Preschool–Grade 6

Queen Esther

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Esther had courage to speak up for her people, even when it could cost her life. God can give me courage to do right and stand up for others.
Bible passage: Esther 1–9. Read Esther 1–10 before class.
Memory verse: "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" *Esther 4:14 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a long strip of paper (or 3 sheets taped end to end), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse in big letters along the long paper strip, in 6 parts with space between them (see part 4).

1. Opening game: Pass the Message (5–10 minutes)

Kids sit in a line. Whisper this message to the first child: "Tell the queen to go to the king and ask him to save her people." Each child whispers it once to the next. The last child says it out loud. Try a second message. Ask: *Did the message arrive the same way it started? Why does it matter to pass on a message carefully?* Say: "In today's story, a queen and her cousin sent messages back and forth, and many lives depended on them."

2. Bible story: For Such a Time as This (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Esther 1. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

A new queen. King Ahasuerus ruled 127 **provinces** (parts of his kingdom) from India to Ethiopia, from his palace in Shushan (Esther 1:1–2). Queen Vashti refused to come when the king called her, so she lost her royal place (1:12, 1:19). The king's servants gathered young women from all the provinces to the palace, and the king would choose a new queen (2:2–4). **Look up Esther 2:7.** Mordecai, a Jew, had raised his cousin Hadassah, also called Esther, as his own daughter after her parents died. Esther was taken to the palace (2:8) and obtained **favour**, kindness and approval, from all who saw her (2:15). The king set the royal crown on her head and made her queen (2:17). Mordecai told her to keep it secret that she was a Jew (2:10).

Mordecai saves the king. Mordecai sat in the king's gate. He learned that two doorkeepers, Bigthan and Teresh, wanted to **lay hand on**, or attack, the king. He told Esther, she told the king in Mordecai's name, and it was written in the king's book of **chronicles**, a book of records (2:21–23).

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Haman's plan. The king set Haman above all the princes (3:1). **Look up Esther 3:2.** Everyone bowed to Haman, but Mordecai did not bow. When Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he was full of **wrath**, which means great anger, and planned to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom (3:4–6). They cast **Pur**, the lot, to pick a day (3:7). Haman told the king that a certain people did not keep the king's laws, and he offered 10,000 **talents** of silver, a huge amount of money (3:8–9). The king gave Haman his ring, and letters sealed with the ring were sent to every province: all the Jews were to be destroyed on the 13th day of the 12th month, Adar (3:10–13).

Such a time as this. Mordecai tore his clothes, put on **sackcloth**, a rough cloth people wore when they were very sad, and cried with a loud and bitter cry (4:1). He sent Esther a copy of the decree and asked her to go to the king for her people (4:8). **Look up Esther 4:11.** Anyone who came to the king in the inner court without being called would be put to death, unless the king held out the golden sceptre. Esther had not been called for thirty days. **Look up Esther 4:14.** Mordecai said help would come from somewhere, but she might have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. **Look up Esther 4:16.** Esther asked all the Jews in Shushan to fast three days, and she and her maids fasted too. "And if I perish, I perish."

The golden sceptre. On the third day Esther put on her royal **apparel**, or clothes, and stood in the inner court (5:1). **Look up Esther 5:2.** The king held out the golden sceptre, and Esther touched its top. He offered her anything, "to the half of the kingdom" (5:3). She invited the king and Haman to a banquet, and then to a second banquet (5:4–8). Haman went home proud, but he was angry that Mordecai would not stand up for him. His wife and friends told him to build a **gallows**, a tall wooden frame for hanging, for Mordecai (5:9–14).

A sleepless night. Look up Esther 6:1. The king could not sleep, so the book of records was read to him. He heard what Mordecai had done and learned that nothing had been done to reward him (6:2–3). Just then Haman came to ask the king to hang Mordecai (6:4). The king asked Haman, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" Haman thought the king meant him (6:6)! So Haman had to dress Mordecai in royal apparel and lead him on the king's horse through the city (6:7–11).

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Esther speaks up. At the second banquet Esther asked for her life and her people's lives (7:3–4). **Look up Esther 7:6.** "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." The king was angry, and Haman was put to death on the gallows he had built for Mordecai (7:7–10). The king gave his ring to Mordecai (8:2). Esther fell at the king's feet and begged him with tears to stop Haman's plan, and the king held out the sceptre again (8:3–4). A law sealed with the king's ring could not be undone (8:8), so new letters sealed with the ring let the Jews gather together and stand for their lives (8:9–11). **Look up Esther 8:16.** Light, gladness, joy and honour! Mordecai wrote that the Jews should remember it every year with days of feasting and joy called **Purim**, named after Pur, sending gifts to each other and to the poor (9:20–22, 9:26).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Esther could have stayed quiet in the palace (4:13–14). Why do you think she chose to go to the king?
2. Before Esther went in, she and the Jews fasted for three days (4:16). Why is it wise to seek help before doing something hard?
3. Mordecai said Esther may have come to the kingdom "for such a time as this" (4:14). Where are you right now, at home, at school or at church, and who could you help there?
4. The king couldn't sleep on the very night before Haman came to ask about Mordecai (6:1–4). The book of Esther never says the word "God." What do you notice about the timing?
5. Haman wanted honor for himself (6:6). Esther and Mordecai used their places to help others (8:3, 10:3). Which way do you want to live?

Recall questions

1. What did the king hold out to Esther? *(The golden sceptre, Esther 5:2)*
2. What did the king hear read from the book of records? *(How Mordecai told about the two men who wanted to hurt the king, 6:2)*
3. Who did Esther say was the enemy? *(Wicked Haman, 7:6)*

4. Memory verse: Scroll Verse (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **holdest thy peace** means stay quiet, **enlargement and deliverance** means help and rescue, **thy father's house** means your family, **who knoweth** means who knows, and **art come to the kingdom** means became queen. Hold up the long paper "scroll" and read the verse together. Roll up the end to hide the last part and read it again. Keep rolling, one part at a time, until the whole scroll is rolled up and the class can say the verse alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Esther said, 'If I perish, I perish' (4:16), and the king spared her. Jesus went further: He gave His life for us on purpose, and He rose again. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: look for one person who needs someone to stand up for them or help them. Pray first, then be brave and do it.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Esther 1:1: How many provinces did King Ahasuerus rule? *(An hundred and seven and twenty, which is 127)*
2. Esther 2:7: What was Esther's other name? *(Hadassah)*
3. Esther 2:21: What were the names of the two men who wanted to hurt the king? *(Bigthan and Teresh)*
4. Esther 3:7: What does "Pur" mean? *(The lot)*
5. Esther 4:11: How many days had it been since the king called Esther? *(Thirty days)*
6. Esther 4:16: How many days did Esther ask the Jews to fast? *(Three days, night or day)*
7. Esther 6:8: What three things did Haman say to give the man the king wanted to honour? *(The royal apparel, the king's horse and the crown royal)*
8. Esther 8:15: What colors were Mordecai's royal clothes? *(Blue and white)*

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7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Esther's courage. Help us speak up for what is right and stand up for people who need help, even when it's hard. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks about Haman's end (7:10): say it plainly and briefly: the king had Haman put to death on the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai. His wicked plan came back on his own head (9:25). Keep it calm and don't add detail.
Left out on purpose: why Vashti would not come (1:10–12), the palace customs for choosing a new queen (2:12–14), and the fighting in chapter 9 (9:1–16). Read Esther 1–10 yourself before class. If a child asks about the fighting, answer briefly: on the day of Haman's plan, the Jews gathered and stood up for their lives, and their enemies could not stand against them (9:1–2, 9:16). Then they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness (9:17).
If a child asks why Mordecai would not bow: the Bible doesn't say. It only says he told the servants he was a Jew (3:4). Don't add a reason the Bible doesn't give.
About God's name: the book of Esther never uses the word "God." Let kids notice the fasting (4:16), Mordecai's words that help would "arise... from another place" (4:14) and the sleepless night (6:1) without putting words in anyone's mouth.

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