Preschool–Grade 6

Queen Esther

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Esther was brave and spoke up to save her people. God can help me be brave and do what is right too.
Bible passage: Esther 1–8 (the end of the story is in 9:20–32). 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)*. Kids learn the last part.
You need: a Bible, a paper towel tube with a yellow paper circle taped on top (the golden sceptre), 4 paper strips, a marker, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the last part of the memory verse on the 4 paper strips (see part 4). Put a bookmark in your Bible at Esther 4:14.

1. Opening game: May I Come In? (5 minutes)

Kids stand in a line at one wall. You stand at the other wall holding the "golden sceptre" down at your side. When you hold the sceptre out, kids may walk toward you. When you lower it, everyone freezes. Anyone who moves while the sceptre is down goes back to the wall. The first child to touch the top of the sceptre becomes the next leader. Then ask: *Was it hard to wait for the sceptre?* Say: "Today we will meet a queen who could only go in to the king if he held out his golden sceptre."

2. Bible story: Esther Is Brave (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Esther 4, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Long ago a king named **Ahasuerus** (say it: a-HAZ-you-AIR-us) ruled a huge kingdom, from India all the way to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1). His palace was in the city of **Shushan** (1:2). Queen Vashti would not come when the king called her, and she was not queen anymore (1:12, 1:19). So the king's helpers brought young women from all over the kingdom to the palace, and the king would choose a new queen (2:2–4, 2:8).

In Shushan lived a Jewish man named **Mordecai**. He had raised his cousin **Esther** as his own daughter, because her father and mother had died (2:5–7). Esther was brought to the palace too (2:8), and everyone who saw her liked her (2:15). The king chose Esther, set the royal crown on her head and made her queen (2:17). Mordecai told Esther not to tell anyone yet that she was Jewish, and she obeyed him (2:10, 2:20).

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The story continues: One day Mordecai heard that two of the king's doorkeepers wanted to hurt the king. He told Esther, and Esther told the king. The king was kept safe, and it was written down in the king's book (2:21–23).

Then the king made a man named **Haman** more important than all the other princes (3:1). Everyone at the king's gate had to bow down to Haman, but Mordecai would not bow (3:2). Haman was full of anger (3:5). When he learned that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman made a wicked plan to destroy all the Jews in the whole kingdom on one day (3:4–6, 3:13). The king gave Haman his ring to seal the letters, and the letters were sent everywhere (3:10–13).

Mordecai tore his clothes and cried with a loud cry (4:1). He sent a message to Esther: go to the king and ask him to save your people (4:8). But there was a law. Anyone who went in to the king without being called could be put to death, unless the king held out his **golden sceptre**, a gold rod that a king holds (4:11). Mordecai sent back these words: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14) That means, "Maybe you became queen for this very time!"

Esther told Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Shushan to **fast** for her, which means to go without food so they could seek help, for three days. Esther and her maids would fast too. Then she said, "So will I go in unto the king... and if I perish, I perish" (4:16). **Perish** means die. Esther was brave!

On the third day, Esther put on her royal clothes and stood in the king's inner court (5:1). The king saw her, and he held out the golden sceptre! Esther came near and touched the top of it (5:2). The king said, "What wilt thou, queen Esther?" (5:3) Esther asked the king and Haman to come to a special dinner, a **banquet** (5:4). There she asked them to come to a second banquet the next day (5:8).

That night the king could not sleep. He had his book of records read to him, and he heard how Mordecai had saved his life (6:1–2). Nothing had been done to thank Mordecai (6:3)! So the king told Haman to put the king's own royal clothes on Mordecai, set him on the king's horse and lead him through the city, calling out, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour" (6:10–11).

At the second banquet Esther said, "Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request" (7:3). Someone had planned to destroy her people (7:4). The king asked who. Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman" (7:6). The king was very angry, and Haman was punished for his wicked plan (7:7–10). Then the king let Esther and Mordecai send new letters, sealed with the king's ring, so the Jews could gather together and stand for their lives (8:8–11). Esther's people were saved! "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour" (8:16).

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3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Who raised Esther? *(Mordecai, her cousin, Esther 2:7)*
2. What did the king hold out to Esther? *(The golden sceptre, 5:2)*
3. What did Esther and her people do for three days before she went to the king? *(They fasted, 4:16)*
4. The night the king could not sleep, what did he hear read from his book? *(How Mordecai saved his life, 6:1–2)*
5. Who did Esther say was the enemy? *(Wicked Haman, 7:6)*

4. Memory verse: Sceptre Verse game (5 minutes)

Read the whole verse from your Bible first. 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. Say: "Mordecai meant, 'Maybe you became queen for this very time.'" Tape the 4 strips up in order: *and who knoweth / whether thou art come / to the kingdom / for such a time as this? Esther 4:14.* Read them together. Then take one strip away and read it again. Keep taking strips away until the kids can say the whole part by themselves. Then hold out the sceptre to a child, and that child says it alone.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Esther was ready to give her life to save her people. Jesus did even more: He gave His life to save us. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."

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: when you see someone left out or picked on, be brave like Esther. Speak up kindly, or go and tell a grown-up.

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6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Esther word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/esther-word-search), the Esther crossword, maze, coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/esther), or **Honor Parade:** one child is Mordecai. A second child walks beside Mordecai around the room, "leading the king's horse," while everyone calls out together, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour!" (Esther 6:11). **Delighteth to honour** means is happy to give a reward. Then two new children take a turn.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for brave Esther, who spoke up for her people. When it's hard to do what is right, help us be brave, and help us stand up for others. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks what happened to Haman: answer simply and calmly. The king had Haman put to death on the gallows (a tall wooden frame) that Haman had built for Mordecai (Esther 5:14, 7:9–10). Haman's wicked plan came back on himself (9:25). You don't need to say more.
Left out on purpose: this lesson does not tell why Vashti would not come (1:10–12), the palace customs for choosing a new queen (2:12–14), or the fighting in chapter 9 (9:1–16). Read Esther 1–10 yourself before class. If a child asks about the fighting, keep it short: on the day of Haman's plan, the Jews gathered together and stood up for their lives, and their enemies could not stand against them (9:1–2). Then they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy, sending gifts to each other and to the poor (9:17–22).
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 says the word "God." Don't put words in anyone's mouth. You can point out that Esther and her people fasted (4:16), that the king couldn't sleep on just the right night (6:1), and that Esther's people were saved.

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