**1. Motivate**

What is a risk you have been willing to take?

* marriage
* work on a graduate degree
* leave home to teach overseas
* give the kids driving lessons
* get back on a horse/bicycle/motorcycle after falling
* make a bet on horse race/sports team/personal competition
* teach a Bible study

A video introduction to the lesson is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_1e8sm9t6> If you do not have
wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/5ckbb4d3>

* buy a new car/house/boat/RV
* sky dive
* SCUBA dive
* learn to fly a plane

**2. Transition**

In a sense, there’s a risk to follow God’s direction in life.

* God calls us to trust His leadership.
* We need to encourage others to follow God’s leadership – no matter what the risk or cost.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Don’t Overlook Potential

Listen for an orphan.

Esther 2:5-7 (NIV) Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, 6 who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. 7 Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

What background information does the passage give us about Mordecai?

* he is Jewish, of the tribe of Benjamin
* we learn some of his heritage (father, grandfather, great grandfather)
* he was one of the many people exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon
* he had a cousin who was orphaned, he raised her

What troubles to you see in Esther's life?

* orphaned at an apparently early age
* had to be brought up by a cousin
* no mention of a mother figure, only a father figure, cousin Mordechai
* was part of a captive Jewish family, exiled to Babylon

What about the advantages she experienced?

* had a loving relative willing to take her in
* was apparently quite attractive

Mordecai would have been the main influence in her life. In addition to our children, in what areas of our lives do we have similar influence with others?

* people who work for us or with us
* a teacher has influence over his/her classes
* neighborhood children who associate with your own children and are often in your home
* we may associate with younger adults at church, at work, as neighbors

Esther is the only book in the Old Testament that does not mention God. What might the author be communicating through this interesting omission?

* we might not specifically be aware of God’s presence and power
* we can still experience Him working in our lives
* sometimes God answers prayers we never prayed
* but after events are over, we can see His hand at work was the only explanation
* sometimes God’s presence is made known by what He is *doing*, not by what He says or what is specifically said about Him
* God does not always work overtly to accomplish His plans

When have you been able to recognize God at work in your own background, maybe even not until much later?

* sometimes experienced situations where protected from imminent danger, even injury
* God answered prayers … but in ways different than we thought
* job opening at just the right time
* doors of opportunity opened that I had never thought of
* doors closed unexpectedly, but later realized were not a good direction to go
* God speaks to us through unexpected sources

3.2 Challenge Others to Do What Is Right

Listen for a chilling government decree.

Esther 4:8-14 (NIV) He also gave him the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people. 9 Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, 11 "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king." 12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

What did Mordecai encourage cousin/Queen Esther to do to intervene on behalf of the Jews, her own people?

* take this to the king
* beg for mercy
* plead with him for all the Jewish population

What reason did Esther offer for questioning the viability of Mordecai’s suggestion?

* the law of the land is that if you enter the king’s presence without his request, you risk your life
* you can be put to death for such an “intrusion”
* the exception is that when he sees you, and extends his golden scepter

What probing question did Mordecai ask Esther to consider in determining her role in the deliverance of her people?

* God has placed you in this royal position for this very situation
* only you have the opportunity to save the whole population
* this is the time to act for God’s purpose in your life

Esther had Mordecai to mentor her in the role God had for her. How do we *recognize* the role God may have for us to play as mentor to someone?

* the specific individuals we are in contact with
* the particular position we have in our job, our community, our church
* family members we have influence over (children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, in-laws, outlaws, etc.)
* people we meet "by chance" in our travels, shopping, sports events
* the specific homes we go to as we follow up new church contacts
* the specific talents God has given us (music, working with children, teaching, helping)

3.3 Pray and Fast

Listen for Esther’s response to Mordecai’s appeal.

Esther 4:15-17 (NIV) Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." 17 So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

What conclusion did Esther come to? What did she ask Mordecai to do?

* I will take the risk, I will go before the king
* but I need your prayer support and that of all the people you know
* let’s all fast and pray that God will prepare the way

What is significant of the comment “If I perish, I perish.”

* there is a risk
* but we’re trusting the Lord, we are in His hands, He is in control
* If I don’t go, we may all perish
* If I do go and am rejected, I perish
* we will trust God to give us favor with the king

Even though he was a mentor to Esther, what trait does Mordecai demonstrate in his response to her bidding?

* total support
* faith in God’s love and power to hear and answer prayer
* she has made the right choice
* she has demonstrated wisdom … we will trust God together

How does fasting sharpen our focus on God for answers?

* we give up normal activities (eating, TV, cellphones, etc.)
* we focus instead on communicating with God, we declare our trust in Him
* we worship and remind ourselves of His attributes … power, authority, love, wisdom, omnipresence, sovereignty, etc.
* we become more convinced/convicted of His sufficiency in a particular situation

Sometimes we are tempted to jump into action without asking God to be the ultimate influencer. In what kind of circumstances is it good for Christians to fast and pray?

* when faced with great danger
* when dealing with uncertainty
* when struggling with spiritual issues
* when burdened with need for a loved one’s salvation
* when carrying out an important responsibility (with family, at work, in church ministries)

What are some reasons we hesitate to ask others to pray for us (for things besides physical needs)?

* pride
* fear of vulnerability – I don’t want people to know of my spiritual failures or struggles
* we don’t want others to know our business

What are some reasons that we *should* request the prayer support of fellow believers?

* this is God’s intention – the church is a Body – members of the Body support and minister to one another
* we cannot always pray objectively
* sometimes one is in such pain or distress that he/she cannot even pray at all

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Evaluate.

* Spend time this week evaluating how prepared you are to face antagonism toward your faith in Jesus Christ.
* What do you need to do to strengthen your resolve?
* Set several short-term goals for spiritual growth.

Pray and fast.

* Choose a day in the near future for an extended time of prayer and fasting.
* Pray for both the person you are mentoring and the spiritual renewal that our country needs.

Be accountable.

* Plan to meet weekly with another believer for prayer and for holding one another accountable in your walk with Christ.
* This could be the person you are mentoring or another strong believer.
* We are better together.

Correct the Story

Now there was a Jew named Mordecai who lived in the palace complex in Susa. He had reared his cousin Hadassah, otherwise known as Suzy, since she had no cat or mother. After her parents died, Mordecai had promoted her. The girl had a good figure and a beautiful nose.

The king was searching for a new prime minister. Many young girls were brought to the palace and given over to Hegai who was overseer of the football team. Esther was among them.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| adoptedbeautycrownEstherfacefatherfoodher | kingmaidsmorenotqueenrightwomenwon |

Hegai liked Esther and took a special interest in her. Left away he started her ugly treatments, ordered special drink, assigned her seven personal mades from the palace, and put her and her mades in the best rooms in the harem. Esther didn’t say anything about her family and racial background because Mordecai had told her knot to.

When it was Esther’s turn to go to the office, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king’s eunuch in charge of the harem, had recommended. Esther, just as she was, one the admiration of everyone who saw him. The king fell in love with Esther far less than with any of the other women. He placed a royal helmet on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti.



I really need your help. Someone has messed up the story. Use the words on the right to replace the incorrect words in the story above. The needed corrections might be wrong spellings, homonyms, or just plain wrong. Editorial help is available at <https://tinyurl.com/5ckbb4d3>. Other Family Activities are also found there.