

## Bible background

Esther 2 - 8

### Aim of lesson

To show that God cares for and protects his people when they are in danger, and that he uses ordinary people to bring his care.

### Preparation required

You will need to make one set of puppets from your activity sheet to use when telling the story. They will need reinforcing with a stick of card. The class will need colouring materials and scissors.

### Suggested outline of lesson

1. Introduce each of your four puppets, Esther, Mordecai, the King and Haman. Explain that Mordecai was a very good man who was kind to Esther when her mother and father died. Haman was a very wicked, cruel man who wanted to kill all Esther and Mordecai's family and all their people, the Jews. Jewish children, when they learn this story today, are encouraged to 'boo' whenever the name of Haman is mentioned. You may like to have your children listen for the names of Haman and Mordecai (or Haman and Esther) and boo for the first and clap or cheer for the second. This does encourage the children to listen carefully.
2. Have one of the pupils hold each of the puppets as you tell the story. They should hold up their puppet when its name is mentioned. The story of Esther is rather long and complicated for one lesson for infants, so a suggested summary of the story is given here: Esther was a girl who did not have a father or mother. They had died when she was very young. She lived with her cousin Mordecai who was a very kind man. He looked after her like a father, after her parents died. All Esther family were foreigners; they were Jewish. Many years before, her great-grand parents had been brought as slaves to the country where they now lived.

As Esther grew up she became a beautiful young lady. The king of the country decided to marry her, so she became the queen. But she did not let anyone in the palace know that she was one of the Jewish people. Not even the king knew.

One of the important men in the palace was a very wicked and cruel man called Haman. When Esther's cousin Mordecai did not bow down to Haman, Haman was very cross. He knew that Mordecai was Jewish, so he decided that not only would he kill Mordecai, he would kill all the Jewish people in the country. He was so cross with Mordecai that he built a very high gallows next to his house and planned to ask the king in the morning if he could hang Mordecai on it. But that night the king could not sleep. He started reading a book, and in the book it had been written that Mordecai had once saved the king's life. He had reported two men who were planning to kill the king. So in the morning Mordecai was dressed in special clothes and seated on the king's horse; and Haman was given the job of leading Mordecai through the city.

But Haman still had a plan to kill all Mordecai's people, the Jews. Mordecai asked Esther to ask the king for his help. Esther knew if the king was angry, he would kill her too. But the king was not angry at Esther. (You may like to include the section about the king holding out the golden sceptre.) The king said Esther and Mordecai could make a law which would stop Haman killing all the Jews. The king had Haman hanged on his own gallows and he gave Mordecai Haman's important position in the palace.

3. The children can colour and prepare their own puppets. They can act out the story together using their puppets.

### Alternative activities

1. Make cardboard crowns and decorate them with felt pens, sticky shapes or shiny paper.
2. Make a collage picture of Queen Esther and give her lots of beautiful jewellery, robes etc. You could use fabric scraps, coloured paper and dried pasta, foil etc for jewellery.
3. Make rattles/shakers like Jewish children use at Purim to drown out the name of Haman. Use dried peas, lentils or rice in small tubs. Seal the lids well with tape then wrap them in plain paper for the children to decorate with pens or sticky shapes.

### Relevance to the children's lives

Even when things look as if they are going wrong, God does know and he does care. Esther must have been very sad when she lost her mother and father, but God knew about it and helped her - he gave her Mordecai to look after. Later when Esther was queen she helped to save all her people. She was learning to care about others as God had cared about her. Ask the children to see if they can be God's helpers this week.

### Verse

'Their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration.' Esther 9:22.

## **Prayer**

Ask the children if they would like to pray that they can be God's helpers by helping their friends and family this week.