

Mordecai's Plan

(Esther 5-6)

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, print the word *Pride* on a card.] Who can tell me what this word means? [Fold sides of card back showing only the *I*.] The heart of prides is *I*. Pride is when I am more important than anyone or anything else. [Fold sides of card out showing only “*rid*.”] God says that you and I as Christians need to get “rid” of pride. If we don't, pride can ruin our lives.

A man in our Bible lesson today learned that pride is a very dangerous thing! He was an important servant to the king of Persia—and he knew it!

Opening Prayer

Father, we are born with a “want to” to do things our own way. We have to learn how to be thoughtful of other people. Teach us through this lesson this morning how important it is for us to get rid of our pride so that we might love others and treat them with respect and honor. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.
(Proverbs 29:23)

Lesson

Review

We have been learning about a little orphan girl who became the Queen of Persia, one of the biggest and most important kingdoms of the world.

The children of Israel had been taken captive by the Babylonians because they had been unfaithful to Him. Since then, the Babylonian empire had been taken over by the Persians.

Meanwhile the Jews were still in captivity in Babylon.

Esther's parents had died and her cousin, Mordecai had raised her. He was like a father to her. When Queen Vashti was banished from the kingdom, King Xerxes held a beauty contest to choose another queen. Mordecai entered Esther in the contest and the king picked her to be the new queen.

Meanwhile, Mordecai heard that the king's prime minister, the second in command of the whole empire, was plotting to kill the Jews.

The King had ordered everyone to show respect to Haman by bowing down before him whenever he passed by. Mordecai refused to do that, because he was faithful to God. He knew it was wrong to bow down to anyone but to God alone. Haman was so mad at Mordecai that he had the king pass a law that on a certain date, every Jew in the land—man, woman, and child—was to be killed.

Mordecai got word to Esther about Haman's wicked scheme and asked her to go before the king and beg for mercy for the Jews.

She was very afraid. She knew that she might lose her life if she tried to get in to see the king without an invitation. There was a law in Persia at that time that said if someone appeared before the king without his permission, they were to be put to death unless he stretched out his golden scepter. And Esther had no idea if the king would welcome her or not. It had been over a month since he had asked her to visit him.

Continuing the Story...

But Mordecai told Esther, if she kept quiet at a time like this, she and all of the Jews would be killed. So she decided to risk her life and go to the king. She said, “*If I die, I die.*”

Esther 5:1

On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance.

I'm sure that Esther walked very slowly to the inner court of the palace where the king was sitting on his royal throne.

I wonder if tears were running down her face? Or, if she was trembling with fright? Would the king extend his golden scepter to her?

Esther 5:2

When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her and held out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter.

King Xerxes was pleased to see Esther and he held out his golden scepter to her. Her life was spared! She touched the tip of the scepter and knelt before him.

Esther 5:3

Then the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

Mordecai had urged Esther to go see the king so that she might beg him to spare the lives of the Jews. But, Esther did not tell the king what she had really come for. Instead, she invited him and Haman to a dinner party she planned. What kept Esther from asking the king to save the lives of her people? Was she afraid? God was in control; she was following His leading to wait; He had a plan. Sometimes we need to wait on the Lord's timing before we say things. Don't be too quick to speak out; wait for the perfect time.

Both the king and Haman were very pleased to be invited to the queen's banquet.

Esther 5:9

Haman was a happy man as he left the banquet! But when he saw Mordecai sitting at the palace gate, not standing up or trembling nervously before him, Haman became furious.

Haman was very impressed that only he and the king had been invited to the queen's special banquet. He felt very honored, but he was full of pride!

As Haman left the palace, his joy at being invited to a special dinner party for just him and the king suddenly turned to anger when he saw Mordecai. Mordecai still refused to bow down to him.

Haman was furious!

When he got home, he told his wife and friends how upset he was at Mordecai because he would not bow down to him. When they heard this, they told him to build a hang man's platform and have the king hang Mordecai.

Haman thought this was a great idea. He ordered the gallows to be built. Haman had planned that in the morning he would ask the king to hang Mordecai from it. Things did not look good for the Jews. However, God is always faithful to His people and He began to work out the situation.

That night the king could not sleep. He thought maybe God was keeping him awake because He had something to say to him. The king decided to have the royal record books brought in and read to him. He thought maybe that would help him fall asleep. As the servant was reading the record of the king's accomplishments, he read the story of how Mordecai, a long time before, had saved the king's life by telling the king of a plot to kill him.

Remember back in chapter 2 when I told you not to forget about the good deed that Mordecai had done? Way back before the king had appointed Haman to be the prime minister and told everybody they had to bow down to honor him, Mordecai had overheard two bad guys making plans to kill the king. He got word to the king and those two bad guys were stopped. Well, the story about Mordecai's good deed was written down in this book of records. But for some reason, the king had never rewarded Mordecai for his bravery. It was all but forgotten over time.

The king couldn't sleep that night and had his servant read the record book and when he got to the part about Mordecai's good deed, the king stopped him and asked:

Esther 6:3

"What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked. His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done for him."

Well it happened that Haman was just coming in to ask the king to hang Mordecai.

Esther 6:4

“Who is that in the outer court?” the king inquired. As it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to impale Mordecai on the pole he had prepared.

But before Haman could ask the king to kill Mordecai, the king asked Haman an interesting question:

Esther 6:6

So Haman came in, and the king said, “What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?” Haman thought to himself, “Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?”

Haman thought the king was talking about him. He didn't know that the king really wanted to honor Mordecai for his bravery.

Esther 6:7-9

So he replied, “If the king wishes to honor someone, (8) he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden—one with a royal emblem on its head. (9) Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honor is dressed in the king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, ‘This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!’”

The king thought this was a wonderful idea and Haman's plans got ruined.

Esther 6:10

“Excellent!” the king said to Haman. “Quick! Take the robes and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Leave out nothing you have suggested!”

What an unexpected turn of events this was for Haman! The very man he had planned to put to death, he now had to proclaim as a hero. Haman was completely humiliated before his wife and friends. Haman's pride was ruining his life.

We all need to be careful not to let our pride ruin our lives. One way to guard against pride is to pray every day that God would help you please Him in your actions towards others—that you will treat them as you would want to be treated. Be willing to listen to your family and friends if they are trying to tell you to change your attitude. The Bible says that *“A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor”* (Proverbs 29:23)

How humiliated and angry Haman was to have to honor the very man he wanted to kill. But he had to do it because the king had commanded it. He would have to do to his worst enemy what he wanted the king to do for him. He even had to lead the horse around town himself! When it was over, he ran back to his home, totally ashamed.

While he was there, a servant of the king arrived and reminded him to come to the banquet Queen Esther had prepared.

Next week we'll pick up the story again to find out how Esther, a poor orphan girl who had become the Queen of Persia, was able to save her people, the Jews, from being wiped off the face of the earth.

Closing Prayer

Father, forgive us for times that we have had prideful attitudes. Help us to not be prideful like Haman was. We want to be humble, helpful, and kind to others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Why was Esther nervous about going in to see the king? (He could have her killed for appearing before him without an invitation.)

2. What did the king do to show that Esther had found favor with him? (He held out the golden scepter.)
3. Did Esther tell the king what her request was right away? (No! She invited him and Haman to a dinner party, instead.)
4. Why was Haman so full of joy at being asked to the queen's special banquet? (He felt special and honored. He was full of pride.)
5. What changed Haman's joyful attitude at being invited to the queen's banquet? (He passed Mordecai who still refused to bow to him.)
6. What advice did Haman's wife and friends give him when they saw how bitter and upset he was? (They told him to build a hang man's platforms and have Mordecai killed.)
7. What happened that night when the king could not sleep? (The king told a servant to bring in the book of records to read to him.)
8. What did the servant read to the king from the record books? (The part about Mordecai warning the king about two palace guards who were plotting to kill the king.)
9. What question did the king ask Haman as he came into the palace to ask the king to have Mordecai killed? (He asked, "What would be a good way to honor someone you appreciate?")
10. Who did Haman think the king wanted to honor? (Himself)
11. Describe some of the ways Haman thought he should be honored. (see verses 7-9)
12. What was the unexpected turn of events for Haman? (The king told Haman that he wanted him to honor Mordecai in the way he described.)
13. What is one way to guard against having a prideful attitude? (Pray every day that God would help you please Him in how you treat others.)