



Faith Adventures for Children Together



*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link:

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Esther 1 v 1 – 4,
Esther 2 v 5 – 8, 4 v 12 – 14,
Esther 3 v 1 – 13,
Esther 5 v 1 – 8.

Esther

Theme: We are all influencers.....but

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

Esther

Written around 500 BC by an eyewitness in the Persian courts, this is the story of Esther, a young Jewish girl who is taken into the king's courts, ends up becoming queen and uses her position to save her people.

We are all in positions of influence, the question is, how do we use it? For good or bad? Who do we influence and how? Who are we influenced by and how?

We invite you to share the whole story with your group using the videos provided and then use the suggested passages to explore the four different influencers in the story. King Xerxes, Esther, Haman and Mordecai. Two of them were good influencers, one was a bad influence and the other one? Was he purely in the middle or was he an influencer too?

This is the only book that doesn't mention God, inviting the readers to ask where do we see God's influence in the story?



This story could be a trigger for those children who might have people in their life who are strong in their influence and power, even abusive, some children might find this difficult to explore. The story also deals with themes of genocide and racism.

Together

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,

Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.

Amen

In-person game

Carrot in a box

This is a bluffing game where players aim to keep hold of the winning box containing a carrot. One player must try to influence another and cause them to choose the incorrect empty box.

You will need –

- 2 boxes with lids (eg shoe box)
- carrot



Before the game the leader should secretly place a carrot inside one of the boxes, the second box remains empty. This is a bluffing game. The aim is to end up with the box containing the carrot.

Players stand facing each other and are each given one of the boxes. Player A begins by looking inside their box, Player B does not get to look inside their box and therefore does not know if it contains the carrot. Player A can now decide whether to keep their own box, or switch boxes with Player B, they should also share the reasons why they made their decision. Player B then has the final decision, choosing whether to keep their current box, or switch. They must decide whether they think Player A is bluffing or telling the truth about what is inside their box.

Try repeating the game with different players. Discuss what this game might teach us about how words and actions can influence others.

Alternative game - Follow the leader circle game

The group stand in a circle and one is chosen to be the guesser, they leave the room briefly. You choose one person in the circle who you will all copy. The leader begins to do some moves and noises, everyone copies. The guesser enters again and tries to guess who everyone is following. The leader can keep changing their moves and sounds to keep the pace quick and fun.

As an alternative, the group can move around the room, they choose one person each to copy. As they move around you will notice a butterfly effect taking place with almost everyone doing the same move eventually.

Experience

For this story we recommend using the Children's International Bible
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Esther%201&version=ICB>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: stories of the Bible Esther by saddleback kids

<https://youtu.be/TfxdB8ShSsE>

Over fives: God's story Esther by crossroads kids club

<https://youtu.be/KPDRmkh7J9c>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: My God is so big so strong and so mighty

<https://youtu.be/Aq1ZIC4IsEw>

Five to elevens: Be my Everything

<https://youtu.be/0bhJHMoDsdE>

Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together



A new way to explore the passage

Begin by showing the whole story using the videos suggested.

Here is a list of the four main characters in the story and the chosen passages for this section to explore. *All from the International Children's Bible*

We are going to think about each character and see how they used their influence.

Haman – Esther 3 v 1 – 13, put in a position of influence, used it for bad.

Mordecai – Esther 2 v 5 – 8, 4 v 12 – 14, put in a position of influence in Esther's life, used it for good.

Esther – Esther 5 v 1 – 8, put in a position of influence and used it to save a nation.

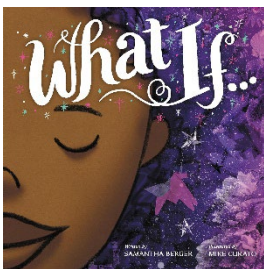
King Xerxes – Esther 1 v 1 – 4, had power and influence as a king, but who would he be influenced by?

Prepare four large pieces of paper, one for each character.

Encourage the group to move round the four papers and have a mini bible study using the passages. Each time thinking about who the character is, what influence they had and come to a conclusion of whether they were a good or bad influence. Younger groups adaptation. Under seven's might need to be more practical. They can use drama to act out each character, using a freeze frame drama, stopping the action and asking questions about whether the character were good or bad influencers? Giving them a thumbs up or down.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.



This is a story about a young girl who wants to create and share her stories for others, but how will she do this? A lovely reminder that you are the story and the story is worth sharing.

'What if' by Samantha Berger

<https://youtu.be/KbZkpTL2O24?si=k3VJkHpJL0xMc4NC>

Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- Where do we see God's influence in this story?
- There are different types of influence, look at the four people in the story, who did they influence and how did they use their influence?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- Have you ever been influenced by someone to do something you wouldn't normally do?
- I wonder who influences you, and who you influence?

What's in the box (for under fives)



Use the special box or bag and sing “what’s in the box/bag? What’s in the box/bag? Let’s see, let’s see, what’s in the box/bag” (to the tune of The Farmer’s in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word ‘box’. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week’s box could include:

- Costumes to dress up as characters from the story.
- Crowns, cloaks, tiaras, princess dresses, simple tunics and shirts and a triangle shaped hat for Haman.
- Include elements of small world play such as wooden or playmobile people, including princesses and kings.
- Four characters using wooden spoons or masks.
- A big smiley face and a sad face on the reverse, or a thumbs up and thumbs down sign, to encourage playing with the concept of good and bad influences and decisions.
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (A cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it’s always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)

Express

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Coloured circle prayers

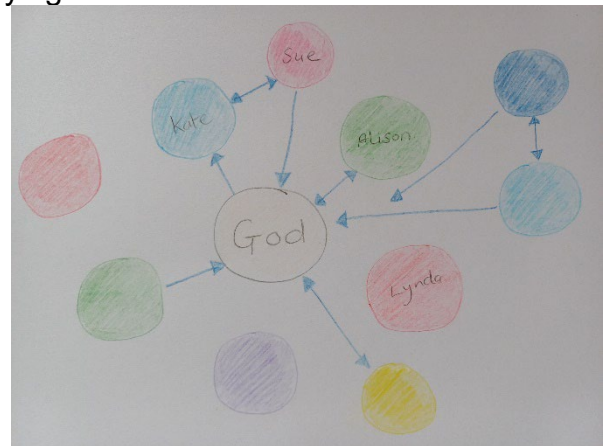
What you need:

- Paper
- Colouring pencils or pens

This is a way of praying intercessory prayers, praying to God on behalf of others.

Start by drawing a circle in the centre of the paper and write God in the circle. This is a way of inviting God into your prayer time. Start to draw other circles around the centre.

Encourage everyone to think about people in their lives they want to pray for perhaps people who are unwell or going through a difficult time, people they want to say thank you to God for who might be influencers in their lives, parents, teachers, friends etc. Continue to think about the world and add circles of prayer for other places and situations in the world that they want to pray for. It might be helpful to play some music as you do this to give everyone some space to think as they colour. When they have drawn the circles encourage everyone to link them to God and others with arrows.



Spoken prayer

God in my everything

God be in my whole life,
 God guide me and be my influence.
 God be in my thoughts and my imagination,
 God be in my yes and in my no.



God be in my today and tomorrow,
 God be in my decisions and opportunities.
 God be in my words and actions,
 God be in my everything.

Amen

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond. <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Craft Crown

Esther stood up for what she believed in and her faith in God gave her the strength and courage to do what is right. Make a crown to remind you that God's love for us helps us to stand strong.

You will need:

- Card
- Coloured pens
- Gemstones

What you do:

Cut a crown from a sheet of card or you could use a pre-cut crown available from online craft sources eg. Baker Ross. Take time to decorate with coloured pens and gemstones and add the words 'God's Love helps us stand strong' in the centre. While making the crowns you could use some of the thinking about and wondering questions.



As an alternative you could make a crown using natural items from the garden.

Magnet Sand Drawing

In this activity participants will create sand drawings using a magnet to pull a ball bearing around a tray of sand. As the ball bearing moves through the sand it leaves an imprint. Use this to reflect on the impact and influence that we have on the people and environment around us.

You will need:

- Tray or piece of card
- Sand



- Ball bearing
- Magnet

Place a thin layer of sand across a tray or sheet of card and place a ball bearing, or small magnet on top of the sand. Hold a magnet under the tray/card and use this to move the ball/magnet on top of the sand. Create drawings or messages in the sand.



Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- Research who are top influences in our country and our world. Take notice of who the influencers are in your church, school, home and amongst friends. What can we learn from them?
 - Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you who has had a good influence in their life and how.
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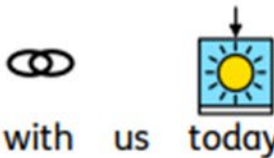
We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Esther** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

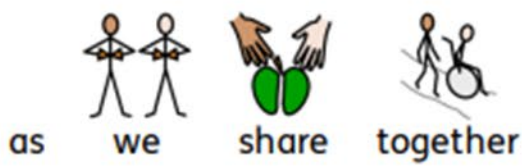
Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Psalm 100**



Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



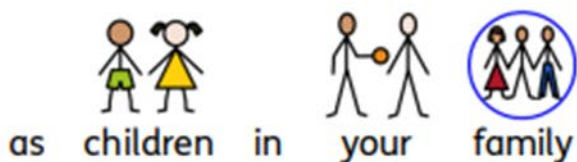
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



Alternate hands back and forth





Illustration by lambsongs.co.nz via freebibleimages.com Jill Kemp and Richard Gunther



