

Esther Saves God's People

(Esther 7—8)

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, bring an unassembled picture puzzle to class.] Do you like putting puzzles together? I'm glad there is a picture of what the puzzle will look like when it's finished, because it reminds me that even though it may look like a mess while I'm trying to put it together, it will eventually form a beautiful picture. Did you know that your life and my life are like pieces of a puzzle that fit into God's master plan? He is working out all the events in your life to fit into His overall plan.

Sometimes we can't understand when things happen that don't seem to fit into what we think God's plan should be.

We've been going through the book of Esther and we've gotten to the point where every Jew in the whole Persian Empire is just about to be killed. The Jews must have wondered how their circumstances could ever fit into God's plan.

Opening Prayer

Father, life is like a puzzle. We can't see how all the pieces of our lives will fit together. Things often seem out of place. Things may not fit exactly right. But thank You that you do have a plan; that You are in control of everything that happens in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Lesson

Review

- King divorces Vashti (1:1—22)

- Orphan Girl Becomes Queen. (2:1—20)
- Mordecai overheard a plot to murder the king, reported it, and his good deed was recorded in the king's record book. (2:21—23)
- The king promoted Haman to a powerful position and ordered people to kneel in respect to him. Mordecai angered Haman by refusing to bow in respect to him. Haman devised a plan to destroy him and all the Jews. (3:1—15)
- Mordecai urged Esther to go to the king and beg for mercy. (4:1—17)
- Esther risked her life and went before the king, but instead of begging him to have mercy towards the Jews, she invited him and Haman to a banquet.
- Proud Haman vengefully built a gallows on which to hang Mordecai; then waited for morning to get the king's permission to carry out his plan. (5:9—14)
- Meanwhile, that very night, the king couldn't sleep and had his record books read to him and discovered that Mordecai had never been rewarded for saving his life. (6:1—3)
- The king asked Haman how a special servant should be honored. Haman suggested an impressive ceremony, which he was then embarrassed to have to carry out for Mordecai (6:4—11)

Continuing the Story...

Last week we left the story right after Haman was so humiliated. How angry he 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 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.

Esther 7:1

So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet.

Mordecai had urged Esther to go see the king so that she might beg him to spare the lives of the Jews. But Queen Esther still had not asked the king for mercy; she had been waiting for the perfect timing. The king knew there was something on Queen Esther's mind. Finally, during the wine course, he asked Esther what her request was.

Esther 7:2

On this second occasion, while they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "Tell me what you want, Queen Esther. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

The king told Esther, *I'll give you anything you ask for, up to half my kingdom.* So Esther knew the timing was just right to ask him.

Esther 7:3-4

Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor with the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my request, I ask that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. (4) For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had merely been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would be too trivial a matter to warrant disturbing the king."

Esther boldly told the king that there was a wicked plot to destroy the Jews. She told him that she and her people were doomed to destruction and slaughter. The king wondered what she was talking about. Who would dare such a thing?

Esther 7:5

"Who would do such a thing?" King Xerxes demanded. "Who would be so presumptuous as to touch you?"

Immediately, Queen Esther pointed her finger at Haman.

Esther 7:6-7

Esther replied, "This wicked Haman is our adversary and our enemy." Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen. (7) Then the king jumped to his feet in a rage and went out into the palace garden.

Haman, however, stayed behind to plead for his life with Queen Esther, for he knew that the king intended to kill him.

The king was furious. He stormed out of the banquet hall in anger and walked into the palace garden to try and control his temper. Haman was afraid for his life.

Esther 7:8

In despair he fell on the couch where Queen Esther was reclining, just as the king was returning from the palace garden. The king exclaimed, "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes?" And as soon as the king spoke, his attendants covered Haman's face, signaling his doom.

The king was enraged to see Haman fall upon the queen.

Just then one of the king's servants said, *"Haman just had a gallows built at his house so that he could hang Mordecai."* And the king ordered that they hang Haman on it! And Haman was taken out of the king's presence and hung immediately on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai.

That very day the king gave Queen Esther Haman's palace and all his property.

Esther 8:1-2

On that same day King Xerxes gave the property of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king how they were related. (2) The king took off his signet ring—which he had taken back from Haman—and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of Haman's property.

The king appointed Mordecai Prime Minister of the Persian Empire in Haman's place. Mordecai was now the second most powerful man in the Persian Empire.

But there was still trouble ahead for the Jews... Remember the command to kill all the Jews that Haman had tricked the king into passing? Well, that law was still in effect; not even the king himself could change that!

So, once again Esther goes to the king.

Esther 8:3-6

Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil plot of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"

Esther begged the king to change the command to kill the Jews. The king couldn't change the law, but he could make a new law! In fact he tells Esther and Mordecai to write the new law themselves!

Esther 8:7-8

Then Esther went again before the king, falling down at his feet and begging him with tears to stop the evil plot devised by Haman the Agagite against the Jews. (4) Again the king held out the gold scepter to Esther. So she rose and stood before him. (5) Esther said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor with him, and if he thinks it is right, and if I am pleasing to him, let there be a decree that reverses the orders of Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, who ordered that Jews throughout all the king's provinces should be destroyed. (6) For how can I endure to see my people and my family slaughtered and destroyed?"

Immediately the king's secretaries were called in and they wrote the new law which said that on the day that the Jews were supposed to be killed, they would have the right to defend themselves and kill all those who tried to harm them.

The day came when the Jews were supposed to be attacked. They fought back bravely and killed many of those who tried to destroy them, including all of Haman's sons!

After the fighting was over, Mordecai sent a message to all the Jews throughout the empire, telling them to set aside two days every year in memory of the great victory God had given them. It was God who worked out everything to make sure His people were not destroyed.

And every year Jewish people celebrate *Purim* to remember when Queen Esther and Mordecai saved the Jewish people from being wiped out and to praise God for guarding His people and saving them from the harm that wicked men plotted against them.

How wonderfully God had worked, moving people and events in just the right way to accomplish His plan. God is in complete control of all the events that happen in each one of our lives.

God knew exactly what He was doing. Because He protected the Jews, many years later Jesus was born to a little Jewish girl named, Mary. He lived a sinless life and died on a cross, and three days later he rose from the dead. Jesus was God, come to earth in the form of a man. He came to take the punishment that you and I deserve. He did it because He loves us and wants us to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Each one of our lives fits like a puzzle piece into God's master plan. He is working out all the events in your life to fit into His overall plan. Think of all the ways God leads you and protects you. Like a shepherd, He will direct the path of your life if you will just follow Him and do what He asks. We need to take time every day to praise God for His love and care for us.

Closing Prayer

Father, sometimes we don't see the big picture of life, like You do. We wonder what in the world You are doing and what Your will is for our lives. Studying Esther's life encourages us to believe that You are in control of all things; that You have a plan and a purpose for our lives. Help us to have faith and trust in You even if we can't see or understand why certain things are happening in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Charades

Have the children form teams of 2 or 3 and act out some of the events from the story of Esther. See if the rest of the kids can guess what the scenario is.

- King Xerxes having a 6-month party and Queen Vashti refusing to come. (1:12)
- Esther receiving beauty treatments. (2:9)
- Esther in the beauty contest. (2:17)
- Haman walking by and people bowing to him; Mordecai refusing to bow. (3:2)
- Esther nervously walking in to see the king; the king extending the scepter. (5:1-2)
- Haman honoring Mordecai in the way he wanted to be honored (6:7-9)
- Esther pointing her finger at Haman and accusing him before the king. (7:8)
- Haman being hanged (7:10)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the ways God showed His complete control over the events in Esther's life?
 - God arranged for Esther to become queen.
 - He placed Mordecai to hear the plot against the king.

- He caused the king to be unable to sleep.
 - He led the king's servant to read the record book with the account Mordecai's good deed.
2. What are some ways God has shown His love and protection in your life? How has He shown you that He cares for and controls the events in your life?