TRACK TWO

Kids Ministry

A complete 45-60 minute lesson for elementary classes (about grades K-5), with notes for preschool and a take-home page for parents.

THE BIG IDEA

God is at work for me, even when I can't see Him.

LESSON PLAN

	45 MIN	60 MIN
Welcome and opening game	8	10
Bible story (told or film)	10	12
Object lesson	5	6
Craft	10	15
Small groups	7	10
Memory verse	3	4
Prayer and goodbye	2	3

THE STORY IN PLAIN WORDS

Esther was an orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai. When the king of Persia looked for a new queen, Esther was taken to the palace, and the king chose her. Mordecai heard about a plan to hurt the king and told Esther, and she told the king. It was written in the king's book. God's name isn't in the story, but He was at work all along.

READ BEFORE CLASS

Esther 1-2 and Proverbs 16:9. If you will show the film, watch it all the way through first.

What Kids May Ask

"Why didn't Vashti come?" The Bible doesn't tell us. Say: *We don't know why. The Bible tells us what happened next.*

"Did Esther want to go to the palace?" The Bible says she "was taken" (2:8). It doesn't tell us how she felt. Say: *Esther didn't get to choose, but God was with her there.*

"Why did Esther keep a secret?" Mordecai told her not to tell anyone she was Jewish (2:10). The Bible doesn't say why. (See the tip on secrets below.)

What happened to the two guards (2:23). With K-2 and preschool, say only that *the king's helpers stopped them.* If an older child asks, say once, simply: *The king's law punished them with death.* Don't add details.

"Where is God in this story?" Say: *His name isn't written, but He is still taking care of His people.*

Telling the Story

YOU'LL NEED a paper crown, a sheet of paper rolled up like a scroll for the king's book, a large envelope for the king's letters, and a long paper chain with five links. *SAY lines are a dramatized paraphrase for children; READ lines quote the WEB.*

DO Teach the cues. When you hear "the king," sit up tall like royalty. When you hear "written down," pretend to write in the air.

SAY Long ago, the king of Persia threw a giant party. He called for Queen Vashti, but she would not come. The Bible doesn't tell us why. The angry king made a law: Vashti could never be queen again. *(Wave the envelope.)*

DO Hold up the paper chain. Hand one link to a helper for each new part of the story.

SAY In the city lived a man named Mordecai. He had raised his cousin, a girl named Esther, because her mom and dad had died.

READ Esther 2:7a aloud: "He brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother."

SAY The king's helpers gathered young women from all over the land, so the king could choose a new queen. Esther was taken to the palace. Everyone who met her liked her, and the king chose Esther! *(Put the crown on a helper.)* But Esther kept a secret: no one knew she was Jewish.

SAY One day Mordecai heard two guards planning to hurt the king. He told Esther, and Esther told the king. The bad plan was stopped, and it was all written down in the king's book. *(Unroll the scroll.)* The king did not reward Mordecai then. But it was written down, and it would matter later. God never forgets.

READ Proverbs 16:9 aloud: "A man's heart plans his course, but Yahweh directs his steps."

ASK Hold up the whole chain. How did each link connect to the next? Who was putting the story together?

USING THE FILM INSTEAD. The film runs about 11 minutes. Preview it, and mark your stop times in your player before class. For grades K-2, show two clips: 4:21 to 5:51 (Mordecai and Esther, through Hegai's kindness) and 6:20 to 6:57 (Esther crowned). **STOP AT 5:51,** before the narration about each young woman's evening with the king, and **STOP AGAIN AT 6:57,** before the plot. The clips total about two minutes: fill the rest of the story time by telling Vashti's refusal and Mordecai's care for Esther first, then the plot and the king's book afterward (from the script above), and finish with two recap questions. For grades 3-5, show 0:30 to 7:49 (starting at 0:30 skips a tease about a murder plot). It mentions the king "merry with wine" (Esther 1:10; at 2:17 in the film), the women's evenings with the king (5:51-6:20, told briefly; nothing shown; you may skip it), and the guards "hanged" (7:34; not shown). Times are from the film's final caption file.

Opening Game: Hidden in Plain Sight

Before class, set a paper crown somewhere in the room where it can be seen but is easy to miss (on a shelf, by a window). Kids walk, no running, and look without touching anything. When someone spots it, they sit down and keep the secret. Play until everyone is sitting; then hide it again for a second round. No one is out.

Wrap up: *The crown was there the whole time, even when you couldn't see it. In today's story, God's name isn't written once. Watch for where He is at work!*

Object Lesson: The Picture Puzzle

YOU'LL NEED a sheet of poster board with GOD IS AT WORK written large on one side, cut into five big puzzle pieces.

Before class, write one story event on the blank back of each piece: *A queen says no. A search. An orphan finds favor. A plot overheard. Written in a book.* Hand out the pieces, blank side up. Ask: *Does one piece make sense by itself?* **Say:** *Nobody in the story could see how all these pieces fit.* Let kids fit them together, then flip the whole puzzle over to show GOD IS AT WORK. *God was putting the pieces together all along. He is at work in your life too, even when things are hard and you can't see how. If something hard is happening, tell a grown-up you trust, and keep trusting God.*

Craft: My Hidden-Message Crown

Kids decorate a paper crown band on the outside. On the inside, where no one can see it, they write **God is at work, even when I can't see Him.** Tape each crown into a ring. Grades 3-5 can add the memory verse. The message is hidden, but it's still there, like God in Esther's story.

SUPPLIES (PER CHILD)

- A crown band, about 4 × 24 inches: two yellow construction-paper strips taped end to end, or one strip of oversized card stock, cut by leaders before class
- Crayons or markers
- Tape (leaders tape for K-2)
- No scissors for children; leaders do all cutting

Small Groups

GRADES K-2

1. Who took care of Esther when she was little?
2. What did Mordecai do every day?
3. How do you think God takes care of you?

GRADES 3-5

1. Esther was taken to a new place she didn't choose (2:8). What helps you when you have to start somewhere new?
2. Mordecai saved the king's life, but he wasn't rewarded at the time (2:23; 6:3). How does it feel when no one notices the good you do?
3. God's name isn't in Esther. How can we tell He was still at work?
4. Read Proverbs 16:9. What does it mean that God "directs" our steps?

Memory Verse Practice

MEMORY VERSE

"A man's heart plans his course, but Yahweh directs his steps."

PROVERBS 16:9, WEB

Motions: on "heart," hand on your heart; on "plans," tap your head; on "directs his steps," walk in place. Say it marching, then tiptoeing. K-2: learn "...Yahweh directs his steps."

Prayer

Invite kids to name one new or hard place they will go this week, out loud or silently. Anyone may pass. Then pray: *Dear God, thank You that You are always at work, even when we can't see You. Go with us everywhere we go this week. Thank You for Jesus. Amen.*

CLASSROOM TIPS

- **Attention signal:** say "The king!" and kids sit up tall, hands folded.
- **Secrets:** if Esther's secret comes up, add: *If anyone asks you to keep a secret that makes you feel unsafe, tell a grown-up you trust.*
- Use only large, safe items. No coins, rocks, beads, or other small objects: they are choking hazards for little ones.
- **Safeguarding.** If a child or teen tells you about abuse, neglect, self-harm, harmful drinking or drug use at home, or anything else that makes you worried for their safety: stay calm, listen, and thank them for telling you. Don't promise to keep it secret, don't question them for details or investigate, and don't confront anyone involved. Write down what they said as soon as you can, and report it the same day to your church's designated safeguarding lead, following your church's safeguarding policy and any mandatory-reporting law that applies to you. If anyone is in immediate danger, stay with them and call emergency services. Telling a church safeguarding lead does not replace any report the law requires you to make directly to child-protection authorities or police.

FOR PRESCHOOL (AGES 3-5)

- Plan 20-25 minutes: story with cues, the hidden crown game, the crown craft, and prayer.
- Tell it as *Mordecai took care of Esther, Esther became queen, and God took care of them both.* Leave out the guards' punishment.
- Questions: *Who took care of Esther? Who takes care of you?*
- Practice "...Yahweh directs his steps." while walking in place.

TAKE-HOME PAGE · FOR PARENTS

Today in Kids Ministry

A Queen in Persia

ESTHER 1-2

WHAT WE LEARNED

Esther was an orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai. When the king of Persia looked for a new queen, Esther was taken to the palace, and the king made her queen. Mordecai heard of a plan to hurt the king, and Esther told the king. God's name is never written in Esther, but He was at work all along. **Big idea:** *God is at work for me, even when I can't see Him.*

TALK ON THE WAY HOME

1. Who took care of Esther? Who takes care of you?
2. What was written in the king's book?
3. Where do you think God was working for you this week?

MEMORY VERSE

"A man's heart plans his course, but Yahweh directs his steps."

PROVERBS 16:9, WEB

TRY THIS AT HOME

Connect the dots: draw five dots on a sheet of paper, and label each with something from this year that turned out to matter. Talk about how God connected them, and thank Him together.

Watch the film together

Scan, or visit phillacolla.com/biblestories. Free, about 11 minutes, listed there from release day. Parents, preview it first: it briefly narrates the young women's time with the king (Esther 2:12-14) and the guards' execution (2:23). Neither is shown.

GO DEEPER AS A FAMILY

The **Family Study** track of the full companion guide has the story, questions for every age, and a prayer. Get the full guide free at phillacolla.com/biblestories. Next in the series: *For Such a Time as This* (Esther 3-5).

PRAY TOGETHER

God, thank You for working even when we can't see You. Help us trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

KIDS: DRAW ESTHER WEARING HER CROWN

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