Esther

BRAVERY

ESTHER 2:5-18; 3:1-6; 4:1-17; 8:1-17

Grades 3-4

What's happening in this story?

Ahasuerus, king of Persia, rejects his wife because she refuses to obey him. Esther, a young Jewish woman, is chosen as the next queen because she is beautiful and she pleased the king. When her cousin Mordecai, who works in the royal court, refuses to bow down to Haman, the king's advisor, Haman plots to kill all the Jewish people in the kingdom. Mordecai asks Esther to intercede with the king on her people's behalf. Though she is terrified, Esther shows bravery in asking the king to spare her people, and the king agrees to do so.

What does this story mean for kids?

This story will probably feel like a fairy tale to kids. Fear is a familiar emotion for all kids and God's unwavering strength in the midst of fear can bring great comfort. Younger kids may have more concrete fears like dark, animals, or storms, while older kids are better able to specifically identify what they're afraid of. Mordecai and Esther serve as models of bravery for kids. They were still afraid of the dangers and difficulties of their situation, but they trusted God and did the right thing.

Why this theme?

You can't be brave unless you have experienced fear. This powerful story displays that sentiment beautifully, reminding kids once again that—even in the most challenging situations—God remains our advocate.

AGE LEVEL TIP

Kids this age probably haven't been challenged in their faith in a way that requires bravery. Encourage them to remember to use what they've learned about bravery when they *do* face challenges.

GENERAL SUPPLIES

- White paper
- Markers
- Scissors
- Pens

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Single-hole punches
- Brass fasteners (1 per kid)

WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL KIDS STUDY BIBLES • DVD • WALL CHART • LEAFLETS

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

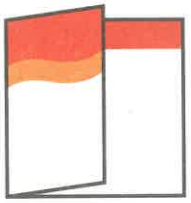
Provide markers and paper so kids can draw animals they think they'd need to be brave to face.

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Being brave is something life requires of us from time to time. Bravery can get easier as you get older, but usually being brave requires you to do something a little beyond what you're comfortable with. Sometimes it means overcoming fear; other times it means stepping into a situation you'd prefer to avoid. When have you needed to be brave? Allow time for kids to respond. **Today we're going to learn about Esther, a Jewish woman who chose to be brave and risk her life to save her people.**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for being with us always. Help us feel brave when we are facing something we aren't sure about. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and pens.



In the clouds on your leaflet, write five words that make you think of bravery. Words like *courage, hero,* and *strength* are all good examples. Kids might also think of people who are brave, like parents or firefighters, or of times when they need to be brave, like going to the doctor.

Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Sometimes people offer or are asked to donate a pint of their blood, which can then be given to someone who needs it. To give blood, the donor has a needle stuck into their arm. Today our Whirl friends will host a blood drive.

View Episode 10, "A Coward's Courage," on the Year Gold Fall Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **Being afraid of needles is sometimes called "medical anxiety." What other things make you nervous when you visit a doctor?**
- **You're not old enough to donate blood, but what other life events require you to be brave?**
- **What was different between what Roxie was feeling on the inside and what she was showing on the outside?**
- **What other emotions might you feel when you have to be brave?**
- **Why did Mimi and Monty still look up to Roxie even though she didn't succeed on her first try?**

HEAR 15

Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is from the book of Esther. It's in the Old Testament in the Historical Books section of the Bible. Invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 586.

The book of Esther is about a brave young Jewish girl who risks her life to save her people. There are lots of characters in this story: Queen Esther is married to King Ahasuerus; Mordecai is Esther's cousin; and Haman is so angry at Mordecai that he wants to destroy all the Jewish people. We're going to read about how the Jewish people reacted when they heard about Haman's plan.

Help kids find Esther 4:1-17 and read it in this creative way together: Kids wail sadly as they lie down on the floor, then take turns reading the verses. **Just a few chapters later, Esther convinces the king to save the Jewish people!**

Invite kids to check out what Gabe says about Esther 4:12-17.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **Why was Mordecai so upset?**
- **When you are sad, how do you show it?**
- **Why did going to the king show Esther's bravery?**
- **How do you decide if you're going to be brave?**
- **What did Esther ask the Jewish people to do while she got ready to see the king?**

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Bravery*. Invite a volunteer to draw a Star of David in the box by *Bravery*. **The Star of David has been a symbol of the Jewish people for centuries. This star reminds us that brave Queen Esther risked her life to save her people!**

BIBLE BIT

The Jewish holiday of Purim revisits this story every spring. The entire book of Esther is read aloud. Those present make a racket to drown out Haman's name whenever it's read!

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, watch for Mimi's and Monty's reactions to Roxie's bravery.

OUR CHURCH

How does your church bring prayer concerns to the whole congregation? Invite a pastor or prayer chain leader to explain how your church comes together in prayer.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out scissors, single-hole punches, and brass fasteners.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **Let's explore what bravery might look like in our own lives. Carefully cut out the arrow from the back flap. Be sure the rest of the flap stays in one piece so we can use it later. Attach your arrow with a brass fastener to the bottom center of your square.**
2. **Close your eyes and listen as I read some scenarios. While you're listening, move the arrow back and forth on your square. When I say, "stop," *stop*. Then open your eyes and look where your arrow has landed. Do whatever that wedge says.**
3. After each scenario, ask kids to share where their arrow landed and discuss what the brave action would be.
4. **Ready? Eyes closed! Here's the first situation: You're playing baseball in the yard, and someone hits the ball through a window in your house. Everyone else scatters, and your parent comes running out. What do you do? *Stop*.** Allow a moment of chaos, discuss bravery in that situation, then repeat with the next scenario.
5. **Next up: There's a new kid in your class at school, and your teacher asks for someone to spend the day being their guide through classes and lunch. What do you do? *Stop*.**
6. **Last one: You're spending the night at a friend's house. In the middle of the night, you wake up because the fire alarm is going off. What do you do? *Stop*.**
7. **Bravery is a part of our lives. Sometimes we need to be a little bit brave. Sometimes we need to be really brave. This activity helped us think about many ways we might react to a situation. Sometimes, the right thing to do is to be brave.**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

When have you *not* been brave? Take time to hear kids' responses. **Being brave isn't always easy, but with God's help, we can have the faith to be brave when it really matters—like Esther did!**

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pens.

Who is the bravest person you know? Write their name in Esther's crown. Ask kids to cut out the crowns and put them up on the wall to remind your group about who inspires them to be brave.

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest)**. And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you)**.** Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.

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