

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Year 3 Curriculum – Summer, Part 1

Lesson 1

Title: Nehemiah – Standing on the promises

Text: Nehemiah 1-2

Theme: The servant of Jesus Christ must cling to the promises of God as he goes about doing the work of the Lord.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to relate what sad situation Nehemiah faced.
2. Be able to tell what promise Nehemiah clung to as he went forward to do the work of rebuilding the city wall.
3. Be able to share what work the Lord has left His followers to do.
4. Be able to share a promise that he can cling to in faith that will encourage him to persevere in God's work.

Memory Verse: *Matthew 28:19-20* Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." **OR Hebrews 8:10** This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Teacher Direction:

1. During the summer we shall be looking at two books of the O.T. that describe happenings during the period of exile. The first is the book of Nehemiah describing events that took place during the reign of the later Persian kings (approx. 430 – 400 B.C.). We shall devote four lessons to this intriguing book. The second is the book of Esther, which also describes events which took place during the reign of the Persian kings, though perhaps 30-40 years earlier. Five lessons and one festival lesson shall be devoted to this book.

In our first lesson from Nehemiah we shall look at the events surrounding Nehemiah's travel to Jerusalem. We shall observe the sad situation that so moved him that he risked his life in order to do something about it. We shall also see his firm confidence in God and in His promises that served to motivate him to do this difficult work with diligence. It is hoped that the children will learn, through this lesson, that all of God's servants have a work to do which will require their strong confidence in God and His promises.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they know what a promise is. Ask them to give a few examples. Ask the children why promises are important. Help the children see that promises can provide encouragement for us. To illustrate this idea have the children imagine that they are doing a very difficult project for school, a project that may seem impossible to do by ones self. Ask them how their dad making a promise to help them would affect them. Would this promise encourage them to go forward with the task? Hopefully, the children will see that their dad's promise of assistance would be of great encouragement to them.

Tell the children that in today's story a leader and his people are confronted with a very difficult task. Encourage the children to listen well to see what that problem was and to see what promise encouraged them to go forward with their difficult work.

3. Bible Story

As you share the account from Nehemiah 1-2 be sure to emphasize the following ideas:

A. The sad situation – God had chosen a special people. He had redeemed them from Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land. He said that He would dwell among them, that they would be His people, and that He would be their God. This people, blessed by God, would be a light to all the nations. But there was one caveat. For them to experience the blessing of this situation, they would have to walk in the ways of their God. Sadly, the people did not walk in the ways of their God. Instead they went after other gods, leaving the one true God only one option. That was to punish His people as He had promised. In time, God did bring foreign nations to invade Israel, to exile the people, and to tear down the temple and the city walls. It was indeed a sad situation and had been so for over 100 years by Nehemiah's day. The people who were to bring glory to God, now brought reproach to His name. It was this situation that brought Nehemiah to prayer as recorded in Nehemiah 1.

B. An encouraging promise – Upon hearing the continued dismal state of affairs in Jerusalem, Nehemiah sat down and wept, fasted and prayed for days. He acknowledged the great and awesome God who had made covenant with his people. He acknowledged the sin of the people and identified himself with it. Then he claimed a promise given through Moses. That promise was that if the people returned to their God, He would gather them from the remotest parts of the earth, and would plant them again in the place that bore His name. Confronted with a very sad situation, Nehemiah clung to the promise of God, and set out to be used by God to do a great and needed work: the rebuilding of the city walls and the removing of the reproach that was upon the people and their God.

C. A faithful God – Nehemiah was asking for no small request from the king. He was asking for a leave of absence, letters guaranteeing safe passage, and timbers for the rebuilding of the wall. He was asking for much, especially for one who was only a servant of the king. But as the text clearly affirms (2:9), God's good hand was upon him. God had heard Nehemiah's prayer and, according to His promise, paved the way for him to arrive safely in Jerusalem.

Upon his arrival, after an inspection of the ruins, Nehemiah was confronted with more opposition. If the task of rebuilding the walls wasn't great enough, surely the addition of hostile officials like Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem would make it impossible. Yet Nehemiah was not discouraged, for he continued to trust in His God and the promise He had made to His people. Though the task would be extremely arduous, Nehemiah and the people would proceed on the work trusting in the God whose name dwelt in that city.

4. Application

From the eyes of God (and those who see as He sees) our world is in desperate ruin. Man, who was made in God's image, has gone his own way and has brought much sadness to our world. Those who know the Lord are called to do something about this, but the truth is, it is a humanly impossible task. Yet, as Nehemiah, we must cling to the promise of God to be with us, and go out in our world and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. When we do this, in obedience to God, we will see the Kingdom of God advanced in our world.

5. Review Questions

What saddened the heart of Nehemiah at the beginning of our story? (He heard how the people in Jerusalem continued to be in distress and how the walls and gates to the city were still in ruin.)

Why was this especially sad news? (Because the people of God were to bring glory to God. This brought reproach to Him.)

What promise from God encouraged Nehemiah to do something about this sad situation? (Through Moses God had told the people that if they would return, He would gather them again in the land where His name dwelt.)

What did Nehemiah ask of the king? (He wanted a leave of absence, letters for safe passage, and timbers to rebuild the walls.)

What evidence did you see in the story that God was true to His promise? (He made Nehemiah's request acceptable in the sight of the king, and brought Nehemiah safely to Jerusalem.)

How do you know Nehemiah was not relying on his own abilities to accomplish this important task? (When opposition came he pointed to God as the One who would bring success.)

What difficult work has God left us to do? (According to our memory verse He has left us to go out in the world and tell others about Christ.)

What promise of God should encourage us as we go out and work for our Lord? (He said He would be with us always. He would dwell among us and be our God.)

Are you saddened by what you see sin has done in our world? What would God have you do about it?

Nehemiah's Suitcase

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ Assemble craft ahead of time so you can instruction the children through the various parts of the craft.
- ◆ Depending on your time allowance you may want to cut the suitcase handles out ahead of time.
- ◆ Give the promise out after the suitcase is assembled.
- ◆ Older children may be able to help younger ones.

Materials

- ◆ Black line masters
- ◆ Colorful heavy cardstock – Light or bright colors
- ◆ Bright colored photocopy paper
- ◆ Staplers or tape
- ◆ Glue sticks
- ◆ Scissors

Instructions

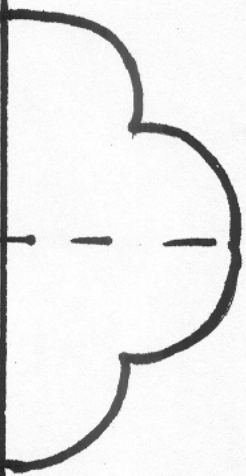
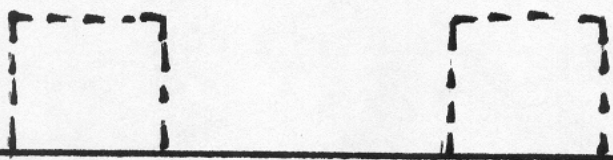
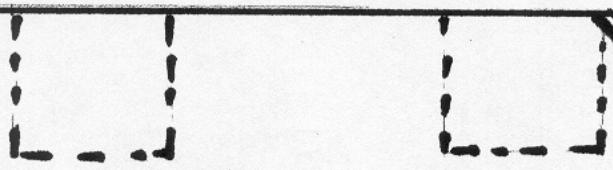
1. Photocopy black line master of suitcase onto heavy cardstock. Do the handles in a different color of heavy cardstock.
2. Photocopy black line master of verses onto a bright photocopy paper. (You may want to use two different colors)
3. Have children cut out the suitcase and handles (unless you have the handles cut out ahead of time-2 for each child)
4. Have them glue, staple or tape the handles onto the dotted lines on each side of the suitcase.
5. Then have them fold the suitcase on dotted line in the middle of the suitcase.
6. Now have them open the suitcase, and on the inside, glue along the very edge of the sides of the suitcase. Refold suitcase to seal the sides. You may want to staple or tape the very top edges of the suitcase on either side to secure it.
7. Hand out the verses and have them put them in their suitcase.

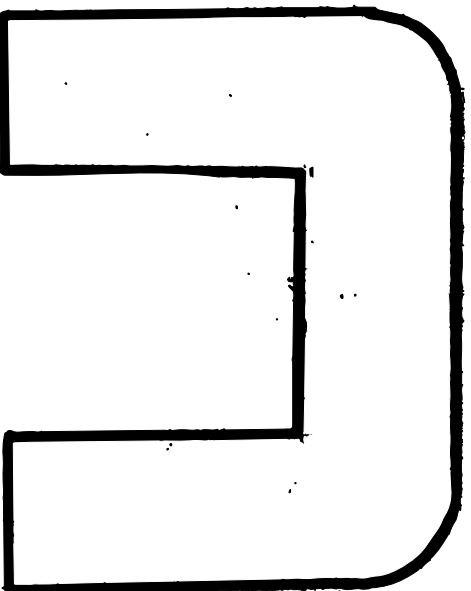
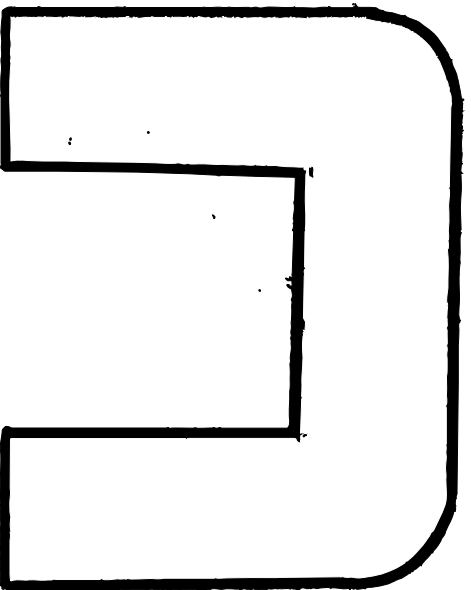
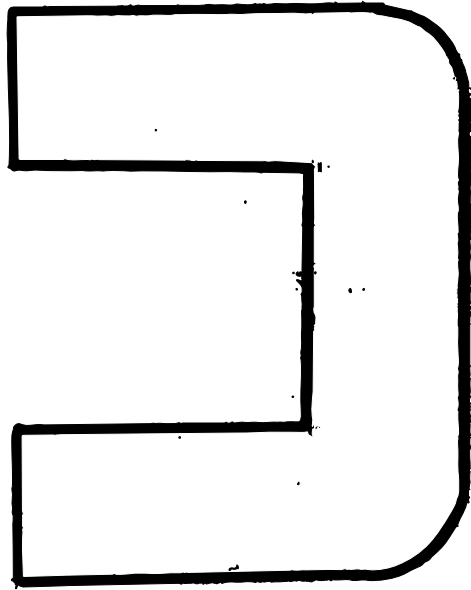
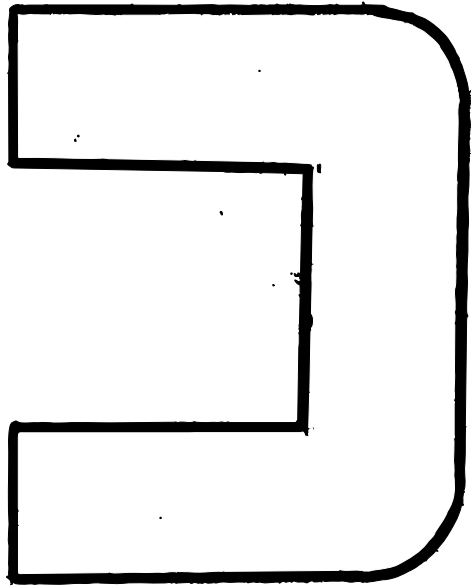
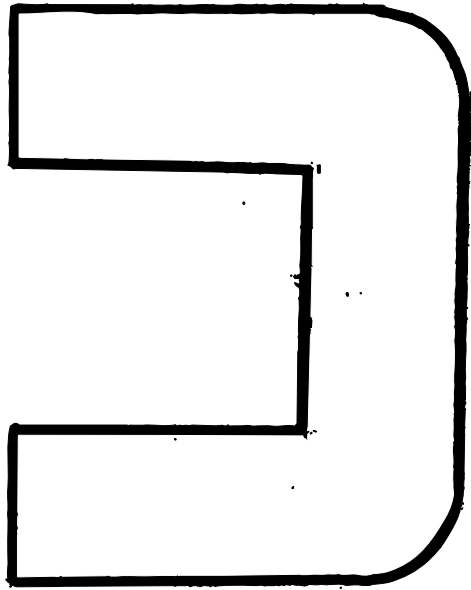
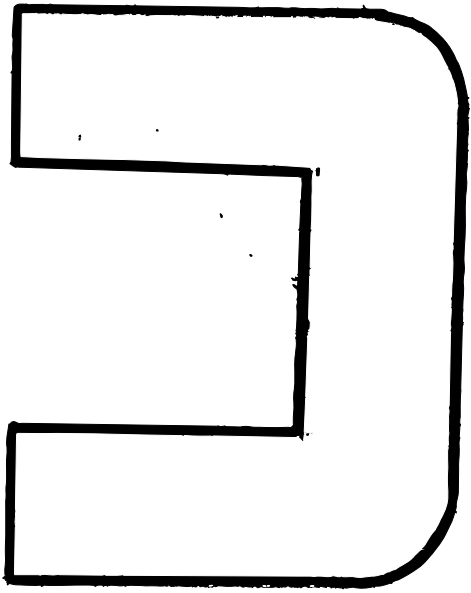
Faith Connections

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." OR Hebrews 8:10 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Have the children share with the class a promise that is very special to their lives and how it has helped them to "travel" through difficult times.

Leaving: *Babylon*
Arriving: *Jerusalem*
Name: *Nehemiah*





Promise Verse

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

Promise Verse

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Hebrews 8:10

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Promise Verse

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Hebrews 8:10

Lesson 2

Title: Nehemiah – Fighting the opposition

Text: Nehemiah 4, 6:1 - 7:4

Theme: God's work requires devotion to prayer, the support of God's people, perseverance and preparedness, and great trust in God.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to share how the work of rebuilding the wall was opposed.
2. Be able to tell what helped Nehemiah and the people to continue building the wall despite the opposition
3. Share ways God's work is opposed today.
4. Trust the Lord in times of difficulty and continue doing the work that God has given him to do.

Memory Verse: *Nehemiah 4:14b, 20b... "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, ... 20 Our God will fight for us!"*

Teacher Direction:

1. The people of Israel, chosen by God to be a light to the nations, had rebelled and then suffered the consequences of their rebellion. Their main city, Jerusalem, and the temple which adorned it, was torn down and burnt. The people were exiled to a foreign land. It was truly a sad situation for a people who were to bring glory to God.

When Nehemiah was informed of this sad condition, it grieved him. Trusting his God and the promises of that God, he set out to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the walls of the city. Prospered by God, he made the journey to Jerusalem and began making preparations for the reconstruction of the wall. This was the content of our first lesson in this unit.

In today's lesson we shall look at the severe opposition Nehemiah and the people had in rebuilding the wall. There were many who did not want to see this city rebuilt. We shall look at what it took for the people to deal with this opposition and to succeed in their mission. It is hoped that, through this lesson, the children will see that whenever the people of God seek, with God's help, to build the kingdom of God, there will be opposition. It is hoped that they will also see how to handle this opposition and to complete the task God has given them to do.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson, ask the children how they would feel if they had a very difficult task to do, and they also had a lot of people trying to keep them from doing it. Would they feel like giving up? Would they feel discouraged? After discussing this, ask the children how they might handle this very difficult situation. Allow the children to comment freely.

Review with the children the very difficult task Nehemiah had. (See last weeks lesson.) Tell the children that not only was the task of rebuilding the wall difficult in itself (Nehemiah needed to gain permission, safe travel and materials), but that there were many people who tried to discourage their work. Encourage the children to listen well to see if they can determine what kind of opposition Nehemiah and the people had, and how they handle these problems.

3. Bible Story

As you share the account from Nehemiah, be sure to emphasize the following ideas:

A. The Opposition Described – The opposition to the wall-rebuilding project took many forms. Sanballat and Tobiah began by ridiculing the people. Sanballat spoke of “feeble Jews” and Tobiah said that their wall could easily be broken down by a fox. Seeing that ridicule did not work (the wall was built to half height), the enemy sought to threaten attack. Sanballat gathered many others who were opposed to this project, and together they conspired to attack Nehemiah and his workers. This, too, was ineffective.

Later, after the wall had been rebuilt, the enemy tried several other tactics. They tried intrigue (asking Nehemiah to come to a secret meeting where he would most likely be harmed), innuendo (spreading rumors that Nehemiah wanted to be king), and intimidation (declaring that Nehemiah should flee to the temple because he was about to be killed). Each of these tactics, however, were handled masterfully.

It should be noted that not all the opposition came from without. In the fourth chapter we see that the people had to deal with inward opposition in the form of weakness (vs. 10) and fear (vs. 14). The people had to battle not only what was presented to them from others, but also what was going on inside of them.

B. The Opposition Defeated – How did the people manage to complete such a difficult job surrounded by such opposition? Several things stand out. First and foremost was prayer. At many points of opposition, Nehemiah paused to pray (4:4-5, 9, 6:9,14). It seemed that he spoke to the Lord about everything. Secondly, was that Nehemiah pointed the people to trust in God. He told them to remember the Lord who was great and awesome and who would fight for them. It is interesting to note that when the wall was completed the enemy recognized that the Lord had gained the victory for His people. Thirdly, Nehemiah called the people to support one another in a spirit of watchfulness. They were to work together, side-by-side, keeping watch over one another, and giving one another rest when needed. Finally, they were to persevere and keep their hands to the good work. They were not to let opposition get in their way, for God would prosper their work.

C. The Reason for Opposition – To understand why there was so much opposition, it is important to understand the context of this story. As was stated in the teacher introduction, God’s people were called to bring glory to Him. A broken temple and wall, however, surely did not glorify the God of Israel. When Nehemiah set out to rebuild the wall, he was doing so for the glory of his God. In essence, he desired, not merely to rebuild a wall, but to honor the name of His Lord. For this reason, the enemies of God joined to thwart his efforts. They did not desire to see the rebuilding of the city of the God of Israel.

4. Application

God has created all of us to bring glory to Him, but sin has marred our ability to carry out that purpose. When God, however, helps us see, as He did Nehemiah, the devastation that the rebellion of man has brought, we will desire to do something about it. We will desire to build the kingdom of God wherever we are so that His glory will shine. But we must realize that there will be obstacles. There will be opposition. Satan does not want to see the kingdom of God advanced. To be successful, then, in the face of opposition, we must use the tools Nehemiah used. We must pray at all times, trust in our Lord, support one another in the work of the Lord, and never give up.

5. Review Questions

What difficult work did Nehemiah and the people set out to do? (The rebuilding of the wall around the city of God.)

Share several ways the work was opposed? (Nehemiah's enemies used ridicule, threat of attack, intrigue, innuendo \ rumors, and outright intimidation.)

What "tools" did Nehemiah and the people use to overcome their enemies' tricks? (They prayed, supported one another, persevered, and kept their eyes focused on God.)

When the walls were finally completed, what did the enemies think was key to Nehemiah's success? (God fought for them and gave them the victory.)

What great work does God have for all of His followers? (God wants us to build the kingdom of God by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.)

What kind of opposition can we expect in doing this work? (People will ridicule us or try to get us off task or interested in other things. We may suffer from our own weakness or we may fear being a witness for the Lord. Our government or teachers may even threaten us. They may tell us not to speak about Jesus.)

Are you willing to do whatever it takes to be used of God to build His kingdom? Are you ready to trust Him to help you bring His blessed message to many who have been hurt, even ruined, by sin?

Rebuilding the Wall

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ Start at the bottom of the wall and work your way up to illustrate the building of a wall.
- ◆ Have different children read a brick before building.

Materials

- ◆ Black line master
- ◆ Tan or gray colored cardstock paper
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Glue Sticks

Instructions

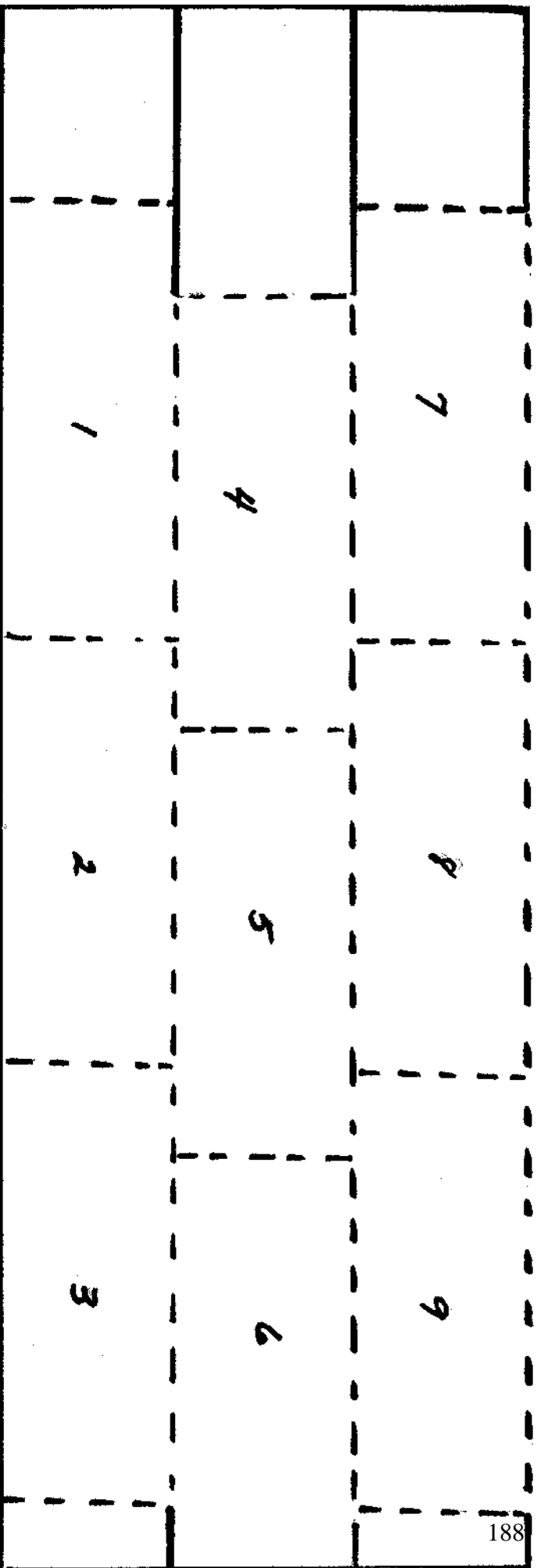
1. Photocopy black line master onto colored cardstock.
2. Have the children cut along dotted line to separate the wall from the bricks and then cut out the bricks.
3. Starting with brick #1, have the children take turns reading the bricks and then gluing them on the wall until they have finished the wall.

Faith Connections

Nehemiah 4:14b, 20b “Don’t be afraid of them. remember the Lord, who is great and awesome,...Our God will fight for us!”

When the children complete the wall have them share how they have used the various “bricks “ to have the Lord build their faith.

Help the Children of Israel rebuild the wall in spite of opposition.



<p>Ignoring ridicule from Sanbattat and Tobiah</p> <p>1</p>	<p>On guard from treats of attack</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Ignoring secret meetings</p> <p>3</p>
<p>Not listening to false rumors</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Ignoring intimidation</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Overcoming weakness and fear</p> <p>6</p>
<p>Giving themselves to prayer</p> <p>7</p>	<p>Trust in the Lord</p> <p>8</p>	<p>The LORD had gained the victory</p> <p>9</p>

Lesson 3

Title: Nehemiah – Fearing God, loving others

Text: Nehemiah 5

Theme: A true fear of the Lord will lead us to loving treatment of others.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to describe the unloving treatment of the Jewish rulers to their people.
2. Be able to tell how Nehemiah set a loving example for his people.
3. Be able to tell how the fear of God is related to the love of others.
4. Express his fear of God by loving those around him.

Memory Verse: *1 John 4:16b* God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Teacher Direction:

1. In our last two lessons we saw the difficult situation confronting Nehemiah and the people. Jerusalem, the city of God, had been reduced to ruins. The city where God said He would cause His name to dwell had been destroyed because of the disobedience of His people. Nehemiah was saddened by this blight on the name of his God and was moved to do something about it.

Yet, the way forward was loaded with obstacles. Nehemiah had to gain permission from the king, whom he served, and had to obtain the necessary materials to rebuild the wall. Beyond that, he and the people had to endure the ridicule, threats, intimidation, intrigue and innuendo of the surrounding people who did not want to see this project succeed.

To make matters worse, however, the people had to endure unloving treatment from their own people. This is the subject of our current lesson. The Jewish rulers were creating a situation that made the lives of those rebuilding the wall even more difficult. More importantly, though, they were, by this behavior, putting another blemish on the name and glory of their God. It is hoped that through this lesson the children will see the importance of showing our fear of God by demonstrating true Christian charity among our brothers. Such a demonstration brings glory to our loving God.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they know what the fear of the Lord is? Ask them if it is like the fear we might have when meeting a hungry lion in the jungle. Ask them if it is like the fear of the dark that many children experience. After discussing their ideas, tell children that to fear God is to respect Him so much that we consider Him in everything that we do.

Next, ask the children how they would know if another person feared the Lord? Ask them how that person would be different? After discussing this, tell the children that in today's story we shall see both people who fear the Lord and those who do not. Encourage them to listen well and to try to find out how Nehemiah and others showed the true fear of the Lord.

3. Bible Story

As you share this account from Nehemiah 5, be sure to emphasize the following:

A. The Problem Described (vs. 1-5) – The situation in Israel was very difficult for most people. Some of the landless people had no grain for food and did not know where to turn. Some fortunate enough to own land had to mortgage their land in order to buy grain. Others had to take loans in order to pay what is believed to be exorbitant taxes. In the worst cases, families were forced to give their children up to slavery because they had nothing else with which to barter. Yet, the most disturbing aspect of all this, is that this oppression came not from foreign princes, it came from their Jewish brothers. It came from those who should have known better. It came from those who should have been a great support during this strategic time of their nation.

B. A Solution Offered and Accepted (vs. 6-13) – Nehemiah became angry when he heard what was going on in Israel. After careful reflection he confronted the Jewish rulers and nobles. He accused them of exacting usury (changing interest) on the poor and of promoting policies that were resulting in bringing their brothers into slavery. He urged them to stop this evil and to do good. He urged them stop charging usury, to return fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses that had been taken, and to return the oil, grain and silver that had been part of the tax placed upon the people.

Fortunately, the rulers took Nehemiah's admonition to heart. They promised to give back what they had taken. To ensure that the rulers followed through on their promise, Nehemiah further warned them that if they continued their current practices, God would shake out and empty out each one of them.

It is important to note what motivation Nehemiah gave them to change their ways. In verse 9 he mentions the fear of God and the reproach of the nations. In essence Nehemiah was saying that their current practices both insulted their Maker and was, at the same time, a blot on their testimony. When God's people treat their brothers unlovingly, they show their lack of fear for God. Such behavior diminishes greatly their testimony to the nations.

C. An Example Displayed (vs. 14-19) – Nehemiah was not like the parent who says "do what I say, but not as I do". Out of the fear of the Lord, Nehemiah treated his people with great benevolence. Though he could have required the people to provide for the governor's food allowance, he chose not to tax the people, for he saw that their burden was already very great. Instead he chose to provide for the 150 people he daily served out of his own resources. His fear of God led him to have a heart of compassion for his people. The resultant behavior brought great glory to the God of Israel as well as respect for this man of God.

4. Application

The fear of the Lord will show itself in our loving treatment of others. When we realize that we live in the presence of God, and that we have been created to bring glory to Him, we should be encouraged to show sacrificial love to our brothers. Such love reflects the character of our God who sent His Son to die so that we might live. When we express this kind of love, God is honored and great good is done for His people.

5. Review Questions

What complaint did the people in Jerusalem have against their Jewish brothers? (They were being mistreated, even taken advantage of, resulting in many going hungry, some having to mortgage their lands, and some having to sell their children into slavery.)

How did Nehemiah react to this situation? (He became angry and scolded the rulers.)

What solution did Nehemiah offer? (He encouraged the nobles and rulers to stop charging usury and to give back a portion of the taxes.)

How did Nehemiah try to motivate the rulers to listen to his warning? (He spoke of the fear of God and their testimony to the nations.)

How did the rulers respond? (They promised to do as Nehemiah suggested.)

How did Nehemiah set a good example? (Instead of taxing the people to provide for the governor's food allowance, he used his own resources. He did this because he saw that the people were already under a heavy burden.)

How is the fear of the Lord related to loving others? (If we fear the Lord we will treat others as the Lord has treated us. He has shown us great mercy and sacrificial love. We who reflect God's image must treat others with great mercy and love.)

How are you showing the fear of the Lord? Are you taking advantage of others around you, or are you looking for ways to serve others? If God is at work in you, you will be growing as a servant!

Picture of Love

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ Encourage children that do not draw well to use stick figures to illustrate their picture. This is not an art show, but a heart show, so let the children know that each of their pictures are important in showing the love of God.
- ◆ Have them take their time and really think through their pictures and make them personal to their lives.

Materials

- ◆ Black line master
- ◆ White photocopy paper
- ◆ Pencils
- ◆ Colored markers or crayons

Instructions

1. Photocopy the black line master onto photocopy paper.
2. Hand a sheet out to each child and read the top of the sheet for instructions.
3. Have the children draw the picture with a pencil and as others are sharing they can color it in, if time permits.
4. Ask the children to show their pictures and share with the class.

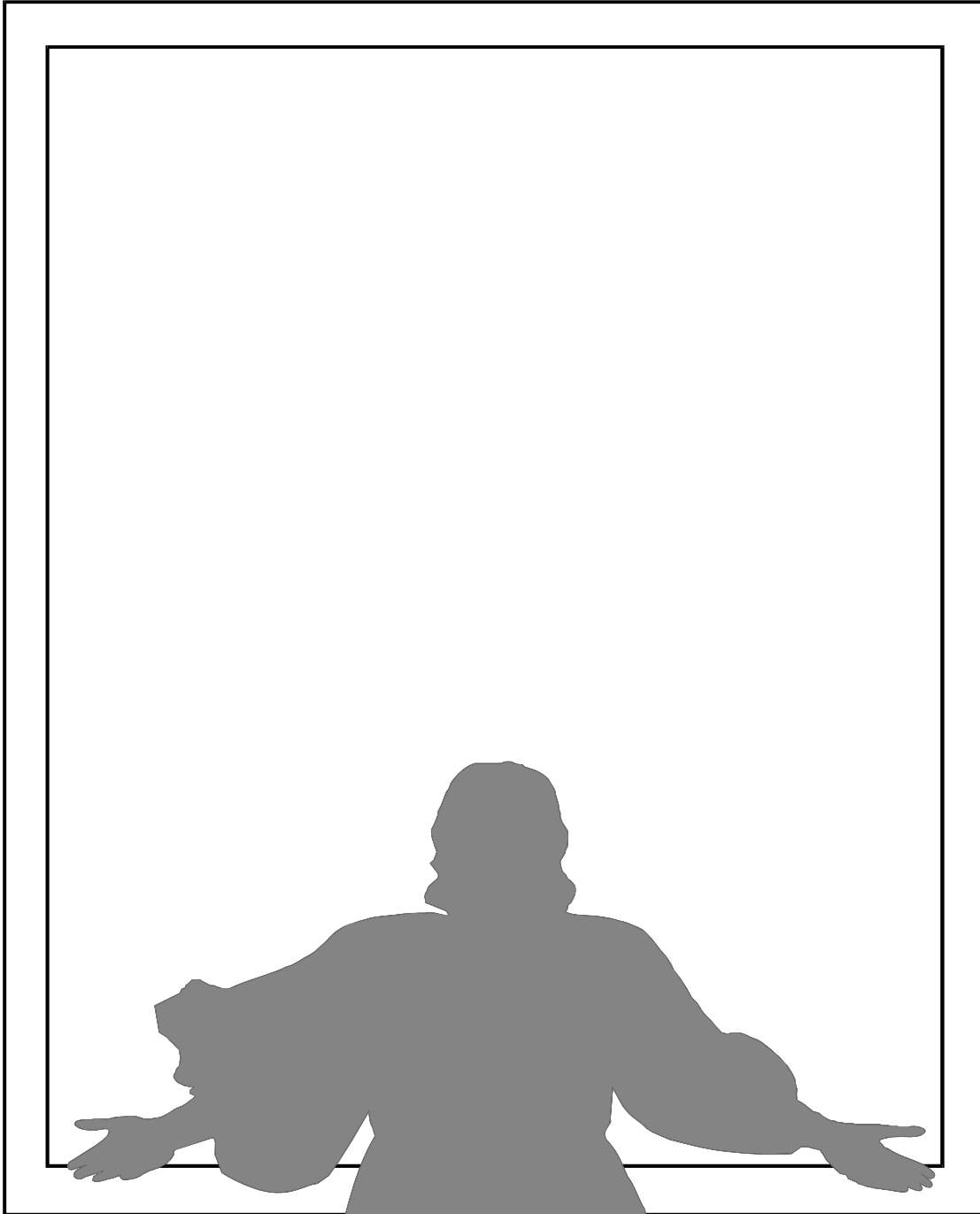
Faith Connections

1 John 4:16 "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."

You might also have the children discuss how an unloving treatment of others could discourage them from wanting to know the God we should fear.

Fearing God, Loving Others

Draw a picture showing an example of how you can fear God by loving treatment to another. When finished, share your picture with the class.



“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” 1 John 4:16

Lesson 4

Title: Nehemiah – The Power of the Word

Text: Nehemiah 8:1-10:29

Theme: The Word of God has power to bring men to repentance and to restore them to a right relationship with God.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to share how God's Word affected the people in Nehemiah's day.
2. Be able to share what affect the neglect of God's Word had in the days prior to Nehemiah.
3. Share reasons why the Word of God is important today.
4. Commit to reading the Word of God and obeying what it commands.

Memory Verse: *2 Timothy 3:15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Teacher Direction:

1. In the first three lessons of this unit we saw how Nehemiah and the people of Israel labored diligently to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. We saw how they labored even though confronted by great obstacles, some from without and some from within. In the end, with the help of God, they were able to complete this project that was so important to them because it affected the glory of the God of Israel.

In this final lesson we shall look at the events that occurred after the completion of the wall. Beholding a completed wall must have signaled to the people that God was giving them a new day. Wisely they sought the counsel of the law of Moses which they knew held the key to their continued success. This lesson looks at the role the law of God had in bringing this people to repentance. It is hoped that the children will see that God's Word continues to have this effect upon any people who will give heed to it.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson show the children several street signs. For example, show them a "stop" sign, a speed limit sign, a "do not enter" sign, and a "one way" sign. Ask the children what purpose these signs serve. After some discussion, tell the children that signs are put up for our own good, so that our experience of traveling down the road will be safe.

Next, ask the children what would happen if they ignored the signs. What if they didn't stop at a "stop" sign, or didn't go the correct speed limit, or entered a road going the

wrong direction? Help the children see that disastrous results could come from ignoring those signs. Help them see that those signs really are put up for their own good.

Finally, tell the children that God has given us a kind of sign. It is a sign which if we listen and obey, we will find traveling the road of this life very pleasant. But if we ignore God's directions, we may find ourselves in great unhappiness. Encourage the children to listen well to see what God has given to help us live this life successfully. Encourage them to see what good this special gift from God can bring to us who will listen and obey.

3. Bible Story

As you share the account from Nehemiah 8-10 be sure to emphasize the following points:

A. Background – Take time to briefly review the first three lessons. Remind the children that Nehemiah was saddened by the state of Jerusalem (temple in ruins, walls torn down) because it caused the name of the God of Israel to be shamed. Share the obstacles Nehemiah faced. Share how he had to get permission from the king, how he had to gain the necessary materials for rebuilding, and how he had to secure safe passage. Share also how Sanballat and his allies tried to stop the work through threats, spreading rumors, and other devious plots. Finally, share how the oppression of the Jewish rulers also contributed to the difficulty of the work. After sharing these items, remind the children that God made their work successful. He enabled them; amidst great opposition, to complete the task He had given them to do. Tell the children that today's story took place after the walls had been rebuilt and the gates set.

B. The Word ignored – What had caused the necessity of the rebuilding of the walls? What had caused reproach to the name of God and His people? Had it not been the neglect and rejection of the law of Moses? God had given Israel his law. It was good (9:13). It is that which brings life if it is obeyed (9:29). But the people did not obey (9:16). They refused to listen and remember (9:17). They were disobedient and they rebelled, putting the law behind their backs (9:26). They became arrogant, not giving heed to the warning of the prophets (9:29-30). As a result, they brought much calamity on themselves, and brought shame to the name of God. They had neglected what had been given for their good, and as a consequence, they had brought upon themselves the judgment of God.

C. The Word heeded – Perhaps as the people of Israel stood before the rebuilt walls, they realized that all of this had come upon them because of the rebellion of their forefathers. In recognition of this, they asked Ezra to come and read to them the law of Moses. They assembled all who could understand and gave many hours to listening and obeying what they heard. As they listened they were moved to worship (8:6), to re-establish the Feast of Booths (8:13-18), to confess their sins (9:34-35), and to renew covenant with their God (9:38-10:20). The Word of God, given for their good, had an enormous impact in their lives during these days. It especially brought them to repentance and to a restored relationship with their God.

4. Application

God's Word is a gift to us. It has the power to bring us to confess our sins and to restore our relationship with God. It also provides for us a manual on living. It gives us insight to our origins, our purpose in life, and our future. We must all give great attention to this gift, studying it daily, and asking God for grace to obey it.

5. Review Questions

What had happened just before Ezra's reading of the Law of Moses to the people? (The people under Nehemiah had just finished rebuilding the wall.)

Why did the people want Ezra to read the Law of Moses to them? (They realized that the neglect of God's Word had led to all the difficulties that they were now experiencing.)

How had their forefathers treated the Law of Moses? (They did not obey it. They refused to listen. They rebelled against it. When warned they put the law behind their backs.)

As the people listened to Ezra read the law, how did it affect them? (They were moved to worship, to re-establish the Feast of Booths, to confess their sins, and to renew covenant.)

How is God's Word important today? (It has the power to bring us to repentance before God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It always provides for us all we need to live godly lives in this often-dark world. It also can keep us from sin and its consequences.)

Are you neglecting the Word or are you giving it the attention it deserves? Are you putting the Word behind your back or are you, with God's help, seeking to obey it?

“Power of Word” Team Puzzle

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ This is better if it is played in teams, for it makes the children see how the Word of God was important in bringing the children of Israel back together for the work of God.
- ◆ Make sure you have the teams divided evenly with older and younger children.
- ◆ Part of the game will be to have the team be able to say the verse together, before they raise their hands.

Materials

- ◆ Black line master
- ◆ Heavy bright colored cardstock paper
- ◆ 2-4 envelopes (depending on the size of your class, you may want more)

Instructions

1. Photocopy black line master onto heavy cardstock paper.
2. You will want to cut these out and place them in envelopes for each team.
3. Have the class divide into teams and put the puzzle together as a team. The first team to be able to put the puzzle together and say it together as a team wins.

Faith Connections

2 Timothy 3:15 “And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Have the children think about and share how they think God’s Word is neglected today. Have they neglected it? Are they willing to make changes in their lives to make it a priority?

**“...and how from infancy
you have known the Holy
Scriptures, which are able
to make you wise for
salvation through faith in
Christ Jesus.”**

2 Timothy 3:15

**Children's Church Grades 1 - 3
Year 3 Curriculum - Summer, Part 2
(Page 1 of 2)**

Theme: Esther

- Lesson 1 Esther Becomes Queen**
- Lesson 2 Mordecai Aggravates Haman**
- Lesson 3 Esther Risks Her Life**
- Lesson 4 Mordecai is Honored**
- Lesson 5 Deliverance for Israel**
- Lesson 6 The Festival of Purim**

Suggested songs related to the theme:

Lesson 1: Esther Becomes Queen

God's Plan For You
He is Lord
He's the Lord of All
King of Kings

Lesson 2: Mordecai Aggravates Haman

Forever
Great Is Thy Faithfulness (verse 1)
I Will Sing of the Mercies
Seek Ye First
We Bow Down

Lesson 3: Esther Risks Her Life

Don't You Know
For God So Loved the World
There is a Redeemer
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (verses 1 and 2)

Also choose assorted general worship songs.

Continued on the next page...

Children's Church Grades 1 - 3
Year 3 Curriculum – Summer- Part 2
(Page 2 of 2)

Theme: Esther (continued)

Lesson 4 Mordecai is Honored
Lesson 5 Deliverance for Israel
Lesson 6 The Festival of Purim

Suggested songs related to the theme:

Lesson 4: Mordecai is Honored

Great is the Lord
He is Lord
Lord, be Glorified
Seek First
Servant of All

Lesson 5: Deliverance for Israel

Beloved
God's Covenant
Jesus, I Love You!
Sing, Shout, Clap

Lesson 6: Festival of Purim

Clap Your Hands (all ye people)
Clap Your Hands (and sing to the Lord)
Make a Joyful Noise
Rejoice in the Lord Always

Also choose assorted general worship songs.

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Year 3 Curriculum – Summer- Part 2

Lesson 1

Title: Esther – Esther becomes Queen

Text: Esther 1:1-2:18

Theme: God, the ruler of all things, places leaders in their positions as He desires.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to share how Queen Vashti lost her position as queen.
2. Be able to share how God raised Esther to the position of queen.
3. Be encouraged to respect those who are his leaders knowing God's part in raising them to leadership.
4. Pray for the leaders God has placed over him.

Memory Verse: *Daniel 4:17b ... the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.*

Teacher Direction:

1. During the summer we are looking at two Bible books that speak of the times after the exile of the people of Israel. The first set of lessons looked at the book of Nehemiah, which describes the return of a portion of the people of Israel to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. The second set of lessons (those now being considered) will reflect on the unique book of Esther, which describes a potentially dangerous situation for the people of God while in their exile. The events of this book occur some 30-40 years prior to the events described in Nehemiah.

In the first lesson we shall look at the dethroning of Vashti, Queen of Persia, and the consequent enthroning of Esther, a Jewish girl being raised by her cousin Mordecai. Though these chapters do not mention the name of God (in fact the Name is missing throughout the book), the hand of God is readily seen. We hope that the children will come to see God's involvement in the raising up and bringing down of leaders, and that this knowledge will encourage their respect for those whom God has raised up to lead them.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they have ever seen a beauty contest or something like a Miss America pageant. Ask the children if they know why there are such things as beauty contests. After some discussion, inform the children that many of

the girls who enter these pageants are very interested in earning scholarships for their education and in gaining many unique experiences related to serving others. These pageants are designed to award very gifted girls.

Next, ask the children how a contestant might prepare for a pageant. As you discuss this, help the children understand that the contestants would have to work very hard. For example, dresses would need to be made, speeches and talent developed, movements practiced over and over and so on.

Finally, tell the children that today's story deals with a very unusual beauty contest. Like today's pageants, the girls in this story had to prepare long and hard. In fact, it would require a whole year of preparation. But unlike pageants of today the winner of this contest was already determined. Encourage the children to listen well and try to find out why this contest was a sure win for one of the girls.

3. Bible Story

As you share the story found in Esther 1-2 be sure to emphasize the following points:

A. Background – God had promised Abraham to make of him a great nation. He promised to give him a land and to make him a blessing to all the nations. In time God had made Abraham a great nation and He had placed that nation in a wonderful land. Sadly though, the seed of Abraham, Israel, forsook their God and went after the false gods of the land. As a result, after many warnings to return, God exiled the people.

It must be noted that God was not done with this people. He had declared to Abraham that He would bring to pass what He had promised. Thus, the people's exile was not to be considered as God abandoning the people nor His promise. In fact, looking at the book of Esther from this perspective reveals God's great care in preserving this people, thus keeping His promise.

B. The Need for a Beauty Contest – King Ahasuerus was a very powerful king. He had inherited a sizable kingdom and was very proud of that fact. He was also very proud of his riches and splendor. He was furthermore desirous of showing off all this to his rulers. Thus, he initiated a six-month banquet, followed by a seven day "drinking party". This would give people throughout his realm ample opportunity to see His magnificence.

Unfortunately, there was a major problem that he had not counted on. During the drinking party, the king asked for his queen to come and parade herself before his (most probably) drunken guests. When the queen was unwilling to degrade herself in this way, the king was embarrassed. After counseling with his wise men, he determined to banish Vashti forever, and to raise up another as queen. This created the need for a "beauty contest".

C. The Pre-determined Winner – Esther was a Jewish girl, probably not a prime candidate to become the next Persian queen, yet this is only from a human perspective. From God's perspective she was the likely candidate because of what God intended to do. God knew Ahasuerus' proud ways. He knew Vashti would not degrade herself and would thus lose her position. He also knew that the very existence of the Jews would soon be threatened. Thus, He set out to place Esther as the next queen so that He might save His people through her and be true to His promises.

As Ruler of the universe, God had no problem in making this happen.

As we look at the story we see that everywhere Esther went she found favor. She found favor in Hegai's eyes (vs. 9). She found favor in the eyes of all who saw her (vs. 15), and most importantly she found favor in the eyes of the king (vs. 17) who chose her to be the next queen. God worked His plan so that Esther would be chosen and that eventually she would be used to save the people of Israel. Esther was the pre-determined winner of the beauty contest because God had chosen her for this very special purpose.

4. Application

As our verse suggests, God puts in positions of leadership whomever He wants. He is even able to put the lowliest of people in positions of authority. Since this is true, we should treat with respect those who are in authority over us. We should also pray for them knowing that the God who rules over all has placed them in their position.

5. Review Questions

How would you describe King Ahasuerus? (He was a very powerful and rich king who enjoyed showing off.)

How long was the party that King Ahasuerus gave? (The banquet was 180 days, the drinking party was 7 days.)

Why did Queen Vashti lose her position as queen? (She did not come out and display herself before the king's drunken guests.)

Why was Esther not a likely candidate to become the next queen? (She was a Jewish, not a Persian girl)

Why was Esther a sure winner of the "beauty contest"? (The God who rules over all had a special plan for her. It included her being queen.)

How did God see that Esther was chosen as queen? (He made her find favor in the eyes of all who saw her.)

How should we view those who are in authority over us? (We should realize that God has placed them over us and should give them respect. It would also be good for us to pray for our leaders.)

Who are the people God has placed over you? (Parents, teachers at school and church, government leaders,...)

Take time now to pray for the leaders God has placed over you. Thank God for your leaders and pray that they lead in a way that would bring honor to God.

King and Queens Signs

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ Do craft ahead of time
- ◆ Make enough for each child to have a king sign and a queen sign. (2 copies for each child)
- ◆ You may want to let the children start to color and if they do not finish in a set amount of time, they can finish when they complete the craft or at home later.

Materials

- ◆ Black line masters
- ◆ White heavy cardstock paper
- ◆ Glue sticks
- ◆ Tongue depressors (2 for each child)
- ◆ Markers or crayons

Instructions

1. Photocopy the black line masters onto heavy cardstock paper.
2. Have the children color the pictures. Set a time limit.
3. Now have them cut each set of pictures in two, down the center of the solid line of each set.
4. Have them turn the set of kings over and glue half of the tongue depressor to the bottom of one of the pictures. Then have them glue all along the edges and on tongue depressor. They will then take the picture they did not glue, line it up to the glued picture (making sure the pictures are both face up) and press them together.
5. Repeat step 4 with the set of queen pictures.
6. Have them show the picture of an angry king with Queen Vashti and a happy king with Queen Esther.
7. If they have time they can finish coloring.

Faith Connections

Daniel 4:17b "...the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and He gives them to anyone He wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men."

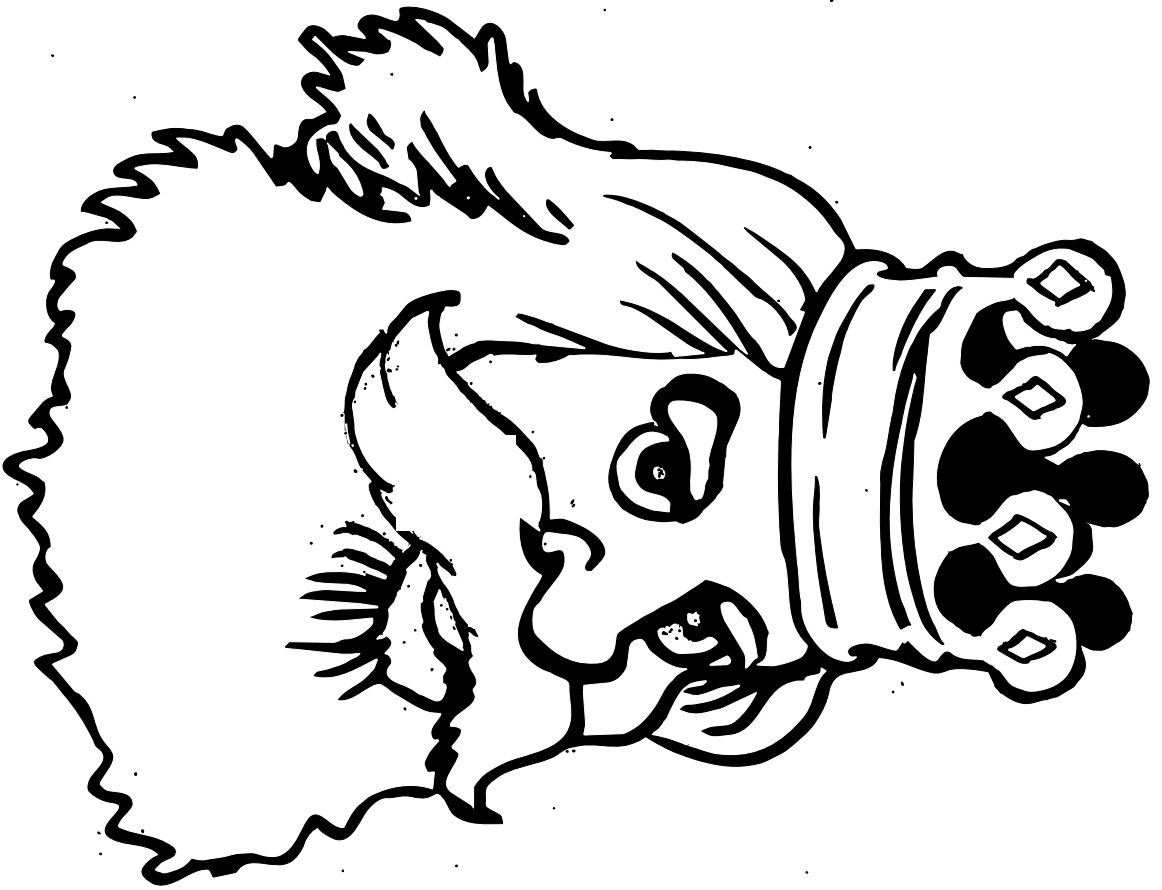
Ask the children if they understand that even though the king had the power to make the decision he did, it was God's plan to put Esther on the throne. We are always to respect our leaders knowing God is in charge.



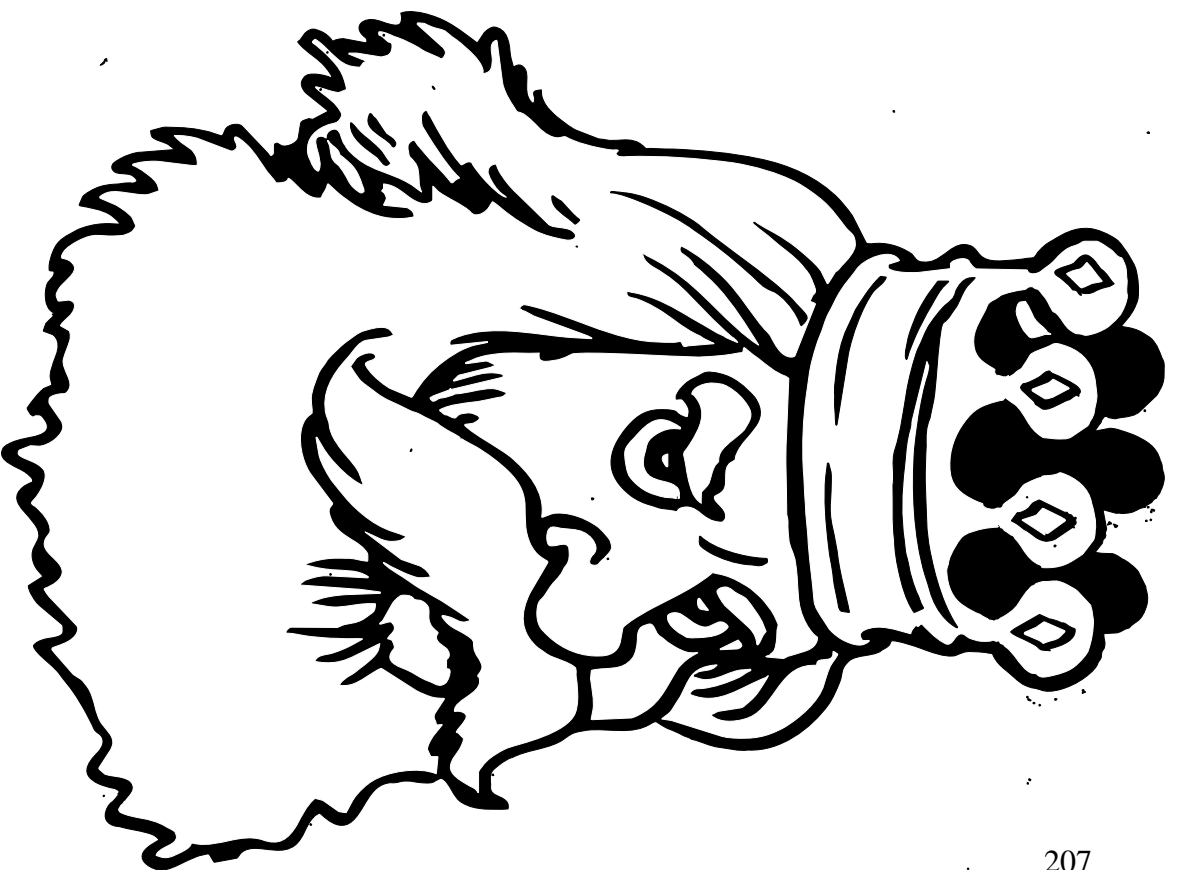
Queen Esther



Queen Vashti



Happy King of Persia



Angry King of Persia

Lesson 2

Title: Esther – Mordecai aggravates Haman

Text: Esther 2:19-3:15 (Teacher text: 1 Peter 2:18-24)

Theme: The follower of Christ must trust God for the consequences of living according to God's ways.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to tell how Mordecai showed he was devoted to God.
2. Be able to tell how Mordecai and the people of Israel got themselves into a very dangerous situation.
3. Be able to tell why Christians are likely to suffer persecution.
4. Commit to doing what is right no matter the cost.

Memory Verse: *Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Teacher Direction:

1. In last week's lesson we saw how God elevated Esther to become queen of Persia. As we looked at the events that led to this Jewish girl's elevation, we saw how God sovereignly rules. He brings one down and lifts another up according to His purposes. In this case, God's purpose was to preserve the people to whom He had made some very special promises.

In today's lesson we shall look at the reason God sovereignly lifted Esther to be queen. The evil Haman, turned off by the righteous behavior of Mordecai, plotted to destroy not only Mordecai, but also the whole Jewish race. This would have had severe consequences upon the plan of God to bring the Messiah through this nation. It is hoped that the children will see that there are often consequences for standing up for God, but that God is able to take care of those to whom He has made promises.

2. Introduction

As you begin this lesson ask the children if they know what it means to be persecuted? After discussion suggest to the children that to persecute is to trouble, afflict or harass another person or group so as to bring injury or distress. Ask the children if they know of any people who have been persecuted. If the children do not come up with any ideas you may want to review one of the mission's stories which the children have previously heard (if familiar to you) or share an example from Foxe's Book of Martyrs or a modern-day situation.

Next, ask the children why they think Christians are often persecuted. Remind them that Jesus even said that in this world Christians would be persecuted. Give the children an opportunity to share why they think this is so.

Finally, tell the children that in today's story the people of God are going to be persecuted in a severe way. Encourage them to listen well to see what this persecution was and why it was leveled at the people of God. Encourage them as well to try to find out why God's people should not fret or back down from their beliefs even though in the midst of affliction.

3. Bible Story

As you share the story from Esther be sure to emphasize the following points:

A. Mordecai's Excellent Behavior – Mordecai was a faithful Jew. He sought to walk in the ways of His God, and in so doing sought to do what was in the best interest of others. He showed that behavior when he adopted Esther and took such good care of her. He seemed to have an excellent relationship with Esther, a relationship that showed him faithfully giving instruction to Esther. Secondly, Mordecai showed his excellent behavior when he exposed the two men who sought to kill the king. Though it was risky to accuse these men, for surely he would end up being despised by them, he still reported the incident to the king in hopes of saving the king's life. Finally, Mordecai showed his commitment to doing good by not bowing down to Haman. Whether he refused to bow because he considered it idolatry or because he thought bowing to an enemy of Israel was wrong (Haman was probably a descendant of Agag, the Amalekite king), in either case Mordecai was motivated by his desire to serve his God.

B. Mordecai's Vengeful Persecutor – Haman was a man interested in glory – his own! When he received his promotion by the king he was elated. He was doubly pleased when the king commanded the other princes to bow down and pay homage to him. This went a long way to "stroke his ego". When, however, Mordecai refused to bow down and pay homage (even after pressure was applied to him by his peers) Haman became enraged. He sought not only to annihilate Mordecai, but was also interested in getting rid of all the Jews.

Why did Haman have such a severe reaction to Mordecai and the people of God? It was most likely because of their unswerving commitment to the one true God. Mordecai said that he would not bow down because he was a Jew. He was not interested in his own glory, but was interested in the glory of his God. This kind of attitude was so opposed to Haman's that it deeply bothered him. It exposed his foolish focus and wounded his pride.

C. Mordecai's Faithful God – Why was Mordecai willing to do what is right even though it could lead to mistreatment, even to his own death? The main reason must be that Mordecai trusted his God. God had promised to take care of the people of Israel. Though He had punished Israel for her rebellion, He had not abandoned her. This must have been the source of Mordecai's hope and confidence. He purposed to do what was right, trusting God to fulfill His purposes for His people. Though the current situation looked worrisome, Mordecai must have had confidence that God could find a way to deliver them.

4. Application

A. Jesus Christ provides the perfect example of One who purposed to do His Father's will no matter the cost. He is the prime model of One who committed Himself to His heavenly Father's plan, even though it cost Him His life. In like manner, we must commit ourselves to doing what is right and good, while we trust the Father to work all things according to His loving purposes. In this way we truly follow in the footsteps of the Son.

B. We must prepare ourselves for persecution for it is the reality of every person who truly follows after Christ. If we live, giving ourselves to the Father's glory and to the good of others around us, we will truly be a light to our world. But those who walk in darkness will not like being exposed by the light, and they will seek to extinguish our flame. We must be ready to entrust our lives to the Father in whose hands is our very life.

5. Review Questions

What happened to make Haman very happy? (The king gave him a promotion and commanded the other princes to bow down to him.)

What happened to make Haman very unhappy? (Mordecai did not bow down to him.)

How did Haman react when Mordecai did not bow before him? (He sought to have Mordecai and the Jews annihilated.)

What kind of man was Mordecai? (He seemed to be a very godly man. He took care of Esther, saved the king's life by exposing his would-be murderers, and refused to bow to an enemy of God's people.)

If Haman were successful with his plan to kill all the Jews, how would this have affected God's plan and promises to Israel? (If the Jews were all killed the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would never have been born. Israel would not be a blessing to all the nations.)

Why should Christians expect to be persecuted? (If we live for God's glory and to serve others, we will be a true light. Those who live in darkness will not like being exposed by the light. They will react by persecuting Christians.)

How should a Christian react to persecution? (He should entrust himself to God who has promised to care for His people.)

Pride vs Humility

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ Do the craft ahead of time.
- ◆ Ask the children, who read, to read the statement and have a younger child who cannot read say who this tells about .

Materials

- ◆ Black line master
- ◆ Light colored photo copy paper
- ◆ Pencils
- ◆ Markers or crayons

Instructions

1. Photocopy black line master onto light colored photocopy paper.
2. Have the children read and answer each of the listed statements with an “H” for Haman and an “M” for Mordecai.
3. When they are finished with the statements have them fold the paper in half longwise.
4. On the front of their paper they should write the words “Pride vs Humility and decorate it with markers or crayons.
5. They can also color the pictures of Haman and Mordecai.

Faith Connections

Matthew 5:10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

You might discuss with the children that if they were Mordecai, do they think they would be as bold as he was. Why or why not? Can they think of ways that they can be bold in the Lord today?



Proud Haman



Humble Mordecai

Read the statements below and put H for those that tell of Haman and M for those that tell of Mordecai.

He was a faithful Jew and walked in the ways of God.	
The King appointed him to a high position even though he was evil.	
He would not bow down to anyone except God.	
Because of his actions he put all of the Jews in danger.	
He hated the Jews and wanted them all destroyed.	
He only thought of himself and power and riches.	
He wasn't worried about himself, but only wanted to obey his Heavenly Father.	
His pride made him only think of himself.	
He could lose his life because of not obeying the King's command.	

Lesson 3

Title: Esther – Esther risks her life

Text: Esther 4:1-5:14

Theme: God's purpose for our lives extends far beyond ourselves.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to tell what crucial decision Esther was forced to make.
2. Be able to tell why Esther risked her life in going before the king without being summoned.
3. Give thanks that Jesus was not only willing to risk His life, but also to give His life to deliver us from sin and death.
4. Commit to giving his life for the purposes of God and for the good of many.

Memory Verse: *Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*"

Teacher Direction:

1. In our last lesson we chronicled the plight of the Jews during their exile in Susa. When Mordecai, the Jew, refused to bow down to Haman, even after being urged by his peers, Haman purposed to annihilate the Jews. We noted that had Haman been successful, this would have had great implications for God's purposes. The Deliverer was to come through this people, and had they been eliminated, there would be no deliverer. But none of this took God by surprise. He had already positioned someone to deliver Israel, even though that person did not yet know she would be the deliverer.

In this lesson we shall look at what transpired after the "annihilation" edict was announced. We shall look at the very difficult decision Esther made in order to deliver her people. It is a decision not unlike the one the Deliverer, who gave His life as a ransom for many, made. It is hoped through this lesson that the children will understand that their lives are not to be lived for their own selfish purposes, but rather for the purposes of God which relate to bringing deliverance to His chosen people.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they would be more likely to risk their lives to save another person, or would they be more likely to try to save their life even though it meant the other person might lose his life. A possible example you might use to help the children understand the choice is as follows: You are in boat in a very large lake when a storm starts to come in. Accidentally, one of your friends falls over the side of the boat. He is struggling to stay above water since the water is wavy and very choppy. In fact, it looks like your friend is struggling to make his way back to the boat. A few seconds pass and you see that your friend is not going to make it without help. What will you do? Will you jump in after him, knowing that you, too, might not make it, or do you risk it and

dive in after him? Allow the children to discuss what they think they would do in this situation.

Tell the children that in today's story a young girl has a choice to make that is much like the one we just discussed. She has a choice of trying to save her own life at the expense of all her people being killed, or of risking her life with the possibility of saving her people. Encourage the children to listen well to see what decision this young girl makes. Challenge the children to find out why she makes the decision she ends up making.

3. Bible Story

As you share this story from Esther be sure to emphasize the following points:

A. A Test of Character – The people of Israel were in a difficult situation. An edict had been announced that their race should be erased from the globe. What was their reaction? They began to fast, pray, and wail – a practice very common in times of great distress. When Esther heard of this, she inquired as to the reason for such behavior. The word she received back from Mordecai, through her assistant, Hattach, brought Esther face to face with a very difficult decision.

Mordecai called on her to deliver her people. This required that she go before the king and request his help. The problem with this was that no one could come before the king without being summoned. Esther had not been summoned for some time. What would she do? Would she in an effort to save her life, let her people perish, or would she risk her life and go before the king in an effort to deliver them? This was indeed a test of character, the source of which is the fear of God.

B. A Decision of Character – Mordecai was very influential in helping Esther make her decision. He told her that she probably would not escape the edict. She, too, was a Jew, and it was not certain that the king would exempt her. But even more persuasive was Mordecai's suggestion that she had been elevated to queen for such a time as this. With this statement (4:14) Mordecai suggested that her being chosen as queen was no coincidence; that it was, in fact, an act of Almighty God designed to deliver His people. Though the stakes were high, Mordecai challenged Esther to think about more than herself. He encouraged her to think about the purpose of God in her life.

Esther responded well to Mordecai's challenge. She called on the people to fast and pray for three days. After three days she purposed in her heart to go before the king. She would leave the result in the hands of the God whom she feared. By this Esther showed that she was willing to give her life for the purposes of God and the good of her people.

C. A Contrast in Character – In the same passage where we find Esther's self-sacrificial behavior, we also see the greatly selfish behavior of Haman. He is thrilled to have been invited by the queen to a special banquet. This makes him feel even more important. He goes home and tells every one how great he is: he is very rich, has many sons, has been honored much by the king, and now is even the special guest of the queen. Haman shows that he is very full of himself. Sadly, this is not enough because one man will not honor him. How ironic – the man trying to fill himself is unsatisfied, while the young girl willing to empty herself is soon to be rejoicing!

4. Application

A. Jesus Christ was One of very high position. He was God. Yet He lowered Himself by taking on the form of a man, and by subjecting Himself to death on a cross. Why was He willing to do this? He was willing because He was committed to His Father's purposes which centered in delivering His people from sin and death. In the same way, all Christians are called on to give their lives to fulfill the saving purposes of God. Each of us, with God's help must commit our lives to the plan and purposes of God.

B. Give thanks to Jesus Christ who was willing to not only risk His life, but also to give His life for us. Thank Him for being committed to the will of His Father. Ask Him to give you that same desire.

5. Review Questions

How did the people of Israel react to the edict? (They tore their clothes, prayed and fasted.)

What did Mordecai suggest Esther do in response to this terrible situation? (He suggested Esther go before the king and ask for help.)

What difficult decision did Esther face? (If she went before the king without being summoned, she could be killed. But if she did nothing, all her people could be eliminated.)

What did Esther want Mordecai and the people to do before she went before the king? Why did she have them do this? (She asked them to fast and pray for three days. It is certain that she showed by this a desire for God's will to be done.)

Why did Esther decide to go before the king and risk her life? (Mordecai encouraged her to think about the purposes of God. Perhaps God had made her queen so that she could deliver her people. Esther decided to risk her life for the good of her people.)

Would you say Esther's decision was "Christ-like"? Explain your answer. (Her decision was very much like Christ's who lowered Himself in order to fulfill God's purposes to save His people.)

In order for us to be more like Esther instead of Haman, what needs to be true of our life? (In our own strength we will be like Haman, lovers of ourselves. But by God's Spirit we can live for something greater than ourselves. We can live for the purposes of God which center around the deliverance of His people.)

A B C Book of Faith

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ Make sure you make this book up ahead of time to show the children how to put it together.
- ◆ Depending upon time you have for this craft, you may want to cut and punch the books ahead of time.
- ◆ Give out ribbon or yarn at the time you come to this part

Materials

- ◆ Black line master
- ◆ Colored cardstock paper (light or medium grade)
- ◆ Ribbon or yarn-12" piece for each child
- ◆ Markers or crayons
- ◆ Hole punch
- ◆ Scissors

Instructions

1. Photocopy black line master onto cardstock, 2-sided mode (2-2). If you use 2-sided mode you will have the back and front copies lined up exactly. Pages are numbered.
2. Have the children cut the page on the solid line (not the dotted line).
3. Now have them put the book together and fold each page along dotted lines.
4. Punch the top and bottom of each book. You may want the older children help the younger one with this.
5. Hand out the ribbon or yarn and have the children starting from the outside top of their books string ribbon or yarn through the hole to the inside of the book, across the inside and then out the bottom hole back to the outside of the book.
6. Have them tie a bow in the center of the back. Older children can help younger ones tie.
7. If time allows, they can color their books

Faith Connections

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

As the children are doing their books have them discuss what this verse means to each of them. Are they willing to commit their lives to serve the Savior?

A

B

C

*“For even the
Son of Man
did not come
to be served,*

*A*lways

*but to serve,
and to give
His life as a
ransom for
many.”*

Name: _____

1

Mark 10:45

6

B_e

Courageous

3

4

Lesson 4

Title: Esther – Mordecai is honored

Text: Esther 5:9-6:14

Theme: According to His plan and in His time, God exalts the humble and casts down the proud.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to share how Haman showed his pride.
2. Be able to retell the events that led to Haman's humiliation and Mordecai's exaltation.
3. Humble himself before God Almighty.
4. Praise God that He is the sovereign ruler over all.

Memory Verse: *1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

Teacher Direction:

1. In our last lesson we saw how Queen Esther was confronted with a major decision. Because of the edict designed to kill all the Jews, Esther had to decide if she would try to save her own life (thus forsaking her people), or if she would risk her life in order to save her nation. With the encouragement of Mordecai, Esther chose to risk her life by going before the king in order to request his help. She chose to place the purposes of God in delivering His chosen people before her own safety. Such behavior reflects the Lord Jesus who freely gave His life so that, in obedience to His Father, He could save His people from their sins.

In our lesson today we shall see another vital lesson of kingdom living. The one responsible for the edict against the Jews is shown in all his pomp and pride. Yet God ordains what seem to be insignificant events to bring a mighty reversal. The proud one is humbled, and the one who was humbled by the edict in the end was honored. This is a clever story of reversals that should help children see that it is God who lifts up the humble, and who casts down the proud. This is a common theme in the Scriptures.

2. Introduction

To introduce this story ask the children whom they would choose to honor if they wanted to honor someone today. Would they honor someone who is good at playing baseball? Would they choose to honor someone who is really intelligent? Would they choose to honor someone who is very popular? Allow the children to share who they might choose to honor. Allow this to be a free discussion of their ideas.

Next, ask the children how they might honor that person. What would they do? Would they throw a party for them? Would they write something up in the newspaper? Would they give their honored guest a trophy? Again allow the children to share their ideas. Note: if you have time you can choose someone in class and honor him by placing a robe upon him, singing a song, and putting a special award on him.

Finally, tell the children that in today's story one man is honored, and another is humbled. Encourage the children to listen well to see why the one was humbled and the other honored. Also encourage them to listen for the way the one man was honored.

3. Bible Story

As you share this story from Esther be sure to emphasize the following points:

A. The Pride of Haman – Haman is very happy and in high spirits after attending Esther's first banquet. In fact, when he gets home he begins to boast. He tells his wife and friends of his vast wealth, his many sons, the way the king had honored him by elevating him above all the other nobles and officials. And if all that was not enough, now the queen wished him to come to another banquet. Haman was surely proud of his position in life, yet there was one "fly in the ointment". Mordecai showed no fear in his presence. This bothered Haman greatly, but his friends' suggestion to have Mordecai hung on a gallows gave him hope. Note: Such is the condition of the proud heart. It is never satisfied and will always be trying to protect itself from other rivals. Note: Be sure to emphasize the pride of Haman so that his humiliation later in the story will be all the more understood with impact.

B. The Sovereignty of God – A major part of this story is a number of seemingly insignificant events that seem to work together. When Haman shares his discontent with Mordecai, his wife and friends suggest that he build a gallows and then go to the king to get permission to have Mordecai hung on it. The king happens to have a sleepless night, and calls on his assistant to read from the book of chronicles. The assistant happens to read to the king the part concerning Mordecai's previous good deed that had not been rewarded. When the king desires to reward Mordecai he asks for someone in the court, and who happens to be in the court, but Mordecai. Are all of these events coincidences? Obviously there are not. The sovereign God is working through the little events of life to bring to pass the deliverance of His people.

C. The Exaltation of Mordecai – Mordecai was a despised Jew trusting in his God for deliverance. Haman was a proud man trusting in himself and seeking to make a name for himself. Yet, in this story the despised one is exalted. A royal robe is placed upon him. He is placed on a royal steed that has been decorated and is led throughout the city. The one leading the horse through the city shouts out that this is the way the king treats one whom he desires to honor. This story also shows how the proud one is humbled. It is Haman, who despises Mordecai, who has to honor Mordecai in the way previously described. It cannot be emphasized how humiliating this must have been for Haman. The fact is, as well, that more humbling is coming for him. Such is the tone set by the words at the end of the chapter. Such are the ways of the sovereign God. He exalts the humble and brings down the proud.

4. Application

A. We must all humble ourselves before the mighty God. We must come before Him, acknowledging our foolish pride, asking Him to restore us to His favor. Those who come to God in this way will be received by Him. God will lift us up, cleanse us from sin, and make us His sons. A position of humility is the best and only position for us to take before our great God.

B. We must praise God for His sovereign workings. He orders even the small details of life in order to bring to pass His saving purposes. We can trust in a God who has such power and control.

5. Review Questions

How did Haman feel after attending Esther's first banquet? (He was very happy and was in high spirits.)

About what did Haman boast to his wife and friends? (He boasted about his wealth, his many sons, his exalted position with the king, and his special place in the queen's eyes.)

What spoiled Haman's high spirits? (Mordecai would not show him the respect he thought he deserved.)

What did Haman's friends suggest he do about Mordecai? (Build a gallows and get the king's permission to have him hung on it.)

What evidence do we see that God is in control of this situation? (He orders all the little events to bring about His purposes. He makes the king restless. He causes the king to be read from the book of chronicles at the place that speaks of Mordecai's good deed. He causes Haman to be in the court when the king is looking for advice as to how he might honor someone.)

How is Mordecai honored? (Haman dresses him in a royal robe and leads him on a decorated, royal steed throughout the city declaring that this is the way the king treats one he wants to honor.)

How is Haman humiliated? (He has to honor Mordecai in this way. This would have devastated Haman.)

What does it mean to humble yourself before God? (To come before God acknowledging His majesty and your sinfulness, asking Him to restore you to His favor.)

Have you come humbly before the mighty God?

“God’s Mighty Hand” Plaque

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ It is important to do this craft ahead, so that you can instruct the children in putting it together.
- ◆ If time is a factor you may want to punch the holes ahead of time for each child
- ◆ Do not give out brads or ribbon/yarn until you are ready for that part of craft.

Materials

- ◆ Black line master
- ◆ Flesh colored or salmon heavy cardstock paper
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Ribbon or yarn (1-10” and 2-4” for each child)
- ◆ Brads (6 – short ones for each child)

Instructions

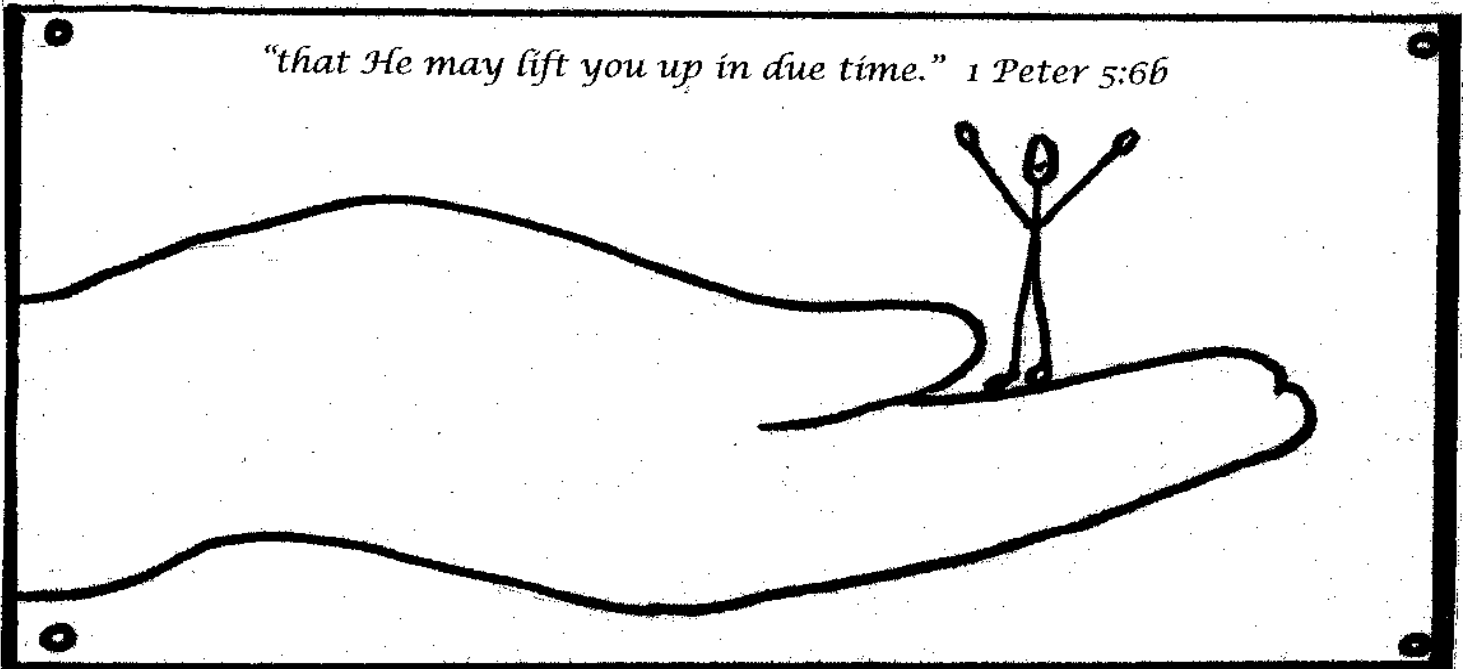
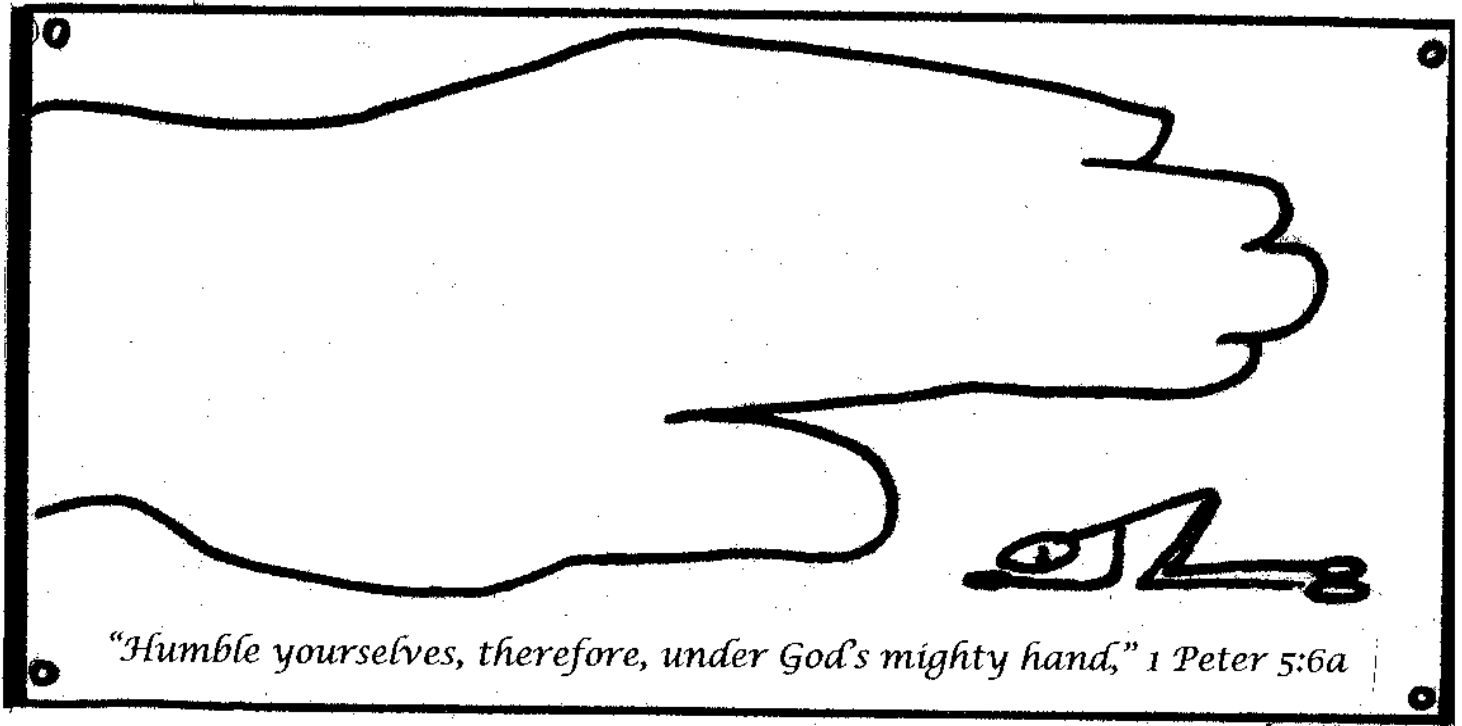
1. Photocopy black line master onto heavy cardstock paper.
2. Have children cut out both pictures along solid black lines.
3. If you have not already done so, have them punch holes in each of the hole diagrams at the top and bottom of each picture.
4. Now give them the brads and have them fasten them in each hole.
5. Hand out the ribbon or yarn and twist around and tie on each brad. Start with the long one on top and then the two short ones on the sides (making sure the sides are evenly balanced. The older children may want to help the younger ones with this.

Faith Connections

1 Peter 5:6 “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.”

Ask the children if they can think of four people in the story who humbled themselves before God. (Esther, Mordecai, Jews, Esther’s servants.)

Do they believe they should humble themselves before God and if so how can they do this?



Lesson 5

Title: Esther – Deliverance for Israel

Text: Esther 7:1 – 9:16

Theme: Great blessing comes to those who give their lives to bring deliverance to others.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to share the end of proud Haman.
2. Be able to share how God blessed the courage and selflessness of Esther.
3. Be able to retell how God brought deliverance to Israel.
4. Be willing to commit their lives no matter the cost to bringing the message of deliverance to others in need.

Memory Verse: *1 Thessalonians 3:9* How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Teacher Direction:

1. In our past lesson we reached the threshold of the climax of this engaging story. The people of Israel had been placed under an edict, drafted by the wicked Haman that was designed to annihilate them. Mordecai had urged Queen Esther to consider her position as providential, and to be willing to risk her life for the sake of her people. Esther decided to risk her life and went before the king, requesting a banquet at which the king and Haman would be present. At the close of last week's lesson we saw how Haman's fortunes began to change (the proud humbled) as well as the fortunes of Mordecai (the humble exalted). The lesson left us sensing that the conflict was soon to be resolved.

In today's lesson we shall see the resolution of the conflict. In fact we shall see a speedy resolution. Haman quickly falls and is hung on the gallows he made for Mordecai. Mordecai quickly ascends to become the king's prime minister. The people of Israel quickly get the upper hand on their enemies. In all this it is important to see the blessing of God especially upon those who are willing to sacrifice their lives in order to bring deliverance to others.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they have ever had to tell a parent or another adult something very difficult. Perhaps they did something wrong and had to admit it to their parents. Perhaps they had done something unkind and had to go and ask for forgiveness. Perhaps they had to ask for something and weren't sure how their request would be received. Allow the children to freely share their experiences focusing on how they felt prior to their having the difficult conversation.

Tell the children that in today's story our main character has to ask for something that could result in her being killed. Encourage the children to listen well to see what she asks for. Encourage them to imagine how hard it must have been to ask for what she asked for. Also urge the children to try to find out what the result was of her courageous request.

3. Bible Story

As you share this story from Esther be sure to emphasize the following points:

A. A Quick Demise – After Haman was forced to parade Mordecai around, he and his family knew he would not win the struggle with Mordecai and the Jews. Shortly after this Haman went to his second banquet with Esther and the king. At the banquet things went from bad to worse. Bravely Esther requested of the king for her life and the life of her people to be saved. (Note: her request could have been met with anger from the king and Haman. She might have lost her life.) She went on to blame Haman for this tragic state of affairs. From this point on the events of the story move quickly to the hanging of Haman on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai. It must be noted how quickly our fortunes can turn around. Haman had just been boasting to his family and plotting Mordecai's death. Now he hung on the gallows. This event also shows that often the evil we intend for others will come back to consume us.

B. A Personal Blessing – Esther had chosen to pursue the purposes of God even though it might cost her her life. She had chosen the way of self-sacrifice even though there was great risk. Mordecai, as well, made some personal decisions because of his faith in God which potentially could cost him great suffering, even death. Yet, in the end, both Esther and Mordecai received personal blessing. Esther was given the estate of Haman and received much special attention from the king as the story progressed. Mordecai was given the privilege of coming into the king's presence and was given the king's signet ring. Mordecai also received from the queen the privilege of running her newly acquired estate. It is true that those who invest their life in bringing deliverance to others, no matter the cost, will receive great blessing as a by-product.

C. A Corporate Blessing – Not only did Esther and Mordecai receive great blessing from their faithful acts, but the people of Israel did as well. They were on their way to annihilation, but thanks to God's working in especially Esther's life, they were brought to new life. Instead of being pursued, killed and plundered by their enemies, they came to have the upper hand. Instead of being dishonored, they came to be an honored people. In fact, the fear of the Jews was so prominent that many, in some way, became Jews to avoid being annihilated by the Jews. God had once again shown Himself able to preserve His people and to continue to fulfill His promises to bring deliverance to the world through this chosen race.

4. Application

A. God must be praised for being faithful to His promises. Had Israel been annihilated at this time, the promised Savior would not have come. But God with great power and wisdom saved His people, thus fulfilling His purposes to bring His Chosen Deliverer through this people. We ought marvel at God's ability to work all things according to His purposes.

B. We, as Esther, must commit our lives to bringing deliverance to those around us, no matter the cost. We must see how sin is seeking to destroy the people around us, and willingly give our lives to bring the message of deliverance found in the Lord Jesus. If we do this, we will find that there is great blessing in the end.

5. Review Questions

What did Esther ask of the king at the second banquet? (She asked that her life and the life of her people be saved from destruction.)

Whom did Esther blame for her difficult situation? (Haman)

What was the end of Haman? (He was hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. His fortunes quickly turned.)

How were Esther and Mordecai blessed for their faithful conduct? (Esther received the estate of Haman. Mordecai gained permission to be in the king's presence and to wear the king's signet ring. Esther also made Mordecai manager of her new estate.)

What happened to the people of Israel because Esther was willing to risk her life? (They got the upper hand on their enemies and were able to defeat them mightily. They were delivered from their dangerous plight.)

In what way are people around you in a dangerous situation? (They are all harassed by sin. Sin is bringing them to destruction.)

How can Christians bring deliverance to these people? (We can share the message of Jesus Christ with them.)

Are you willing to give your life to bring deliverance to those around you?

End of Pride

Tips for Teachers

- ◆ You can divide your class into teams (2-4) and make that many hangmen copies. You may want to make more copies to repeat the game as time allows.
- ◆ Have simple questions for the younger children and for those who are not as familiar with the story.
- ◆ The object of the game is to save Mordecai from the gallows.

Materials

- ◆ Black line master
- ◆ White photocopy paper
- ◆ Pencils

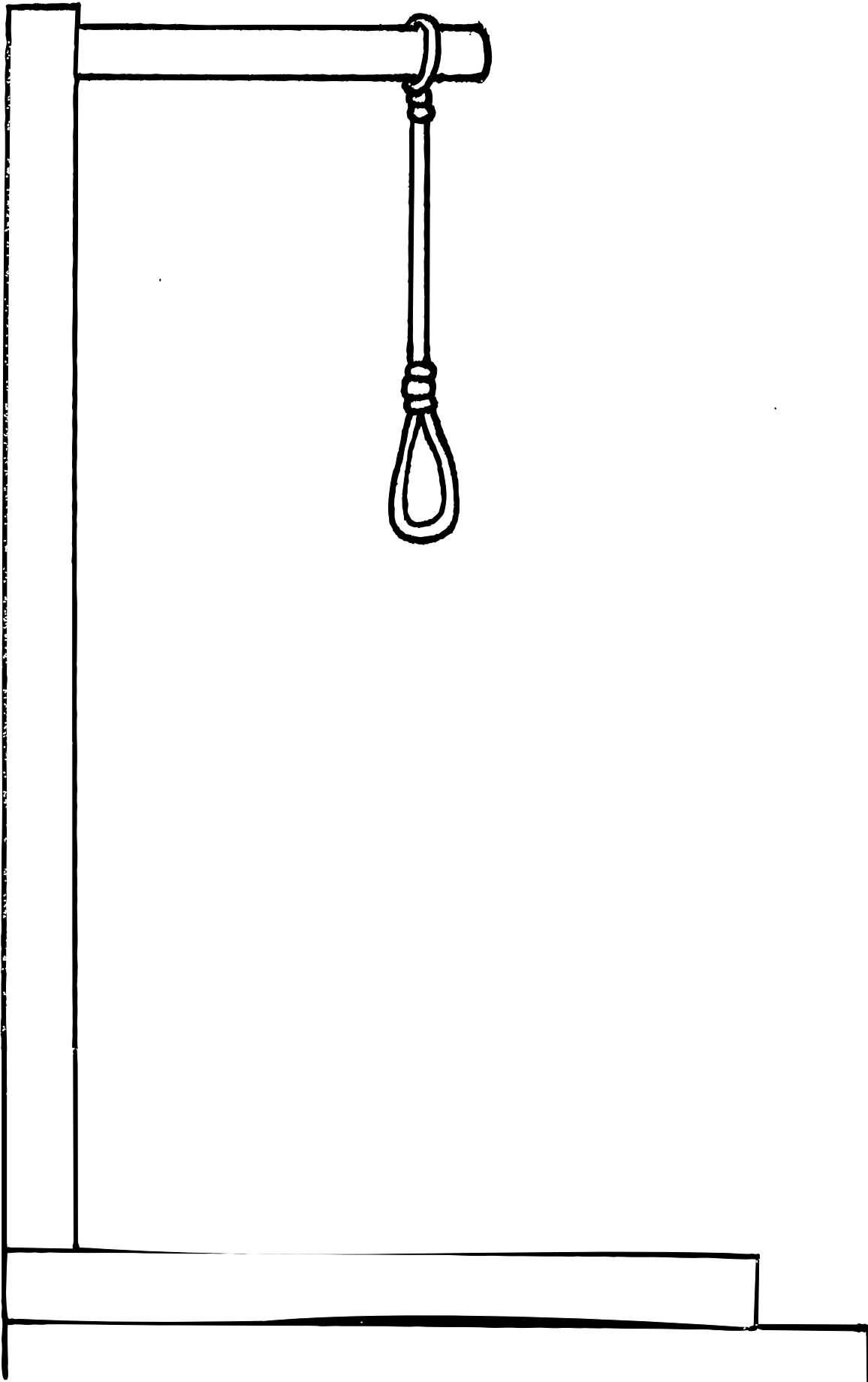
Instructions

1. Photocopy black line master onto photocopy paper
2. Divide the class into 2-4 teams, making sure you have evenly divided the younger with the older taking into consideration those who are stronger in the Word.
3. Select 2-4 captains to serve as hangmen (they will do the drawing on the papers for their team).
4. Ask a question to the first team and if they do not get it right they have to draw a body part on the gallows. Ask the same question to the next team and so on.
5. The team that saves Mordecai from the gallows is the winner.
6. If time allows, you can repeat the game.

Faith Connections

1 Thessalonians 3:9 “How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?”

We know Mordecai never went to the gallows because of God’s intervention on the part of the Jews. Let the children share how they can commit their lives in sharing the message of deliverance with others who do not know Christ. Have they been delivered from the sentence of death?



Questions & Answers

1. What was the name of the Queen at this time? [Esther]
2. Who did Esther invite to the banquet? [The King & Haman]
3. What was Queen Esther's request of the King? [Her life and the life of her people]
4. Who were her people? [The Jews]
5. What was going to happen to her people? [They were going to be killed]
6. What was the King's name? [King Ahasuerus]
7. Who was it that planned to kill all the Jews? [Haman]
8. Where did the King go after Queen Esther told him about Haman? [Out to the palace garden]
9. What did Haman do while the King was gone? [Begged Queen Esther for his life]
10. Was the King angry with Haman when he came in to find Haman before the Queen? [Yes, very angry]
11. Who built the gallows? [Haman]
12. Who was he going to have hung on them? [Mordecai]
13. Who did the King have hung on the gallows? [Haman]
14. What did the King give to Mordecai? [His Signet Ring]
15. Who did the King give Haman's property to? [Queen Esther]
16. Who did Queen Esther put in charge of Haman's property? [Mordecai]
17. How did the King let the Jews live? [He had Mordecai send letters letting them know they could fight their enemies]
18. Did Mordecai become important in the kingdom? [Yes, he was given royal robes and a crown of gold]
19. Who made all this happen? [God]

Lesson 6

Title: Esther – the Festival of Purim

Text: Esther 9:16 – 10:3

Theme: God's great deliverance offers reason to rejoice and to bring His mercies to others.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Participate in a Purim celebration.
2. Be able to share some of the traditions associated with Purim.
3. Rejoice in God's greatest deliverance accomplished through Jesus Christ.
4. Commit to giving gifts to the poor as a way of giving thanks to God for His mercies.

Memory Verse: *Psalm 105:1 Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.*

Teacher Direction:

1. In the past five lessons we have chronicled the events from the book of Esther. Beginning with the removal of Queen Vashti from office, through the evil edict of Haman to destroy the Jews, to the time of great deliverance, we have learned many lessons, especially concerning God's ability to bring to pass what He has promised.

In this final lesson, we want to focus on the celebration that followed the great deliverance of the Jews. That celebration is called the Festival of Purim. We would like to have the children enter into the spirit of this festival by participating in some of the traditional activities associated with Purim. More importantly, however, we want the children to think about God's great deliverance of them from their cruel enemy, sin. Hopefully, the spirit of joy and giving associated with Purim will transfer to their remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson considering completing the following activities with the children:

A. As the children enter the room, take a black marker and write the name "Haman" on the sole of their shoes. If children do not want anything written on their shoes, you can place a mailing label on the sole of their shoes and then write the name on the label.

B. After the children have entered the room, tell them that today you are going to celebrate the festival of Purim. Explain to them that the word Purim comes from the Hebrew word "pur" which means "lot". Purim is the plural of pur meaning "lots". It refers to the time Haman cast lots (perhaps throwing pebbles or bits of pottery) in order to determine the most favorable day to exterminate the Jews. Tell the children that an important part of the Purim celebration was and is the reading of the Megillah, the scroll of Esther.

Tell the children that you would like them to make a pictorial scroll of the story of Esther that can be used as the story is retold later in the lesson.

After giving this introduction assign each child or group of children a specific picture to draw. Examples might include: Esther becomes the new queen, Haman makes a law saying that people have to bow down to him, Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman, Haman asks the king for a new law to punish the Jewish people, Mordecai tells Esther about the new law, Esther tells the king about Haman's law, Haman is punished, the Jewish people celebrate. When the children have finished their drawings attach them in order to a long piece of butcher paper rolled into a scroll.

Finally, invite the children to participate in the Festival of Purim.

3. Bible Story

As you share the story from the book of Esther again consider the following activities and suggestions:

A. Story Review – An important part of the tradition that has developed around the festival of Purim is the reading of the Scroll of Esther, which is essentially a reading of the biblical account. After the people had fasted in preparation for the celebration, they gathered together and listened to this great story of deliverance. As the story is being read, whenever the name “Haman” is mentioned, the people begin to boo or to make noise so that his name is drowned out. Likewise, when the name “Mordecai” is mentioned the people begin to cheer. Note: As you read the story from the sheet provided, encourage the children to respond. When Haman's name is spoken encourage them to stomp their feet (remember, Haman's name was written on the sole of their shoe), to shout, or to shake noisemakers (a few stones in a tin can will do). As Mordecai's name is spoken have them cheer and clap their hands.

B. Joy and giving – This festival is one of the most joyous festivals known to Jews. It certainly was for those who first celebrated it. They had been near death. Haman's edict was a very dark cloud over their heads. But when this cloud was lifted, there was exceeding great joy among the people. Encourage a climate of great joy in the classroom, but be sure to help the children understand that Israel's joy stemmed from the great deliverance they had just experienced. Also point out that this celebration was accompanied by much giving. The people gave gifts of food to one another and they gave gifts to the poor. In a sense, those who had been delivered from their distress were made more sensitive to those around them who were in distress.

C. Mordecai's greatness – The story of Esther ends with a description of Mordecai. God had greatly blessed him by making him second in the kingdom next to King Xerxes. Beyond that, Mordecai was highly esteemed by many fellow Jews. Why was this man so honored? The text tells us because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for their welfare. He continued to exemplify a self-giving love, a quality ordained by God to bring deliverance to those in distress. After all, this was the key characteristic of Christ who brought the greatest deliverance ever to sinners of all ages.

4. Application

A. Every Christian has reason to rejoice. He has been delivered from the greatest enemies: sin, death, and the devil. When this deliverance is brought to our

remembrance, for example, at the Lord's Table, it is important to rejoice for what the Lord has done.

B. As it was the practice of the Jews at Purim to give gifts to others, especially the poor, it is equally important for us to remember those who are in distress around us. Whenever we are reminded of our former distress, our slavery to sin, we ought look around for ways to bring deliverance to others. This may compel us to give to the needy, to pray for the sick, or to encourage someone who is discouraged.

5. Review Questions

How did Esther come to be queen in Persia? (Queen Vashti disobeyed her husband and was removed. Esther, by divine providence became her replacement.)

In what great danger did the people of Israel find themselves? (Haman had convinced the king to write a law ordering the annihilation of the Jews.)

What important decision did Esther face and how did she decide? (She faced being quiet in order to save her life, or risking her life to save her people. She chose to risk her life believing that God had called her to this.)

How were the people eventually delivered? (Esther went before the king and invited him and Haman to a banquet. At the second banquet she disclosed Haman's plot to kill her people. Haman was hung for his treachery and then the king allowed new laws to be enacted to save the Jews.)

What are some of the things the Jews did to celebrate Purim? (They fasted and feasted, retold the story to their children, gave gifts to their friends and to the poor,...)

Why was Mordecai honored? (His life exemplified self-sacrificing love. He really cared for his people and worked for their deliverance.)

Who else worked for the deliverance of His people and was willing to die for them? (Jesus Christ)

In what way have all Christians been delivered? (We have been delivered from sin, death and the devil.)

When does the church take time to remember our deliverance? (At the Lord's Supper.)

What are some ways you can show your thanks for your deliverance from sin? (Remember others in their distress: give to the poor, encourage those who are discouraged, visit and pray for the sick,...)

6. Special notes

- ◆ Try to make this class a real celebration. Begin with the activities outlined in the introduction. Then read the story while the children respond. Be sure to take time to bring home the application at this time. Next, take time to sing joyous songs that speak of our deliverance. Finally, end with the activities suggested below.
- ◆ Make "Hamantashens", triangle-shaped cookies eaten at the festival to remind the people of the shape of Haman's hat (so states some tradition). After explaining the tradition, pass one out to each child for their snack.

- ◆ Since Purim is about lots being cast, a game of casting lots could be devised. Mark off with masking tape a square on the floor. Divide it into 8 equal sections, giving each a distinct number. Have children cast a lot (a pebble or fragment of pottery) into the square. Whatever number their lot lands on is the number of the question they must answer. Link the review questions with each number, then when the child lands on a given number, he is to be asked the corresponding question.

THE FEAST OF PURIM

The Feast of Purim is founded upon the story of the Feast of Esther, especially the events of Chapter 9. It is another Post-Mosaic Festival but no reference is found in the New Testament concerning it.

However, there are spiritual and moral lessons, which the church may learn from this Feast which is still kept by modern Jewry.

Purim, after the name Pur, in the Persian language, signifies "lot". The Feast of Purim, or Feast of Lots has a reference to the time having been pitched upon Haman through the decision of the lot (Esther 3:7).

Although the Feast was a Post-Mosaic Festival, it was a yearly celebration and a joyous time in Jewry. As we consider the story of Esther and the inauguration of this Feast, we will discover spiritual truths for the church in these last days.

During the reign of Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, the queen Vashti had displeased the king and had been deposed from her royal throne. Certain virgins were chosen to go through months of purification and preparation out of which one would be chosen to replace Vashti. The fair and beautiful Esther was chosen to be the bride, the royal queen (Esther 1-2).

In the King's palace was an Agagite, a descendant of Amalek, of Esau, by the name of Haman. He carried within his heart a evil hatred for the Jewish nation. Mordecai, Esther's uncle, would in no way bow to this wicked Haman (Esther 3:1-6).

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, which was the Feast of Passover, lots were cast before Haman from day to day and month to month through to the twelfth month, Adar (Esther 3:7).

Haman, at this time told King Ahasuerus that there was a certain people scattered throughout his 127 Provinces who had their own laws and who failed to keep the laws of the Persian kingdom. He suggested that the king write a decree that these people be destroyed. He himself would help finance the business. The king sealed the decree with his own ring. Letters were written throughout the Provinces that all Jews, men, woman and children, were to be destroyed on the 13th day of the month, Adar. The letters were delivered in haste by the posts to all Provinces (Esther 3:8-15).

Great mourning fell upon the Jews throughout the Provinces as they realized the death-decree, which hung over their heads and their days were numbered.

When Mordecai found out he called upon Esther to endeavor to change the decree. He said to her that enlargement and deliverance could come from another place if she held her peace at this time. The great challenge to Esther was "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for a time as this?" (Esther 4:1-14).

Esther, along with the Jews at Shushan, fasted 3 days and 3 nights without food or water. At the end of the days she would risk her life by appearing before King Ahasuerus (Esther 4:15-17).

On the third day she appeared before the King as he sat on his royal throne. She found favour in his sight and he held out to her the golden scepter.

In the following days, upon her request, the King, along with Haman, attended banquets, which Esther had prepared (Esther 5:1-14).

Providentially after the first banquet the king could not sleep. Someone was asked to read him some of the Chronicles of the kingdom. The account of Modecai saving the king from assassination was read. The king asked if this person had been rewarded at all. The answer was in the negative. In the morning the king called Haman in and asked him what he thought should be done to a person the king desired to honour. Haman, filled with pride and egotism thought the king would like to do honour to him. So he described in glowing terms what rewards should be given to such a person. With amazement and bitter disgust the king told him to do all he said to Mordecai (Esther 6:1-14).

The next banquet the king and Haman attended, the king asked Esther what her request would be and it would be granted, even to half of the kingdom (Esther 7:1-2). Queen Esther took advantage of the whole situation. She begged for her own life and the life of the Jewish people who had been sold to destruction. The king, horrified, asked who dared to do such a thing. The wicked Haman was pointed out. Haman stood to plead for his life, even throwing himself upon Esther's divan, which was the greatest of insults in a Persian palace (Esther 7:3-8). The end result was that Haman hung from the very gallows, which he had prepared for Mordecai to hang on (Esther 7:9-10).

The king gave to Esther all of Haman's possessions and his own ring which he had given to Haman (Esther 8:1-2).

However, the great problem remained and that was the saving of the Jews as a nation in the Provinces. The law of the Medes and -Persians could not be reversed. The king therefore gave permission to write another law by which the Jews could stand to preserve their lives and to destroy all those who would seek to destroy or assault them (Esther 8:3-14). Thus there was a counter-decree without nullifying the previous decree.

The Jews had great joy and gladness in the Provinces when they received this counter-decree. Great fear fell on the people and many became Jews when they saw this (Esther 8:15-17).

On the 13th day and the 14th day of Adar, the Jews stood and defended their lives and possessions throughout the Provinces. Seventy five thousand people were slain. In Shushan palace 500 people were slain. Thus the Jew'sh nation was providentially preserved from annihilation. Haman's ten sons were slain and hung on the gallows also.

The Jews at Shushan then set aside the 13th, 14th, and 15th day of Adar as days of feasting, resting and rejoicing and sending portions one to another to commemorate this great deliverance (Esther 9:1-19). Mordecai wrote letters and made a decree that year by year the Jews should establish the 14th and 15th days of Adar as a Festival time, the Feast of Purim (Esther 10:1-32; 11:1-3).

This is the story behind the Feast of Purim, the Feast of Esther, the Feast of Lots. Although the name of God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther, His providential hand is manifest throughout.

OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS

Scripture	Feast	Time of Year
Esther 9-10	Purim Feast of Esther	February/March
Exodus 12 I Cor 5:7; 15:3	Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bred	March/April
Leviticus 23 Matthew 28:1-10	Yom Habikkurim Feast of Firstfruits	May/June
Leviticus 23:15-22 Exodus 23:19 Deuteronomy 26	Shavuot Feast of Weeks Pentecost	May/June
Genesis 22:1-18	Rosh Hashanah Jewish New Year Feast of Trumpets	September/October (10 days before Yom Kippur)
Leviticus 16	Yom Kippur Day of Atonement	September/October
Leviticus 23:39-43	Sukkot Feast of Booths Feast of Tabernacles	September/October 4 days after Yom Kippur
I & II Maccabees	Hanukkah Feast of Dedication	December