

# Session 5

## Esther: The right woman in the right place

Children discover that anyone can be used by God in a specific place and time

**Scripture:** Esther

### Supplies

- Blanket or sheet
- Newspaper
- Dowels or skewer sticks
- Foil
- Decorations, glue and scissors
- Copies of the mystery scriptures
- Bibles



### Welcome

### Mystery knees:

Use the blanket or sheet and ask two children to hold it. The blanket must be about 40cm above the floor. Now give 5 children a chance to come to the front while the rest keep their eyes closed. The 5 children take off their shoes and go stand behind the blanket in any order. Their bodies and faces are hidden behind the blanket (perhaps they could sit on a chair). The rest of the group have to guess which feet/knees belong to which child.

### Mystery ID:

Let's play a quick memory game. Guess who the mystery person is. We'll give you one part of their story and everyone guesses who it is.

### Clues:

- He was in a big fish (Jonah)
- He was in a lion's den (Daniel)
- He was the first king (Saul)
- She stayed with her mother-in-law (Ruth)
- He ate honey from a lion's carcass (Samson)
- He lived in a temple since he was a child (Samuel)
- He fought against a giant (David)
- He was very smart (Solomon)
- God taught him about clay (Jeremiah)



### Worship

**Settle down ritual:** Let the children close their eyes. Let them look at the dark and light patterns inside their eyelids. After 10 counts say in a quiet voice: "God's light shines over all of us, whether it's dark or light in our lives. Ask God to show you the dark things in your life and to help you get rid of them." Wait a few more seconds and then close with "Amen".



## Word

As you know, God's people were living in foreign countries. In that time there was a young girl named Esther. Her parents had died and she was living with her uncle, Mordecai. They lived in a city called Susa. The king from that time was king Xerxes and his queen was named Vashti. Queen Vashti (with good reason) didn't show enough respect for her husband when he expected it. The king was scared that she was setting a bad example for other women, so he decided he didn't want her as queen anymore and he sent her away. It was a very big scandal. Then the king decided he needed a new queen.

This is how choosing a new queen would work:

Girls from all over would be sent to the palace. A man was appointed to take care of these women and his name was Hegai. He had to make sure that they received beauty treatments so that the king could choose the most beautiful girl to become queen. Esther was one of the girls who had to move to the palace. Hegai immediately liked Esther and treated her better than the rest. She got better beauty treatments and also got to eat a special diet. He moved her to the best room and gave her slaves.

Her uncle suggested she doesn't tell anyone that she's a Jew. Her uncle also spent every day at the palace to make sure she was alright. After 12 months each girl had to appear before the king so he could make his choice. When it was Esther's turn, everyone was blown away by her.

When the king saw her, he immediately decided to make her queen. Her uncle Mordecai also got a job at the palace. Esther still didn't say anything about her background and that she was a Jew. In the time that Mordecai worked for the king, he overheard two of the palace guards talking. They were angry with the king and wanted to kill him. When Mordecai heard that, he told Esther. Esther went to the king and told him what Mordecai heard. The king immediately started an investigation, and it came out to be true. The palace guards were hanged and this story was written down in the king's history books.

There was also a man named Haman. He was the second in command in the country. The king commanded all the palace workers to bow before Haman as a sign of respect. Everyone did it, except Esther's uncle, Mordecai. Mordecai didn't want to do it because he was a Jew and would only bow before God.

Haman was furious when he found out Mordecai wouldn't respect him. Then he decided to not only punish Mordecai, but to kill all the Jews (Israelites). Haman chose a date when they would start killing the Jews. Haman went to the king and said: "Among us are a people who are different to us. They don't even accept our laws. Give me permission to kill them all." The king answered: "Do with the Jews as you please!" But what the king didn't realize was that his own wife, Esther, was a Jew.

When Mordecai heard what was going to happen, he was very sad and upset. He put on mourning clothes and walked through the city crying. When Esther heard what he was doing, she realized something was wrong. She immediately sent someone to find out what was going on. Mordecai told them and asked Esther to go see the king and speak to him about it. But that's not how things worked back then! You couldn't just see the king. You had to be called or invited – otherwise you were killed! But Esther decided to take the risk. She fasted and prayed for three days. She also asked that Mordecai and the other Jews also fast and pray. Three days later Esther put on her royal clothes and went to the entrance of the king's throne room. When he saw her there he was overwhelmed by her beauty and lifted his scepter to her (this was a sign that she could come closer and speak to him).

He asked her: "What is it, my queen? Tell me what you need and I'll give it to you, even if it is half of my kingdom." "If it's fine with you," she said, "I would like you and Haman to be my guests this evening at a dinner I'm hosting." Then the king said: "Go fetch Haman immediately so that we can do as Esther asks."

At the dinner Esther said: "What I really want, if you will agree, is that you and Haman will be my guests again tomorrow night. At that dinner I will tell you what I want."

When Haman went home that night, he bragged to his wife. He ate with the king and queen and would do so again the next day! But there was one thing still irritating him: Mordecai. If only he could get rid of him, then his life would

be perfect. His wife's advice was: "Build a gallows tomorrow and ask the king if you can hang Mordecai immediately. Afterwards you can go eat with the king and queen."

But that same night the king couldn't sleep. Something was bothering him. He fetched his history books and one of his slaves read it to him until he fell asleep. But in one of those books the slave read how Mordecai had saved the king's life so many years ago. The king wanted to know if Mordecai had been rewarded, but he never was. The next morning the king asked Haman what he would do to reward someone. Haman thought the king meant him, Haman, so he thought up something very special.

"Take nice clothes that you would wear, and also a horse that you would ride. Have a palace worker give it to the person and lead him through the streets while calling out: "The king thanks this man!"

The king said: "That's a great idea. Go and do so for the Jew, Mordecai." Haman had to do it. He was very upset and embarrassed. Later that day he was eating with the king and queen. While they were eating, the king asked Esther: "What did you want to ask me? Tell me and I will give it to you."

She answered: "If it's alright with you, I would like to ask this: Please allow me and my people to live." "Who wants to kill you?" he asked. "Who is this man?"

Then Esther answered: "Our enemy who wants to kill us is this man, Haman." Haman went entirely pale. Suddenly the king realized that his wife is also a Jew – the people who Haman hates. The king ordered gallows to be made and that Haman would be hanged. The people said: "The gallows is already built because Haman wanted to hang Mordecai." That day Haman was hanged on his own gallows. The king also changed the law that said the Jews had to be killed.

Esther was queen in the right place and the right time. She was brave and faithful. With God's help she came up with a plan that worked.

Children reflect on the story:

1. I wonder which part of the story you liked the most
2. I wonder who you want to be in the story
3. I wonder if you're proud/grateful



### Working and Playing

- Use the Bible to complete the mystery verse
- Make scepters



### Closing prayer to end the session

"God chooses you to help people who are struggling, no matter who you are. Go now, don't be afraid. God is with you."

#### ANSWERS:

Isaiah 41: 10 So do not **fear**, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your **God**. I will strengthen you and help you; I will **uphold** you with my righteous right hand.

Esther 1: 19 Therefore, if it **pleases** the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of **Persia** and Media, which cannot be repealed, that **Vashti** is never again to enter the presence of King **Xerxes**. Also let the king give her **royal** position to someone else who is better than she.

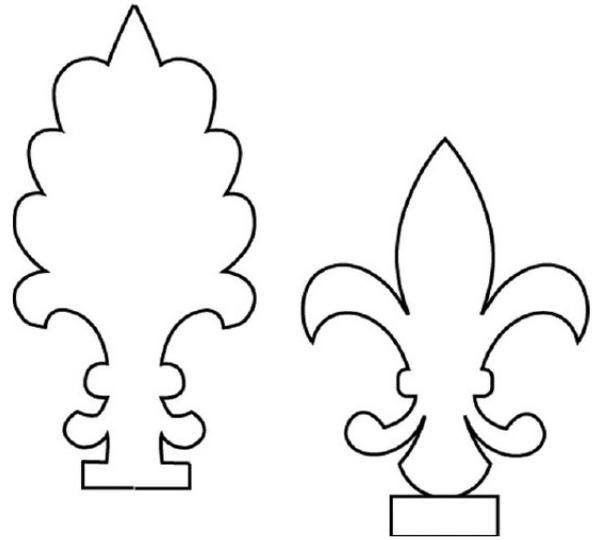
Esther 2:15 When the turn came for **Esther** (the young woman **Mordecai** had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai suggested.

Esther 2:21 During the time **Mordecai** was sitting at the king's gate, **Bigthana** and **Teresh**, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became **angry** and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

### How to make scepters:

Scrunch some newspaper into a ball and cover it with foil. Stick the foil-ball onto the top of a dowel stick with masking tape. Now cover it all with foil. Children can decorate their scepters with stars and other shiny decorations.

Alternatively, copy or trace these patterns. Fasten two identical scepter heads on both sides of a dowel stick and cover with foil.



**Complete the following verses. Use your Bible to find the answers.**

1. So do not \_\_\_\_\_, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your \_\_\_\_\_. I will strengthen you and help you; I will \_\_\_\_\_ you with my righteous right hand. - Isaiah 41: 10
2. Therefore, if it \_\_\_\_\_ the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of \_\_\_\_\_ and Media, which cannot be repealed, that \_\_\_\_\_ is never again to enter the presence of King \_\_\_\_\_. Also let the king give her \_\_\_\_\_ position to someone else who is better than she. - Esther 1: 19
3. When the turn came for \_\_\_\_\_ (the young woman \_\_\_\_\_ had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai suggested. - Esther 2:15
4. During the time \_\_\_\_\_ was sitting at the king's gate, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became \_\_\_\_\_ and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. - Esther 2:21