

Fun with Esther: Games and Activities

Let's dive into the exciting story of Queen Esther with some fun activities!

1. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Briefly introduce the Book of Esther. Mention it's a story from the Bible that takes place in the ancient Persian Empire. Ask: What do you already know about Queen Esther? Explain that although God's name isn't directly mentioned, we can see His work throughout the story.

2. Reading & Story Overview (15-20 minutes)

Read key sections of the Book of Esther together (or use a reliable children's Bible summary). Focus on the main flow:

- King Ahasuerus removes Queen Vashti.
- Esther, a Jewish orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai, wins the contest to become the new queen (keeping her Jewish identity secret).
- Mordecai uncovers a plot to kill the king.
- The king honors a wicked man named Haman.
- Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman.
- Haman plots to destroy all the Jewish people.
- Mordecai asks Esther to risk her life by going to the king.
- Esther holds two banquets for the king and Haman.
- The king remembers Mordecai saved him and honors him (using Haman's suggestion!).
- Esther reveals Haman's plot and her own identity.
- Haman is punished, and Mordecai is promoted.
- The Jews are allowed to defend themselves, and they are saved.
- The celebration of Purim begins!

3. Activity: Character Match-Up (10 minutes)

Before the lesson, create simple cards. Write names on some: Esther, Mordecai, King Ahasuerus, Haman, Vashti. On others, write descriptions: 'Brave queen who saved her people', 'Esther's wise cousin', 'Powerful but impulsive king', 'Wicked man who hated Mordecai', 'Queen who refused the king'.

Game: Lay the cards face down like a memory game or simply spread them out face up. Have the student match each character's name to their description. Discuss each character briefly as they match them.

4. Activity: Esther's Journey Board Game (15-20 minutes)

Setup: Draw a simple winding path on paper or cardstock. Create spaces representing key events (e.g., 'Chosen Queen!', 'Mordecai Overhears Plot', 'Haman Gets Angry - Go Back 1', 'Esther Plans a Banquet', 'King Can't Sleep', 'Esther Risks Her Life - Extra Turn!', 'Haman's Plot Revealed!', 'Mordecai Honored', 'Victory! Feast of Purim - Finish!').

Game: Use buttons or coins as game pieces. Players roll a die and move along the path. If they land on an event space, they briefly explain what happened then. You can add 'Question' spaces where they have to answer a simple question about the story (e.g., 'Who was Esther's cousin?', 'Why was Haman angry?'). The first person to reach the 'Feast of Purim' space wins. (Optional: small prize for the winner).

5. Activity: Royal Decree & Secret Message (10 minutes)

Discuss how important royal decrees were, sealed with the king's ring.

Task 1: Have the student write a short 'Royal Decree' from King Ahasuerus's perspective about honoring Mordecai or allowing the Jews to defend themselves. They can decorate it.

Task 2: Talk about Mordecai's secret message urging Esther to be brave 'for such a time as this'. Have the student write a short, encouraging 'secret message' to someone, perhaps focusing on being brave or doing the right thing.

6. Activity: Design a Crown or Scepter (10 minutes)

Using construction paper, markers, glitter glue (optional), have the student design and create a crown fit for Queen Esther OR a royal scepter like the one the king held out to her. While crafting, discuss what these symbols represent (royalty, power, authority, favor).

7. Discussion & Wrap-Up (5-10 minutes)

Ask questions to reinforce learning:

- Who were the main heroes in the story? Why?
- When did Esther show great courage?
- Even though God isn't mentioned by name, where do you see His help or plan in the story? (e.g., Esther becoming queen, Mordecai being in the right place, the king's sleepless night)
- What does 'for such a time as this' mean? How can we be brave or helpful when needed?
- What was your favorite activity or part of the story?

Briefly mention that the Jewish festival of Purim celebrates these events even today.