

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
NOVEMBER02 2024

Esther's victory

Scripture Story: Esther 5–10.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 49.
Key Text: Esther 5:3.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Finally convinced she had come to royal position "for such a time as this," Esther recognized her mission. After she prayed and fasted for three days along with Mordecai and the entire Jewish nation, Queen Esther approached the king at the risk of her own life.

When the king extended the scepter, in sign of favor to Esther, she did not yet share her request. Instead, she invited the king and Haman to a banquet. Then, when they showed up for that event, the queen invited them to a second banquet before she finally raised the issue of the decree against the Jews. Was Esther scared? Strategizing? Stalling for time? Whatever her reasoning, her efforts paid off. She asked the king to spare her people, and he agreed. Haman, once the power behind the throne, suddenly found the tables turned. Now he was the victim of the king's wrath, and Esther, Mordecai, and the Jews experienced God's gift of victory.

God answered Esther's prayer of faith and used her influence as the much loved and favored wife of King Ahasuerus to reveal to the king the evil plot of the enemy and bring about a turn of events to save His people. A key lesson from the story is that God can use anyone who is willing to be an instrument in His hands and accomplish His purposes.

The lesson focuses on the victory we can have through Christ—victory over sin, over temptation, over Satan's power in our world and in our lives. Victory is God's work, but grasping it requires courage on our part—courage like Esther had. It also requires faith—putting our trust in God who can bring good out of the worst circumstances.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that God promises victory not only over literal enemies but also over sin and temptation. *(Know)*
- Feel confident in God's love and ability to bring victory. *(Feel)*
- Choose to make a courageous stand like Esther's, knowing that God will be with them. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 10: "In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, Substitute and Example. This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin." (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 45:22; 53; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 33:11; 36:25-27; Habakkuk 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-10; 8:1-4, 14-17; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Ephesians 2:4-10;

Colossians 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Hebrews 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Revelation 13:8.)

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

We all experience hardships and difficult times in life—but we also experience victory. In fact, as Christians we should expect victory. How do we deal with it when God answers our prayers?

Give each person in the class a piece of paper and pencil. Ask them to brainstorm all the "victories" they can think of in their lives—answered prayers, times they overcame temptation, or found a solution to a difficult problem. Ask each person to choose one thing from the list that they're comfortable sharing with others, then go around the circle (in a larger class, divide into small groups) and ask each person to share one victory they've experienced with God's help.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Once upon a time, when people watched an event, they watched it as it happened. Just like those watching live in the stands, they had no idea of the outcome until the game was finished. Viewers at home sat in real suspense as the game played out.

We can still do that, of course. But in this day and age, we've also got video recording, digital recording, TiVo, and every other imaginable way of recording what we watch.

Have you ever sat down to watch a prerecorded event when you already knew the outcome? You are still thrilled to watch and cheer, but you already know the outcome.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In our Christian lives we face challenges, setbacks, and trials. But we know the outcome will be victory if we trust in Jesus. He has already won the game for us. We're not spectators, but players; we play with the confidence of knowing that victory is already secure.

Bible stories such as the story of Esther challenge us to trust God in a big way—to stand up for what we believe, to do what's right when it's unpopular. The same stories come with the assurance that God will give us victory—even though our faith may be tested along the way.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

Discuss the *Out of the Story* questions, then refer back to some of the "victory" experiences students shared in the Getting Started section. Ask a couple of students if they are OK with you using their experiences as an example for the discussion (you can also contribute one or two of your own). On a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flipchart at the front of the room, re-create the following chart. Discuss with students how to fill in each of the headings,

Situation	What was the problem?	Who/ what was the enemy?	What did the person involved have to do?	What did God do for them?
Esther saves the Jews of Persia				

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Talking About Personal Experience

The *Getting Started* activity for this week's lesson asks students to share in their groups their personal experiences of victory. The dynamics of sharing may differ depending on how willing they are to share personal experiences, and within a group there will be different levels of comfort with activities such as this. Your challenge as the teacher is to make these activities low-risk enough that nobody feels "on the spot" or threatened, while still allowing for meaningful discussion.

Young people who are shy or experience social anxiety, or who feel they don't fit in well with others in the group, may be uncomfortable with this kind of experience. Those who are not very spiritually mature or haven't given much thought to spiritual things may find it difficult to come up with something appropriate to share. Some tips to make sharing easier:

- Divide into pairs or small groups, especially if your class is very large.
- Allow students to brainstorm a list of ideas privately first, then pick one they're comfortable sharing.
- Model appropriate answers yourself as you introduce the activity: "For example, one victory I experienced was when I prayed about an exam I thought I was going to fail, and God answered my prayer by helping me think clearly and figure out the answers, so I passed the exam." Make sure your own example is general and relatable enough that it will encourage class members to think of similar examples from their own experience.

using four experiences of victory suggested by class members, plus Esther's experience from the Bible lesson.

After discussing each situation, ask: What can we learn from these stories that can help us the next time we face an "enemy" in our lives?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 6:10-18.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Jesus taught that our attitude toward enemies should be one of love and forgiveness (Matthew 5:43-48). So for Christians, having "victory" doesn't mean defeating your enemies by using tactics of

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

attack. Rather we are to put on God's armor that will equip us for the spiritual warfare that is raging all around us. Being braced with God's truth and knowing that He has already won the victory over the forces of darkness we can live as His messengers of truth and Light.

Paul reminds us that we are not battling flesh and blood, but spiritual powers (Ephesians 6:12). The real enemy is not your classmate—he or she is a human being you are called to love and win for Christ. The real enemy is Satan, who tries to tempt us, discourage us, and distract us from following God. The real enemy often seems to come from within, because we all have a sinful nature over which God promises victory. In our struggle against spiritual powers, our weapons are not swords and guns, but the whole armor of God. The greatest victories are those we win by resisting temptations, overcoming our own sinful tendencies, and loving our enemies.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Read the following quote to the class and then discuss it with the students:

"The final decree against God's remnant people will be similar to the one Ahasuerus issued against the Jews. In the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment, the enemies of the true church see a Mordecai at the gate. God's people reverence His law, and this is a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling on His Sabbath. . . . The last great conflict in the controversy between truth and error will be fought on this battlefield. As in the days of Esther and Mordecai, the Lord will give the victory to His truth and His people" (*Royalty and Ruin*, p. 213).

Debriefing

Ask: Have you thought of having to take a stand for God's truth? Why is it important that we practice taking a stand for what is right when there is not much risk involved and nobody else is watching? How do the seemingly small, day-to-day decisions that test your faith now prepare you for the greater battles that carry eternal consequences concerning your salvation? Are you willing to be a true follower of Christ even when the Christian journey involves sacrifice and renunciation? Say: As we close with prayer, I want you to think about how God can bring victory out of any difficult situation you're facing right now, if you turn it over to Him.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Esther and all the Jews of Persia faced a challenge—an enemy who was determined to destroy them. But Esther moved forward in faith, doing what had to be done even though she recognized that it was risky. When she responded with courage, God rewarded her and her people with victory.

We, too, face challenges. We're constantly attacked by the devil's deceptions, by temptation, fear, discouragement, and all kinds of things that try to derail us from living a Christian life. When we face up to these enemies with courage and do God's will, He promises victory, just as He did for Esther.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*),* chapter 49.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Esther 5–10.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 49.

Esther's victory



PRIXEL CREATIVE/LIGHTSTOCK

keytext

"Then the king asked, 'What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.' "

(Esther 5:3, NIV)

flashlight

"The trying experiences that came to God's people in the days of Esther were not peculiar to that age alone. . . . The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict. . . .

". . . And we are not left in doubt as to the issue. Today, as in the days of Esther and Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate His truth and His people" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 605).

what do you think?

When I get something I prayed for, I

____ am in awe that God has answered my request.
____ am grateful to God and anyone who helped me.
____ am prone to forget that God is the giver of every blessing.
____ am so happy that I have to tell everyone about God's goodness!

did you know?

In the ancient world, defeated enemies usually suffered a terrible fate. Prisoners of war could be expected either to be killed or taken as slaves, although wealthy and important prisoners might sometimes be ransomed—returned to their homes in exchange for money and land. Very few were so lucky. Defeated enemies might be tortured, hanged, drawn and quartered, beheaded, crucified, or burned, depending on the technology and the traditions of the enemy who defeated them.

The Bible tells us that after Esther informed the king that she was a potential victim of Haman's plot, Haman was hanged on the gallows he'd built for Mordecai. Later Esther demanded that Haman's 10 sons be hanged as well—it was common for victors to wipe out the families of their enemies as well, so that no one could survive to carry on a blood feud.

As Christians, we're told to love our enemies. How does the idea of getting revenge on a defeated enemy fit with Jesus' idea of forgiveness? What kind of "victory" does God promise us?

INTO THE STORY

"So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, 'Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.'

"Then Queen Esther answered, 'If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.'

"King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, 'Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?'

"Esther said, 'An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman.'

"Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

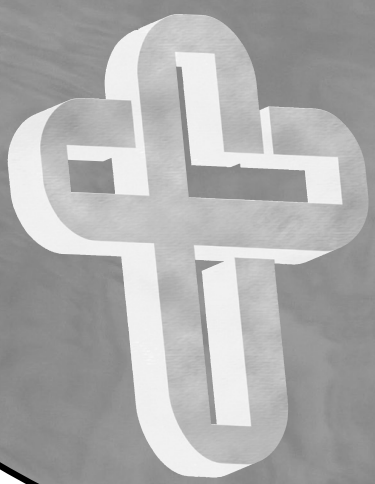
"Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining.

"The king exclaimed, 'Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?'

"As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, 'A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits [seventy-five feet] stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.'

"The king said, 'Impale him on it!' So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided."

(Esther 7, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Esther waited for a second banquet rather than tell the king what she wanted as soon as she went to the throne room, or at the first banquet?

_____
_____
_____

Why was it important to Esther to have Haman present when she made her accusation?

_____
_____
_____

What does the king's reaction tell you about the kind of man the king was?

_____
_____
_____

How do you think Esther felt while the king was out in the garden and she was left inside with Haman?

_____
_____
_____

How do you think the way Esther and Mordecai dealt with Haman and his family teaches us about how (or how not) to deal with enemies?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" **(1 Corinthians 15:57, NIV).**

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" **(Romans 8:37-39, NIV).**

"With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies" **(Psalm 60:12, NIV).**

"Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" **(1 John 5:4, NIV).**

"To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne" **(Revelation 3:21, NIV).**

further insight

"When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 594

Sabbath

Read Romans 8:37-39.

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. . . . Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin" (Fundamental Belief 10, The Experience of Salvation).

Look back at the *What Do You Think?* section, then at the Bible verses under *Punch Lines*. Throughout the Bible God promises us victory. In some Bible stories, such as the story of Esther, this means victory over a literal enemy who's threatening us.

For many Christians today God's promise of victory means victory over temptations, sin, and trials in our lives. Where would you like to see victory in your life today?

Think about one time in your life that God gave you victory in a tough situation. How did you react?

Sunday

Read Esther 4:16; Esther 7:6, 7, 10.

Read through the *Into the Story* Bible passage and the questions that follow it. As you read the scene, imagine yourself in the role of each of the three players: Esther, Haman, and the king.

What would you have said or done if you were in the shoes of one of the people in the story to make a difference for the better?

_____

_____

_____

Monday

Read Ephesians 3:20.

What would you do if a king offered you anything "up to half the kingdom"? This over-the-top offer King Xerxes made to Esther was an exaggeration—intended to show the king's generosity.

But the King of heaven, our Father, really does make extravagant promises. What does today's Bible verse tell us about God's promises?

_____

_____

_____

If you walked into the throne room of heaven and God offered you more than you could even ask or imagine, what would you ask Him for?

_____

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Psalm 60:12.

The *Flashlight* quote from *Prophets and Kings* tells us that Bible-believing Christians in the last days may face the same kinds of challenges that the Jews in Esther and Mordecai's time faced. God also promises that, just as He did then, He will deliver His people.

God has many ways to bring victory, but He usually uses faithful people like Esther who have the courage to stand up for what's right. List three things you have learned from the story of Queen Esther that could help you in a situation in which you had to stand up for what you believe is right.

_____

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:57.

Read the Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section. Each of them is a promise of victory. Choose your favorite promise from this list (or another Bible verse you like about God giving us victory) and create a poster of it that you can display in your room, near your computer, or anyplace you look at often. Use it as a reminder that God is powerful enough to give you victory over any kind of "enemy" you face.

Thursday

Read Deuteronomy 20:4.

Our "enemies" could be actual people—maybe a bully who picks on us, or someone who stands in the way of doing what we know is right. More often the enemies we fight are spiritual, and they take root within our own lives—temptations and trials that we have to overcome. Romans 8:31-39 and Ephesians 6:10-12 show us what kinds of battles we fight as Christians, and what kind of victory God promises.

Think about a battle that you're engaged in on the spiritual level right now. God promises victory, but He often asks us for courageous action—just like He asked of Esther. What's one thing you could do today to move toward the victory God has in store for you in this situation?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read Romans 8:28.

Sometimes when you're in a crisis situation, such as Esther was, it's difficult to have faith that God will give you victory. Reflecting on Bible stories and other experiences in which God has triumphed can build our faith. As you think about your own "battle" situation (see yesterday's section), what stories of faith—from the Bible, from people you know, or from your own experience—encourage you and give you inspiration? Reflect on those stories and remember that though it may take awhile, God has already won the victory!

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 49.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it by going to www.cornerstoneconnections.net and clicking on "Conflict of the Ages series." By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.