



**Book of Esther / Lesson 4
Esther Pleads for Her People**

Esther Pleads for Her People

Esther 4:1-17

Servants Preparation instructions:

- Pray, read the chapters in the bible and the lesson thoroughly.
- Within the lesson you will find actual verses of the chapter and explanation of the part
- Make sure to use the maps and the intro info [from lesson1] for all the upcoming lessons as reminder.
- **Attention gritter** is an ice breaker and intro to the lesson, use your discretion for age appropriation; if it does not suit your class age try tweaking it a bit to fit
- There are **activities and crafts**; they are meant to engage the class and have them pay more attention; , use your discretion for age appropriation; if it does not suit your class age try tweaking it a bit to fit
- Announce the **Lesson goal** and have the kids point out where is the goal in the passages you read together.
- There are video resources/ games resources at the intro [from lesson1] make sure to incorporate some for each lesson.
- Questions and assignment at the end: you don't need to do all of them, but you can use them either during class for checking on comprehension/ or at the beginning of the next class for revision/ as a home work or at the end of the book as a competition assignment with rewards.

	Part	Chapters
2	The banquet of Queen Esther	3 - 7

1- The humiliation of Mordecai	1 - 3
2- Deeply distressed, Esther sent Hathach to learn what happened to Mordecai	4 - 9
3- Messages between Esther and Mordecai	10 – 17

MEMORY VERSE

ESTHER 4:16

“...And so I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Chalk, paper, and tape.

One 9" x 9" square piece of burlap for each child, gray or black construction paper or confetti, string or ribbon, paper, markers, and a hole punch.

Chalk and a chalkboard.

ATTENTION GETTER!

What's My Line? [Guessing game]

God has a wonderful plan for all of our lives. Before class, take three sheets of paper and tape them onto your class chalk/dry erase board. The papers should be in a row approximately 6 inches apart. Choose two or three children from your class and ask the question, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" Do not have them answer just yet. Have your first "chosen" child come up and sit at the front of the class. Have them whisper into your ear what their future profession will be. Write it on the chalkboard, concealing it with a piece of paper and tape.

Have the rest of the class, one at a time, ask a question to try to guess. They can ask anything except, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" Have the child in the front answer the questions. Play until either the profession is guessed or everyone has asked a question. If it is not guessed remove the paper from the chalkboard to reveal what it is.

Allow the next one or two children to play. Explain to all of the children that no matter what we do in life, God has a wonderful plan for us. No matter where He places us, we can be used for His glory just like Esther was used.

LESSON TIME!

Lesson Goal: **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Goal Explained: sometimes we can find ourselves in bad situations, like Queen Esther and the Jewish people did. At those times, let us remember that He will be our strength and help; He will deliver us. He may even want to use our lives, like He did Queen Esther, to bring about that deliverance. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Review of previous events:

The situation seemed out of control. Haman, in a wicked plot of revenge against Mordecai and all of God's people, had persuaded the king of Persia to issue a decree—in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, all the Jewish people were to be annihilated! But, God had a plan. He would deliver His people. Remember Esther, who was made Queen of Persia? She was in the right place at the right time. She will be called upon to help in this time of crisis; but it will not be easy! Will she choose to be a part of God's plan? **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Esther 4:1-3

The humiliation of Mordecai / Esther Agrees to Help the Jews

4 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. ² He went as

far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. ³ And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

When Mordecai heard the king's decree stating the Jews were to be killed, he went throughout the city mourning and lamenting, even to the king's gate. He cried bitterly, tore his clothes, put on sackcloth (a rough, hairy garment), and spread ashes upon his head as a sign of deep grief. He came to the king's gate but did not enter, since there was a law that no one should enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. Humiliated himself before God, and prayed. Everywhere, the Jews fasted, wept, wailed, and wore sackcloth and ashes.

Imagine how the Jewish people must have felt. Not only would they have felt a **great sense of rejection** (from the King of Persia, himself), but their very lives were threatened. It seemed they had only days to live. It must have *seemed* hopeless! **Yet God was still in control.** He had a plan.

Application:

We may face difficult and seemingly hopeless situations. May we not look at our circumstances and despair; may we, instead, look to our God! He has a plan. A turn of events never surprises Him; though perhaps silently and behind the scenes, He is, indeed, working. He will help us in our time of need and weave the circumstances of our lives together for His good purpose.

Esther 4:4-9

Deeply distressed, Esther sent Hathach to learn what happened to Mordecai

⁴ So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*. ⁵ Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this *was*. ⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king's gate. ⁷ And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. ⁸ He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at ^{la}Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people. ⁹ So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Esther's maids and attendants told her of Mordecai's appearance in sackcloth and ashes (deep mourning) before the gate of the palace. Esther was filled with grief and sent Mordecai regular clothes to put on instead of his sackcloth. Perhaps, she did that so he would enter the palace and explain to her what was wrong. He refused the new clothes, perhaps to make her aware of the extent of his grief and persuade her to question the reason for his attire.

Then Esther sent Hathach, one of her attendants, to Mordecai to learn the cause of his mourning. When Hathach came to him, Mordecai told him all that had happened and the amount of money that Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasuries to acquire the king's permission to destroy the Jews.

Mordecai also gave Hathach a copy of the decree published in Susa [The City] to show it to the queen. Mordecai then told Hathach to command Esther to go in to see the king, to entreat him, and to make request before him for her people.

Sackcloth and Ashes

In Old Testament times, whenever people were sad or mourned, they would put on sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was very rough material that would scratch against the skin. They would put ashes in their hair as a sign of sadness. In our lesson, today, Mordecai, and many of the Jews wore sackcloth and ashes because of their sadness over the king's decree.

Optional craft

For a **craft**, you will make a sackcloth pouch filled with ashes. You will need one 9" x 9" square piece of burlap for each child, gray or black construction paper or confetti, string or ribbon, paper, markers, and a hole punch. Begin by laying out the burlap square. Tear several strips of black or gray construction paper into tiny pieces or use confetti and place in the center of the square. Pull up each end of the square and tie the top with string or ribbon. This will make a small pouch. On a small strip of paper, approximately 1" x 4," write "Sackcloth and Ashes" and today's memory verse or theme. Write the child's name on the back of the paper. Punch a hole in the paper and tie to the pouch with string or ribbon.

God is Our strength

Remind the children that sometimes we can find ourselves in bad situations, like Queen Esther and the Jewish people did. At those times, let us remember that He will be our strength and help; He will deliver us. He may even want to use our lives, like He did Queen Esther, to bring about that deliverance. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Esther 4:10-14

Messages between Esther and Mordecai

¹⁰ Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: ¹¹ "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." ¹² So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

¹³ And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"

Esther's Reluctance:

After Hathach told Queen Esther all that Mordecai had instructed, she sent her response back to Mordecai by Hathach. She told him that she could not--without endangering her life--go to the king and talk to him. There was a law that stated that whoever came to the king without being summoned (asked to come) could be put to death if the king so desired. If the king was pleased to see an uninvited visitor, he would hold out the golden scepter and the visitor would be allowed to enter his presence. Queen Esther had not been summoned to him for thirty days. Realizing the danger—it could cost her life—Esther was afraid of such a bold action.

Mordecai Trust in God/ Showing Esther the right way

When Mordecai heard of Queen Esther's reluctance, he sent her back a very sober message. "Think not that you will be saved in the king's house above all the Jews." Mordecai wanted Queen Esther to realize her life was also in danger. Haman's intent was to destroy *all* Jews. In other words, if she does not die because she does not go to the king, she could still die as a result of the decree.

Mordecai displayed great confidence in the Lord. He *knew* that if Esther did nothing, God would deliver the Jews some other way. He knew that the Jewish nation would not perish because of lack of God's protection. But, he also saw that it was, perhaps, God's plan to use Esther as the one through whom deliverance would come. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Mordecai encouraged Esther, "...Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Perhaps, Esther had been placed as Queen of Persia for this very purpose—to be God's instrument in protection of His people.

Esther had a choice to make. Would she choose to be used by God?

It is as though he is telling her that God would find another way to deliver His people, but you would lose the crown He meant for you to have. So, if Esther became a queen, or Joseph was sold as a slave, God, the Lord of history, meant to bring them forth to where they would glorify Him to the account of the whole congregation. [Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty]

Esther 4:15-17

¹⁵ Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

¹⁷ So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded ^{to} him.

Fasting and Prayer:

If Mordecai has confronted Esther with such utter courage and frankness, to take fear out of her heart, She, in her turn, humbly received his message, and her response to it revealed a heart, wide with exalted love; She urged Mordecai and all the Jews to unite in a three day fast, during which she and her maidens would also fast.

God's gracious help was needed in the bold step she was to take. Fasting is when God's people take a period of time to go without food to pray and to seek Him. Fasting allows us to keep our focus on the Lord without distractions. Esther wanted as many people as possible to keep her lifted up in prayer during this very important time.

Esther concludes, "If I perish, I perish." These are not words of despair, but the voice of one who has surrendered completely to the will of God. Esther made the right choice. She yielded her life to God, though she was faced with much uncertainty.

Application:

Let us consider our own lives. God has a plan and purpose for us as He did for Esther. He places us in the right places at the right times, orchestrating the events of our lives so that His purposes may be accomplished. Perhaps, He has placed us in a certain school so that we can be a witness for Him. Maybe there is someone in our family that needs to see an example of Jesus. Maybe God will use us to pray for and help a neighbor in their time of need.

As a result of Esther's decision to yield to God and do His will, His plan and purpose in the deliverance of His people will begin to unfold. God has everything

under control! We, too, will make a choice. May we choose, like Esther, to be His vessels, yielded to His will, that we may see His plan and purposes accomplished in our lives. **God has a purpose for our lives.**

Why did Esther elected to fast and pray?

Esther did not blame Mordecai for causing that by refusing to bow down to Haman; she as an honest Jew knew he did the right thing. She also did not ask him to find another solution without involving her; She was obedient to someone who raised her as a woman of God. She chose to fast and pray with all of her people and her maids as well; We also have a good effect on the people surrounding us to draw them near to God.

Esther trusted God and knew that He can change the stony heart of the king: for: *"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord"* (Proverb 21: 1). She resorted to prayer and fasting, to let God change the stony nature of the king's heart, and to open it up for her, to enter into it together with the Lord, to deliver her and her people. About this, **St. Ambrose says:** [By her fasting, Esther moved the proud heart of the king

Fruit of the Spirit Tic Tac Toe [Game]

If we live a Spirit-controlled life, we can certainly be useful to the Lord. Do our lives display the fruits of a Spirit-controlled life? Draw a large Tic Tac Toe graph on the chalk or dry erase board. In each square put a small number beginning with 1 and going through 9. Each of these boxes will represent a fruit of the Spirit.

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Longsuffering
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self-control

Split up your class into two teams, the "X"s and the "O"s. Have each group take turns choosing which square they would like to take by choosing a number. After choosing the number, in order to capture the square, they will need to get together as a group and "act out" that fruit of the Spirit. They can do anything to demonstrate that fruit. You as the teacher will be the judge if they are accurate and should qualify to receive the square.

Continue playing until someone gets Tic Tac Toe. If you feel they did not earn the square then the other team can try to earn the square. Play the game a few times and have fun. As we yield to God's control, these fruits of the Spirit will be evident in our lives.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to seek God's will for their lives, understanding He has a plan and a purpose for them.

Questions for Revision or homework:

CHAPTER 4: [For Servants; you can pick some or all of the questions]

1. What did Mordecai request from Esther?
a) to kill Haman
b) flee with the Jews
c) ask the king to spare Esther's people
2. Esther asked the Jews to:
a) fast for three days
b) kill the king
c) protest in front of the king's palace
3. Any person who went into the inner court to the king, and has not been called, were (Killed – welcomed – promoted), except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter.

Application Questions

What does it mean to "trust" God and how can I do it? (Esther 4:14)

How can I stand up for what is right, even when it's difficult? (Esther 4:13)

How can I know what God wants me to do? (Esther 4:19)

What does it mean to "fast" and how can I do it? (Esther 4:16)

Should I always do what other people tell me to do? (Esther 4:19)

What does it mean to "pray" and how can I do it? (Esther 4:17)

What should I do when I'm feeling afraid? (Esther 4:15)

What does it mean to have "courage" and how can I get it? (Esther 4:14)

What do you think Mordecai's motivations were for asking Esther to intercede on behalf of the Jewish people? ([4:1-4,14](#))

Exegetical Questions

How might Esther's experience be relevant to Christians today who find themselves in positions of power or influence?

How does Esther's status as a foreigner in the Persian court complicate her decision to intervene on behalf of her people?

How does Mordecai's advice to Esther ("For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for

the Jews from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?") apply to Christians today?

What is the significance of Esther's phrase "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" in light of God's sovereign plan?

How does Esther's initial reaction to Mordecai's plea for help compare to her later decision to intervene on behalf of her people?

What does Esther's example teach us about the use of power or influence for good?

What can we learn from Esther about the importance of speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves?

What does Esther's experience teach us about the role of chance or providence in human affairs?

Observation Questions

What was the outcome of Esther's decision?

What did Esther do in response to Mordecai's request?

How did Esther feel about her decision?

What can we learn from Mordecai's persuasiveness?

What can we learn from Esther's response?

What did Mordecai think was the best solution?

What did Esther think of Mordecai's solution?

What was the problem that Mordecai was trying to solve?

Group Discussion Questions

Why do you think Mordecai wanted Esther to get involved? (4:14)

Why do you think Esther ultimately decided to help? (4:17)

What do you think was going through Esther's mind as she considered what Mordecai had asked her to do? (4:16)

How do you think the other Jews would have reacted if Esther had refused to help? (4:3)

How do you think the other Jews felt about Mordecai's request? (4:3)

How do you think Esther felt when Mordecai approached her with this request? (4:4)

What do you think is the takeaway from this passage about helping others? (4:14)

What do you think would have happened if Esther had refused to help? (4:17)

How do you think Esther felt about risking her life to approach the king? ([4:11-13](#))

Assignments on Esther 4

Please read Esther 4 and answer the following questions.

1. How did Mordecai act when he learned about the decree – 4:1? Why be so upset?
2. How did other Jews react – 4:3? Explain the purpose of sackcloth, ashes, and fasting.
3. What did Esther do about Mordecai's distress? How did he respond – 4:4?
4. Whom did Esther then send to Mordecai, and for what purpose – 4:5,6?
5. What information did Mordecai send to Esther? What did he ask her to do – 4:7-9?
6. What reason did Esther give for not going before the king? How long had it been since the king had called for her – 4:10-12?
7. What did Mordecai warn Esther about in 4:13? In what sense is this also true of us if we fail to serve God?
8. What did Mordecai say would happen if Esther did not speak up – 4:14? On what basis could he know this to be true?
9. Explain Mordecai's statement: "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Think: Do we always know what purpose God may have for putting us in a certain position? Explain.)
10. What decision did Esther make? What did she want people to do for her – 4:15-17

