

WE DO BRAVE THINGS WITH GOD'S HELP

COURAGE IS... doing the right thing even when I'm afraid.

Esther 3:5-5:3:
Esther Goes to the King

An official named Haman plotted to kill all the Jews. Queen Esther, who was Jewish, was in a position to save them. Mordecai, her cousin and adoptive father, pleaded with her to ask King Xerxes to spare the Jewish people. But to approach the king uninvited could be punishable by death. Esther had to be brave to go before the king, and she needed God's help. Through Esther, God saved his people. Use this lesson to help children learn that they can do brave things with God's help.

WHAT KIDS DO	WHAT YOU'LL NEED
<p>God Sightings (5 minutes) Share ways they've seen God at work.</p>	
<p>Bible Experience (15 minutes) Listen to an account of Esther's life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible
<p>Bravery I Know (10 minutes) Draw pictures of brave people in their own lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • card stock • markers or crayons
<p>I Can Be Brave (10 minutes) Face their fears and learn to be brave with God's help.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pencils or markers • copies of the handout (found at the end of this lesson)
<p>Fear Challenge (10 minutes) Play a game and share how God can help you be brave.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scrap paper cut into thirds • pencils • basket or bowl
<p>Life Application (10 minutes) Watch a video about bravery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Character by God's Design</i> DVD • DVD player



*Photocopy the Take-Home page at the end of this lesson for each child.

COURAGE DEVOTION

When Esther faced a crucial choice, she turned to God in prayer. She also got others to pray and petition God on her behalf. When you have to take a step of faith, turn to God as your source of courage. Rather than relying on your own strength, ask God to empower you. And follow Esther's example even further: Gather people who will hold you up in prayer. Choose to live out courageous faith like Esther's as you trust God's plan for your life.

BIBLE FOUNDATION FOR TEACHERS

Esther 3:5–5:3: Esther Goes to the King

HAPPILY NEVER AFTER

Esther lived as queen of Persia alongside her husband, King Xerxes. But Esther's marriage to Xerxes had more to do with power than with love. Their relationship began when, after banishing his first wife Vashti for disobedience, Xerxes held a mandatory beauty contest to find a replacement. Xerxes' people rounded up attractive young women and forcibly put them in the king's harem. After a year of beauty treatments, the king took them each to bed. Yes, you read right: Part of the "contest" for these women was an encounter with the king! Ultimately, Xerxes chose young Esther to be queen.

TWO STRIKES

Even though she was queen, as a woman Esther was still relegated to second-class status. She was expected to wait on the king and be at his beck and call. If Esther ever dared to approach him on her own initiative, without being summoned, the law dictated that she be executed—unless the king held out his scepter in forgiveness for the offense.

Not only was Esther a woman, she was also Jewish. The Jews living in Persia were in exile, without a land of their own. They lived in the Persian culture while they clung to their faith in the one true God. Fearing for her safety, Esther's wise cousin Mordecai advised her to keep her nationality a secret.

REFUSING TO BOW

Mordecai drew the ire of a Persian official, Haman, because Mordecai refused to bow down to him. Mordecai would only



ILLUSTRATION BY DANA REGAN

go so far in his assimilation into Persian culture. Enraged with Mordecai, Haman “looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire.” Manipulating the king, Haman set a date when, by law, all the Jews in Xerxes’ empire would be slaughtered.

HONEY, CAN WE TALK?

Mordecai appealed to Esther to intervene with the king and save her people. She faced a very real risk of death for approaching her husband, so first Esther spent three days fasting and praying. Finally, she bravely approached her husband—and he spared her life. Through two special meals, Esther revealed the evil of Haman’s crusade against the Jews. Xerxes halted the planned genocide and executed Haman instead.



GOD SIGHTINGS

As a group, share God Sightings—ways you’ve seen God at work. Then celebrate how God is at work in your lives through a prayer of thanksgiving.

BIBLE EXPERIENCE

Open your Bible to Esther 3:5–5:3 and show children the words. Explain that today you’ll learn about brave Queen Esther.

Talk about: **Bravery isn’t just for knights on horses, superheroes, and firefighters. All of us can be brave. Being brave means you take a step forward even when you’re afraid to. And when we pray and ask for His help, God will answer our prayer. 🕊️ We do brave things with God’s help.**

Have kids spread out around the room.

Say: **Let’s act out what happened in Esther’s life.** Then read “Esther’s Life,” found at the end of this lesson.

After the drama, have everyone give each other a “high four” instead of a “high five.”

Lead this discussion: **What did God do to help Esther? What’s it like to know that God is on your side? What’s something you need God’s help to be brave about?**

THE LESSON

YOU’LL NEED:

✓ Bible

Talk about: **Esther could've just kept quiet. After all, she was in the palace, she was the queen, and it was possible that she could have kept her secret about being Jewish from the king. But Esther didn't keep quiet. She knew the right thing to do. She prayed, and with God's help, she did a very brave thing. Like Esther, we do brave things with God's help. Just knowing that God is with us is sometimes all we need in order to stand up and do what's right.**

YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **card stock**
- ✓ **markers or crayons**

BRAVERY I KNOW

Say: **Esther had to be brave to go before the king, and she needed God's help. Through Esther, God saved His people.**

Have kids find partners. Say: **Tell your partner about a time you were afraid to do something.** Allow time.

Say: **Like Esther, we're all afraid sometimes. God gives us courage to be brave. Sometimes God sends other people into our lives to help us be brave.**

Give each child a sheet of card stock and crayons or markers.

Say: **Let's make superhero cards. Draw a brave person you know. This person may be brave at work or at home. This person doesn't run away from doing or facing hard things.**

Allow time. Have kids put a title on their superhero cards, such as Courageous Cousin, Brave Brother, or Fearless Friend. Then have them write a few words about what makes this person brave.

Invite kids to share their drawings. Ask each child: **Why do you think the person you drew is a brave person? What do you think helps that person be brave?**

Then talk about: **How might God help you be brave?**

After everyone has shared, say: **It's sometimes hard to be brave, but Esther did what it takes to do the right thing. Just like her, we do brave things with God's help. Maybe one day, when asked to draw someone who's brave, children will draw you!**

FOR TEACHERS: WHAT IS BRAVERY?

The word *bravery* means being afraid but doing something anyway. It's not the absence of fear. Jumping out of airplanes is a brave thing to do, but so is talking about Jesus to someone we don't know. Help children know that God gives us courage to do brave things with His help.

I CAN BE BRAVE

Distribute handouts and markers or pencils.

Say: **Esther could've been killed if she didn't approach the king the right way. Write a headline for the most daring thing you've ever done, such as "Teenager Confronts Mayor."**

Allow time. Then ask kids to share their headlines. Talk about: **Why did you do this brave thing? What help—if any—did you have to do that brave thing?**

Then say: **We're all afraid of different things, so we can all be brave in different ways. Next on your handout, take a look at some common fears people have. Circle all your fears.** Allow time.

Say: **God can help us be brave. On your handout, write a how-to guide for one of the fears that'll show how God could help a person overcome that fear.**

Then lead this discussion: **What's something you're afraid of, and why are you afraid of it? What helps you be brave when you're afraid? How can God help you be brave in the face of something scary?**

Say: **God asks us to live bravely for Him. That means not only living outside our comfort zones, but being willing to do anything—even risk our lives—for Him. Queen Esther risked her life by going to the king because she knew we do brave things with God's help.**

FEAR CHALLENGE

Give each person three pieces of scrap paper and a pencil.

Say: **Write or draw on each of your pieces of paper something people are afraid of. Come up with at least one nonserious fear.**

Fold up the fears, and put them in a bowl or basket. Pass it around, and have each person take one. Have them draw a new fear if they get one that they wrote.

YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ pencils or markers
- ✓ copies of the handout (found at the end of this lesson)

FOR TEACHERS:

GOD'S WORD ON FEAR

"But when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?"

—Psalm 56:3-4

YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ scrap paper cut into thirds
- ✓ pencils
- ✓ basket or bowl

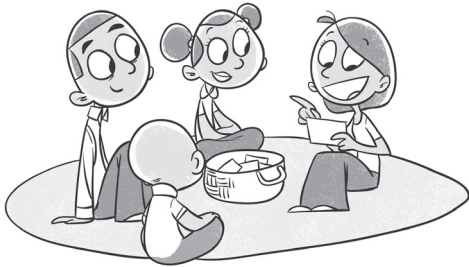
Say: **Read the fears you each drew, and share how God could help a person with that fear be brave.**

Have kids guess who wrote each fear. Play until you've gone through all the fears.

YOU'LL NEED:

✓ **Character by God's Design DVD**

✓ **DVD player**



LIFE APPLICATION

Say: **Bravery comes in all shapes and sizes. You don't have to be a firefighter or a soldier—you can be brave right where you are! Watch how this person, in different ways, learned to “jump in” to what God had for her.**



Play “3, 2, 1...Jump!” (track 1) on the *Character by God's Design DVD*.

Afterward, lead this discussion: **In what ways did Shawna show bravery? Tell about a brave thing you've done. Why did it take courage to do that thing?**

Talk about: **Doing the right thing can take courage. When we're afraid, we may want to turn around and not take the leap like God is telling us to take. If Queen Esther had turned around from being courageous, a lot of people would've lost their lives. God helped Shawna and God helped Queen Esther. ● We do brave things with God's help, too.**

PRAYER

Thank You, God, for always being here. Please give us the boldness to stand up and do what's right even when we're afraid. In Jesus' name, amen.

TAKE-HOME PAGE

Give each child a Take-Home page to take home. Encourage kids to select one of the six challenges for the week ahead.



PRACTICING COURAGE

Keep growing in your faith and character. Choose one of the following challenges to do this week to do brave things with God's help.



CHALLENGE 1

Do butterflies in your stomach ever hold you back from doing something you'd really like to try? Maybe you'd like to try out for a new sport or make a new friend. Do three brave things with God's help.



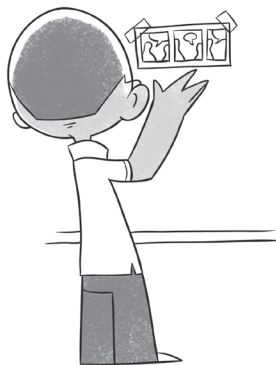
CHALLENGE 2

Do a little research to find an example of someone being brave. You could find a news story or look up someone from history. If you get stuck, ask a parent to help. Then share what you found with your family, and tell them what you learned about how God helps us do brave things, too.



CHALLENGE 3

Are you afraid of the dark? Be brave in the dark by turning off the lights and reading these Bible verses with a flashlight: Joshua 1:9; Psalm 31:24; Matthew 14:27. Remember that God is never afraid of the dark, and He's always with you.



CHALLENGE 4

Create a comic strip of yourself standing up for kids who are being bullied. Put your comic strip in your room to remind yourself that God can help you bravely stand up for kids who are being picked on.



CHALLENGE 5

Come up with a cheer about being brave with God's help. Teach the cheer to your family and friends.



CHALLENGE 6

Sit with your eyes closed and hold your hands out, palms down. Talk to God about things that scare you, and imagine those fears falling out of your hands and away from you. Then turn your hands palms-up, and ask God to fill you with bravery.



THE CAST

✓ **Narrator (teacher)**

THE MOVEMENTS

Haman: bow low to the ground

Mordecai: stand

King Xerxes: pretend to sit on a throne

Queen Esther: put your hands like a crown on your head

ESTHER'S LIFE

In this interactive reading, you're telling about Esther going to King Xerxes to tell him of Haman's plot to get rid of Mordecai and all the Jewish people. You're the Narrator, and the kids do specific movements when they hear the names of the people called out.

NARRATOR

In the Persian kingdom, a man named Haman loved being in charge. Haman loved power and loved it when people did what he said. He especially loved it when people bowed to him. So when I say "Haman," bow as low as you can!

However, there was a man who refused to bow—he believed he should listen only to God. His name was Mordecai. So! When I say "Mordecai," stand up as tall as you can!

When Haman (*pause*) saw that Mordecai (*pause*) would not bow down before him, he got really mad! Haman (*pause*) decided to find out why Mordecai (*pause*) wouldn't bow—and found out he wouldn't bow because he was Jewish. Jewish people believed in bowing to God, not to other people. Haman (*pause*) decided to punish all the Jewish people everywhere. Not just Mordecai (*pause*).

Now enter King Xerxes. King Xerxes was a powerful man who sat upon a throne. So! Whenever I say "King Xerxes," pretend to sit on a throne!

Haman (*pause*) thought up a plan to get rid of all the Jewish people, and he went to King Xerxes (*pause*). He told the king that the Jewish people were different and refused to obey any laws. He said that they caused trouble and that they needed to be gotten rid of.

So here's what happened so far! Haman (*pause*) was after Mordecai (*pause*) for not bowing. After going to King Xerxes (*pause*), Haman (*pause*) knew his plan would work. He told King





Xerxes (*pause*) to get rid of the Jews, and the king agreed with Haman (*pause*). Mordecai (*pause*) was in big trouble!

But Haman (*pause*) didn't count on Mordecai (*pause*) going to Queen Esther.

We've got one more person to add to the mix: Queen Esther. Esther was special, chosen to be queen out of many women. There was something else about her: Queen Esther was Jewish. She was also very, very brave.

So! Every time I say "Queen Esther," use your hands to put a pretend crown on your head.

Remember, the motions are: Haman, bow low; Mordecai, stand tall; King Xerxes, sit on a throne; and Queen Esther, put your hands like a crown on your head. Ready?

After Haman (*pause*) went to see King Xerxes (*pause*), Mordecai (*pause*) went to see Queen Esther (*pause*). He told her about the plan to get rid of all the Jewish people. He said that since she was the queen, she could do something to save the Jews! All she had to do was go to King Xerxes (*pause*) and tell him about how sneaky Haman (*pause*) was being. Then Mordecai (*pause*) and Queen Esther (*pause*) would be saved!

But there was a catch. People—even queens—couldn't go to the king without being invited. If people did that, they would be killed. The queen had to be incredibly brave, because not only was she risking her life trying to save her people, she was also trying to get someone else in big trouble—Haman (*pause*).

So instead of going to the king right away, the queen prayed. And she got others to pray as well. After three days, Queen Esther (*pause*) summoned up her courage and said, "If I die, then I die. I must do what I can to save my fellow Jewish people." She went in to see King Xerxes (*pause*), and guess what happened?

Queen Esther (*pause*) didn't die! The king listened to the queen, and she invited him to dinner. King Xerxes (*pause*) came to dinner, and that's when Queen Esther (*pause*) told him all about the

TEACHER TIP

Take your time with the reading, but not too much time! Give kids just enough time to get used to the movements, and then, as the skit goes on, speed up. Go faster especially with the sentences that have all four names and movements in them.





sneaky plan, about her people, and about how she didn't want any of the Jewish people to die. She was incredibly brave.

So! Queen Esther (*pause*) was brave and went to King Xerxes (*pause*) because Mordecai (*pause*) told her about Haman (*pause*). And all the Jews were saved, and everything worked out in the end!





WRITE YOUR HEADLINE HERE

DIRECTIONS: Circle your fears. Then pick one and write about how to overcome that fear.

HEIGHTS

ACTING IN SKITS

SPEAKING IN FRONT OF A LARGE CROWD

BEING IN SMALL SPACES

SPIDERS

NEEDLES
