

## Lesson 114

# Esther Trusts God

God used Esther to protect his people.

# Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

## Introduction

Note: Before class, be sure to try the object lesson with your blow-dryer and ping-pong ball to determine how far you can angle the dryer before the ball falls.

Have the blow-dryer, ping-pong ball, and a marker ready for the object lesson.

Plug the dryer into a nearby electrical outlet. Pick up the ping-pong ball and show it to the class. Let's imagine that this ping-pong ball represents a student named \_\_\_\_\_ (insert a name). Using the marker, draw a face and some hair on the ball to match the name you chose. Set the ball on the dryer's end, which should be facing up, then turn it on. \_\_\_\_\_ (name) has ups and downs in life, just like any student your age. Let the students watch the ball float above the dryer. When he won a prize drawing at the sports store and got a new bike, he felt really lucky. Angle the dryer slightly (no more than 45 degrees) and watch the ball stay in the air stream. Then his bike got stolen from the driveway, and he thought that was rotten luck. Realign the dryer straight then angle slightly the other way. He thinks life isn't fair and that the "winds of chance" are controlling his life. Turn off the dryer and set the ball down.

But what caused the wind that was holding up the ball? The blow-dryer. So, what do you think controls everything that happens in our lives: luck or God? God.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. God is in control of everything just like the blow-dryer controlled the wind and the ball. What attribute of God describes this? Sovereign.

In today's lesson we'll see a series of events God controlled to save his people from a powerful enemy. There is no way that "luck" had anything to do with what happened!

### Slide #3

Refer to Lesson 113 Theme Poster. Last lesson we saw how God used King Cyrus of Persia to fulfill his promise to the Israelites that they would return to Judah after 70 years of captivity. King Cyrus made a proclamation allowing the Israelites, also called Jews, to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The descendant of King David who led the group of exiles to return was named Zerubbabel. Under his direction, the people rebuilt the altar of God and laid the foundation of the temple.

But what happened to delay the work on the temple for over 20 years? The people in the land opposed the building and scared the people into stopping the work.

The other people who'd moved to Jerusalem after the Jews were taken away did not like them rebuilding the temple now that they'd returned. They forced the Jews to stop building. But God worked out that situation, too, so that the king blessed their work and the temple was finally completed.

## Esther Becomes Queen

Meanwhile, the Jews still in Persia were about to face a terrible plot to destroy them! We will be reading from the book of Esther today. Turn there in your Bibles.

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. In what section of the Old Testament is Esther found? History.

As you read the book of Esther, you might think that Esther is the main character. But she is not. God is the main character. He worked through many situations and people in this book to accomplish his perfect will to protect his people.

Esther was a Jew. But she was born in Persia and raised by her cousin Mordecai. Her parents had previously died.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. Remember that the Babylonians had conquered Judah and brought the people into Babylon to live. Years later, during the reign of King Belshazzar (and during Daniel's lifetime), the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians. Now Babylon was part of the Persian Empire. This is where Esther and Mordecai were living and where the events of the book of Esther took place.

The book begins with the king and queen of Persia. The king of Persia, named Ahasuerus, got angry with his queen and commanded that she be removed from the throne. To begin his search for a new queen, the king sent his men to gather all the beautiful, young women of the land. From this group of women, he would choose his next queen.

Slide #4

Slide #5

Esther 2:8–9

And that's where we will pick up this account. Turn to Esther 2:8–9. Who will read those verses? Choose a reader.

Who was being gathered at the citadel? Many young women.

What is a citadel? The king's palace.

What young woman was taken to the king's palace in verse 8? Esther.

Esther is a Persian name that likely means "star." But that wasn't her Jewish name. Remember how King Nebuchadnezzar changed the names of Daniel and the three Jewish men—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah?

Does anyone remember their Babylonian names? Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Well, in Esther's case, it was her cousin Mordecai who changed her name from Hadassah (Jewish for "myrtle") to Esther so that she wouldn't be recognized as a Jew.

All the women, including Esther, were put under the care of Hegai, one of the king's servants. It was his job to get the women ready to go before the king.

In Esther 2:9, what did Hegai think of Esther? She pleased him. She won his favor.

What did Hegai do for Esther? He gave her cosmetics and food. He gave her seven young women, and he moved her to the best place in the harem.

Just as God gave Daniel favor with the servant in charge of him in Nebuchadnezzar's palace, God gave Esther favor with Hegai. Hegai gave Esther beauty treatments, food, servants, and the best place in the house for the women.

Esther was put in a special place, and it wasn't an accident! God was in control from the very beginning.

#### Slide #6

#### Slide #7

Esther 2:16-17

Esther spent an entire year getting beauty treatments in the palace. She was being prepared to meet the king. Finally, the time came for Esther to go before the king. Would the king look favorably on her? Someone read Esther 2:16-17. Assign a reader.

Did Esther find favor with the king? Yes!

What did the king think of her? The king loved Esther more than all the other women.

He loved her, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight. What did he do after meeting her? What did he set on her head? He put the royal crown on her head. He made her queen!

Esther, a Jewish woman, received the crown and became queen of Persia. Her cousin Mordecai kept close watch on her. And Mordecai, while keeping track of Esther, discovered that someone wanted to murder the king!

#### Slide #8

#### Slide #9

Esther 2:21-23

Who will read Esther 2:21-23? Choose readers.

Where was Mordecai sitting? At the king's gate.

Who else was there guarding the threshold, or entrance? Two of the king's eunuchs (servants), Bigthan and Teresh.

What does the Bible say these men were planning to do? Lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

They were angry with the king and were planning to kill him.

But who found out about their plot? Mordecai.

How did he stop it? He told Queen Esther, who told the king. The king investigated the report and found it to be true.

What happened to the two men who had plotted to kill the king? What was their punishment? They were hanged on the gallows.

Gallows is the name of the structure where people were hanged.

This was all part of God's plan to save the Jews. God had placed Mordecai at the king's gate where he would be sure to hear of the plot to kill the king. And after the king's life was saved, the Bible tells us that the entire account was written down in the book of the chronicles, which was a record of important events that happened in the kingdom. The plot was recorded, including the fact that it was Mordecai who had warned the queen of the king's danger.

## Esther Saves the Jews

But things were not good for the Jews in the nation of Persia! The king promoted a man named Haman to a very powerful position in the nation. The king had commanded that the people bow to Haman because of his high position. But Mordecai would not bow to this man. Haman became so angry that he formed a plan that would destroy Mordecai, the Jew, and ALL the Jews in Persia at the time.

Haman went to the king. He wanted to use his power and influence to persuade the king to order the destruction of the Jews.

Slide #10

Slide #11

Slide #12

Esther 3:8–10

Would Haman succeed? Turn to Esther 3:8–10. Choose readers.

Haman said there was a certain people scattered throughout the kingdom. Who do you think he was referring to? The Jewish people.

What did he say about Jewish laws? Their laws are different from others. They don't keep the king's laws.

What did Haman say the king should do about these people at the end of verse 8? The king shouldn't tolerate them.

Haman wanted the Jews destroyed, and he knew the king could do it. The king agreed, signed a decree to kill all the Jews, and told Haman to see to it!

Well, who do we know were Jews? Queen Esther and Mordecai.

The king didn't know Queen Esther was a Jew, but he had just ordered her death because the decree included the command that ALL Jews be killed! The king sent a letter telling everyone throughout the country to destroy, kill, and annihilate (wipe out) all the Jews, young and old, women and little children. This was really bad!

But, who was in control? God.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. Which attribute did we learn that means God is in complete control of everything? Sovereign.

God was in control of the entire situation. He made Esther queen. He allowed Mordecai to discover the plot to murder the king. Mordecai's message saved the king's life. God also knew all about Haman's plot to kill all the Jews, and he allowed Mordecai to learn about Haman's plan.

Mordecai and all the Jews in the land mourned this news. They fasted (didn't eat) and wept when they heard what was to happen. Mordecai went to Queen Esther and pleaded for help. He asked the queen to go before the king and beg for mercy. But there was a law that made that impossible! No one could approach the king without being invited—not even the queen. If she went without an invitation, the king could kill her on the spot! Only one thing could save her—if the king held out his golden scepter to her when she approached, she would live.

Mordecai reminded Esther that although she risked death to approach the king, she would be killed by the king's law, too. Mordecai told her that it could be for this very reason that she had become queen—for such a time as this.

#### Slide #13

#### Slide #14

Esther 4:15–17

What would Esther do? Would she risk her life to save the lives of the Jewish people? Let's read Esther 4:15–17. Assign a reader.

What did Esther tell Mordecai to do? Gather the Jews and fast for three days.

What was Esther going to do after the fast? She would go to the king.

What was she willing to do to save the Jews? It is at the very end of Esther 4:16. Perish.

Esther wanted the people to pray and fast for three days. Then she would go to the king. She would rely on God to protect her. And God did!

#### Slide #15

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. When Queen Esther entered the inner court of the palace where the king was on his throne, the king welcomed Esther by holding out his scepter! The king asked Queen Esther what she requested. He assured her it would be given to her.

For her request, Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet. At this banquet, she requested a second banquet. Haman was so happy! He now believed he was the favorite of both the king and the queen and that his plot to kill the Jews and Mordecai would soon happen. He built an enormous gallows to hang Mordecai on.

But that was not God's plan! One night before the second banquet, the king couldn't sleep. He ordered that the chronicles be read to him—these were

accounts of important events that had happened in the kingdom. As they were read, the king was reminded of the time Mordecai overheard the plan to murder the king. The king remembered that it was Mordecai who saved his life back then. And Mordecai had never been properly honored for his loyalty, so the king wanted to honor Mordecai in a special way. Guess who the king commanded to give these special honors to Mordecai? Allow guesses. Haman.

Right after Haman was forced to honor Mordecai, he was brought to Queen Esther's second banquet. King Ahasuerus asked again what her request was. Queen Esther revealed everything to the king. She admitted she was a Jew. She told the king about Haman's wicked plot to destroy all the Jews in the land. And she requested that the king allow her and all the Jews to live.

The king realized that this plot would include the death of his queen, Esther, and Mordecai, who had saved his life. The king was furious and ordered the death of his servant Haman on the gallows he had built for Mordecai. God revealed his sovereignty through all these events that saved his people, the Jews, from destruction.

Slide #16

Slide #17

Slide #18

Slide #19

Esther 8:5-8

Let's read Esther 8:5-8 to see how God protected his people. Choose readers, or you read the passage and have students follow along.

Slide #20

What did Esther ask the king? To revoke the letters Haman sent.

Revoke: call back or cancel

Revoke means to call back or cancel. Esther was asking the king to change the order to kill the Jews that Haman had sent throughout the country.

The king agreed with Esther. What did he tell Mordecai and Queen Esther to do? Write another edict (law) concerning the Jews in his name.

Mordecai and Queen Esther wrote a letter of protection for the Jews, allowing them to gather together and defend themselves against anyone who would attack them. The letter was signed by the king and sent throughout the land of Persia. On the day that Haman had planned for the Jews to be destroyed, the Jews defeated all their enemies. It became a day of feasting and celebration that the Jews called Purim. Some Jews today still celebrate Purim every year to remember how God saved the lives of his people from Haman!

Pass out the Class Notes.

Slide #21

Slide #22

Slide #23Slide #24

Let's review with the Class Notes. You will check the names of the correct people to answer each question in the chart. Go ahead and complete those now, and then we'll read the answers together to see how you did. Allow students to work individually or in pairs to complete the Class Notes.

Review answers together by choosing a reader for each one.

## Application

Today we studied the book of Esther. Even though God's name isn't mentioned in the book, we see how he controlled people and events to accomplish his will to save the Jews from destruction.

Slide #25

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. God's hand was at work in so many of the details of this event! Here is a list of just a few: 1) The Jewish girl Esther became queen of a pagan nation; 2) Mordecai overheard the plot to murder the king then saved the king's life; 3) The king accepted Queen Esther when she approached him uninvited; 4) The king listened and took pity on Esther, Mordecai, and all the Jews and agreed to save their lives; 5) The king allowed Mordecai and Queen Esther to write the letter that would be sent throughout the country and would save the Jews.

Some people might say, "Wow, the Jews were really lucky that Esther became queen and that the king didn't kill her and that Haman didn't get his way and kill all the Jews." But we know that there is no such thing as luck! And we know that because we believe in God, the Creator of the universe. He is the one who holds all things together. God knows what is going on, and God is directing all things the way he wants them. As children of God, we believe in the one true God who works out all things according to his will.

How does the account of Esther help you trust God more, especially when you're afraid or sad? Allow discussion or share a personal example.

When we are in tough situations, like Esther and the Jews were, we can know that God is in control. We just need to pray and be obedient to God wherever he has placed us and leave the rest in his hands.

## Lesson Review

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.



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