



Cooperative Baptist
Fellowship North Carolina

FAITH FAMILY TALKS

CBFNC is offering this resource from the CBF Children's Ministry Network, to our state fellowship to provide families weekly spiritual conversation starters. Our hope is that this resource empowers parents to have more faith-filled conversations at home.

Listen. Talk. Go.

January Faith at Home: The Book of Esther

January 2023

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FEATURED RESOURCES: FAITH FAMILY TALKS

Setting the Scene

This month we are going to look at the book of Esther in the Old Testament. Esther is an action-packed story that is full of twists and turns, a villain, and a brave young woman. Did you know that this is the only book in the Bible that does not mention God? God might not be mentioned, but God is there every step of the way.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 1

The Story

A long time ago, after many hard years of being kept from their homes and land, the Israelites (the Jewish people of faith) were freed from Babylon. Some of these Israelites ended up in a empire called Persia. The king of Persia was a man named Xerxes and he had a wife named Vashti. The king loved to show off his riches and have lots of parties. One day he told his wife, Queen Vashti, to come and show everyone how beautiful she was. When she refused, Xerxes had her exiled from their lands.

Some time passed and Xerxes decided that he needed a new queen so his advisors suggested that he hold a beauty pageant to find a beautiful wife. There was a young woman named Esther living in Persia who was one of the Israelites who had moved to the country. Esther was being raised by her cousin Mordecai, who had adopted her. Mordecai told Esther to not tell anyone about their Jewish faith when she went to the beauty pageant. He was most likely worried some people would not like her because she was an Israelite and not Persian. Esther listened to her uncle. King Xerxes saw Esther and was so moved by her beauty that she was eventually chosen to be the new queen and a great party was thrown in her honor.

Talk.

- Why do you think Queen Vashti refused to listen to King Xerxes? Do you think she made the right choice?
- How do you think Esther felt having to keep her faith and identity secret? Have you ever felt that way?
- I wonder where you might see God at work in this part of the story?





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THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 1, *cont'd.*

God, Doing the right thing is not always easy. Help us to be brave like Vashti and Esther. Amen.

Go.

The story of Esther might not mention God, but God is there all the same. It's important to look for God at work in our lives every day. Many people refer to evidence of God at work in our lives as God Sightings. Take some time as a family to talk about God Sightings from your day or week. There are no right or wrong answers! Examples might be in a conversation, a smile from a stranger at the perfect time, an answered prayer, or something beautiful in creation.



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THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 2

Listen.

Mordecai would come to the King's gate to check on Esther each day and one day he overheard two men plotting against King Xerxes. Mordecai told Esther about the plot and she warned King Xerxes, giving credit to Mordecai. It was found out that the plot was real, and Mordecai's quick thinking saved the life of the King. Around this time, King Xerxes promoted a man named Haman to be the most important official in the country. A law was made that everyone had to bow down to Haman. Haman really liked this new rule. Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman and explained it was because he was Jewish. Haman was enraged and decided to not only get back at Mordecai, but he would plot against the entire Jewish people.

Haman cast Pur. Casting Pur was like casting lots in the Bible where a person would throw down objects like sticks or smooth stones with symbols on them to help decide something important. A lot of people say that this is kind of like how we roll dice nowadays! When Haman cast Pur, it was decided that the date to go after the Jewish people would be in eleven months. Haman continued his cruel plot by going to the king and telling him that there was a whole group of people living in Persia who were living by their own rules and not the king's. Sneaky Haman talked the king into making a law to get rid of all of the Jewish people in the entire empire. Letters were sent out to lots of officials giving orders to hurt the Jewish people living there once the eleven months had passed. Then Haman and King Xerxes held a party to celebrate.

Talk

- What about Mordecai's faith in God made him not willing to bow down to Haman?
- Haman enjoyed his power and bringing other people down. What can we do when we meet unkind people in our lives?
- In this part of the story we have lots of anger and unkind moments. Even in the midst of all of this, I wonder where you might see God?

God of Love, help us to be people of love. Help us to use our voices to speak out against injustice. Use us to bring hope to others. Amen.





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THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 2, *cont'd.*

Go.

Casting Pur plays an important part in today's story and will actually be something to celebrate by the time we get to the end of Esther's story. The Pur from the story were used to decide something unkind. Find dice in one of your family's games, or create one out of paper and tape (google has lots of great examples on how to do this) and take only one. Roll the one die and whatever number you roll will be the number of things that you share about the person to your left. Share something that you appreciate about the person or a positive memory that you have with them. Make sure that each person has a chance to share kind words and receive kind words.



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THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 3

Listen.

Mordecai found out about Haman's evil plan and asked one of her helpers to warn Esther and encourage her to approach the King to ask for help for her people. Esther is worried because it was actually against the law for anyone to approach the king without being summoned, even the queen. Surely she remembered what had happened to Queen Vashti. Mordecai sent another message to Esther, saying that if she remained silent, something else would happen to save their people. His deep faith helped him to have hope for the future of their people. In the same message he also told her that perhaps she had been made queen for this very moment. This message helped Esther to realize that she could make a difference and with bravery she agreed to approach the king and boldly said, "If I perish, I perish." She knew she had to stand up for her people and do what she could to save them.

Queen Esther approached King Xerxes and he agreed to give her whatever it is she asked for. He was very fond of Esther. She invited him and Haman to a special banquet, a dinner party, where she asked them to attend one more banquet the following day. After leaving the first banquet, Haman saw Mordecai and was enraged yet again, making a plan to have Mordecai killed the next day.

That evening, the king could not sleep, and he asked a servant to read the book of records, like a history book for the kingdom. One of the parts that was read mentioned how Mordecai had saved the king's life when he overheard the two men plotting against the king. Xerxes asks if Mordecai had been properly thanked and realized that he had not. So, he made plans to honor him. When Haman came to tell the king about his plans to kill Mordecia, the king gave Haman instructions to give Mordecai royal robes that the king himself had worn, a crown, and to lead Mordecai around on a horse so that others could recognize and honor him. Haman was infuriated, but he did as he was told.

Talk.

- How did God use Mordecai, Esther, and King Xerxes to help in this part of the story?
- What ways has God or might God use you to be a helper?
- How does it feel knowing that God can use you to make a difference?





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THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 3, *cont'd.*

God, help us to listen to you. Help us to be brave and bold, willing to do what you want us to do and to be the people you created us to be. Amen.

Go.

God used Mordecai, Esther, and even King Xerxes to help bring about the plan to save the Jewish people in the Kingdom of Persia. Acts of kindness and service help us to show love to God, others, and make a real difference. As a family, talk about an act of kindness or service that you all could do together this week. It could be a card or meal delivered to a friend going through a hard time, you could volunteer in your community, or even find ways to support refugees in your area.



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THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 4

Listen.

At the second banquet, King Xerxes asked Queen Esther to share what she would like to ask him for and promised that whatever she wanted he would give to her. Esther was thankful and told him that she wanted to ask for her life and the lives of her people to be spared. She shared with Xerxes that Haman had plotted against her and her entire people. King Xerxes was angry on her behalf and Haman was put to death.

Mordecai came to the palace and Esther explained that he was her cousin and had been taking care of her after the death of her parents. Mordecai was given a position of authority and honor within the kingdom by King Xerxes. Queen Esther was relieved and fell at the king's feet, crying. She begged him to stop the plot to kill the Jewish people. King Xerxes held out his gold scepter to her and she rose to her feet in relief. Esther asked the king to allow a letter to be written and sent to the officials of the land to overturn the command to hurt the Jews and stop the attacks. King Xerxes agreed that she could write whatever she would like to aid her people. Letters were sent out throughout the land to all the people, including the Jewish people who were told that they could defend themselves if anyone attacked them. They even made sure to send the letters on fast horses so that they would arrive in time.

Afterwards, Mordecai went out wearing the royal robes and a crown and the city rejoiced. All across the empire, Esther's people celebrated with joy. The Jewish people defended themselves against the provinces that decided to attack them and won.

Haman plotted to destroy them, but the Jewish community in Persia prevailed. Because of Mordecai's encouragement and Esther's bravery, an entire group of people was saved. The people were so happy that they created a day of celebration, the Festival of Purim. This was based on the Pur, or lots, that were cast by Haman to decide the date of the failed attack on the Jewish people. This Festival of Purim was held in honor of Esther and Mordecai and is still celebrated today by people of Jewish faith.

Esther and Mordecai first saved the king and then the Jewish people, God's people. Throughout this book we see God at work, but we never see God mentioned. The story of Esther reminds us that we can do big things, make a difference, and that God is present with us all the way. Even in hard times when we don't quite feel like God is there, God is.



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THE BOOK OF ESTHER: WEEK 4, *cont'd.*

Talk

- I wonder where you might see God at work in this final part of the story of Esther?
- How do you think Esther felt when she revealed to King Xerxes that she was Jewish? How do you think she felt having to ask for him to spare her and her people?
- What have you learned from the story of Esther about God? What could you learn about yourself?

God, Thank you for loving us and for teaching us to love. Help us to remember that even when things are hard or scary, that you are at work in our lives and in the world. Amen.

Go.

The story of Esther is full of action and intrigue. As a family, act out the story of Esther. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to be. You can dress up or not, you can do the whole story or just a part. Whatever you do, have fun! Bonus points if you find a way to creatively point out that "God is Here" in different parts of the story when you can see God at work.

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