



Big Idea: Courage means doing the right thing even when it's risky.

Primary Scripture: Esther 4:1–17 NLT

Supporting Scripture: Joshua 1:9 NLT, 2 Timothy 1:7 ESV

CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

[Share a story when you had to speak up or stand up even though it was uncomfortable.]

Have you ever faced a moment when you had to decide whether to speak up or stay silent? Do you do the right thing, even though it's uncomfortable or risky? Or do you just blend in and hope someone else takes care of it?

Maybe you were faced with a decision on whether to stand up for a kid being picked on when everyone else just laughed. Maybe it was saying “no” when your friend group was pressuring you to do something you knew didn't sit right with your faith or your values. Maybe it was being honest with a parent or teacher when lying would've been easier.

I remember being at a friend's birthday party when I was in middle school. It was a slumber party, and we had stayed up very late. I'm pretty sure that prank calls were made and articles of clothing were frozen. One of my friends said she brought a game for us to play and pulled out a Ouija Board. I honestly didn't know what it was when I first saw it, because the spelling and pronunciation didn't match at all. However, when they read the instructions, I knew exactly what it was. I knew it wasn't a good idea to try and contact spirits, but everyone else seemed into it. I didn't want to stick out, but I was also very uncomfortable. I finally spoke up, and it turned out some of my other friends were also uncomfortable. The girl who brought it rolled her eyes at me and even threw in a comment that I was being a baby. She did put it away though, and we played a different game.

Moments like these can feel big. They're usually full of nerves, questions, and second-guessing. You feel your heart racing. Your hands might shake. There's fear, but the Holy Spirit, the voice inside you says, “Do what's right.”

Moments like this require something more than just confidence. They require courage.

Courage isn't about being fearless. Courage is about choosing what's right even when you're afraid. And that's what we see in the story of Esther.

Esther was a young woman who found herself in a moment that could change everything. She was faced with an impossible choice: she could keep quiet and stay safe, or she could risk her life to speak up for people who desperately needed someone to fight for them.

Esther didn't start out as a superhero. She didn't sign up for to be involved in the moment she found herself in. She was scared, just like any of us would be. But when the time came, she stepped up. She showed courage.

And that's what we're talking about tonight. We are talking about the courage that comes when we trust God.

SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)

Let's dive into Esther's story. We'll start in **Esther 4:1–17**.

I want to set up some context before we read the passage. During this time, the Jewish people were in exile under Persian rule. Esther, a Jewish girl, had become the queen, but the king didn't know anything about her background. He married her because of her beauty.

Also involved in the story was a powerful leader named Haman, and he was furious that Queen Esther's cousin, Mordecai, would not bow to him. Mordecai would only bow to God and Haman's pride made him feel disrespected and enraged when he wouldn't bow to him. Because of this, he had convinced the king to sign an order to kill all the Jews.

He was devious about it and described the Jews as having different customs who refused to obey the Kings orders. He painted a picture that they were a threat to the Kingdom. Mordecai shared all of this with Queen Esther and asked her to intervene.

“When Mordecai learned about all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on burlap and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail. ² He went as far as the gate of the palace, for no one was

allowed to enter the palace gate while wearing clothes of mourning. ³ And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in burlap and ashes.

⁴ When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the burlap, but he refused it. ⁵ Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed as her attendant. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was troubling him and why he was in mourning. ⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square in front of the palace gate.

⁷ Mordecai told him the whole story, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews. He asked Hathach to show it to Esther and explain the situation to her. He also asked Hathach to direct her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people. ⁹ So Hathach returned to Esther with Mordecai's message.

¹⁰ Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai: ¹¹ "All the king's officials and even the people in the provinces know that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days." ¹² So Hathach gave Esther's message to Mordecai.

¹³ Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. ¹⁴ If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die." ¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.



Surface

- What's your go-to reaction when something doesn't go your way, venting, distracting yourself, shutting down, or something else?
- Have you ever had a moment where you laughed or cried during a prayer? What made it memorable?
- If you could ask God one honest question and be guaranteed an answer, what would it be?

Serious

- Why do you think it's easier to talk to friends about our problems than to God?
- What's something in your life right now that feels too big, confusing, or painful to handle on your own?
- How would your life look different if you made prayer your first response instead of your last resort?

Spiritual

- What's one raw or honest prayer you feel like God is inviting you to pray this week?
- Do you believe God really listens and responds when you pray? Why or why not?
- What would it take for you to build a real, daily rhythm of prayer in your life and how can your group help?

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