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# Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

*Scripture: Nehemiah 1:1-6:16*

**Theme: Prayer and action go hand in hand**

*4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

Sunday School Lesson Overview: Esther , For Such a Time as This Theme: God places us where we are for a purpose. Introduction (Engage & Connect): Start by asking kids, "Have you ever felt like God called you to something big, but you didn't know how to start?" Esther's story shows how God uses people in unexpected places for great things. Show a picture of Esther (or describe how she looked) and explain that she was an orphan chosen by her uncle, Mordecai, to help her people. Today, we'll see how God works through people like us, even in ordinary lives! Key Story (Explain & Explore): Esther lived during a time of war and danger for her Jewish people. When the king's wicked advisor, Haman, wanted to destroy them, Esther had to step into the royal court with courage. She didn't know if she'd be safe, but God had a plan! Her story teaches that God doesn't always call us to grand adventures, sometimes He calls us to use what we have, where we are. Esther didn't have power, but she had faith, and God used her to save her people. Ask: "Where have you seen God use you in small ways this week?" God's Purpose (Reflect & Discern): Haman's plan to kill the Jews backfired when the king remembered his kind deeds to Mordecai. Esther's bravery saved her people, proving that God's power works through people, not just in perfect circumstances. The lesson's title, "For Such a Time as This," means God uses each of us exactly when He needs us. For kids, ask: "If you had to do something brave for God, what might it look like?" (Write their ideas on the board.) Personal Application (Apply & Encourage): End with a prayer: "Lord, help us trust You with our 'small' moments. Give us courage to speak up, even when it's scary." Remind kids that Esther's story shows God doesn't wait for perfect timing, He uses people now. Challenge them: "What's one thing you can do for God this week, just as Esther did?" (Examples: sharing kindness, praying for friends, or standing up for what's right.) Closing (Wrap-Up & Inspire): End with a story or song about God's faithfulness. Leave them with hope: "No matter where you are or what you're doing, God is using you for something great!" Highlight that Esther's story is a reminder that God's work isn't always visible at first, sometimes it's quiet, like a seed growing under the soil. Encourage them to keep growing in faith, one step at a time. Tools for Engagement: - Use a simple map of Persia to show Esther's world. - Play a "What Would You Do?" game: "If you were Esther, how would you help your people?" - Share a short video clip of the Esther movie (e.g., Disney's

animated version) to illustrate the story. Deeper Questions for Discussion: - Why do you think God chose Esther, a woman who didn't know her people's story? - How can we trust God when things feel uncertain, like in Esther's time? - What's one way you can "step into the story" this week for God? Encouragement: Celebrate their courage and remind them that God sees their hearts!

## Bible Story

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Sunday School Lesson: Esther , For Such a Time as This

Once upon a time, in a vast and powerful kingdom, there was a queen named Vashti. King Xerxes the Great had thrown a grand party for all his nobles and officials, and Vashti was supposed to come and show off her beauty, but she refused. The king was furious and ordered that she be thrown out of the palace. Later, the king asked the wise woman Mordecai, who was a Jew, to find a new queen. Mordecai recommended a young Jewish woman named Esther, who was kind, beautiful, and brave.

The king held a beauty contest for all the women in his kingdom to find a queen, and Esther won. She was taken to the palace, where she was given a new name, Esther the queen. For a while, Esther was happy in her new role, but the king's wife Vashti was still a powerful presence. Mordecai, Esther's cousin and protector, urged her to use her position wisely. "For such a time as this," Mordecai told her, meaning this was a special moment where she could help her people. Esther listened and made a plan.

One day, two of the king's servants, Haman and his son, tried to trick the king into making a law that would hurt all the Jews in the kingdom. They asked the king to sign a document saying that anyone who asked for justice for the Jews would be put to death. Mordecai, who was not in the palace, heard about this and asked Esther to help. He knew she was the queen and could talk to the king. Esther told Mordecai that she would go to the king alone, and he told her to do whatever she needed to.

Esther knew that going to the king was dangerous because only someone summoned by the king could come into his presence without being killed. She prayed and asked God for courage. She went to the king, who was angry at first but remembered that she was his queen. She told him the terrible plan that Haman had made and asked him to reverse it. The king was surprised but agreed, and Haman was humiliated. Later, Esther told the king again, and this time, he ordered Haman to be killed, and his plans for the Jews were also reversed. The Jews were saved!

Esther's story is a beautiful example of how God can use even the smallest person to do big things. Her bravery and wisdom helped her people, and she proved that God works in unexpected ways. When we face big challenges, like Esther did, we can pray for courage and trust that God is with us.

Deeper Questions: 1. Why was Vashti thrown out of the palace? 2. Why did Mordecai say, "For such a time as this"? 3. How did Esther ask the king for help? 4. Why was Haman so angry? 5. How did Esther and God work together to save her people?

Personal Application: Esther's story reminds us that God wants us to be brave and kind, even when things seem scary or unfair. Do you ever feel like you're too small to make a difference? Like Esther, we can trust God to use us in special ways. What is one kind or brave thing you can do this week to help someone?

## Key Verse

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### Nehemiah 2:18

Esther's Big Lesson: Why You're Here for a Reason! Imagine you're playing a super important game, and suddenly, you're chosen to be the captain. At first, you might feel confused or nervous, "Why me? What if I mess up?", but deep down, you know this moment isn't just about you. It's a chance to do something special for your team (or even the whole world!) that only you can do. That's what Esther learned when she was named queen. She realized God had placed her in her position for a reason, not just to sit on a throne, but to help save her people from a big danger. Her story shows that every "weird" or unexpected moment in your life might be part of a

bigger plan, like being the person to share kindness, stand up for what's right, or help someone else see God's love. Esther's verse, "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14), is like a secret message from God to you. It's saying: "Look around! You're here right now for something amazing, even if you don't see it yet." Maybe you're in a class where you're the only one who gets a certain science question right, or you're the friend who helps others feel included. Those moments aren't small, they're opportunities! Just like Esther didn't know she'd save her people until she was queen, you might not see your purpose today, but God has a plan. The question is: Will you trust that He's leading you toward something great, even when it feels unclear? Here's something fun to think about: If you were a hero in a story, what's the one thing you'd do for your friends or the world? For Esther, it was risking her life to save her people. For you, it could be being brave enough to share your faith, stand up for someone who's sad, or just being the kind friend who makes someone's day better. Esther didn't know her "royal position" would lead to this, but she knew she had to use it wisely. What's your "royal task" right now? Maybe it's not a throne, but it's still a chance to do something meaningful. Sometimes, we feel lost or like we're not "enough" for what God has in store. But think of it like a puzzle: You might not have all the pieces yet, but every person is a piece of the bigger picture. Esther's story reminds us that God often uses ordinary people in extraordinary ways. If you feel small or unsure, ask yourself: Who needs me to be brave, kind, or true right now? God might be calling you to be the light in a dark moment, the helper in a tough time, or the one who shows others how to love. The answer isn't always easy, but it's always important. Personal Challenge: This week, ask God to help you notice one way you can use your talents or time to make a difference, big or small. It could be as simple as listening to a friend who feels lonely or as brave as sharing your faith with someone who's curious. Remember, Esther didn't act out of fear; she acted out of faith. What will you act on? Your "royal position" isn't about being perfect, it's about being present and doing what you can, even when it scares you. And that's when you'll find out you're exactly where you're meant to be! Deeper Questions for Reflection: - If you had a superpower, what would you use it for? How is that like God's plan for you? - What's one thing you've done lately that made someone else smile? How did it feel? - Do you think God wants you to be famous or just known for kindness? Why or why not? - What's a "doubt" you have about your purpose? How can you ask God to show you a little more?

## Activities

### Activity 1:

Students write a letter to a "king" (led by the teacher) about a problem they care about, then practice responding with Esther-like boldness. This activity encourages risk-taking and empathy.

1. Introduce the Theme: Ask, "What does it mean to step into the spotlight when you're afraid? How did Esther's courage inspire her?" Play a clip of Esther's story (e.g., a 1-minute scene from *The Princess Diaries* or a Bible story video).
2. Design Your Mask: Give each student a paper plate and ask them to draw or write on it a word or image representing their biggest fear (e.g., "public speaking," "making mistakes"). Encourage them to add a "courageous" element (e.g., a crown, a sword, or a bold statement like "I am brave").
3. Share and Reflect: Have students show their masks. Discuss: "What did you draw that made you feel nervous? How can you 'wear' courage like Esther did?" Write a class affirmation (e.g., "I am brave when I speak up for what matters").
4. Personal Application: Ask each student to share one thing they learned about Esther's courage and how it applies to their own life today.
2. "Letter to the King" (Role-Play + Journaling)
6. Set the Scene: Explain that Esther's story is about using words to change the world. Read Esther 4:14 aloud: "Who knows if you have come to life for such a time as this?" Ask, "What's a problem or issue you'd want to 'speak up' about?"
7. Write Your Letter: Have students write a short letter to a "king" (e.g., the teacher, a school leader, or God) about something they care about. Encourage them to use Esther's example, framing their request as a service to others.

8. Role-Play the Response: The teacher acts as the "king" and reads back the letters. After each one, ask: "What would Esther do next? How could you respond with confidence?" (Example: "I'd say, 'King, I ask you to act because my people need this.'")
9. Journal Time: Ask students to reflect:
10. "What was hardest about writing this letter?"
11. "If you could ask someone for help today, what would it be?"
12. "How can you be 'for such a time as this' like Esther?" Write their answers in a class journal.
13. Why These Work:

## Discussion Questions

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- Here are four open-ended discussion questions about Esther that encourage deeper reflection and personal connection while keeping upper elementary students engaged:
  1. How Did Esther Feel When She Was Chosen as Queen?
    - Esther's story begins with her being selected to replace Queen Vashti, a bold and confident woman. The question asks students to imagine how Esther might have felt, happy, nervous, or something else. Encourage them to explain their thoughts and connect it to how they feel when they're chosen for something special, like a school project or a team.
    - Why might she have hesitated before sharing her identity with King Ahasuerus? What could have made her brave enough to speak up later? (Hint: Think about how her fear of the law changed her courage.)
  2. Why Did Esther Ask the King Twice for Permission to Appear Before Him?
    - King Xerxes' decree gave the Jews a set time to pray, but Esther realized they needed more. She asked the queen to invite her to the feast and then asked the king again to see them. Why do you think she did this? How can we apply this kind of persistence in our own lives, like when we want to ask for help, share our feelings, or stand up for what's right?
    - What might have happened if Esther had only asked once? What would make her ask again?
  3. What Did Esther Learn About God's Plan Through This Story?
    - When Esther's people were in danger, she prayed, and God gave her wisdom and courage. How do you think God guided her in ways we can't always see? Later, when she risked her life to save her people, what did she discover about God's faithfulness?
    - Do you think God has a plan for you like He did for Esther? How can you trust that plan, even when things feel unclear?
  4. How Can We Be Like Esther in Hard Times Today?
    - Esther's story teaches us that even small voices can make a big difference. Think about a time when you felt afraid to speak up, but later realized it was the right thing to do. What helped you stand strong?
    - Would you say you're brave like Esther? What's one way you can use your voice or trust God to help others, even when it's scary? How can you be "for such a time as this"?
    - These questions encourage students to reflect on courage, prayer, and trusting God while making connections to their own experiences. Would you like any adjustments to fit a specific focus (e.g., more focus on prayer, bravery, or community)?

## Prayer Focus

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*"A Prayer for Courage, Kindness, and Brave Choices" Dear Heavenly Father, We come to You today with hearts full of wonder and hope, like the brave girl Esther in the Bible who was chosen to be a queen. She didn't know it at*

*first, but God had a special plan for her, and He wants You to show us how to be like Esther today. Help us to stand up for what is right, even when it's hard, and to speak kind words to others, just like Esther listened carefully to her friends and made choices that honored You. Give us the courage to speak when we see someone being treated unfairly, just as Esther risked her life to help her people. Help us to remember that even small acts of kindness or standing up for justice can make a big difference in the world. Father, sometimes we feel shy or scared, like Esther did when she hesitated at first. But You know our hearts, and You encourage us to trust You. Just as Esther asked her friends to help her, remind us to lean on each other and pray together when we need strength. Teach us to listen to Your still, small voice in our daily lives, like when Esther heard her friends' advice and decided to act. Help us to pay attention to the people around us and to make choices that show our love for You and others. You called Esther for a time when her people needed her, and You call us too. Just like Esther didn't know what God would do, sometimes we don't know how to fix the problems in our world, but You do. Give us wisdom to see when we should speak up, when we should listen, and when we should let others lead. Help us to remember that even if we don't always understand Your plan, we can trust that You are working for good. Just like Esther believed in her friends and in You, help us to believe in each other and in the love that You share with us. Lord, we want to live like Esther, brave, kind, and loyal to You. Help us to be more like her in small ways today: by sharing our toys with others, by standing up for friends who are being bullied, or by making sure our actions show that we care about others. Just as Esther's story shows us how to be brave, help us to use our voices and hearts for good. And when we feel afraid, remind us that You are with us, just like You were with Esther. Give us the strength to be brave, like she was, and the kindness to be like her too. Father, thank You for Esther's story and for the many ways You call us to be brave and kind. Help us to grow in our faith every day, trusting that You will guide our steps. Teach us to see opportunities like Esther saw, where others might see only danger, we see the chance to make a difference. And when we pray together, remind us that our prayers matter and that You always hear them. In Jesus' name, Amen. Class Discussion Questions for Reflection: 1. What's one way we can be brave like Esther today? How can we stand up for others? 2. Esther waited for advice from her friends before acting. Who can we turn to for help when we feel unsure? 3. How does it feel to know God has a plan, even if we don't understand it yet? What can we do to trust Him? 4. Esther's story shows us that kindness matters. What's a kind thing we can do for someone this week? Personal Application: - Write down one way you'll use Esther's courage today. - Pray for a friend who might feel left out, ask God to help you include them. - If you're scared to speak up, ask Him to give you a sign (like a feeling or dream) to encourage you.*

### >> Missions Spotlight

The Persian-speaking peoples of Iran (Farsi) have a deep love for the story of Esther, which takes place in their homeland. Iranian believers use Esther's story to encourage courage in the face of persecution, God is at work even when He seems hidden.

### -> To the Cross

Esther was placed in the palace 'for such a time as this' to save her people. Jesus was placed on the cross 'for such a time as this', to save all people. God has a plan, and He uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.