Preschool–Grade 6

Queen Esther

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Courage means doing right and speaking up for others even when it costs you. Wherever you are, you may be there "for such a time as this."
Bible passage: Esther 1–10. Students read Esther 4:1–17 and 8:3–8 out loud themselves.
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)* and "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." *Joshua 1:9 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Esther 1–10 and Joshua 1:9. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Speak Up or Stay Quiet? (5–10 minutes)

Name one side of the room "speak up" and the other side "stay quiet." Read each situation. Students walk to the side that shows what they would honestly do. 1) A group chat starts making fun of a kid in your class. 2) A younger kid is being pushed around at the bus stop. 3) A friend is about to blame someone else for something your friend did. 4) Everyone is laughing at a joke about God. Ask: *What makes speaking up hard? What could it cost you?* Say: "Today we'll meet a young queen for whom speaking up could have cost her life."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the beginning in your own words: King Ahasuerus ruled 127 provinces from Shushan (1:1–2). When Queen Vashti refused to come at his command, she lost her royal place (1:12, 1:19), and the king's servants gathered young women from every province so the king could choose a new queen (2:2–4). Mordecai, a Jew, had raised his cousin Esther as his daughter (2:7). The king made Esther queen (2:17), but she kept it secret that she was a Jew, as Mordecai told her (2:10). Mordecai uncovered a plot against the king, and it was written in the king's chronicles (2:21–23). The king promoted Haman above all the princes, and Mordecai would not bow to him (3:1–2). Full of wrath, Haman planned to destroy all the Jews, cast Pur (the lot) to pick the day, and got the king's ring to seal the decree (3:5–13).

Read out loud: Esther 4:1–17. Old words in this passage:

- **rent his clothes** (4:1): tore his clothes in grief; **sackcloth with ashes** (4:1): rough cloth and ashes worn when mourning
- **raiment** (4:4): clothes; **the copy of the writing of the decree** (4:8): a copy of Haman's law
- **make supplication** (4:8): beg for help; **the inner court** (4:11): the king's private court
- **holdest thy peace** (4:14): stay silent; **enlargement and deliverance** (4:14): relief and rescue
- **bade** (4:15): told; **if I perish, I perish** (4:16): if I die, I die

Tell the middle part in your own words: On the third day Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court. The king held out the golden sceptre, and she touched its top (5:1–2). She invited the king and Haman to a banquet, then to a second one (5:4–8). Haman went home proud of his riches and honor, but angry about Mordecai, and his wife and friends told him to build a gallows for Mordecai (5:9–14). That night the king could not sleep. The book of records was read to him, and he learned that Mordecai had never been rewarded for saving his life (6:1–3). Haman, who had come to ask for Mordecai's death, was told to honor Mordecai instead, leading him on the king's horse through the city (6:4–11). At the second banquet Esther pleaded for her life and her people's lives and named "this wicked Haman" as the enemy (7:3–6). The king had Haman put to death on the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai (7:10). The king gave his ring to Mordecai (8:2).

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Read out loud: Esther 8:3–8. Old words in this passage:

- **besought him with tears** (8:3): begged him, crying; **mischief** (8:3): harm; **device** (8:3): plan
- **reverse the letters** (8:5): undo the decree; **endure** (8:6): bear
- **as it liketh you** (8:8): as you think best; **may no man reverse** (8:8): no one can undo it

Tell the end in your own words: New letters sealed with the king's ring let the Jews in every city gather together and stand for their lives (8:9–11). Mordecai went out in royal apparel of blue and white, and the city rejoiced: "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour" (8:15–16). When the day came, the Jews' enemies could not stand against them (9:1–2). Mordecai and Esther wrote to set apart the days of **Purim**, named after Pur, to remember every year how their sorrow was turned to joy, with gifts to each other and to the poor (9:20–22, 9:26–29). Mordecai became next to the king, "seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed" (10:3). **Wealth** here means good, and **seed** means people.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Esther had a good reason to stay quiet (4:11). What did it cost her to speak up? What does it cost you to stand up for someone?
2. Mordecai said that if Esther stayed silent, help would "arise... from another place" (4:14). What does that tell you about God's plans and our part in them?
3. Esther didn't go alone. She asked others to fast with her first (4:16). Why does that matter when you face something hard?
4. The book of Esther never names God. Where do you see Him working anyway (4:14, 6:1–3)? Where might He be working in your life when you can't see Him?
5. Haman had riches, honor and a high place, and still said "all this availeth me nothing" because of one man (5:11–13). What does pride do to a person?
6. Joshua 1:9 says, "the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." How can that help you be brave like Esther this week?

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4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: in Esther 4:14, **holdest thy peace** means stay silent, **enlargement and deliverance** means relief and rescue, **thy father's house** means your family, and **art come to the kingdom** means became queen. In Joshua 1:9, **dismayed** means discouraged or terrified, and **whithersoever thou goest** means wherever you go.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Esther 4:14 this week; keep working on Joshua 1:9 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Esther risked her life to save her people, and the king spared her. Jesus laid down His life for us on purpose, and rose again. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where has God placed me right now (family, school, team, church)? Who there might need me to speak up or help "for such a time as this"?
2. What makes me want to "hold my peace"? What is one brave step I could take this week?
3. Write a short prayer asking God for courage, and thanking Him that He is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: stand up for one person or speak up for what is right, kindly and with courage, and pray before you do it.

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7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You are with us wherever we go. Give us Esther's courage to speak up for what is right and for people who need help, even when it costs us something. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about Haman's end (7:10): answer honestly and briefly. The king had Haman hanged on the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai. Esther 9:25 says his wicked device returned "upon his own head." Read it as written and don't add detail.
If a student asks about chapter 9: this lesson doesn't read 9:1–16. Read it yourself before class. Answer honestly and calmly: Haman's decree could not be undone (8:8), so the second decree let the Jews defend themselves (8:11). On that day they fought those who attacked them, their enemies could not stand against them, and they did not take the spoil (9:1–2, 9:10, 9:16). Then they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness (9:17).
Left out on purpose: why Vashti refused (1:10–12) and the palace customs for choosing a new queen (2:12–14). If asked, keep it short: the king chose Esther and made her queen (2:17).
If a student asks why Mordecai would not bow: the Bible doesn't say. It only says he told the servants he was a Jew (3:4). Let students notice what the text says and doesn't say.
About God's name: the book of Esther never uses the word "God." That's worth talking about with this age (question 4), without putting words in anyone's mouth.

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