

2 Corinthians 7:10 NIV

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

## Unit 18: The People Prepare

**Unit Description:** God had made good on His promise to bring the people back into the land, but they were still waiting on another promise: for God to send the ultimate Rescuer. God's people began to prepare for the Messiah's arrival, but even so, as always, they couldn't escape the allure of sin.

**Big Picture Question:** How should we feel when we sin? When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.



### **SESSION 1: Esther Saved Her People**

Esther



### **SESSION 2: Nehemiah Rebuilt the Walls**

Nehemiah 1–7



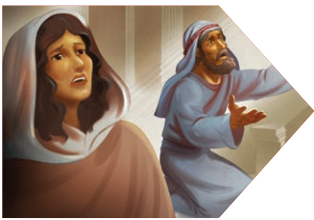
### **SESSION 3: Ezra Read the Law**

Ezra 7–10; Nehemiah 8



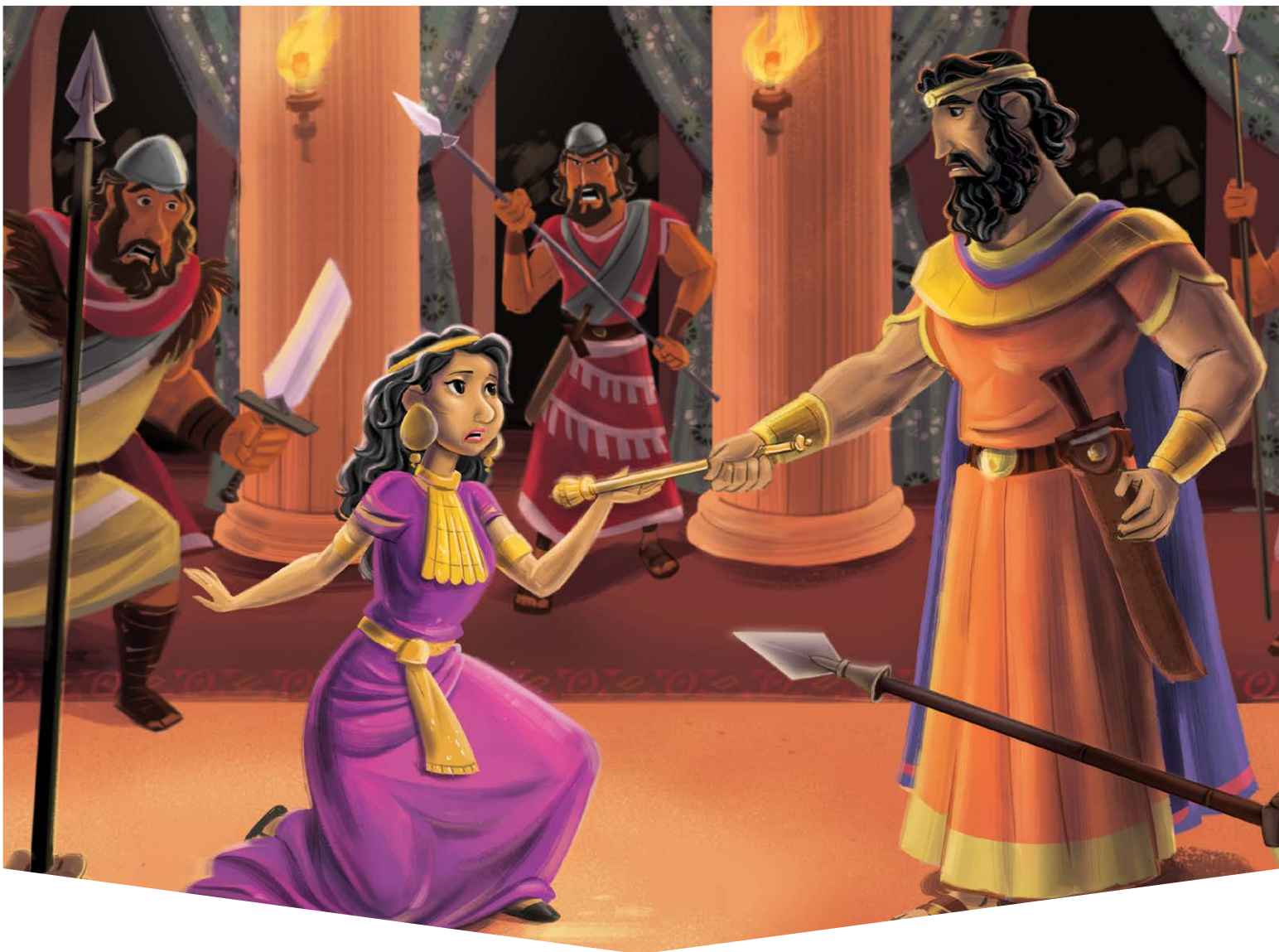
### **SESSION 4: The People Promised to Be Faithful**

Nehemiah 9–10



### **SESSION 5: We Should Be Sorry for Sin**

Romans 8



UNIT 18 | SESSION 1

## ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE

ESTHER

### KEY PASSAGE:

2 Corinthians 7:10

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How should we feel when we sin? When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.

### CHRIST CONNECTION:

God was in control over Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to ruin God's plan and destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. All who believe in Jesus are rescued from sin and death.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



## LEADER Bible Study

You may never have said it aloud before, but there is a good chance that you have thought it: “If I just had \_\_\_\_\_ [fill in the blank with your greatest desire], then following Jesus would be so much easier.” What is your greatest desire? For some it may be money; for others, possessions; for others, power or a relationship or a feeling.

We live in a broken world and may often fantasize about what life would be like if our ideals came to pass. We may even hurt or mistreat others in pursuit of our dreams—to gain that which we believe has the greatest importance. But the reality is that even if we have all that we want, there is still a great temptation to desire more and continue seeking our own good at the expense of others.

However, we don’t find this temptation when we read about the life of Mordecai in the Book of Esther. We observe Mordecai’s journey from faithful adoptive father of a young girl in a foreign land to his becoming the king’s right-hand man.

Mordecai was faithful. He was faithful to take in Esther, his cousin who was without father or mother. He was faithful to sit, wait, and watch every day at the gate of the king’s palace to see what God would do through this beautiful young woman. He was faithful to

speak up with boldness and confidence, even at the threat of death. And he was faithful to lead beside the king in an honorable way seeking the flourishing of the kingdom.

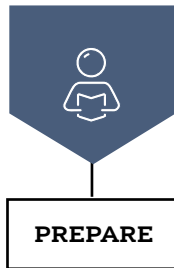
Mordecai rose to a position of great power and authority. Many figures in power tend to forget their roots, turning to selfishness and unfaithfulness. Mordecai, however, did not. Read Esther 10:3.

In our temptation to seek our own pleasure, we must remember that our Savior, Jesus Christ, “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). In remembering the work of Christ, we find not only an example to follow but also the power to do the same.

Christ in us seeks the good of those around us. No matter how high or low our rank in the world, He is always good and always desires that we seek the good of those around us, for His glory.

### PEOPLE TO KNOW

**Esther:** the woman named Hadassah at birth who was raised by her cousin among the Jews in Persia. Esther was chosen as queen in Persia. God used Esther to preserve His people.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

## GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

### Activity Page

- “What’s Different?” activity page

### Session Starter (Option 1)

- index cards, 10

### Session Starter (Option 2)

- timer
- index cards, 16



LEARN

### Introduce the Session

- countdown video

### Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

### Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

### Tell the Bible Story

- “Esther Saved Her People” video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Bible props (optional)

### Questions from Kids

- “Unit 18, Session 1” questions from kids video

### Missions Moment

- “Missionary Life During COVID-19” missions video
- world map

### Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- “Lead Us To Salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10)” song
- worship song of your choice (optional)
- dry erase board
- dry erase marker



LOVE

### Review & Bible skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set
- world map



LIVE

### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- masking tape

### Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- “Bible Story Match Up” activity page



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

**SAY** “ Have you ever had to do something that you were afraid of doing? What helped you complete the task? ”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “What’s Different?” on the activity page.

**SAY** “ Today, we will learn about a woman named Esther who risked her life to go before the king. In our Bible story, we will learn how God was with Esther. ”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: SPEAK UP!



Before the session, write the names of different animals on 10 index cards. Form kids into two teams and ask for one volunteer from each team. Give each volunteer an animal card and direct him to hold it to his forehead so his team can see the animal name listed on the card. Set the timer for one minute. When you say “Go!” challenge each team to shout out clues to help each volunteer guess the name of the animal listed on the card. The volunteer that guesses correctly first wins a point for their team.

Invite two new volunteers to try and guess a new animal using their teammates clues. Continue to play until all 10 cards have been used. The team with the most correct guesses wins.

**SAY** “ The key to this game was for the teammates to speak up and give good clues about the animals on the card. Today, we will hear a story about a woman named Esther who spoke up at just the right time. ”

#### OPTION 2: TIME’S UP!

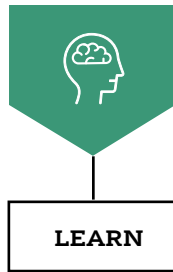
Before the session, use index cards to create four sets of category cards. Write the following categories on each set of cards: Colors, Jobs, Transportation, and Countries. Form kids into four groups and direct them to sit in a circle or around a table. Distribute a category card set to each group.

Challenge a kid in each group to read one category listed on a card to the kid next to him. Instruct that kid to list five items from that category within five seconds. For example, if she has the category Colors, she could list any five colors. Award a point to a group each time they are able to list five items within five seconds. Continue until each kid has had a turn or as long as time allows.

**SAY** “ You had a very short amount of time to think of items for each category. Time is important, isn’t it? Today, we are going to learn a story from God’s Word about a woman who was placed in an important position at just the right time. ”







## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

# INTRODUCE the Bible Story

### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

**SAY** “ Hi, kids! I am so glad you’re here! My name is [your name], and I am looking forward to reading a story from God’s Word with you. Did you bring a Bible with you today? [Distribute Bibles to kids who do not have one.] Our story today will help us learn how God is always in control. Even when bad people are planning evil things, God still remains in control and protects His people.

Our story today comes from a book in the Old Testament. It is the Book of Esther. Like all of Scripture, the Book of Esther helps us trust that God is always working for the good of His people. As we read Esther, we should be reminded that God is our Deliverer who sent Jesus to save us from sin and death. ”

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

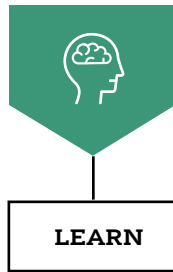
**SAY** “ Each week when we are together, we learn a big picture question and answer. This question helps us focus on a truth from God’s Word. Our big picture question for the next few weeks is, **How should we feel when we sin?** The answer is, **When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.**

Sin separates us from God and dishonors Him. Our hearts should be saddened that our sin shows how we have not loved God rightly. God is worthy of all our love and obedience. Let’s say the big picture question and answer again. **How should we feel when we sin? When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.** ”

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** “ God has always cared for His chosen people. Long ago, God made a covenant with Abraham and promised to make him into a great nation. He also promised that through Abraham, the whole world would be blessed. And God is always faithful to His promises. Even when His people disobeyed, God was still faithful. God was making a way for His people to be saved. Though His people were taken captive to Babylon, God’s faithful promise to protect His people and bless the nations through them would not fail. In today’s story, we will learn how God saves His people from an evil plan meant to destroy them. ”



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

# LEARN the Bible Story

### 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Esther. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Esther Saved Her People.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

### ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE

“**King Ahasuerus** (uh haz yoo EHR uhs) **was the king of Persia.** Many years earlier, **when Cyrus was king, he sent some of God’s people back to Judah to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Another group of God’s people stayed in Persia.** God’s people were called Jews because they were from Judah. **The king of Persia chose Esther to be his queen.** Esther didn’t tell the king that she was a Jew.

**One day, Mordecai heard that Haman, an important leader who worked for the king, was planning to kill all the Jews. Mordecai was upset! He was a Jew; he didn’t want all the people he loved to be killed.** Mordecai and all the Jews cried.

**Esther didn’t know what was wrong.** She sent a messenger to ask Mordecai why all the Jews were upset. **Mordecai told Esther about Haman’s evil plan.**

**“You have to do something!” Mordecai said.** “Ask the king to stop Haman. Ask him to save the Jewish people.”

Esther sent a message back to Mordecai. “No one can approach the king unless the king calls for that person first,” Esther said. “The punishment is death—unless the king holds out his scepter; then you may live.”

**“You’re a Jew,” Mordecai said. “If you don’t stop Haman, he will kill you too. Maybe this is why you are the queen.” Maybe God put Esther in the palace to save her people! Esther asked Mordecai and the Jews to fast for three days. Then Esther would go to the king, even if it meant she might die.**

**On the third day, Esther went to the king. He saw Esther and held out his golden scepter. “What is it, Queen Esther?” the king asked. “What do you want to ask me? I’ll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”**

**Esther said, “Would you and Haman come to a feast today?”**

**So Haman and the king went to Esther’s feast.** After eating, the king said, **“What do you want, Queen Esther? I’ll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”**

**“Come to my feast tomorrow,” Esther said.**

The king agreed. **The next day, Haman and the king went to Esther’s feast.** After eating, **the king said, “What do you want, Queen Esther? I’ll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”**

**Esther spoke up, “There is a plan to kill me and my people.”**

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Dress up:** Dress up as Mordecai or Esther and tell the story from his or her perspective.

**Use dramatic voice:** Use a dramatic voice as you tell the story. Change the tone and inflection of your voice as you read what each person said in the story.



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

**The king replied, “Who is responsible for this plan?”**

**“This evil enemy—Haman!” Esther said.**

**The king was angry! He punished Haman and made a law to keep the Jewish people safe from their enemies.**

Christ Connection: God was in control over Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to ruin God’s plan and destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. All who believe in Jesus are rescued from sin and death. ”

### 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** “ God allowed Esther to be chosen as the queen. Did Esther tell the king that she was a Jew? Look at Esther 2:20. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Esther 2:20.] Mordecai had instructed Esther not to reveal that she was a Jew. Some people in Persia did not like Jews.

When Mordecai heard of Haman’s plot against the Jews, Mordecai encouraged Esther to use her position as queen and speak to the king to help save her people. Haman’s evil plot was meant to destroy the Jewish nation. But what did Mordecai say would happen even if Esther kept silent about Haman’s evil plan? Look at Esther 4:13-14. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Esther 4:13-14.] Mordecai was convinced that God would protect and rescue His people, even if Esther did not speak up about Haman’s plan. Still, Mordecai encouraged Esther to consider why she had been placed in the palace at this exact time. God placed Esther in her position as queen to protect His people. He continues to protect and rescue His people from the evil one who wants to destroy. God rescued His people then and He has rescued His people for all eternity through Jesus. ”

### 3 CHRIST CONNECTION

**SAY** “ God was in control over Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to ruin God’s plan and destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. All who believe in Jesus are rescued from sin and death. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

### 4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Do we only need to ask for God’s forgiveness when we wrong others? Do we need to ask for their forgiveness too? Why?
2. Who are some other people in the Bible that trusted God and did what was right, even in hard times?





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Show a world map to the kids and point to Southeast Asia. Explain that for security purposes, you cannot name the specific country where David and Lark Washington (names changed) are serving as missionaries.

**SAY** “ David and Lark Washington are serving in a place where the country is in a state of unrest with the government. People who live there are afraid and confused. The missionaries have continued to tell people about Jesus through the difficult days in the country. ”

Play the missions video. Explain that many businesses and churches in this country were closed for long periods of time. People who left the country were not allowed back into the country unless they stayed quarantined for two weeks in a government-run hospital when they returned. Some regions did not allow anyone who was not from the area to enter it. Help kids understand that missionaries had to find creative, new ways to continue telling people about Jesus. Tell kids that David was able to speak to several people as he read his Bible from on top of a ladder.

Pray for the missionaries serving in Southeast Asia. Pray for their safety and wisdom as they continue serving God in difficult situations.

### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Before the session, use a dry erase board to write out the key passage but leave out several words.

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 2 Corinthians 7:10 together.

**SAY** “ Today, we will begin learning our new key passage. Let’s see if you can fill in what our key passage says. ”

Display the dry erase board with the partially written key passage. Cover up the key passage poster and invite kids to call out the missing words. Once the passage is complete, erase more or different words and challenge the kids to fill in the key passage again.

Lead kids to sing “Lead Us To Salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

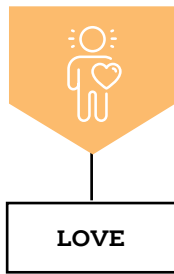
### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “ Thank You, Lord that we can trust that You are always in control and that we are never alone. Help us trust You and serve You where You have placed us. In Jesus’ name, amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





## THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

# LOVE God by Applying the Story

### 1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Esther 8. Explain that the Book of Esther took place in the city of Susa, which was the capital of Persia. Point to the area of the Persian Empire (H12) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to help kids understand where the story of Esther took place.

Consider comparing the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to a modern-day map to help kids understand where these stories took place. (Tip: Locate the areas in and around modern-day Iran.)

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Esther 8:17.

**SAY** “ Throughout the Book of Esther, we see how God directed every event and every person in order to protect His people. God placed Esther in a position of leadership and influence so that, at just the right moment, she could address the king and reveal Haman’s evil plan against the Jews.

The Book of Esther reminds us that God is always in control over every situation. Nothing is a surprise to Him and His plans will always succeed. Throughout the Bible, we see how God protects His people. God still protects His people today. God sent Jesus, at just the right time, to rescue us from sin and death so that we can live with Him forever. ”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “ How do we know God is always in control? ”

Help kids understand that God rules and reigns over everything. Remind kids that we can trust that God is always in control because His Word teaches us this truth. Encourage kids to remember that the Bible shows us that God has been faithful throughout history and because He never changes, He will continue to rule and reign forever.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 47:2-3.)

| **SAY** “ How can we stand firm in the Lord when it seems like evil is winning? ”

Remind kids that we live by faith and believe in the promises of God. Encourage kids to remember that through Jesus’ death and resurrection, God has already defeated Satan, sin, and death.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 John 5:4-5.)

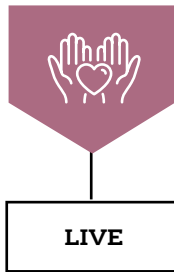
| **SAY** “ How can you serve the Lord where He has placed you? ”

Encourage kids to think of ways they can serve God by serving others. Remind kids that we all can use our time, talents, and treasures to serve God.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 3:17.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





## THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### OPTION 1: LADDER RELAY



Before the session, use masking tape to create a “ladder” on the floor. Place two long strips of tape parallel to each other. Make the “steps” of the ladder by placing eight shorter pieces of tape horizontally across the two longer pieces of tape.

Form the kids into two teams. Designate one end of the ladder as the starting point. Lead kids to “climb” up the ladder using both their hands and their feet. Once they reach the end, they must then “climb” down the ladder by going backwards. Explain that kids cannot skip over steps, but must climb up or down each one. The first team to have all of the kids finish the relay wins. Play again if time allows.

**SAY** “ Earlier, we learned that David Washington climbed up his ladder during the government lockdowns so he could read his Bible and talk to people. God can also use the tools, talents, and circumstances of our lives to tell other people about Jesus as well. ”

##### OPTION 2: BIBLE SCAVENGER HUNT



Form kids into groups of three or four and distribute Bibles to each group. Before starting the scavenger hunt, use your Bible to provide a brief review of the concordance and what the chapter and verse numbers look like.

Challenge kids to listen as you call out questions and then use their Bibles to work together to complete the scavenger hunt. Some question ideas are: “How fast can you find Esther 3:2?” “How many chapters are in the book of Esther?” “What books come before and after the Book of Esther?” Consider inviting kids to come up with questions as well.

**SAY** “ Mordecai trusted that God would be faithful to His people. When we read our Bibles, we are reminded of God’s faithfulness and are strengthened to trust in Him. I hope you will continue to study the Bible and love God more as you read it. ”

#### 2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, thanking God that He is always in control and that we have hope in every hard situation because of Jesus. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Bible Story Match Up” on the activity page.



JOURNAL PAGE

1. What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
2. What does this story teach me about myself?
3. Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
4. Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
5. How does this story help me to live on mission better?



Unit 18 • Session 1

## ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE

Esther

**HOW SHOULD WE FEEL WHEN WE SIN?  
WHEN WE SIN, WE SHOULD FEEL SORRY THAT WE HAVE DISOBEYED GOD AND  
WANT TO TURN FROM OUR SIN BECAUSE WE LOVE HIM.**

King Ahasuerus was the king of Persia. When Cyrus was king, he sent some of God's people back to Judah to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Another group of God's people stayed in Persia. The king of Persia chose Esther to be his queen. One day, Mordecai heard that Haman was planning to kill all the Jews. Mordecai was upset! He was a Jew; he didn't want all the people he loved to be killed. Mordecai told Esther about Haman's evil plan. "You have to do something!" Mordecai said.

Esther asked Mordecai and the Jews to fast for three days. Then Esther would go to the king. On the third day, Esther went to the king. He saw Esther and held out his golden scepter. "What is it, Queen Esther?" the king asked. "I'll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."

Esther said, "Would you and Haman come to a feast today?"

So Haman and the king went to Esther's feast. "What do you want, Queen Esther? I'll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom."

"Come to my feast tomorrow," Esther said.

The next day, Haman and the king went to Esther's feast. The king said, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I'll give you up to half of my kingdom."

Esther spoke up, "Haman has a plan to kill me and my people."

The king was angry! He punished Haman and made a law to keep the Jewish people safe from their enemies.

**Christ Connection:** God was in control over Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to ruin God's plan and destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. All who believe in Jesus are rescued from sin and death.

FOLD





**What's Different?** | Look at both pictures on the left and find 10 differences.

- King of Persia
- Important leader who worked for the king
- Queen of Persia
- Made an evil plan to kill the Jewish people
- Esther's cousin
- Told the king about the evil plan to kill the Jews
- Sent a message to Esther about the plan to kill the Jews
- Made a law to keep the Jewish people safe
- Saves anyone who believes in Him from sin and death

**Esther** •

**Ahasuerus** •

**Mordecai** •

**Haman** •

**Jesus** •

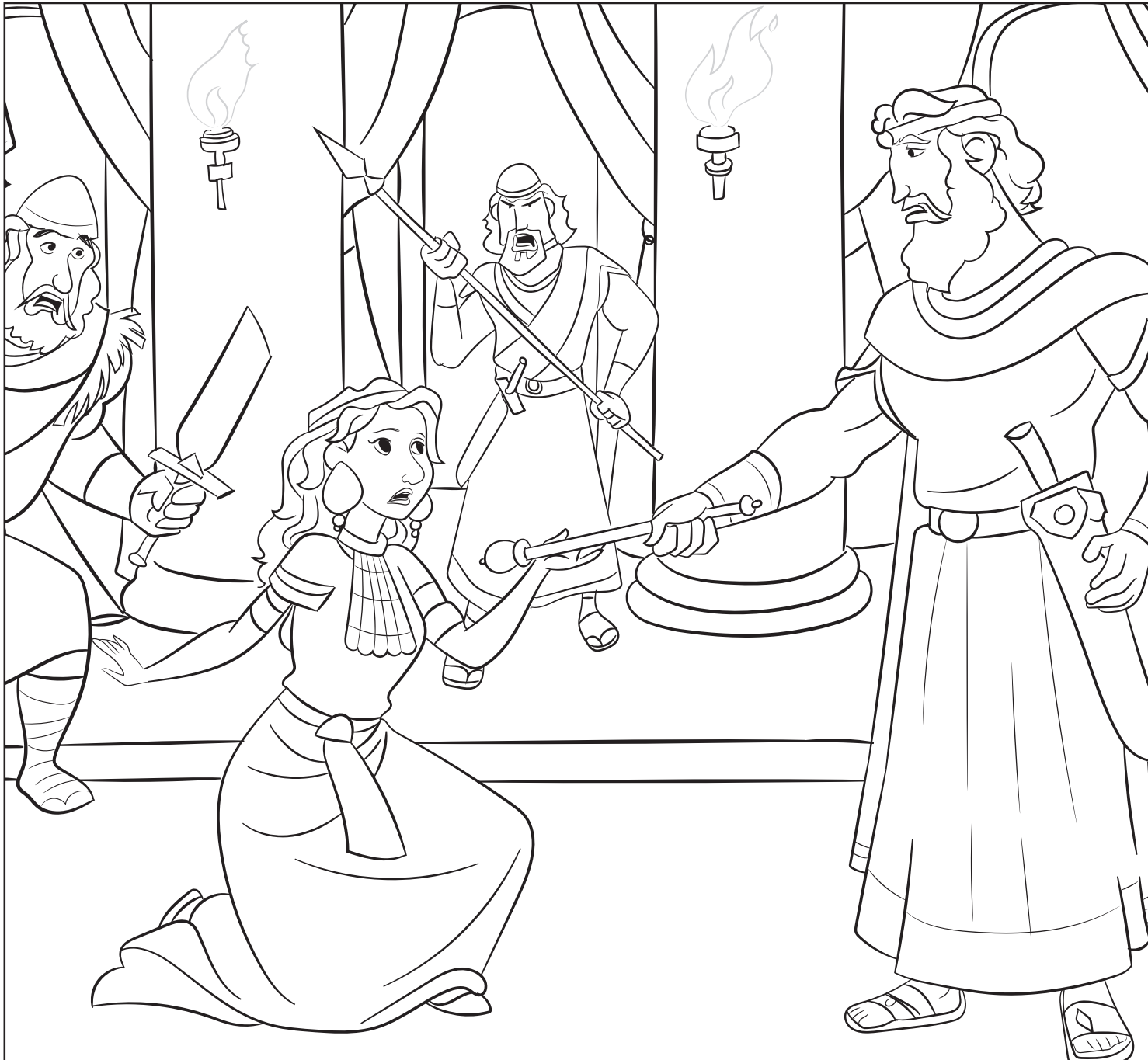
**Bible Story Match Up** | Match each person to the statement that best describes him or her. (Hint: Some people may have more than one correct answer.)



NAME:



the **GOSPEL** PROJECT.



## Esther Saved Her People

### BIBLE STORY SUMMARY:

- The king of Persia chose Esther, a Jew, to be his queen.
- Esther's cousin Mordecai heard of an evil plan to destroy God's people.
- God used Esther to save His people.

### CHRIST CONNECTION:

God was in control over Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to ruin God's plan and destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. All who believe in Jesus are rescued from sin and death.

### KEY PASSAGE:

2 Corinthians 7:10

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How should we feel when we sin? When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.