

SABBATH SCHOOL

Preteen Sabbath Instruction Program — Teacher's Outline

Level 5 • Unit 9 • Week 2

ESTHER SHOWS FAITH

OBJECTIVE:

To illustrate and enlarge upon the concept faith, which is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and to gain practice in reading the Bible.

ATTENTION GETTER:

Do: Select a child to read Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Say: Simply put, faith is our assurance of the existence of things we cannot see. Or we can say, faith is believing God will keep His promises. To believe in someone is to have faith in them.

Suppose you had two friends, the first one promised to treat you to the movies. When the time came, you were dressed and ready and he kept his word. A week later the second friend promised to treat you to the movies. When the time came, you stopped your play, got dressed and waited; but your friend never did show up. You could always trust the first friend to keep his promise, but the second friend only kept his promise when he felt like it.

Ask: In which friend would you have faith that he would keep his promises? Why?

BIBLE LESSON:

Supplies: You will need a map showing Persia, the territory ruled over by Ahasuerus (from India to Ethiopia), Shushan and Jerusalem. Display the map so the students can get an idea of the vast area that Ahasuerus ruled over.

Children will need their Bible. When a student reads Xerxes for Ahasuerus, point out that some Bibles may use Xerxes instead of Ahasuerus and some use Susa instead of Shushan.

Do: Make a copy of the Bible Lesson for each student.

ESTHER

Say: Picture yourself living in the fifth century B.C., working as an investigative reporter for the *Ancient World News*. You happen to be in the marketplace when a camel caravan with all its wares arrives from Shushan, Persia. The news the caravan brought caused quite a buzz. A decree has been sent throughout the Persian Empire stating that a whole nation—men, women and children—will be exterminated on the 14th day of the 12th month. No one is to be spared! You know a story when you see one and this is big—really big.

You notify the office of the *Ancient World News* that you are going to Persia to find out the rest of the story. There are questions that need answers. Who? What? Where? When? Why? And how? With no time to waste, you hurriedly pack and return to the market place to join up with the caravan on its return trip to Susa. It was best to travel with a caravan because of the danger of being robbed by bandits. After several weeks of travel, you finally arrive at the palace of King Ahasuerus in Susa.

Do: Select a student to start by asking the student on his/her right the first question. The second student will then read the appropriate Bible verse from their Bible. After reading the verse he/she will then ask the student on his/her right the second question. Each child will have a turn to ask a question and give a Bible verse answer. (The student that started the questions will get his/her turn to answer when the questions and answers go around and come back to him/her.)

Say: Each of you will have a turn at being an investigative reporter and asking the questions who, what, where, when, why and how. These are the questions that a good investigative reporter uses to ferret out the facts. You will also have a turn at answering the questions by reading the appropriate verse from your Bible. The first student will ask the first question, and the next student will read the answer from her Bible. That student will then ask the next student question 2, and we will go around the room asking the Five W's and and H questions.

1. WHO ordered the decree?

Esther 3:8-9 "Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, 'There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king's treasuries.'"

2. WHAT happened then?

Esther 3:12 "Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king's satraps to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring."

Esther 3:14 "A copy of the text of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day."

3. WHERE, WHEN and WHO were these people that Haman wanted destroyed?

Esther 3:13 "And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions."

4. WHO was Haman and WHY did he want to have the Jews killed?

Esther 3:1-2 "After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage."

Esther 3:5-6 "When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai."

5. HOW did Haman find out that Mordecai was a Jew?

Esther 3:3-4 "Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, 'Why do you transgress the king's command?' Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew."

Say: Several months have passed since Haman sent his decree throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus announcing the destruction of all the Jews. You have your story and you are packing your things and heading home. Suddenly, one of the young boys you have befriended rushes in with some late-breaking news. With this strange turn of events, you start unpacking. Being a good reporter, you must find the answers to all the questions bombarding your mind. You had planned to return in the 12th month to cover the story of the destruction of a people, but this changes things.

6. WHAT is this late breaking news?

Esther 8:11 "By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions."

Esther 8:13 "A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies."

7. WHEN and WHERE was this to take place?

Esther 8:12 "On one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar."

Say: Remember, Haman, with the king's approval, put into law that the Jews would be annihilated on the 13th day of the 12th month.

8. WHAT has happened that would cause such a turn about of events?

Esther 4:6-8 "So Hathach [a eunuch] went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate. And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people."

9. WHY was Esther reluctant to go into the king's presence in the inner court?

Esther 4:11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days."

Say: Esther thought she had lost favor with the king and this added to her fears.

10. WHAT was Mordecai's answer to Esther?

Esther 4:12-14 "So they told Mordecai Esther's words. And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: 'Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'"

11. WHAT was her reply?

Esther 4:16 "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

12. WHAT happened on the third day?

Esther 5:1 "Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house."

Esther 5:3-4 "And the king said to her, 'What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!' So Esther answered, 'If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.'"

Say: Haman was in high spirits because of the Queen Esther's invitation until he saw Mordecai. He was filled with rage when Mordecai neither rose nor showed fear in his presence. When Haman reached home he boasted to his wife and friends that he was the only one to be invited to accompany the king to the banquet Queen Esther gave. Haman then lamented that as long as Mordecai lived he could not enjoy life. Acting on the suggestion of his wife and friends, Haman had a 75-foot gallows built. He planned to ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it.

As you continue your investigation about the second decree, you come across another interesting turn of events.

13. HOW did it happen that Haman's plans for Mordecai were turned around?

Esther 6:1-3 "That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. Then the king said, 'What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?' And the king's servants who attended him said, 'Nothing has been done for him.'"

Say: As Haman entered the court, before he could speak, the king asked him what should be done for someone who deserved to be honored. Thinking the king was going to honor him, Haman said, "Clothe him in the king's royal robe and let him be led about the city on the king's horse. Select one of your most noble princes to go before proclaiming, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'"

"Good! Do what you have said for Mordecai the Jew," said the king, "and you, noble prince, will lead Mordecai on my horse." Haman did as the king said and that evening hurried home in grief. As he was telling his wife what had happened, two of the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

14. WHAT happened at the banquet?

Esther 7:1-6 "So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, 'What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!' Then Queen Esther answered and said, 'If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss.' So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?' And Esther said, 'The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!' So Haman was terrified before the king and queen."

15. HOW did the king react and WHAT did Haman do?

Esther 7:7 "Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king."

16. WHAT happened to Haman?

Esther 7:8-10 "When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, 'Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?' As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, 'Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.' Then the king said, 'Hang him on it!' So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided."

17. HOW did the king show his appreciation to Queen Esther and Mordecai?

Esther 8:1-2 "On that same day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman; and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman."

Say: Haman was hanged, and Mordecai was saved from the gallows. But the decree was still in effect. Once a document is written in the king's name and sealed with his ring, it cannot be revoked or taken back.

18. HOW, with King Ahasuerus' permission, did Esther and Mordecai resolve this problem?

Esther 8:8 "You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke."

Esther 8:10 "And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds."

19. What happened on the 13th day of the 12th month?

Esther 9:1-3 "Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, the time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them."

Say: You have your story and return to the office of the *Ancient World News*. Later, you receive an award for the best story of the year.

LESSON APPLICATION:

Say: A good reporter can glean many facts from what he learns even though a direct statement is not made. It is called "reading between the lines." Esther 4:16 does not state that "Esther demonstrated faith" or that "she showed courage," but by "reading between the line" we can come to that conclusion.

Open your Bibles to Esther 4:16. [Select a student to read Esther 4:16.] Esther 4:16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Let's analyze or pick apart this verse and see whether or not Esther had faith.

In Romans 10:17 we read that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Ask: How did Esther know what to do when she asked Mordecai to ask all the Jews in Susa to fast.

Say: In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 God commands the Israelites, "And you must think constantly about these commandments I am giving you today. You must teach them to your children and talk about them when you are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and the first thing in the morning." Orphaned as a child, Esther was brought up by her cousin Mordecai who was mindful of God's teachings. By this we can conclude that Esther was taught as a child about God and His promises to the Jews.

Ask: While verse 16 of Esther 4 only says that Esther asked Mordecai to ask the Jews to fast, do you think they prayed to God as well? Why?

How did Esther demonstrate her faith?

Say: After fasting and praying for three days, Esther put her life in God's hands and went to the king, even though it was against the law and she could be put to death.

Ask: How did Esther show courage?

Say: When Esther went before the king to save her people, even though she could have been put to death, she showed great courage and faith that God would save her people.

MUSIC:

Teacher's choice from the United Church of God hymnal.

MEMORY VERSE:

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

family activity

THE POINT:

Today's lesson was about faith, a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The story of Esther was used as a means of teaching about faith. Only the highlights of Esther's faith were touched on in the lesson.

FAMILY TOGETHER TIME:

The book of Esther is a wonderful story, with all the ingredients that makes a book hard to put down. It is about a young Jewish girl in captivity, who marries King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and becomes queen of the Persian Empire. It is about "the good, the bad and the beautiful." This is a suspense story of power, palace intrigue, and justice, with God working out the details to save His people.

As a family, take turns reading "the rest of the story" of Esther.

MEMORY VERSE:

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."