Esther, that there is an enemy who has a very evil plan to kill all the Jews. Esther was a Jew and so her life is in great danger. In our lesson today, Esther makes a very important decision, one that could cost her life.

Throughout life we will all have decisions to make. What should I do when I grow up? Who should I marry? Where does God want me to serve Him? These are all decisions that will probably come before every one of us one day. We also have to make choices day by day. Things like, will we obey God? Will we stand up for what is right? Will we obey our parents?

Our answers to these questions are very important. They were very important to Esther as the day came for her to make a very important decision. It was not easy, but God was going to use Esther for a very special purpose. God wanted to use her to rescue her people. There may also come a day for each one of us to make a decision to let God use our lives for His kingdom. He has a purpose and plan for our lives; we need to be ready to obey. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

ESTHER 4:1-3

When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

In our previous lesson, we learned that a very evil man named Haman came up with a plan to kill the Jews. He was angered that Mordecai refused to bow to him. So in his pride, Haman convinced the king to make a decree to have all the Jews killed on the same day. Little did Haman know that God was planning to protect His people, and little did he know that Queen Esther was a Jew. We pick up the story just after the decree for the Jews to be killed is issued.

When Mordecai learned about the king's decree for the Jews to be killed he went throughout the city mourning and lamenting, even to the king's gate. He cried bitterly, tore his clothes, and put on sackcloth (a rough, hairy garment) and spread ashes upon his head as a sign of deep grief. He came to the king's gate, as noted, though there was a law that no one should enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

In verse 3 we are told that all the Jews broke out into mourning, weeping, and lamentation, while many also tore their garments, and wore sackcloth. Imagine how you would feel if you knew someone hated you. But imagine how you would feel if you knew that they hated you enough to kill you, and even had a plan to kill you. And not only that, but they also had the king's approval. There was nothing you could do about it. You would probably feel very much afraid and helpless.

Sometimes in our lives we might face a situation that seems hopeless. Certainly the Jews must have thought that this was completely hopeless, but it was not. God was still in control then and God is still in control today. There is never a situation that God can not step into and help us. So we need to keep our eyes on Jesus and remember that He is our hope.

In this terrible situation, we will see that God was planning to raise up deliverance for His people. He was not going to let Haman get away with this plot. God is also our protection in times of trouble. He will help us in our time of need. He may even plan to use our lives to help out someone else in their time of need. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

ESTHER 4:4-9

So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them.

Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.

So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate.

And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.

He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and

that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.

So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Her maids and attendants made the situation known to Esther. They told her of Mordecai's appearance in sackcloth and ashes (deep mourning) before the gate of the palace. Esther was filled with grief and sent Mordecai regular clothes to put on instead of his sackcloth. Perhaps she did that so he would enter the palace and explain to her what was wrong. He refused the new clothes, perhaps to make her aware of the greatness of his grief and the reason for his grief.

Then Esther sent Hathach, one of her attendants, to Mordecai to learn what was the meaning and the cause of his mourning. When Hathach came to him, Mordecai told him all that had happened and the amount of the money that Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasuries that it might be permitted for him to destroy the Jews. This shows the resentment and eagerness with which Haman had urged the destruction of the Jews.

Mordecai also gave Hathach a copy of the decree published in Susa to show it to the queen. Mordecai then told Hathach to command Esther to go in to the king, to entreat him and to make request before him for her people. Esther had been asked to do a very dangerous thing by Mordecai, as we will see. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Esther had no idea this was happening. But the scary thing for her was that she was a Jew--one of the ones who was supposed to be killed. She was in a pretty tough situation, but she was going to learn that God definitely had a plan for her life, just like He does in our lives!

Sackcloth and Ashes

In Old Testament times whenever people were sad or mourned they would put on sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was very rough material that would scratch against the skin. They would put ashes in their hair as a sign of sadness. In our story, today, we saw that God's people were very sad. Mordecai and many of the Jews wore sackcloth and ashes because of their sadness over the king's decree.

For a craft you will get to make a sackcloth pouch filled with ashes. You will need one 9" x 9" square piece of burlap for each child, gray or black construction paper or confetti, string or ribbon, paper, markers and a hole punch. Begin by laying out the burlap square. Peel several strips of black or gray construction paper or confetti and place in the center of the square (tear the construction paper into tiny pieces). Pull up each end of the square and tie the top with string or ribbon. This will make a small pouch. On a small strip of paper approximately 1" x 4" write Sackcloth and Ashes and today's memory verse or theme. Write the child's name on the back of the paper. Punch a hole in the paper and tie to the pouch with string or ribbon.

Remind the children that sometimes we can find ourselves in bad situations, like Queen Esther and the Jewish people did. But we also need to remember that He will be our strength and help in our time of need and will deliver us. He may even want to use our lives, like He did Queen Esther to bring about that deliverance. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

ESTHER 4:10-17

Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai:

"All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days."

So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.

"For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai:

"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

After Hathach told Queen Esther all that Mordecai had instructed, she sent her response back to Mordecai by Hathach. She told him that she could not, without endangering her life, go to the king and talk to him. She also shared that by Mordecai asking her to do this thing he was putting her life in great danger.

There was a law that stated that whoever came to the king without being summoned (or asked to come) could be put to death if the king so desired. But if the king was pleased to see the visitor, he would hold out the golden scepter to them and allow them to enter his presence. Queen Esther had not been summoned to him for thirty days. She thought that the king did not wish to see her, and for this reason dared not go to him without an invitation.

Going to the king to talk to him seemed like an impossible thing to Esther. She just couldn't, it was too dangerous. When Mordecai hears this, he sends her back a very sober message. "Think not that you will be saved in the king's house above all the Jews." He is telling her that her life is already in danger because of Haman's plan. In other words, she will die because of the decree or die trying to talk to the king. Mordecai is trying to help her to understand that she should at least try.

Mordecai also had great faith in the Lord. He knew that if Esther did nothing, God would deliver the Jews some other way. He knew that the Jewish nation would not perish because of God's protection. But maybe God wanted to use Esther as the one through whom deliverance would come. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

He then encourages Esther to use her position as Queen to help her people. He tells her that perhaps she has been blessed to become Queen for a time such as this. Maybe God placed her right there at this time so He could use her to help His people. Esther had a choice to make. Would she choose to be used by God?

There is much for us to consider at this point in our own lives. We should think about where God has placed us. Maybe He wants to use our lives for great things. Maybe He placed us in a certain school so that we can be a witness for Him. Maybe there is someone in our family that needs to see an example of Jesus. Maybe God will use us to pray for and help a neighbor in their time

of need. We may not see it all right now, but we need to be ready to do what God wants us to do when He says to go for it. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

We need to consider the reason that God has put us in whatever place or situation we are now in, and be careful not to miss what He has for us. We must also think about others, and the ways He would use us to help them.

Esther resolves to go to the king without being asked to come. She begs Mordecai and all the Jews to unite in a three day fast, during which she and her maidens will also fast. She wants to seek God's gracious help in the step she is to take. Fasting is when God's people take a period of time to go without food to pray and to seek Him. Fasting allows us to keep our focus on the Lord without distractions. Esther wanted as many people as possible to keep her lifted up in prayer during this very important time.

Something that is very interesting about the book of Esther is that the words "God" and "prayer" are not mentioned in this book, yet it is still obvious that God is very active in this book and prayer was very much a part of the Esther and Mordecai's lives.

Then Esther shares, "If I perish, I perish." These are not words of despair, but the voice of one who has come into perfect submission to the will of God. When we are faced with difficult circumstances, may our hearts also seek and yield to the will of almighty God.

God had a very special purpose for Esther. In the following lesson, we will see what happened when Esther obeyed. God wants to use our lives. The important thing is not how talented we are, but whether or not we are willing to be used. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Fruit of the Spirit Tic Tac Toe

One of the greatest ways that we can be used by the Lord is to live out the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Draw a large Tic Tac Toe graph on the chalk or dry erase board. In each square put a small number beginning with 1 and going through 9. Each of these boxes will represent a fruit of the Spirit.

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Longsuffering
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self-control

Split up your class into two teams, the “X”s and the “O”s. Have each group take turns choosing which square they would like to take by choosing a number. After choosing the number, in order to capture the square, they will need to get together as a group and “act out” that fruit of Spirit. They can do anything to demonstrate that fruit. You as the teacher will be the judge if they are accurate and should qualify to receive the square.

Continue playing until someone gets Tic Tac Toe. If you feel they did not earn the square then the other team can try to earn the square. Play the game a few times and have fun. Remind the children how important it is to display these fruits in our lives so we can be use by the Lord.

PRAYER

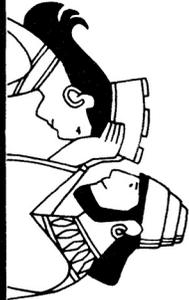
Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to always seek God's will for their lives. To understand that God has a plan and a purpose for them and that true happiness comes when we walk according to God's plans for our lives. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

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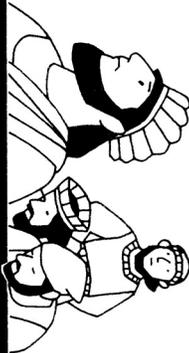
WASHTI



ESTHER



HAMAN / MORDECAI



FEAST OF PURIM

