** BIBLE 101**

Unit 3: The Lord is My Helper

*Esther – Superhero Queen*

**A Note to the Teacher:** Queen Esther is an important Biblical figure for many reasons. She is a *woman*, a second-class citizen in her time, whom God chooses to use for God’s purposes in the world. God gives Esther the confidence and promise of help that she needs to speak to the king against the Prime Minister, and ultimately to save the Jewish people from death. Esther is a model of what it means to embrace God’s help in order to change the world.

Queen Esther is such an important figure that her story has its own book of the Bible. Take time to talk with students about why Esther may have her own book, and why a book named for and about a woman would have been such a big deal when the Bible was canonized in the 3rd century. Many stories of Esther emphasize her beauty, but be careful to emphasize her leadership and the way in which she leaned on God – the helper – to do something amazing.

**Gathering**

As students enter the space, gather them in a seated circle. Put on the sample crown. **Say, “I know that Halloween is over, but I just had to dress up for today’s lesson. Can anyone guess what I am?”** Give time for students to answer. **Say, “The crown made it pretty easy to tell that I am pretending to be a queen. Our story today is about a real queen who lived thousands of years ago. A queen named Esther.”**

For grades 2-5, have students turn to the book of Esther in their Bibles. For prek-grade 1, open the teacher’s Bible to the book of Esther.

**Say, “Queen Esther is a very important Biblical figure. In fact, you could even think of her as a Biblical superhero; because Queen Esther managed to save the Jewish people from death.”**

Explain that we know that the story of Esther is an important one based on her having her very own book of the Bible. **Say, “In the time of Queen Esther, women were not thought to be equal to men. They were treated more like property: they belonged to their fathers until they were married, and then they belonged to their husbands. Women had certain jobs that they were supposed to do to help take care of the house, the children, and their husbands. But women were never in places of power – they did not make rules or even speak up in public. Let’s keep that in mind as we read the story of Esther.”**

Read, or invite a student to read, the story of Esther from one of the Bible storybooks. If time allows, you may want to read through several versions. When you have finished reading, discuss the age-appropriate questions.

*For Prek-Grade 1*

1. Why did Haman want to kill the Jews?
2. How did Esther feel about having to speak to the king? What helped her?
3. What was the happy ending of this story?

*For Grades 2-5*

1. Why did Haman want to kill the Jews?
2. How did Esther feel about having to speak to the king? What helped her?
3. Mordacai tells Esther that perhaps she was made queen “for such a time as this.” Have you ever been in the right place at the right time to make a difference? Tell the story.

4. What was the happy ending of the story?

**Say, “Esther knew that she needed to talk to the King in order to save her people, the Jews. But Esther was nervous – women were not supposed to speak up to men, and especially not the king! Esther turned to God. She prayed and fasted, asking God to help her. God did help, giving her the courage she needed to speak with King Xerxes and to have Haman killed in order to save the Jews. Esther asked God for help, and God helped her save her people.”**

**The Crown Jewels**

**Say, “When we started class this morning, it was easy for you to tell that I was pretending to be a queen by the crown I had on my head. We are going to make our own crowns today to help you remember the story of how God helped Queen Esther. When you family and friends see you wearing your crown, you can tell them the story, too.”**

Put out pipe-cleaners and beads. Help students to connect pipe-cleaners in order to make a base that fits their head. Students can then add beads to additional pipe-cleaners and attach them to the base in order to form the points of the crown.

As students work, read an additional version of the Esther story or continue the discussion of ways that God helps us in our own lives just like God helped Esther.

**Closing**

As students finish, work together to clean up materials. If time allows, students may work on the worksheets and coloring sheets related to the lesson.