Bible Point

God has special plans for us to work together.

Bible Verse
“The Lord will work out his plans for my life” (Psalm 138:8a).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Children will
- hear how Mordecai and Esther worked together,
- work together to accomplish a task,
- teach Pockets that God wants us to work together, and
- discover that teamwork is fun!

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

Mordecai and Esther work together.

Haman’s attempt to exterminate the Jews in Esther’s day was no match for God and the two servants he had set up to deal with the situation—Esther and her cousin Mordecai.

In Esther 4:14, Mordecai encourages Esther to consider that “perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this.” He was encouraging her to be brave in the face of difficult circumstances, reminding her that in their world, as in ours, one couldn’t be made queen by some impersonal force of fate, but rather by a powerful God working behind the scenes. Esther responded by working together with Mordecai to bring about change in the kingdom using her royal influence.

Esther’s bravery was a key element in how things turned out, but Mordecai’s wisdom was equally important. If God raised up Esther “for just such a time as this,” it is evident he raised up her wise cousin as well. Often God uses “teams” of people—each person bringing unique gifts and abilities—to accomplish his purposes.

Prayer
- Read Hebrews 10:24-25.
- How has God worked through your combined efforts with others to accomplish great things for him? Pause to reflect.
- Pray: Lord, help me combine my efforts with others to fulfill your purposes, especially in teaching, as I…

Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use. Refer to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies columns to determine what you’ll need.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God’s direction in teaching the lesson.
### This Lesson at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Children Will Do</th>
<th>Classroom Supplies</th>
<th>Learning Lab Supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcome Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Let's Get Started</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bible Story Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome!—Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.</td>
<td>Option 1: Puzzle Partners—Work in pairs to put puzzles together.</td>
<td>Setting the Stage—Form pairs and work together to accomplish a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bible Song and Prayer Time—Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Option 2: Pass the Message—Pass a secret message, and learn that Esther and Mordecai also passed secret messages to each other.</td>
<td>Hear and Tell the Bible Story—Form trios while they learn from Esther 4:1-17 how Esther and Mordecai worked together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Option 3: Teamwork Treats—Work as a team to make snacks.</td>
<td>Do the Bible Story—Walk while linked together, and learn an action rhyme with special motions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pick Up Our Toys—Sing a song as they pick up toys, and gather for Bible Story Time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.*
Welcome Time

Welcome!

**SUPPLIES:** “Stone Tablet Name Tags” handouts (p. 27), markers, pins or tape

- Bend down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them how they put last week’s lesson into practice. Ask questions such as “What plans do you think God has for you?” and “How does it feel to know God has special plans for you?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that God has special plans for us to work together.**
- Hand out the stone tablet name tags children made in Lesson 1, and help children attach the name tags to their clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged or if children weren’t in class that week, have them make new name tags using the photocopiable handout at the end of the first lesson.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.

Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among the children to offer help as needed, and direct children’s conversation toward today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “What are some things you can’t do by yourself?” or “When do you like working with a friend?”

- **Option 1: Puzzle Partners**
  - **SUPPLIES:** simple jigsaw puzzles
  - Set out several simple jigsaw puzzles, each with no more than 10 pieces. (If you don’t have puzzles, you can easily make some by mounting magazine pictures on poster board, and then cutting the poster board into large pieces.) Have children form pairs and work together to complete their puzzles. As children work, point out that they’re a puzzle-solving team. Explain that **God has special plans for us to work together.**

- **Option 2: Pass the Message**
  - **SUPPLIES:** none
  - Have the children form a line. Whisper a command to the first child in line, such as “Clap your hands,” “Turn around,” or “Give someone a high five.” Instruct children to whisper the message from person to person until it reaches the end of the line. Have the last child in line act out the message and then go to the head of the line. Continue playing until everyone has had a chance to act out a message. Explain that Esther and Mordecai passed secret messages back and forth with the help of a trustworthy servant.
**Option 3: Teamwork Treats**

**SUPPLIES:** a variety of trail-mix ingredients, such as pretzels, chocolate chips, and raisins; bowls; plastic spoons; resealable plastic bags

Have children sit side by side at a table. Put each of your trail-mix ingredients into a separate bowl with a plastic spoon, and place one of the bowls in front of each child. Pass resealable plastic bags down the line, and have each child put a spoonful of his or her snack item into each bag. At the end of the line, help seal the bags, and set them aside until the Closing activity. As children work, talk about how each child’s contribution to the snack is important.

Be sure children fill enough bags for each person to have one.

When everyone has arrived and you’re ready to move on to the Bible Story Time, encourage the children to finish what they’re doing and get ready to clean up.

**Pick Up Our Toys**

**SUPPLIES:** CD player

Lead children in singing “Pick Up Our Toys” (track 2) with the CD to the tune of “Skip to My Lou.” Encourage the children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

If you want to include the names of all the children in your class, sing the song without the CD and repeat the naming section. If you choose to use the CD, vary the names you use each week.

**SING**

We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys.
We will pick up our toys
And put them all away.

There’s [name] picking up toys.
There’s [name] picking up toys.
There’s [name] picking up toys,
Putting them all away.

(Repeat.)

**Bible Story Time**

**Setting the Stage**

**SUPPLIES:** none

Tell the children you’ll clap your hands to get their attention. Explain that when you clap, the children are to stop what they’re doing, raise their hands, and focus on you. Encourage children to respond quickly so you’ll have time for all the fun activities you’ve planned.

Help each child find a partner of similar height. Say: We’re going to try an experiment to see how well you and your partner work together.
Mordecai and Esther Work Together

Have partners sit back to back and link arms at the elbows. Say: *Now try to stand up. It's a tricky task, but work with your partners to do it.* If children have trouble with the task, encourage them to push up and against each other. After everyone is standing, ask:

- **With your arms linked like that, could you stand up by yourself? Why or why not?** (No, because my partner pulled me down; yes, but it was hard because I had to pull my partner, too.)
- **What made it easier to stand up?** (Pushing against each other; working together.)

Say: *Working together makes lots of things easier! In our Bible story today, we'll learn that Esther and Mordecai worked together to carry out God's plan. Today we'll also learn that God has special plans for us to work together.* Let's sing our Bible song and get ready to hear about the team of Esther and Mordecai.

### Bible Song and Prayer Time

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, construction paper, scissors, basket or box, CD player

Before class, make surprise cards for this activity by cutting construction paper into 2x6-inch slips. Prepare a surprise card for each child, plus a few extras for visitors. Fold the cards in half, and then stamp the crown stamp inside one of the surprise cards. Bookmark Esth 4:1-17 in the Bible you'll be using.

Have the children sit in a circle. Say: *Now it's time to choose a Bible person to bring me the Bible marked with today's Bible story. As we sing our Bible song, I'll pass out surprise cards. Don't look inside your surprise card until the song is over.*

Lead the children in singing “Read God’s Book” (track 3) with the CD to the tune of “The Muffin Man.” As you sing, pass out the folded surprise cards.

**SING**

Now it's time to read God's book,
Now it's time to read God's book.
Let's hear a Bible story.
(Repeat 3x.)

After the song, say: *You may look inside your surprise cards. The person who finds the crown stamped inside his or her card will be our Bible person for today.*

Identify the Bible person, and then have the rest of the children clap for him or her. Ask the Bible person to bring you the Bible. Help the Bible person open the Bible to the marked place and show the children where your story comes from. Then have the Bible person sit down.

Say: *[Name] was our special Bible person today. Each week we’ll have only one special Bible person, but each one of you is a special part of our class! Today we’re all learning that God has special plans for us to work together.*
Let’s say a special prayer now and ask God to help us work together. I’ll pass around this basket. When the basket comes to you, put your surprise card in it and say, “God, please help us work together.”

Pass around the basket or box. When you’ve collected everyone’s surprise card, set the basket aside, and pick up the Bible. Lead children in this prayer: God, thank you for the Bible and all the stories in it. Teach us today that you have special plans for us to work together. In Jesus’ name, amen.

■ Hear and Tell the Bible Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, paper, crepe paper streamers

Have children form a circle, and give each child a link from the linking hearts and stars. Hold up the Bible Big Book: Esther so children can see the first page. Say: Let’s go around the circle and let each person say one thing he or she remembers about our Bible story last week. After you tell us what you remember, link your heart or star with the person on your left’s heart or star, to make a crown.

Encourage children to tell things they remember, such as Esther loved God, Esther became the queen, Esther was pretty, the people celebrated, or God has special plans for us. When each child has shared, put down the Bible Big Book, and set aside the crown.

Say: You’ve remembered lots of things about Queen Esther. Today we’ll learn more about the plans God had for Esther and for her cousin Mordecai.

Point to the Bible and say: Our Bible story comes from the book of Esther. Find two friends so you can help me tell the story.

Form groups of three, and have each trio form a small circle. Have the trios decide who will be Esther, who will be Mordecai, and who will be Hathach (HAY-thak). Distribute a star link from the linking hearts and stars to each Esther, give a crepe paper streamer to each Mordecai, and give a rolled-up sheet of paper to each Hathach.

Say: As I read our story, listen for me to say the name of your character. When I say “Esther,” all the Esthers may hold up their stars to remind us that Esther’s name means “star.” When I say “Mordecai,” all the Mordecais may tear their streamers a little bit to remind us that Mordecai tore his clothes to show how upset he was. When I say “Hathach,” all the Hathachs may hold up their pretend messages and then hide the messages behind their backs.

As you read the following story, remind children of the appropriate actions.

About four years after Esther became queen, the king gave an important job to a man named Haman. Haman was so important that people who worked in the palace bowed down to Haman to show him their respect.

Esther’s cousin Mordecai was one of the king’s officials, too. But Mordecai wouldn’t bow to Haman. Because he was a Jew, Mordecai would only bow down to God.

This made Haman hopping mad! He came up with an evil plan to get back at Mordecai. Haman told King Xerxes lies about the Jewish people and said they weren’t obeying the king’s laws. He asked the king to send out a decree that these people be put to death. King Xerxes didn’t know that
Esther was Jewish, so he allowed Haman to write the terrible decree.

When Mordecai read the king’s decree, he tore his clothes to show how sad and upset he was. Then he put on rough, scratchy clothing called sackcloth and poured ashes on his head. Mordecai went through the streets of the city crying loudly.

When Queen Esther heard what Mordecai was doing, she sent her servant Hathach to find out what was going on.

Mordecai told Hathach about Haman’s wicked plan and gave him a copy of the royal decree. “Take this to Esther,” he said. “Ask her to beg the king to have mercy on her people.” So Hathach took the message back to Esther.

When Queen Esther got the message, she said, “Tell Mordecai that no one can go to the king unless they’re invited. Anyone who goes to the king without an invitation is put to death—it’s the law! The only way I won’t die is if the king sees me and raises his golden scepter.” Hathach delivered the message to Mordecai.

When Mordecai read the message, he told Hathach, “Even Esther won’t be spared from Haman’s evil plan. Maybe this is why God allowed her to be queen!” Hathach quickly took the message to Esther.

Esther said to Hathach, “Take this message back to Mordecai. Tell him to get all the Jews in the city together. Pray for me. Don’t eat or drink anything for three days. My servants and I will do the same thing. In three days, I’ll go to the king—even though I might die.”

Hathach went to Mordecai and told him what Esther wanted him to do. Then all of God’s people prayed for the queen for three days.

You’ll have to tune in next week to see what happened next!

Collect the items, and have the children form a circle. Hold up the Bible Big Book so pages 2 and 3 are showing.

Ask:
• Who had an evil plan to kill the Jewish people? (Haman.)
• What did Mordecai want Esther to do? (Ask the king for help; ask the king to save the Jews.)
• Why was Esther scared to help? (The king hadn’t invited her; she might die if she visited the king.)

Say: Mordecai and Esther worked together to find a way to save the Jews. They needed each other to carry out God’s plan, and God helped them both to carry out his plans for them. Our Bible verse for today, from Psalm 138:8a, tells us that God will help us, too: “The Lord will work out his plans for my life.” Just as God helped Esther and Mordecai to work together, God has special plans for us to work together, too.

Do the Bible Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Form children into groups of three or four. Choose one group to stand inside the Chinese jump rope, stretching the jump rope across at the ankles. Encourage the group to work together to walk around the room. The other groups can stand like statues around the room to make a human obstacle course for the team to walk around. As the team with the jump rope walks by, the “statues” can whisper the Bible Point to them.
After each group has had a turn, put the Chinese jump rope away, and gather the children in the middle of the room.

Ask: • **How did you feel trying to walk together around the room?** (It was hard to walk so close to someone else; it was funny; I was afraid I might fall over.)

  • **When you were hooked to other people, was it possible to go anywhere by yourself? Explain.** (No because we were all tied together; I could take a step by myself but I couldn’t go very far.)

Say:  ► **God has special plans for us to work together.** We just practiced this by working together to walk around the room. The Bible also mentions how we can help each other by working together. Let’s see what it tells us in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Read the verses out loud.

Ask: • **Why do the verses say it is better to work together?** (If one person falls, someone else can help him up; people can keep each other warm; you can stand back-to-back and conquer.)

  • **What’s one practical way you can work together with your friends at school or in your neighborhood?** (I can help my friend across the street do his yard chores; I can share my supplies in art class with my friend.)

**God wants us to work together. You all just did a great job practicing that! Let’s learn a rhyme that will help us remember this.**

Have the children find a partner and stand side by side with that partner. Have each child place one arm around his or her partner’s shoulder or back so each partner has one free hand. Say: I’ll show you some fun actions to go along with the rhyme. You and your partner will have to work together to do them.

You’ll need a partner to demonstrate the motions as you lead children in the following action rhyme.

**You need two hands to give a hug** (wrap free arm around partner),

To clap and cheer ❄️ (clap hand with partner’s hand),

Or to catch a bug. (Cup hand over partner’s hand.)

**You need two feet to walk a mile** (walk in place),

To skip and hop (hop forward and then backward),

Or to dance awhile. (Wiggle and dance in place.)

**You need two friends to work as one** (link index finger with partner’s index finger)—

Helping each other (shake partner’s free hand with your free hand)

To get things done. (Give high fives.)

Allow children to find new partners, and then repeat the rhyme. Have children form a circle, and then ask:

  • **Why do we need to work together?** (To get things done; so we can do hard things; because God wants us to.)

  • **What jobs are easier when a friend works with you?** (Lifting heavy things; raking leaves; picking up toys.)

  • **What good things happen when we work as a team?** (We get more things done; we can have fun with our friends; we can carry out God’s plans.)
Say: *In the rhyme we just learned, you worked with your partner to do the motions. Sometimes we don’t have a partner to share with, but we have a forever friend who will never leave us. Do you know who that forever friend is? Jesus! Jesus promises that he will never leave us, so even if we sometimes feel alone, we aren’t. We can always call for his help. At home, at school, and at church, we need to work together, too.*  

**BIBLE POINT**  
God has special plans for us to work together. Let’s visit Pockets and tell her how Mordecai and Esther worked together.

### Closing

#### We Can Help!

**SUPPLIES:** yarn

Before this activity, tangle a length of yarn around Pockets. Bring out Pockets the Kangaroo, and go through the following script. When you finish the script, have kids wave goodbye and then put Pockets away and out of sight.

*(Pockets enters, struggling to untangle herself.)*

**Teacher:** What happened to you, Pockets? You’re a tangled mess!

**Pockets:** *(Frustrated)* Oh, Sarah was practicing her knots for Kangaroo Scouts, and she practiced on me! Now I’m stuck!

**Teacher:** Here, we’ll help you get untangled.

**Pockets:** No, no, no! I can do it by myself! I don’t need any help!

**Teacher:** But Pockets, things go much faster when we work together. In fact, great things can happen when we work with our friends. Children, can you tell Pockets who worked together in our Bible story today? *(Allow children to tell Pockets how Esther and Mordecai worked together to save the Jews from Haman’s plot.)*

**Pockets:** What’s going to happen to Esther? Will the king hold out his scepter? Will she die? Will she save the Jews?

**Teacher:** Next week we’ll learn what happened to Esther. But when she worked with Mordecai and Hathach, they came up with a plan to save the Jews. **God has special plans for us to work together,** too.

**Pockets:** *(Sheepishly)* Will you work with me to untangle these knots?
Lesson 11

**God’s Team**

**SUPPLIES:** Teamwork Treats from Option 3, CD player

**Say:** God has special plans for us to work together. Some of you worked together earlier and made a delicious snack for us to enjoy. Before we eat our tasty treats, let’s sing and celebrate God’s plans for us. Do you remember our Bible verse for today, from Psalm 138:8a? Let’s say it together:

“The Lord will work out his plans for my life.” Let’s sing a song about that.

Lead children in singing “The Lord Will Work Out His Plans” (Psalm 138:8a) to the tune of “Mulberry Bush.” You’ll find the song on track 17 on the CD. Encourage children to participate in the accompanying motions.

**SING**

The Lord will work out his plans for my life,
Plans for my life, plans for my life.
The Lord will work out his plans for my life,
And I will clap for joy. (Clap, clap, clap.)

The Lord will guide my every step,
Every step, every step.
The Lord will guide my every step,
And I will sing for joy. (La, la, la!)

The Lord will lead me day by day,
Day by day, day by day.
The Lord will lead me day by day,
And I will jump for joy. (Jump, jump, jump!)

The Lord will work out his plans for my life,
Plans for my life, plans for my life.
The Lord will work out his plans for my life,
And I will clap for joy. (Clap, clap, clap!)

After the song ends, turn off the CD player, and distribute the Teamwork Treats from Option 3. If you didn’t choose Option 3, provide some other tasty snack. Before children eat, pray: Dear God, thank you for working out your special plans for each of us. Help us work together as your special team. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Collect name tags for next week’s use before children leave.
Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Today I Learned...” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week’s topic.
**Lively Learning: Back-to-Back Relay**

Have children form pairs, and then have the children line up in their pairs at one end of the room. Show partners how to stand back to back. Place the *jewel ball* between the backs of the first two partners. Instruct partners to lean against each other to hold the ball in place. On your signal, have the first pair walk to the other end of the room and back. If they drop the ball, help them put it back in place. As other pairs continue the relay, remind them to lean against their partners and work together to keep the ball in place. Tell children that *God has special plans for us to work together.*

**Make to Take: Torn-Paper Pictures**

Set out crayons, glue, and different colors of construction paper. Invite children to create pictures of the Bible story by tearing the paper into shapes and gluing the shapes onto a large sheet of construction paper. Children may add details with crayons. Explain that Mordecai tore his clothes to show he was sad about the king’s decree.

**Treat to Eat: Sticky Sandwiches**

Set out graham crackers, marshmallow creme, plastic knives, and napkins. Have children form pairs, and have pairs stand side by side with one arm wrapped around each others’ shoulders. Each partner should only have one free hand. Instruct partners to help each other make sticky marshmallow-creme sandwiches. As children work, explain that we need to “stick together” and work as a team to see God’s plans for us.

**Story Picture: Esther and Mordecai Work Together**

Hand each child a photocopy of the “Today I Learned...” handout. Set out crayons, scissors, glue, and pieces of burlap. After children color their pictures, have children cut pieces of burlap and glue them to the blanket around Mordecai’s shoulders. Tell the children that Mordecai wore sackcloth to show that he was sad about the king’s law.
Today your child learned that God has special plans for us to work together. Children learned how Hathach, Mordecai, and Esther worked together to save the Jews from Haman’s evil plot. They discovered that God’s people can accomplish great things when we work together.

**Verse to Learn**

“The Lord will work out his plans for my life” (Psalm 138:8a).

**Ask Me...**

- Who wanted to hurt Esther’s people, the Jews?
- Who helps you do difficult things?
- When does our family work together?

**Family Fun**

- Make a family message center. Cut a slot in the side of a shoe box, and set crayons, markers, and a pad of paper next to it. Encourage family members to write messages or draw pictures for each other. Each evening, have a different family member be the “mail carrier” and deliver the messages. Talk about how Mordecai and Esther sent messages back and forth.

**Mordecai and Esther Work Together (Esther 4:1-17)**