**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 3 of 4

# Esther

### MEETING AIM

To think about how God was with Esther when she was afraid and gave her courage.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Esther 4,5,9

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

There is a lot to cover in the story of Esther! Esther became queen after King Xerxes got rid of his previous queen, Vashti. Esther was a Jew, living in Persia, and kept her identity secret. God used Mordecai to encourage Esther and he gave Esther boldness to step out and risk her life for her people. It’s worth reading through the book of Esther to get an overview of the whole story.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can) and ask the children: “What’s the bravest thing you’ve ever done or seen someone else do?” Thank God that he’s with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** elastic; beads, cotton reels or other small items that can be threaded onto the elastic

Explain that in your story today you’re going to hear about a queen who did something brave. She would have worn royal robes and probably expensive jewellery. Show the children how to make jewellery by threading beads onto their elastic. (You could alternatively make crowns with the same discussion. Make zig-zag cuts lengthways across gold card and tape together to fit the children’s heads.)

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** play food; crown; people paper chain

Sit the children in a circle and tell this story:

King Xerxes was the King of Persia. He had a queen, but she had refused to do what he said so he had got rid of her! He wanted a new queen. *Hold up the crown anytime you talk about Esther being queen.*

So, his officials gathered all the young women in the kingdom so he could pick one. He chose Esther.

Esther lived with her cousin Mordecai and she was Jewish. Now, the Persians didn’t like the Jewish people at all so when Esther became Queen of Persia, she didn’t tell anyone she was Jewish.

One day, the king’s servant, Haman, made a plan to get rid of all the Jewish people and he got the king to agree with his plan!

Esther’s cousin, Mordecai, heard about this plan and he was heartbroken. He ripped his clothes and cried and cried. But God heard him and he helped Mordecai come up with a plan. The law could not be changed but perhaps Esther could help save her people!

Mordecai asked Esther to tell the King she was a Jew. He begged her. He said to Esther: “Maybe this is why God has made you queen. Maybe you are here for this,”

Esther was very scared. Even though she was the queen she wasn’t allowed to go and speak to the king. She had to wait to be invited. He was the kind of king who got rid of a queen because she wouldn’t do what he said. You can imagine why she was nervous!

However, she knew it was the only way to try to save her people. She put on her royal robes and went to the king. She hoped he would let her speak.

When the king saw her, he was pleased and let her speak to him. He said: “What do you want? I will give you anything.”

Esther told him that she wanted to have a meal with the king’s servant, Haman. She was going to find a way to tell the king about Haman’s horrible plan.

Twice they had a banquet. *Lay out food for a banquet and invite the children to sit down as if they were there too. Pretend to eat the food together.*

During the first meal, Esther didn’t say anything but on the second banquet she told them she was Jewish. She said how Haman’s plan would mean she, and all her people, would die. The king was furious! He had his officials take Haman away.

Esther risked her life to save her people. The king allowed the Jewish people to defend themselves and even the king’s officials helped them! *Show your paper chain people and pull it out as you talk about Esther’s people.*

Esther was scared but God used her to help save her people. God made her bold and gave her courage. Esther could ask God to help her when she felt alone and afraid.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* What was your favourite part of the story?
* What do you do when you feel scared? Or if someone is asking you to do something that feels really big?
* How do you think Esther felt when God saved her people?
* How can you encourage others when they’re scared?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper; person template; felt-tip pens or crayons; glue; things to decorate paper people (eg sequins or stickers)

Before the session, pre-cut people paper chains as long as you can make them!

Explain that Esther was scared but God gave her courage. God was with Esther and God saved Esther’s people. Give each child a people paper chain and invite them to decorate Esther and all the Jewish people.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** the jewellery or crowns from ‘Play’

Invite the children to wear their jewellery.

Say that God made Esther the queen and she was able to help her people even though it was scary. Sometimes we will be afraid but God is with us and he helps us.

Invite the children to name a place where they might feel afraid and then to ask God to be with them and give them courage. Finish by saying: “Thank you, God, that you’re with us.”

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