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

Esther's victory



PIXEL 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?

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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?

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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?

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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.

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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?

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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.