Esther

Grades 5-6

BRAVERY

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

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 are bombarded with stories about bravery from the time they are very young. As a result, they may think they know everything about it. The Esther story shows that bravery comes in many shapes and sizes, and often shows up just in the nick of time.

GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Pens

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Mural paper
- Sticky notes (various colors)

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

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

On a piece of mural paper, write the following prompts: "The bravest person I can think of is . . ." and "because . . ." Leave sticky notes of different colors for kids to write their answers on and attach to the mural paper.

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Go around the circle and invite kids to name one person or character they think is brave. **Bravery can happen in lots of different situations, from a classmate confronting a bully to a firefighter rushing into a burning building. When have you been brave?** Allow time for kids to respond. **Our main character today was very brave. She even risked her life. Her name is Esther.**

Pray together: **The *Shema*** ("shuh-MAH") **is a prayer that every Jewish child learns. Repeat after me: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone"** (Deuteronomy 6:4)**. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and pens.

When people cook something, they often follow a recipe. Today, we're going to prepare a fresh batch of bravery! Choose from the ingredients on your leaflet—add others if you want to—and write preparation directions. What "seasoning" is required? How do you prepare it? What "utensils" do you need? Does bravery come together quickly, like in a microwave? Or slowly, like in a slow cooker? How is it served? Are there recommended side dishes? Have kids work alone, then share their recipes with a partner.

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

Bravery can look different depending on the person and the situation they're in. But it usually involves setting aside some kind of fear or anxiety in order to move forward. Let's watch and see how Roxie handles her fear, and whether or not she's as brave as people might expect her to be.

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

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **How do you feel about needles? How do you feel when you need a shot at the doctor's office?**
- **What is something that makes you afraid? What makes you feel safe when you're afraid?**
- **Although Roxie fainted, Mimi and Monty thought she was brave. Do you agree? Why or why not?**
- **How do you think fear and bravery are related?**
- **What's the bravest thing you've ever done?**

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.

Esther was Jewish, but most people didn't know she was Jewish. After she was selected to be queen of Persia, she still had to obey the king and live by his rules. When the Jewish people were in danger, Esther had to make a decision: keep quiet about being a follower of God and stay safe, or stand up to the king and risk her life.

Help kids find Esther 2:5-18; 3:1-6; 4:1-17; 8:1-17 and read it in this creative way together: Divide into groups and assign each group one section of the reading. Have each group report back to the others with a summary of the action, characters, and main plot points of their passage. Ask groups to share where bravery enters into their part of the story.

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

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **What do we know about the relationship between Mordecai and Esther?**
- **Why do you think Mordecai told Esther not to reveal to the king that she was Jewish?**
- **How is Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman an act of bravery?**
- **What happened when people spoke to the king without being called? What happens to you if you speak in class without being called on?**
- **Even though Haman was out of the picture, his order to destroy the Jewish people still stood. What did Esther do to stop it?**

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*. **The book of Esther tells how a brave Jewish woman who became the queen of Persia saved her people.** Have a volunteer draw a crown in the box by *Bravery*.

BIBLE BIT

Esther is the only book of the Bible that does not mention God by name. Many people believe that Esther 4:14 implies God's action, but the name of God is never used.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, watch for Roxie's reaction to Mimi and Monty when they first ask her to consider donating blood. What do you think is going through her mind?

OUR CHURCH

In Esther's time, women weren't often given the opportunity to lead. How many women help lead at your church? Make it a point to thank them for their leadership!

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out pens.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. Form groups that have at least one person from each of the three Hear reading groups. **What if Esther's story was made into a movie? How would you tell it?**
2. **Work together in your groups to create a framework that would tell Esther's story to other people.**
3. **What are the important points of the story you want to include?**
4. **Identify major characters: Who is the hero? The villain? What supporting actors do you need to include?**
5. **Whom would you cast to play the various roles in your movie version of the story? Think of actors or friends who would be good in each role. Whom would you cast in the starring role?**
6. **Write a voice over for the movie trailer, the commercial that makes people want to go see it.**
7. **What will you name your movie?**
8. After groups have a chance to work on their leaflets, have them share their voice overs and other information with the rest of the group.
9. **Why did you choose the things you did? If someone made your Esther movie, what would you want the audience to remember after they saw it?**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Mordecai got in trouble because he wouldn't bow down to anyone but God. Esther saved Mordecai and the rest of the Jewish people by showing the king that Mordecai was guilty only of following the Jewish law. How can you get in trouble for doing the right thing?

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pens.

We probably won't have to defend our family to a king, but there are people we can help. Brainstorm ways you can reach out to people who are lonely or left out.

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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