

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: Be sure to test the blow-dryer and ping-pong ball before class to determine how far you can angle your dryer before the ball falls.

How many of you have been outdoors on a windy day? Show of hands. Lead a short discussion about the wind: Could you tell which way the wind was blowing? Does the wind change direction or speed? Does the wind ever cause destruction, or does it do some good? Allow discussion.

Some people say luck, or chance, is like the wind; you don't know when it will come or go, but you hope it will be good and not bad.

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 is 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. Then his bike got stolen, and he thought that was rotten luck. Realign the dryer straight then angle 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 was controlling the wind that held up the ball? The blow-dryer. What controls everything that happens to us: luck or God? God. Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. Just like the dryer controlled the wind and the ball, God is in control of everything that happens in our lives. Which attribute of God does this describe? Sovereign.

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

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. Remember that the Babylonians had conquered Judah and brought the people into Babylon to live. Years later, the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians, so Babylon became part of the Persian Empire.

Slide #3

Refer to Lesson 113 Theme Poster. In our 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 allowed the

Israelites, also called Jews, to go home and rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel led the group and helped them rebuild the altar of God and lay the foundation of the temple.

Did they finish the temple right away? No.

The other people living in Jerusalem did not want the Jews to come back and rebuild. They made it very difficult for God's people to continue their project, and the Jews stopped building. But God worked that situation out, too, so that a new king blessed their work and the temple was finally completed 21 years later.

Esther Becomes Queen

Meanwhile, the Jews who were still in Persia were about to face difficulties of their own!

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. We will be reading from the book of Esther today. What kind of book is it? History.

Right. Esther is a book of true history, which tells how God controlled a terrible situation to protect his people. And we'll see that luck had nothing to do with it.

The events in the book of Esther took place in Persia. Esther was a Jew who was born in Persia. After her parents died, she was raised by her cousin Mordecai.

The book begins when the king, named Ahasuerus, got angry with his queen and commanded that she be removed from the throne. Now he needed a new queen. So, all the beautiful young women of the land were brought to the city so the king could choose his next queen.

All the young women, including Esther, were put under the charge of the king's servant. It was his job to get the women ready to come before the king. Esther found favor with the servant in charge. He provided all she needed—beauty treatments, food, servants—and moved her to the best place in the women's house.

Was this lucky for Esther, or did God cause the servant to do these things? God caused it.

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

Slide #4

Slide #5

Esther 2:17

After a year of beauty treatments, the time finally came for Esther to go before the king. Would the king like her, or would he throw her out like his first queen? Someone read Esther 2:17. Assign a reader.

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

What did the king set on Esther's head? He put the royal crown on her head.

God caused Esther, a Jewish woman, to become the queen of Persia!

Mordecai loved Esther as his own daughter and stayed close by. While he was at the king's gate, he overheard two of the king's men making plans to murder the king! Mordecai told Queen Esther what he had heard, and she told the king. Sure enough, it was true, and the king commanded that the two men be punished.

Some might say it was lucky that Mordecai was there at the right place and the right time. But it was all part of God's plan. After the king's life was saved, everything was written down in the book of the chronicles, which was a journal of important events that happened in the kingdom.

Esther Saves the Jews

Although Esther was the queen, things were not good for the Jews in the nation of Persia. The king promoted a wicked man named Haman to a very powerful position. But Mordecai would not bow to honor this man. Haman became so angry that he formed a plan that would not only destroy Mordecai, but ALL the Jews in Persia!

Haman wanted the Jews gone, and he knew the king could make it happen. "O king," he said. "There are certain people living in your kingdom who do not keep your laws."

"What do you think we should do?" the king asked.

"We should destroy them," Haman replied.

"All right," the king agreed. "Do whatever seems good to you."

Haman sent letters throughout the country, telling everyone that, on a certain day, they were to rise up and destroy all the Jews—young and old—and take all their belongings. The king didn't know it, but he had just ordered Queen Esther's death, too!

What a horrible problem! Some might call it bad luck. But who was in control? God.

God is sovereign. He knew all about Haman's plot to kill the Jews, and he allowed Mordecai to learn about Haman's plan. Mordecai told Esther and pleaded for help. "You must go to the king and beg for mercy that the Jews may be saved."

"But I cannot do that," Esther explained. "The law says no one may go to the king without being called. I could be killed on the spot—unless he holds out his golden scepter."

Show Illustration. A scepter looks something like this. A king would hold it as a symbol of his authority.

Mordecai reminded Esther that although she risked death by going to the king uninvited, she would still be killed by the new law against the Jews. "Who knows?" said Mordecai. "Perhaps you were made queen for such a time as this to help your people."

Slide #6

Slide #7

Esther 4:15–17

Would Esther risk her own life to save the lives of the Jewish people? Let's read her response in chapter 4, verses 15–17. Assign readers.

What did Esther tell Mordecai to do? Gather the Jews and fast (not eat or drink) 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 verse 16. Perish.

Esther wanted the people to pray and fast for three days. Then she would go to the king. She was willing to perish—to die—for her people, but she would trust in God to protect her.

Slide #8

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. When Esther went to the throne room, she didn't know if she would be welcomed or punished. But as she stood there waiting, the king held out his scepter to her. Whew! What a relief! Esther came forward and touched the scepter.

The king asked, "What is your request? Whatever you want, I will give it to you."

Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet, a fancy dinner. Then during the banquet, she asked them both to come to a second dinner.

Haman was so happy to be invited twice! He thought he was the favorite of both the king and queen. Surely his plot to kill the Jews and his enemy Mordecai would happen very soon. He even built an enormous gallows to hang Mordecai on.

But that was not God's plan. One night, the king couldn't sleep. He ordered that the book of the chronicles be read to him—remember the journal we mentioned earlier? As the king listened, he was reminded of the time Mordecai reported the plot to murder the king. Isn't it interesting that God even chose what was read to the king that night? The king realized Mordecai had saved his life and told Haman to honor him for it. Although Haman hated Mordecai, he obeyed the king.

Later, at the second banquet, King Ahasuerus asked Esther again for her wish and request. This time, Queen Esther told the king everything.

Slide #9

Slide #10Slide #11

Esther 7:3–6

Let's find out what she said in Esther chapter 7. Listen to this. Read verses 3–4.

Look at verse 3. What did Esther ask the king to grant for her wish? Her life.

What did she ask as her request? My people. The lives of her people.

The king realized that this plot to kill the Jews would include the death of his queen and of Mordecai, who had saved his life.

Who would like to read what the king said next in verse 5? Choose a reader.

Who will read Esther's answer in verse 6? Choose a reader.

How did Haman feel at that moment? He was terrified.

The king was furious and ordered the death of Haman on the same giant gallows Haman had built for Mordecai. But that wasn't the end. The day was still coming when everyone thought they were supposed to kill the Jews. Let's find out what God did about that.

Slide #12Slide #13

Esther 8:3–5

We'll read from Esther chapter 8 to see how God protected his people. Choose readers for verses 3–5, or you read the verses.

What did Esther do in verse 3? Fell at the king's feet and begged him to stop the evil plan against the Jews.

How did the king show Esther that he would listen to her? He held out his scepter to her.

In verse 5, what did Esther ask the king to do about the letters written by Haman? To revoke them.

Revoke means to call back or cancel something. Esther was asking the king to change Haman's order to destroy the Jews.

Pass out the Class Notes.

The king agreed with Esther and told Mordecai to write a letter of protection for the Jews, allowing them to fight back against anyone who would attack them. 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 because God saved the lives of his people!

Slide #14Slide #15Slide #16Slide #17Slide #18Slide #19

Let's review with the Class Notes. You will read each sentence, draw a line to the correct picture, then write the number of the sentence under the picture. 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 can see how he controlled people and events to save the Jews from destruction.

Slide #20

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. God's hand was at work in so many of the details! Think about these: 1) Out of all the young women in the land, a Jewish girl became queen of Persia; 2) Mordecai was in the right place to hear the murder plot against the king so that he could save the king's life; 3) The king held out his scepter when Esther came to him uninvited; 4) The king listened to Esther and agreed to save the lives of the Jews; 5) The king allowed Mordecai to write a new letter that 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 them all." But we know that there is no such thing as luck because we believe in God, the Creator and Controller of the universe. He is the one who holds all things together. God knows what is going on, and he directs events in the way he wants them to go. As children of God, we believe he is the one true God who works out all things according to his will.

Lesson Review

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

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