



Faith Adventures Youth Resource

Embedded in Faith Adventures: Children Together, this youth resource is intergenerational in nature and designed to foster God-connection in church, home 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/Faith-Adventures-How-To-FAYR.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 before we begin?

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 who might have people in their life who are strong in their influence and power, even abusive, therefore some might find this difficult to explore. The story also deals with themes of genocide and racism.

Together

Let's start our time with God and each other well

If used in a mixed-age group, then young people can support younger ones in using the gathering prayer in Faith Adventures: Children Together. If used in a youth group, you could use this opening prayer or encourage young people to open the session with a prayer of their own.

All mighty God,

Be with us as we learn more about you through stories and people in the Bible.

Help us to walk in your way and follow your path.

Be with us as we make decisions that affect our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Amen

In-person and Alternative game

See this week's Faith Adventures : Children Together for suitable games for this theme.

Hot Air Balloon Debate

In this activity, the group will imagine that they are in a hot air balloon which is rapidly falling because it is too heavy. The only way to survive is to reduce the weight, by throwing people out of the balloon. Give participants different characters (eg historic figure, celebrity) and they must give a short speech (30 seconds) explaining why they should stay in the balloon. The group votes to decide who should be thrown out of the balloon. (You could also use objects instead of people.)

Experience

Research different versions of this reading on <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

Watch: Derek Sivers' TED Talk 'How to Start a Movement' -
<https://youtu.be/gxFt1BZiMTw?si=ROX3jsmwQWwLlazo>



Watch the video above and use the discussion questions to reflect on how to make a movement and influence others.

Questions for discussion

- What stood out to you from this video? What key message did you take away?
- Which role do you usually take? – leader, first follower, early follower, crowd member joining existing movement.
- Who/what are your influencers?
- How have you influenced others?
- How/where might God be calling you to influence others?

Explore

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

A new way to explore the theme

You may wish to use the explore section from this week's Faith Adventures: Children Together to guide your exploration of the theme this week.

Alternatively:

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. Consider and discuss where is the good or bad influence for each character in the story, no one was totally good or bad surely. Delve deeper into the characters with your own study and research to learn more about the four influencers.

Modern parables

This section includes references to TV programmes, films, books, TED talks, TikTok etc aimed at this age group that will have been widely seen, or where a clip is available to use as a stimulus for discussion. You may also enjoy the picture book recommended for Faith Adventures: Children Together and explore the relevance of the story to the theme of the session in more depth – young people and adults are often well tuned in to the deeper meanings in materials aimed at younger people and the authors are often very aware of the adults reading the books to or with younger ones.



Talking together: Going deeper

- 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?

Conversation starters

- Consider who has the influence and power in your life, family, friendship groups.
- How do people use their influence or power?

Express

How do we respond to what we've discussed and express our faith personally?

Praying together

Prayer Respond to the theme by writing or saying a short prayer. Alternatively use the creative prayer from Faith Adventures: Children Together for this session, or use the prayer activity below.

Alternatively light a candle and play some music while you listen and talk to God together.

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

This is an opportunity for a social justice challenge, some research, craftivism, or a craft or STEM activity. You may have a specific activity chosen but free choice is also an option. Here are some suggestions for this week's theme. See Faith Adventures: Children Together for a craft and a STEM activity which may also be appropriate. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

Influencing Peers

Encourage the group to reflect on how their own actions impact their peers and others around them. How does the way in which they live out their personal faith and values impact others in the local community and beyond?

Take a look at Mission Academy Live "peer to peer evangelism" resources from Hope Together. Reflect on opportunities for participants to evangelistically influence their peers.

https://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/371496/Mission_Academy_Live.aspx



Take a look at the YouthScape “Influencers” report which can be downloaded via the link below.

<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/research/published-research/influencers>

- What stands out to you from this report?
- Are there any stats or figures that you found surprising?

Challenge

Discipleship doesn't stop when you walk out of the church door – it is a part of everyday life. Take a challenge with you and try to make it part of your week.

You may think of your own suggestion of what you as an individual or a group might do in the coming week in response to what you have explored today? If not here are some suggestions:

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- Use one of the “conversation starter” questions or the question below to talk with someone of a different generation or from a different setting and share your questions, thoughts, insights together. **Who has a great influence on your life?**
 - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://www.jpit.uk) Commitment for Life [cforl.co.uk](https://www.cforl.co.uk)
 - 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?
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Thank you for exploring the **Esther** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing children.youth@urc.org.uk or by sharing it on https://bit.ly/FACT_FB