

# Lesson #1-13

## ESTHER LEADS

### Esther 4:1-17



#### Key Verse:

"Who knows? Perhaps you came to royal dignity for such a time as this."  
Esther 4:14

#### The Point:

We all can be leaders in faith and make a difference for others.

#### Making Connections:

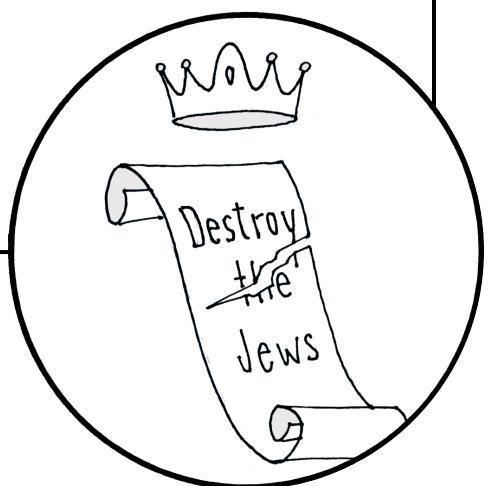
Faith in God's Promises

#### Bible Nuts & Bolts:

The Exile

#### Spiritual Practice:

Prayer



# ACTIVITIES A LA CARTE

## ACTIVITIES

### INTO THE STORY

#### FOLLOW THE LEADER

Practice leading and following.

**10 MIN.**

- † Groupings Guide
- † Materials for chosen cross+generational grouping

### BIBLE NUTS & BOLTS

#### THE EXILE

God's people are scattered.

**10 MIN.**

- † Small balls

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

#### GOD'S PROMISES: ADVENT WREATH

Remember God's promises.

**10 MIN.**

- † Activity Sheet #1-13.A
- † Markers or crayons
- † Scissors
- † Tape
- † Optional: gift wrap, glitter, and other craft embellishments; paper or plastic plates or sturdy cardboard, paint and paint brushes, greenery, pinecones, glue, etc.

### LEARNING THE STORY

#### STICKING TO YOUR BELIEFS

Modernize the story of Esther.

**20 MIN.**

- † Bibles
- † Optional: story Bible, costumes and props

# ACTIVITIES A LA CARTE

## LIVING THE STORY

### SPIRAL PRAYER

Come together as a group as you pray.

5 MIN.

† None

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

### GOD GOES WITH US

Make a reminder that God is always with us.

10 MIN.

† Smooth stones  
† Acrylic paints  
† Paint brushes  
† Paper towels  
† Cups  
† Water

### GIVING TREE

Serve others by donating gifts to those in need.

15 MIN.

† Gift wrap  
† Donated gifts  
† Scissors  
† Tape  
† Internet-connected devices  
† Optional: Activity Sheet #1-12.C

## SENDING THE STORY

5 MIN.

† Sharing God's Story @ Home



# LIVING THE WORD

*Exploring God's Story Together  
Narrative Lectionary, Year 1*

Cross+Generational Ministry has at its core the concept that faith is formed through meaningful relationships. When we connect with people of a different generation, we are able to learn from them and share our own experiences, no matter what age we are. We find our place in God's story best by exploring that story as community.

Effective cross+generational experiences are:

- *Experiential*
- *Interactive*
- *Engaging*
- *Story-centered*
- *Home-based*
- *Equalizing*

all of which promote an **encounter with God**. All of the activities included in this leader guide are intended to engage these principles, through intentional cross+generational interaction and active, creative activities that bring the Bible story to life in our lives.

We pass on the faith through every action, experience, or relationship that nurtures a transformative relationship of trust with God and shapes the way we see and interact with God's world. When we do this in meaningful, intergenerational relationships, our faith is enriched from the diversity of the experiences we share with each other. Our communities are strengthened, and we have confidence in our sense of belonging to God and with each other.

# BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

## Making Connections

In this second Sunday of Advent, we continue to wait and watch for God's promised Messiah. This week, we hear the story of a young woman who becomes a queen and goes on to save her people through her courageous faith. The subject of exile is also introduced and discussed in relation to the story.

## Story Summary:

### *Esther Leads*

Mordecai brings an urgent message to his cousin, Queen Esther, telling her of a new law created by the king's second-in-command, an evil man named Haman (HAY-muhn). Haman has tricked King Ahasuerus (a-has-you-AIR-us) into signing a law that orders all the exiled Jews living in the area to be killed on a specific date. Mordecai has heard about this terrible plan, and is at the castle gates begging for help from Queen Esther. This is when Mordecai cries, "Who knows? Perhaps you came to royal dignity for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14).

At first, Esther feels helpless and is afraid to go to the king and ask for help for her people. According to the text, people are not supposed to appear before the king without first being called. The only way a person who committed this affront could escape certain death was if the king decided to spare them, which he signaled by holding out his scepter. But Esther prays, and puts her faith in God and dares to go to the king with her request. Because of her courage and faith, her people are ultimately saved!

## The Point

We all can be leaders in faith and make a difference for others. Esther's actions show us that God gives us courage to do the right thing even when we may be afraid. This message of faith and courage carries on throughout the rest of the Book of Esther and sets a good example for all God's servants to follow.

## Bible Nuts & Bolts:

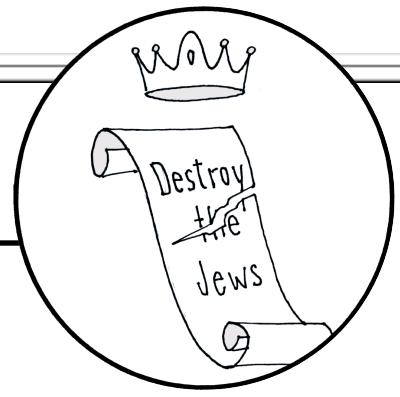
### *The Exile*

This week will introduce the meaning of the word "exile," which means the state of being taken from one's native country and prevented from returning. This happened to the people of Judah and Jerusalem when King Nebuchadnezzar (Ne-bu-kad-nezzar), forced them into exile and sent them to Babylon. Esther's family was part of this exiled group, which also included her cousin and father figure, Mordecai. It is this group of exiled Jews that Esther saves in today's story.

## Spiritual Practice: Prayer

As we continue to wait for the promised Savior, we pray. Prayer brings us into the presence of God in times of waiting. Today we pray as Queen Esther prayed for courage to do what was needed for her people. Today, we pray as Esther did, to do what we need to be leaders for our families and communities.

# LESSON PLAN



## INTO THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

### FOLLOW THE LEADER

Practice leading and following.

*You will need:*

- † Groupings Guide
- † Materials for chosen cross+generational grouping

*Before class:*

1. Determine how you would like to group participants at their tables (in a cross+generational grouping), using the Groupings Guide.
2. Prepare the materials indicated in the Guide.

*During class:*

1. Welcome the class and instruct them to group themselves cross+generationally according to the method you have selected from the Groupings Guide.
2. **If someone is sitting alone, please introduce yourself, and invite them to join you. Young children who are not comfortable leaving their families should sit at a table with someone in their family.**
3. **Today we are going to begin with a simple game: Follow the Leader.** Play a game (or multiple games, if there are lots of people) of Follow the Leader.
4. **What does it take to be a good leader?** Allow answers. **Today we are going to talk about Queen Esther, who was a great leader to her people, even though it took a lot of courage.**

# BIBLE NUTS & BOLTS (10 MINUTES)

## THE EXILE

God's people are scattered.

*You will need:*

- † Small balls

*During class:*

1. The time in which the Jewish people were in exile is called the Diaspora. This simply means that they were away from their homeland and scattered in different places.
2. One of the greatest challenges for the Jewish people during this time was being able to carry on and share their traditions and customs. When you are far away from the rest of your family, your church, or other people that you care for, it can become difficult to communicate. We are going to do an activity to help us understand this.
3. Have each small group stand in a circle, and give each group a ball. Begin by tossing the small ball around your group, saying the name of the person to whom you are tossing the ball. After each successful round, move two steps away from each other and repeat the task. Eventually groups will overlap and move too far away from one another to complete the task.
4. Invite groups back to their original places. What is it like when you are all trying to do the same thing but you are apart from one another? Is it easy or hard to complete your task? Is it easy or hard to communicate?
5. During the Diaspora, or exile, the Jewish people had moved throughout the Middle East, and were no longer living near each other. How would this make it harder for them to worship and to share their faith with others who have the same beliefs? *[It would be harder to communicate, they could not participate in rituals together, they could not tell stories to one another.]* It is in this setting that our story takes place.

# MAKING CONNECTIONS (10 MINUTES)

## GOD'S PROMISES: ADVENT WREATH

Remember God's promises.

*You will need:*

- † Activity Sheet #1-13.A
- † Markers or crayons
- † Scissors
- † Tape
- † Optional: gift wrap, glitter, and other craft embellishments; paper or plastic plates or sturdy cardboard, paint and paint brushes, greenery, pinecones, glue, etc.

*Before class:*

1. Make a copy of Activity Sheet #1-13.A, "God Promises Direction" page for each individual or family unit.

*During class:*

1. **Last week, we started an Advent wreath for you to bring home to use as you wait and watch for the Messiah.**
2. For participants who missed last week, show the project and provide supplies for them to take home. **Our Advent wreath was very simple. We decorated a plate (or cardboard) as our base, and each week we will decorate a candle in class to bring home and add to our wreath.**
3. Distribute the "God Promises Direction" page from Activity Sheet #1-13.A. **Last week we learned that "God promises justice." This week we will make the candle for "God promises direction." Over the next weeks, we will discover that God promises hope and God promises a Savior, so those will be on the candles that we add.**
4. Give participants time to color and cut out their candle.
5. **Before you roll your candle, take a moment to write a prayer on the inside asking God to provide direction to our world.**
6. Participants can roll and tape the candle in class or bring it home flat and tape it there.

# LEARNING THE STORY (20 MINUTES)

## STICKING TO YOUR BELIEFS

Modernize the story of Esther

You will need:

- † Bibles
- † Optional: story Bible, costumes and props

During class:

1. Our story today is the story of Queen Esther. She was in a difficult situation and had to be very brave to save her people.
2. Read the story of Esther from Esther 4:1-17. Optional: read the entire story of Esther from a story Bible or retell it in your own words.
3. What does courage mean? *[Being brave, doing the right thing even when it is hard.] Who are some people who have shown courage? [Queen Esther, Jesus, parents, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, soldiers, police officers, firefighters, doctors, teachers.]*
4. We all face situations when we have to be courageous like Esther. In your small groups, think of a situation where you would need to be courageous. Each group will act out their situation for the rest of us, and we will talk about how courage was shown in that situation.
5. Give groups time to work. When they are done, have them present their scenarios.
6. What are some ways you can show courage? *[Doing the right thing, even when no one else is; being willing to try new things, even if you might fail; telling the truth no matter what the consequences might be; facing your fears and working to overcome them; admitting your mistakes and learning from them.]*
7. Even though you may not be a queen like Esther, you can still be courageous just by doing the right thing. When you do the right thing, you make other people safe and happy, and you set a good example, too! But sometimes it can be really hard to know what the right thing is. When Esther needed courage, what did she do? *[Prayed.]*

# LIVING THE STORY (5 MINUTES)

## SPIRAL PRAYER

Come together as a group as you pray.

*You will need:*

- † Nothing

*During class:*

1. We are going to share a movement prayer today. Our lives move and intertwine and spiral around one another. Sometimes, we find ourselves following, and sometimes we find ourselves leading. Today we are going to have a popcorn-style prayer, where each of you can pop in with a prayer petition, thanking God for those people in our lives who have served as leaders to us.
2. Have participants stand in a line holding hands. For those who may be physically unable to participate, have them be on one end of the line, which will become the center of the spiral. Those who do not wish to hold hands can move in the line as if they were.
3. Begin a prayer naming all the people who have been faith leaders, and as people are named (popcorn-style), spiral around the center until everyone is in a tight group.
4. Close with prayer: **Thank you, God, for the leaders who have been with us in difficult times. Thank you for all of the times that you have sent someone for us to follow. Thank you, too, God, for giving us wisdom and courage to be leaders when we need to be. Thank you for the others in this church and the closeness we experience as a group. Amen.**

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

### GOD GOES WITH US (10 MINUTES)

Make a reminder that God is always with us.

*You will need:*

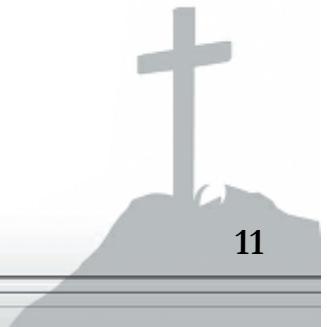
- † Smooth stones
- † Acrylic paints
- † Brushes
- † Paper towels
- † Cups with water

*Before class:*

1. Gather medium-sized smooth stones, two for each participant you anticipate. Bags of stones can be purchased at craft stores.

*During class:*

1. **People have begun to leave inspirational rocks in public to help others. We can do the same, and be leaders in our faith community as we do it. Today we will each make two painted rocks. One is to help you remember that God is always with you. Keep that rock in your pocket or backpack. The second rock is to place out in the community to share the good news of God's continued presence with others. What are some things we might want to write or draw on our rocks?**  
Brainstorm ideas.
2. Allow participants time to work.



## A GIVING TREE (15 MINUTES)

Serve others by donating gifts to those in need.

*You will need:*

- † Gift wrap
- † Donated gifts
- † Scissors
- † Tape
- † Internet-connected devices
- † Optional: Activity Sheet #1-12.C

*Before class:*

1. This is an ongoing activity. In the next weeks, you will:
  - Advent 2: Learn about the service project recipients; gather and begin to wrap donations
  - Advent 3: Wrap gifts; go shopping to supplement giving
  - Advent 4: Deliver gifts or hear from a speaker representing the organization

*During class:*

1. **Last week, we talked about the importance of creating a just society, and began to have a small part in that by helping people who need help through our Giving Tree project.** Describe the organization that you are serving.
2. **The organization that we are helping serves people who are struggling with (food scarcity, homelessness, other issues). Let's take some time to learn more about this issue.**
3. Allow participants to look online for information about the social issue that your organization addresses. As participants learn facts and statistics from your area, invite them to share it with the rest of the group.
4. **Our congregation has just begun to donate to our Giving Tree. We are going to wrap the gifts that have come in and place them under the tree.**
5. Decorate and resupply any gift tags as needed, using Activity Sheet #1-12.C from the previous lesson.

## SENDING THE STORY (5 MINUTES)

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If your congregation is using the “Living the Word: Sharing God’s Story @ Home” insert, remember to hand them out at this point in the lesson.

In small groups, thank the person next to you and share one way that they have helped you in your faith, or if you do not know them well, share a way that they might help others in their faith walk. (“You seem like a kind person, funny person, good listener. This would help someone in their faith walk by...”) When everyone has finished, pray:

Dear God, thank you for leading and guiding us with your love. Give us the courage and the wisdom to follow you and lead others to your love. Amen.



# GOD'S PROMISES: ADVENT WREATH

*Remember God's promises.*

