



## the old testament SUMMER STORIES

### WHAT'S INCLUDED

Each story comes with a packet of specific ideas related to that story if you choose to use them.

- More ideas on how to use the summer stories
- A written transcript of the audio so you can follow along or act it out
- A page for drawing or writing things down
- A beautiful piece of artwork that goes with the story
- A coloring page or activity to keep hands busy while children listen

We hope you will enjoy each one!

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— the old testament —

# SUMMER STORIES

Do you have your imagination ready? You'll need it because you're about to take it on a *wonderful adventure!*

It's summertime and that means we get to switch gears and let go of our old routine and go somewhere new. With the help of a professional storyteller, we're going to travel back in time and meet some of our favorite *heroes from the Old Testament*.

The beauty of a story is that you can step inside of it from wherever you happen to be. Press PLAY in the car, under the shade of a favorite tree, or with a flashlight under the stars.

You can use the stories however you like. Maybe they will be a springboard to a reader's theater, the drawing of a new hero, or writing and recording a story of your own. Above all, we hope you *connect with the scriptures* in new ways and deepen the image of the story in the gallery of your mind.



## HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL WAYS TO ENJOY THE SUMMER STORIES:

- 1 Read the story out loud to yourself.
- 2 Draw the story as you listen. You can draw lots of little pictures of your favorite part of the story. You could even get a little notebook or pieces of paper stapled together and call it your "summer scripture stories" and add new pictures every week.
- 3 Gather a box filled with props, and have children pull out anything that could go with the story as they listen. They can be simple items like a baby doll, a crown, or some bread.
- 4 After church, put a blanket on the grass and eat lunch while you listen.
- 5 Lie under the stars and listen to the story.
- 6 Listen in the car as you go on errands or on a road trip.
- 7 Print the art for the week and display it while you listen. Then create your own piece of art about the story.
- 8 Listen in the mountains or another nature spot. Have a special treat while you listen.
- 9 After listening to the story, produce your own theater, acting out the story. Get creative and make your own props and costumes.
- 10 Choose a "story tree." Take pillows outside and listen to the story under your tree.
- 11 When everyone gets in bed, play the story after lights are out from the hallway.
- 12 Make your own audio of a story that you love. Send it to Grandma or some cousins. Maybe ALL the cousins could record one, and Grandma declares a winner.
- 13 Make a "story fort" inside for a cozy place to listen.
- 14 Add some sound effects with musical instruments or things around the house.
- 15 Pause the story often and ask, "What do you think will happen next?" Or "Wow! How did the Lord help them? What do you think the Lord wants you to learn from this story?"

# Esther

## THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Was it possible, truly possible, that everything that had happened was leading up to this moment? All the events of the last few years raced through my head, filling my mind with memories of moments, important moments, moments that changed my life.

When I first heard the news, my fingers stopped their up and down rhythm sewing stitches on Mordecai's prayer shawl. This sewing came straight from my heart through my fingers. Mordecai had always been there for me. His kind face and ways had been a constant blessing in my everyday life since my parents died and he had become my new guardian. I owed everything to Mordecai. Not only did he provide for me, he also taught me and loved me. That is why I was working so carefully to make his prayer shawl beautiful. I wanted him to know how grateful I was for him, and for him teaching me to go to God in prayer with my worries and in my distress. I felt something different than distress, though, that day when I heard the news. The women often talked of things happening around the city while we sewed together. But this news was unbelievable. Queen Vashti had refused to follow the king's command, which the Queen didn't feel right about. The King had banished and divorced her because of her decision. I knew very little about Vashti, but now I quietly admired her bravery and strength in being so bold in her integrity, and for choosing banishment from the palace rather than going against her feelings of right and wrong. Amazing. What was more amazing is what I heard next as I tried to get back to my sewing. There was to be a gathering of all the maidens in the city, and some women from that group would be selected to live inside the palace. One of those, a normal maiden like my cousins, friends and I, the King would choose to become his wife. I felt a shiver over my whole body. Somehow, I knew I would be one of those entering the palace.

The day the maidens were selected was the day I gave Mordecai the finished prayer shawl. He



gently touched the stitches, and looked into my eyes. His eyes were filled with tears. We prayed together that the Lord would be with me, no matter what happened. Many of those in the palace did not understand or trust the Jews. Mordecai told me not to reveal to anyone my Israelite heritage, to pray, keep the promises of the Lord in my heart, and trust in Him. Leaving Mordecai and the life I had known was terrifying. Mordecai promised to come outside of the women's house to check on me every day. That promise and knowing the Lord would be with me, were the only things that gave me strength stepping into the palace.

I remember how surprised I was to see the fine linens, the soft cushions, and the overflowing food the king provided to the women. It was strange being bathed and perfumed, and dressed in clothes that were nothing like the simple dresses and aprons I was used to. But the most difficult thing I faced was being separated from my people, my faith, and keeping what was most valuable to me in all the world hidden from everyone around me.

I remember my surprise when the king sent me maidens to wait on me, and put me in the best place in the house of the women to show his favor and kindness to me. I didn't believe that it might be possible that I could be chosen to be his wife. Many of the maidens who were gathered to the palace asked for beautiful things and special favors. I asked for nothing. I only wanted to stay safe and serve God. I felt that everyone who I came to know at the palace

praised me and favored me. But they didn't even know the true me, who I really was, what I believed. The teachings and love of the Lord were what made me, "me." Even so, things were changing, but Mordecai was a constant, walking before the court of the women's house, to inquire how I was and what would become of me. (Esther 2:11) This simple act reminded me who I was, and I was so grateful.

Mordecai was a source of trust and knowledge for me, even though we were living apart. He connected me with my people. He even overheard a plot against the king. He sent word of this rebellion to me, and I sent the message to the king. Some of the king's closest servants had been trying to kill the king. And because of the plot against the king by people that he had trusted, a new rule had come to the palace - no one, not even a servant or his wife, could come close to the king without first being invited. Even so, the king would be safe. Because of Mordecai's message, I had saved the king's life.

I didn't know then, but soon I would be in a position to save many lives. The lives of my people. But to do it I would have to risk my own life.

Soon after the extravagant wedding where I became the wife of the king, and the new queen of an enormous kingdom, things began to go very wrong for my people. My husband the king put a man named Haman in charge of many things. Haman was hungry for power and was angry when people didn't obey him. As Mordecai watched for me, as he always did, without the gate, Haman came by. All the people were required to bow to him, but Mordecai would not. He would only bow before the one true God. This was the same feeling of many Jews. His refusal filled Haman with wrath. (Esther 3:5)

Haman spoke with the king and convinced the king that the Jews were breaking laws and were a threat to the king. Haman told the king that he needed to destroy the Jews, and promised the king that he would put all the riches gathered from the Jews into his treasury. The king handed the responsibility of dealing with the Jews over to Haman, and said "do with them as it seemeth good to thee." (Esther 3:11)

A proclamation went out to all the land. When Mordecai read the decree, which gave the command "to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day" (Esther 3:13), he was sick with sorrow. He rent his clothes and dressed in sackcloth. When I saw him dressed in this garment of sackcloth that showed an Israelite was in mourning, I knew something was very wrong. I hadn't heard of the decree Haman sent out to have the Jews killed. But Mordecai sent me a message telling me the horrible truth. I couldn't believe it. But he included a copy of the decree. At the end of his message, Mordecai told me to "go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for [our] people." (Esther 4:8) Mordecai wanted me to risk going to the king without being invited, to plead with him to save our people. I would also have to reveal what I had not told the king, that I too was a Jew.

Did Mordecai understand that I could be put to death for this? I sent a short and hurried reply, my beloved Mordecai, "[If] man or woman, shall come unto the inner court, who is not called...[he will be] put to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live, but I have not have been called to come in unto the king these thirty days." (Esther 4:11)

Now, Mordecai's reply had come. One phrase that he sent felt like an arrow striking my heart and filling me with the Spirit of God: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Now, remembering all that had gone before, all that had been sacrificed, all that I had been spared from, all the blessings and good that had led me to be queen... I could see the hand of God in my life, in giving me the faith to face this moment, and to defend my people and the Lord.

But I would need the support of my people and the Lord to do this thing. I sent word to Mordecai. "Go, gather together all the Jews...and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:16)



These were not idle words. I knew what had happened to Queen Vashti who hadn't obeyed the king's wishes. I knew that now, more than ever, obedience was expected of the queen. But I knew my life was in God's hands, and that I must do what was right.

Four days later, I slowly put on my royal apparel, all the finest gifts my husband, the king had bestowed upon me. I said a prayer, and felt the power of my people, fasting for deliverance, fasting for the lives of their children and loved ones, and fasting for my courage to do this thing. I stepped into the inner court and saw my husband sitting on his royal throne.

Our eyes met. The moment froze in time. Would I be banished, executed? I saw a softening of his eyes, and slowly he extended the golden scepter. Relief flooded over me. I could approach the throne. I did so, and "touched the top of the sceptre." (Esther 5:2)

The king said, "What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." (Esther 5:3)

I requested to host a banquet and to invite Haman, and at the banquet I would explain more. He agreed. Before the banquet the next day, the king's servants told the King that the man who had sent me the message which saved his life from those plotting to kill him was just outside the palace gate. It was Mordecai! The king told his servants to bring the man in and dress him in robes of honor as a thank you for saving the king's life. When Haman appeared at the banquet, not only was his enemy, Mordecai there, but Mordecai was dressed in royal robes of honor. The king, not knowing the history of Mordecai not bowing to Haman, asked Haman to put Mordecia on the best horse and lead Mordecai throughout the city, saying to all "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour." (Esther 6: 11). Haman had no choice but to obey the king and honor his enemy.

After Haman had done this humiliating thing, he prepared a place to hang Mordecai and kill him. Then Haman arrived at the palace, dressed for the second banquet. After the feasting, the king turned to me and asked me sincerely,

"What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom." (Esther 7:2)

I gathered my courage. This was the moment I would reveal who I really was. A believing Israelite daughter, a Jew. A follower of God.

I explained that my people were in great danger: "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." (Esther 7:3-4)

The king first seemed to be confused, then understanding about who I was and what I was requesting. But he chose to honor me, and to honor my request. He answered, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" (Esther 7:5)

I cast my eyes across the room, and spoke firmly: "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." (Esther 7:6)

Haman was filled with fear. The king was furious at his actions.

The king sentenced Haman to death upon the gallows, or hanging place, where Haman was planning to kill Mordecai and to begin the day of killing all the Jews.

We were saved. My heart was overflowing and my joy was so full I could burst. The fasting of the people, the strength of their faith, allowed me to be a tool in the hand of the Lord to deliver his people. My people. Mordecai was freed. I could now be queen and be known as a child of Israel, and could use my belief in God to do good in the kingdom. Through God's wisdom and grace, I was truly come to the kingdom for such a time as this.



# Esther

Fill this page with drawings or notes of your favorite things from this story.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

How would you describe Esther in three words?

How do you think Esther felt when she had to go and speak to the king without being invited?

What did Esther and Mordecai do to prepare for when Esther went in to the king?

How did Jesus help Esther?

Do you think you were born in the time and place you were for a special purpose?





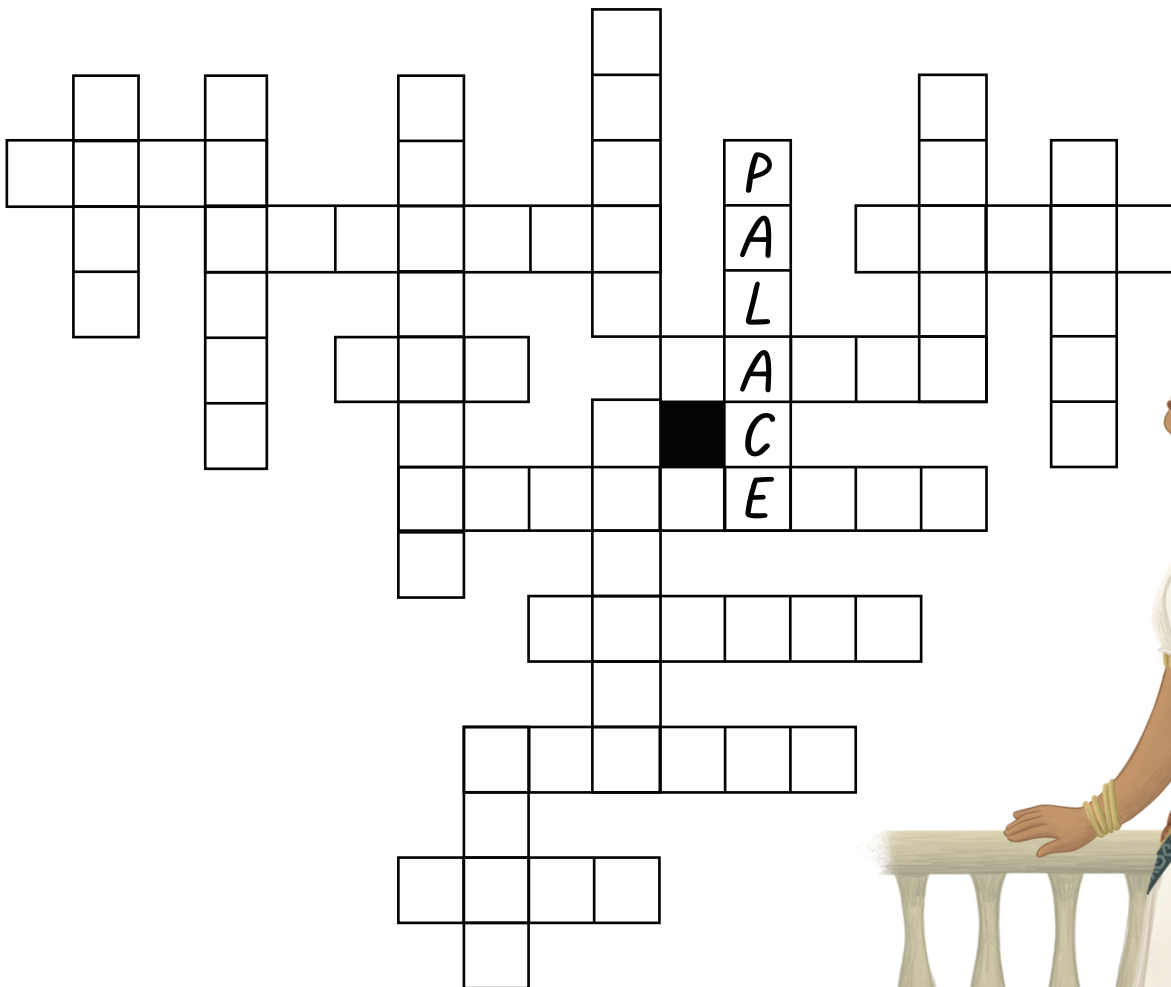




# ESTHER

## FILL IN THE GRID

Below are some words that go with the story of Esther, but they only fit in the grid one way. Can you figure out how to fit all the words into the grid?



### 3 LETTERS

Jew

### 4 LETTERS

King  
wife  
fast  
pray

### 5 LETTERS

Haman  
queen  
crown  
saved  
royal

### 6 LETTERS

Esther  
Persia  
palace  
decree  
throne

### 7 LETTERS

courage

### 8 LETTERS

Mordecai

### 9 LETTERS

Ahasuerus