

## Behind The Scenes

Week 4

### **BIG IDEA**

God gives us peace behind the scenes.

### **BIBLE**

Scene IV. Esther Talks to the King:  
Esther 5:1-8, 7:1-6; 8:1-8; Psalm 122:6-9

## LARGE GROUP TIME

SAY...

Welcome back to our final week of *Behind the Scenes*! We've been totally immersed in the play, *The Epic Events of Esther and the Empire*!

Remember, there's a new rule calling for the destruction of all the Jews living in Persia. Who will save the day? Will it be Mordecai? Esther? Will they succeed before the final curtain? Let's find out!

## WHAT?

MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** You can lead kids in worship with any songs of your choice, but here are some suggestions that go along with this month's theme. Make sure you have purchased any licenses required to play or perform these songs. For more information, [read this!](#)
  - "God is Real" (Vineyard Kids)
  - "Thank the Lord" (Ark Kids)
  - "In You Alone" (Lifetree Kids)
  - "Raise a Hallelujah" (Community Kids)

ACTIVITY | Four Corners (of Persia)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Post different numbers or colors in each corner of the room. Choose one person to stand in the middle of the room with a blindfold on – they're "Haman." When the music plays, kids

*pick a corner to stand in. When the music stops, every kid freezes. The blindfolded volunteer calls out a corner (color or number), and everyone in that corner is out. Hand each kid who is out one puzzle piece. Play as many rounds as you can before Haman is stopped. To stop Haman, every kid who got out must work together to solve the jigsaw puzzle. Once the puzzle is complete, everyone has to yell, "Stop, Haman!" Prepare an extra puzzle to play again with a different volunteer as Haman, in case this game goes by quicker than expected.*

- If you recall, the villain in *The Epic Events of Esther and the Empire* is a man named Haman. We'll see what our heroes do to thwart his evil plan. But first, let's play a game and try defeating "Haman" ourselves!
- While the music is playing, pick a corner. If Haman calls the corner you're standing in, come over here to the puzzle station. Everyone here will get one piece of the puzzle and work together to complete it.
- Work quickly to solve the puzzle while your friends playing Four Corners keep trying to avoid getting caught. Once the puzzle is complete, let's all yell, "Stop, Haman!"

QUESTION | When I Say, "Peace," You Say . . .

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Divide kids into as many groups as you have leaders for. Give each group a paper and pen and have leaders write down the kids' ideas. Have each group share their responses afterward.*
  - **PRETEEN HACK:** *After each team jots down all the peace-related words, have them put their heads together to pick the one word from the list that reminds them the most of peace. Encourage a little healthy debate and have preteens defend their choices.*
  - **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Turn this into a form of Socratic discussion. Have leaders provide kids with picture examples of different forms of "peace" (a river, a peace sign, a handshake, etc.) and discuss what comes to mind for them.*
- As a group, I want you to think of all the words that come to mind when I say the word "peace." It doesn't have to mean the same thing — just list all the words that first pop into your head!
- Peace means different things to different people. And even though that's the case, we'll learn today the kind of peace God gives is perfect!

## SO WHAT?

SCRIPTURE | Esther 5:1–8, 7:1–6; 8:1–8 (Scene IV. Esther Talks to the King)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Set up your Bible story space like you're rehearsing a play with a director's chair in front of the stage area and the audience behind you. Choose kids and volunteers to pantomime the instructions you call out as you tell the story. Pick a few kids to be the story's characters: Xerxes, Haman, Esther, and Mordecai. As you tell the story, pause occasionally to tell the actors to stand in a certain spot or move in a certain way. Have volunteers ready to bring in a banquet table when you give the cue and have them be the guards to take Haman away at the end. Have a flashlight ready to use as a "spotlight."*
  - **PRETEEN HACK:** *Recruit preteens to give a recap of the story so far for the rest of the group. Use the coloring pages provided for this series and have them create "storyboards" to give their summaries.*

- Welcome, one and all, to the last exclusive, behind-the-scenes experience. Our actors are rehearsing the final scene of our play and I think all of you will be most impressed.
  - *Optional:* The original script for our play can be found in Esther 5:1–8, 7:1–6.
- In the previous scene, Mordecai had asked his cousin, Esther, who was the queen of Persia, to help save her people from Haman the Horrible by talking to the king.
  - Okay, that's not what they called him, but he was indeed horrible. Because he was mad at Mordecai, Haman wanted to destroy an entire group of people.
  - Esther was afraid to do it. Anyone who approached the king without being called on could also be in big trouble.
  - But Mordecai reminded her that maybe God had allowed her to become queen for exactly this moment. She was the only one who could help now.
- So, after asking Mordecai to call on their community to pray for her, Esther decided she would visit with the king.
  - Esther slowly put on her royal robe. She topped it off with her shiny crown. Then, she slowly walked toward the throne room where the king was.
  - She took a deep breath.
- The king looked up from his extravagant royal chair. And who was this radiant creature standing in his court? Why, it was the queen! He quickly held out his golden scepter toward her, which meant that it was okay for Esther to enter.
  - Esther walked forward and touched the tip of the scepter as the king started to speak.
  - But Esther didn't start by mentioning the big problem she really wanted to talk to the king about. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet — which is just a party with fancy food.
- *[Call offstage.]* Okay, stage crew, let's bring in the banquet table!
- So the king, the queen, and Haman sat down and enjoyed a fancy banquet. I wonder what they were thinking? *[Turn on the flashlight and shine toward each of the characters, avoiding their eyes.]*
  - Esther was probably really nervous and just waiting for the right moment to bring up her request to the king so she could save her people.
  - Haman was probably feeling really happy with himself, seeing that he was specifically invited by the queen to join her and the king for this party.
  - The king was probably just staring at Esther the entire time because he couldn't believe how lucky he was that she was queen.
- At the end of the banquet, Esther spoke up. But again, instead of mentioning what she really wanted to talk about, she . . . invited them to another banquet the next day! So, that's what they did. *[Turn on the flashlights.]*
  - Haman was probably still really proud of himself for snagging another exclusive invitation to the queen's banquet.
  - The king was probably starting to get suspicious. Why did the queen suddenly throw two parties back to back? She must want something.
  - Queen Esther was gathering all her courage because tonight was the moment she would bring up what needed to be said. Watch out, Haman.
- So, when King Xerxes turned to the queen, flashed a winning smile, and said to her, "What's on your mind? You can ask me for anything, you know," Esther answered: "If you really mean what you say, then please, save my life and the lives of my people."
  - The king scratched his head.
  - Haman froze. His mouth fell open.
- Esther continued, "You see, someone put out an order for the Jews to be destroyed. I'm also a Jew and these are my people. If it were anything else, I wouldn't have bothered you. But we really need your help."
- King Xerxes stood up, filled with rage. "Who would do such a thing!" he demanded.
  - Esther pointed at Haman.
  - Haman begged Esther to save his life. Then, he tried to make a run for it. But he was caught by some of the king's people and was dragged away to receive the same fate he wanted for

Mordecai and all the Jews.

- That same day, King Xerxes gave everything Haman owned to Esther and gave her and Mordecai his ring so they could write a new law that would undo Haman's old law. The people were safe!
- And . . . scene! Bravo, everyone!
- Every character in every scene had a part to play. But there's someone we don't see on stage but is the only reason everything worked out the way it did. **Can you guess who that is?** It's God!

BIG IDEA | God gives us peace behind the scenes.

VIDEO | Behind the Scenes, Episode 4

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).*

STORY | Behind The Scenes

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a short story about a time you experienced when you really didn't have peace. Maybe it's a time when you were a teenager and you were in an argument with friends. Maybe it's a time you were job hunting and you were worried about making ends meet. Describe ways God gave you peace through that time (or how God could have if you knew then what you know now). Talk about the people, places, and things God used to bring stillness to whatever chaos you were facing.*
- We'll always face moments in our lives like these where peace is hard to find. The peace that God gives, however, doesn't rely on what's going on around us.
- God reminds us we're safe and loved and we don't need to worry. In fact, we can take all our worries to God in exchange for God's peace.

OBJECT LESSON | Peace is Cool!

- Back in the day, playhouses weren't extravagant theaters with lighting, sound equipment, and air conditioners. Playhouses were mostly outdoors, which meant productions were at the mercy of weather conditions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show an image of an outdoor theater like [this](#) one of the Globe Theatre in London.*
- Imagine you went to go watch a play at an outdoor theater in the middle of winter. You'd be really cold!
- **What are some things we do when we get cold?**
  - The thing I was thinking about was rubbing our hands together really fast. Let's try it.
  - **What's happening?** Your hands are getting warmer!

- Just like our hands get warm when we rub them together, things heat up when someone rubs us the wrong way. There are so many ways we can get into conflicts with others, and when we just keep rubbing it in that we think we're right, the temperature just keeps rising.
- We talked today about how God gives us peace behind the scenes. And once we receive that peace, we should take it and make more peace.
- **Think of the last time you got into a heated disagreement with someone.**
  - **What are some things you did to cool things down and make things okay again?**
  - **Or if you could go back, how might you try to bring peace to that situation?**

#### SCRIPTURE | Psalm 122:6–9

- This passage in the Bible is a wonderful prayer for peace. Let's read it together.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 122:6–9.*
- Now, even though we don't know the exact words Esther, Mordecai, and the people were praying, a lot of this sounds like something they might've said.
  - Verse six says to pray for the peace and safety of Jerusalem, which was the home of the Jews who were forced to live someplace else.
  - Verse seven talks about peace within the walls, which is exactly what they wanted — peace throughout the kingdom.
  - Verses eight and nine are a reminder to promote peace among each other, look out for each other's well-being, and trust God will bring us peace.
- Prayer and peace go hand in hand. **Did you know Jesus also prayed for peace?**
  - Just like Esther and the author of Psalm 122, Jesus prayed for Jerusalem and God's people. Jesus lamented — which means to pray with grief — that Jerusalem had no peace, but needed peace desperately.
  - Jesus also prayed moments before being captured by Roman soldiers to make peace with what was coming next. Jesus wanted peace of mind and heart to carry out God's plans to save the world.
- Bringing peace was Jesus' mission while here on Earth. And now peace is possible for all of us. Jesus was God's way of giving us peace from behind the scenes!

## NOW WHAT?

#### ACTIVITY | Peaceful Party

- Esther hosted not one, but two parties for the king and Haman where she didn't come right out and say the thing she most wanted to say.
- Let's play a game where we pretend we're at a party, too, and the guests are going to keep some information for their party host!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Choose one person to be the party host and ask them to briefly leave the room. Choose three people to be party guests, and have the rest of the group suggest simple characters for each of them (Spider-Man, a cheerleader, a bullfighter, a clown, a lion, or a basketball player). Then, have the guest sit down and have the host return. Have guests return to the stage one at a time and talk to the host for one minute. They have to pretend they're at a party but must stay in the*

character they were assigned without revealing it to the host — the things they say and act out should be related to their character without saying so. At the end of five minutes, have the host guess who each guest was supposed to be. You might want to include your leaders in this activity for more laughs!

#### MEMORY VERSE | Philippians 2:13 (NIV)

- **“For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Practice the memory verse together a few times. This week, instead of dividing the group into smaller teams, have everyone stand in a large circle (or a few large circles if you have a bigger group). Use the scepter prop from the Bible story and have kids pass the scepter around the circle behind their backs so it's hard to keep track of who has it. Play some music as it's being passed. Pause the music and whoever is holding the scepter behind their back has to say as much of the verse aloud as they remember. Do this a few more times so a few more people have a chance to recite the verse. Once someone recites the verse, have everyone say, "Hear! Hear!"
- **(Don't forget to also check out the memory verse signs — a combination of SEE and ASL — available in your Programming folder or at [growcurriculum.org/Philippians2-13](http://growcurriculum.org/Philippians2-13).)**

#### PRAYER

- God, thank you for giving us peace behind the scenes. Sometimes, it feels like things around us are really chaotic and it's easy to get into disagreements with people. But even when things get really tough, you are working behind the scenes to give us peace. Thank you for helping me and everyone in my life to have peace during the times when we all need it most. Help us to be peacemakers and peace givers. Amen.

### SMALL GROUP TIME

#### DISCUSSION

- **How was Esther risking her life to talk to the king?**
- **What did Esther ask the king first? Why do you think she did that?**
- **How did Esther and Mordecai's actions help bring peace to their people?**
- **Read Psalm 122:8. What do you think it means to have peace within us? How does that help our family and friends?**
- **How has God given you peace in the past? Or what is one thing you'd like to pray to God about to give you peace?**
- **What are some situations we might find ourselves in where we would need to be the ones to make peace?**
- **What is one thing you can do this week to invite God's peace into your life?**

## ACTIVITY | Instrument of Peace

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Print this week's printable (based on [this](#) prayer) and pass them out to the kids. Show clips of videos (like [this](#) and [this](#)) of people singing this prayer with various instruments. Ask kids to design and draw their own musical instruments that they can use to make their own version of the song. Ask follow-up questions after they're done drawing.*
- A long time ago, someone named St. Francis wrote a beautiful prayer about serving others and bringing more peace to the world.
- I'll read it first, and then we'll watch a few people sing this prayer. Then, we'll create some instruments of our own!
- **I'm curious about your new inventions!**
  - **What is the instrument you created called?**
  - **How is it played?**
  - **What does it sound like?**
  - **How does it help bring peace?**