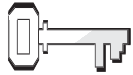


# An Unusual Competition



### References

Esther 1, 2; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 598–601



### Memory Verse

“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NIV).



### Objectives

The children will: **Know** that God’s children serve Him as they influence others for good.

**Feel** motivated to stand for the right in all things.

**Respond** by choosing to do what is right.



### The Message

God can use my life to influence others for good.

### Monthly Theme

People are attracted to God through the lives of His people.

### The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Queen Vashti angers the king when she ignored his command to appear at his banquet so he could show off her beauty. His counselors warn him that women throughout the kingdom will follow Vashti’s example and rebel against their husbands. The king decrees that Vashti is no longer queen.

The king invites young women throughout the kingdom to come before him so he can select a new queen. Mordecai, a Jew, has raised his uncle’s orphaned daughter. He encourages her to go before the king. The king chooses her to be his new queen. She is an influence for good in the palace. Her positive influence lays the groundwork for later events.

### This is a lesson about service.

God placed Esther in a position where she could serve Him and His people through her influence as queen. Today, He places us in positions where we can serve Him through our influence as we associate with others.

### Teacher Enrichment

“**Vashti**, an Old Persian name meaning ‘the desired one,’ or ‘the best one.’ The queen of the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes). . . . Secular sources know the name of only one wife of Xerxes, Amestris, whom the king had married before he ascended the throne. Vashti may have been one of Xerxes’ other wives, unknown from extra-Biblical sources” (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, p. 1147).

**Ahasuerus.** The father of Darius the Mede (Dan 9:1). A son and successor of Darius I on the Persian throne (486–465 B.C.), known in secular history as Xerxes. . . . The description of his character by contemporary historians agrees well with the impression one gains from reading the story of Esther, his queen. He was a weak character and was easily influenced by his courtiers and wives. Ezra 4:6 tells how the Samaritans attempted to influence ‘Ahasuerus,’ identified by many with Xerxes, against the Jews. Whether this effort succeeded or failed is not known” (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, p. 23).

## Room Decorations

If possible, create a simple palace scene in one part of the room. Pillars cut from old wallpaper with a marbled pattern can be very effective on the walls. A throne may be created by draping a throw over a chair. Adding a mat in front of the throne and some large garden pots will create the atmosphere of an exotic, ancient court.

## Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
<b>1</b> Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Rainbow Colors</i> B. <i>Hear and Draw</i> C. <i>What's That Smell?</i>	clear plastic cups, food coloring, water, bucket simple picture of house or different shape, paper, pencils three or four items with distinctive smells, such as perfume, onion, peanut butter, lemon, liquid soap; paper bags, paper, pencils, blindfolds
<b>Any Time</b> Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> perfume bottle or gold box pretty piece of fabric, paper, pencil, pins or cellophane tape
<b>2</b> Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story  Memory Verse Bible Study	Bible-times costumes, royal robe, two crowns, perfume, hand cream beanbag Bibles, four perfume bottles, tape
<b>3</b> Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Beautiful Characters</i>	throne, perfume/after shave lotion (optional)
<b>4</b> Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Sweet-Smelling Thanks</i>	small muslin/cloth drawstring bags or small plastic bags, potpourri, card

**\*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.**

# TEACHING THE LESSON

## Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Review last week’s memory verse and encourage the children to share any experiences from last week’s lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.



## Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

### You Need:

- clear plastic cups/containers
- food coloring
- water
- bucket

### A. Rainbow Colors

Fill each clear plastic container about three-fourth’s full of water and give one to each child. Let the children add one drop of food coloring of their choice, then experiment with different color combinations. Have a bucket for waste water.

### Debriefing

Ask: **What difference did one drop of food coloring make? Our actions are like the food coloring. We influence people every day. Influence means that people want to, or don’t want to, be like us. Our memory verse speaks about influence too. It says: “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Our Bible story today is about a girl who chose to be a good influence. Our message is:**



**GOD CAN USE MY LIFE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS FOR GOOD.**

Say that with me.

### You Need:

- simple picture of house or different shape
- paper
- pencils

### B. Hear and Draw

Ask one person to come to the front of the class. Show them the picture and ask them to describe it to the rest of the class. Tell the class that they cannot ask any questions, but should just draw what they hear described. Compare the drawings with the original when they are finished.

### Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **How easy was it to draw without seeing what you were drawing? Why? How easy was it to describe the picture? How much easier would it have been to draw a copy if you could have seen the picture? Often people look at us and what we do and follow our example. We want to do what is right, so what we do influences others for good. That’s what our memory verse says: “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Our choices can result in others making good or bad choices. Our story today is about a girl who made good choices and was a good example to everyone she met. Today’s message is:**



**GOD CAN USE MY LIFE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS FOR GOOD.**

Say that with me.

### C. What's That Smell?

Place each item in a separate paper bag. Blindfold each of the children in turn and let them smell each of the items. When they think they know what they are, they are to go back to their seat and write the names of the items on a piece of paper. When everyone has had a chance to smell the items ask: **What was the first smell?** Review each smell.

### Debriefing

Ask: **How easy was it to recognize each smell? When Mom is baking, how quickly does the smell spread through the house? How does it make you feel?** (Hungry. Want to eat something good.) **In the same way that the smell of something good baking spreads around the house and makes us feel hungry, our actions can make people want to do good. We call that influencing others. Our memory verse encourages us to do good. "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Our story today is about a girl who set a good example to everyone she met. Today's message is:**



**GOD CAN USE MY LIFE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS FOR GOOD.**

**Say that with me.**

**NOTE: Prayer and Praise appears on page 57.**

### You Need:

- three or four items with distinctive smells (perfume, onion, lemon, peanut butter, liquid soap)
- paper bags
- paper
- pencils
- blindfolds

## Bible Lesson

### You Need:

- Bible-times costumes
- royal robe for King Xerxes
- two crowns
- perfume
- hand cream

### Experiencing the Story

**Characters:** King Xerxes, Mordecai, Esther, Hegai

### Setting the Scene

Choose the children to mime the parts. Explain that they need to listen carefully. (Have an adult helper prompt each one as needed.) King Xerxes should sit on his throne.

Have the rest of the children form four groups, each with an adult helper, and do the following when they hear the names:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Group 1: Esther</b>      | Say "Ahh."  |
| <b>Group 2: King Xerxes</b> | Boys bow, girls curtsy.                                       |
| <b>Group 3: Mordecai</b>    | Nod head.   |
| <b>Group 3: Hegai</b>       | Rub cheeks with hands as if washing or rubbing cream on face. |

### Read or tell the story.

"Cousin Mordecai," said Esther. "Did you hear? King Xerxes is sending his men to bring all the unmarried girls to the palace. He's looking for a new queen." *[Esther stands up and looks excited.]*

"I heard," said Mordecai. "But he's not sending for all the unmarried girls. Just the pretty ones. I'm sure you'll be chosen." He smiled. *[Mordecai smiles.]*

"Oh, Cousin Mordecai," said Esther. "I can't leave you. You've taken such good care of me since my parents died." *[Esther shakes her head.]*

"Don't worry about me, Esther," said Cousin Mordecai. "It will be a good opportunity for you. Remember everything that I've taught you. But no matter what hap-

pens, don't let anyone know you are a Jew or that you are my cousin." *[Mordecai shakes finger to emphasize what is being said.]*

"But why, Cousin Mordecai?" asked Esther, looking puzzled. *[Esther looks puzzled.]*

"Because this is not our home. We are Hebrews. Although our people have lived in Persia for a long time, a lot of people don't like us. They want to get rid of us," said Cousin Mordecai quietly.

"I will do as you say, Cousin Mordecai," said Esther sadly. *[Esther looks sad.]*

"Don't look so sad, Esther," said Cousin Mordecai. "A lot of other beautiful girls will be at the palace. But remember, beauty is as beauty does. Be kind to everyone. That's the best kind of beauty." *[Mordecai smiles.]*

When Esther was taken to King Xerxes' palace, she remembered what her Cousin Mordecai had told her. There were a lot of beautiful girls at the palace, and some of them were not very nice. But Esther remembered what Cousin Mordecai had said. She was kind to everyone. *[Esther smiles.]*

The king's helper, Hegai, noticed how kind Esther was. He liked Esther and quickly chose her to begin beauty treatments. *[Give each child a little hand cream to rub into their hands.]* He also gave her special food. Then he gave her seven servant girls and moved them all to the best part of the women's quarters.

For a whole year, Esther received beauty treatments at the palace. She was bathed, oiled, and perfumed every day. *[Pass around perfume to smell.]* The beauticians fixed her hair, her face, and her fingernails. The designers made her new clothes and shoes. *[Esther mimes trying on a new dress.]*

Meanwhile, Esther's Cousin Mordecai

walked back and forth near her rooms every day. *[Mordecai paces back and forth.]* He couldn't talk to Esther. And she couldn't talk to him. But they could see each other from far away. *[Esther and Mordecai wave to each other.]* Cousin Mordecai wanted to make sure she was all right. But he didn't want anyone to know that they were related. If they did, they would know Esther was a Jew.

One day Hegai came to Esther, smiling. *[Hegai comes to Esther, smiling.]* "Esther," he said. "The king wants to see you."

"Really? What shall I say to him?" asked Esther.

"Just be yourself," said Hegai, smiling.

"I'm so nervous," said Esther, excitedly. "I can't even think right now."

"Esther, I think the palace people and the king are really going to like you," smiled Hegai. "You are ready to go there. You will say the right things."

Hegai was right. Everyone liked Esther, especially the king. He liked Esther more than any of the other young women he had seen. So he made her his queen. *[Place crown on Esther's head.]*

### Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask:

**What advice did Mordecia give to Esther when she moved into the palace?** (Be kind to everyone.) **How did the king's servant, Hegai, treat Esther?** **What kind of beauty treatments did Esther receive? How would you like to spend a year using special lotions and creams every day?**

**Before Esther became queen, she had a whole year of using lotions and creams and perfumes to make her more beautiful. What made her truly beautiful?** (Her character, what she was like on the inside.)

**God can use us as well to be a good influence on those around us. Let's say our message for today:**



**GOD CAN USE MY LIFE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS FOR GOOD.**

### Memory Verse

Say the first word of the memory verse. Then toss the beanbag randomly around the circle. As each child catches the beanbag, they say the next word of the memory verse. After going through the memory verse three times, start to cover up one word at a time. By the time all words are covered up, the children should know the memory verse.

**"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NIV).**

### Bible Study

Tape the following verses, one each, onto the four bottles. Divide the children into four groups and let each group choose a bottle. Adults assist as needed. Say: **The Bible tells of many people who influenced others to do right or wrong. Find and read the text to find out who and how they influenced others:**

- 1 Kings 18:30-38 (Elijah)
- 2 Kings 5:2-4 (captive maid)
- Daniel 1:8, 9 (Daniel)
- John 7:45-52 (Nicodemus)

Allow time for each group to report.

### Debriefing

Ask: **What kind of influence did each of these people have on those around them?** (good, positive)

**Can you think of anyone in the Bible who had a bad influence on others?**

**What does it mean to influence someone? Let's repeat today's message together:**



**GOD CAN USE MY LIFE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS FOR GOOD.**

#### You Need:

- beanbag
- memory verse words written where all can see

#### You Need:

- Bibles
- four perfume bottles
- tape

## 3

## Applying the Lesson

### You Need:

- throne
- perfume/after-shave lotion (optional)

### Beautiful Characters

Before Sabbath School, think of something good about each child in the class. Think of some positive things that could be said to a visitor, such as they have a lovely smile which reflects God's love to those around them.

Say: **Esther was very beautiful. She was lovely to look at, but she was also lovely inside. We are going to play "Pass before me." I will be the king, and when you pass before me, I will tell you one lovely part of your character.**

As the children pass by, say something positive and have a helper put a dab of perfume on the girls' wrists or a dab of aftershave on the boys' faces.

### Debriefing

Say: **Take a deep breath. What can you smell?** (perfume, aftershave) **How is your life like the sweet smell of perfume or aftershave?** (When we do nice things, we can be a positive influence.)

**How did you feel when I said something nice about you? What is more important: that we look nice outside or are nice inside?**

**The lovely parts of your character are a gift from Jesus. He wants us to influence others for good so they can come to know Him too. Remember our message:**



**GOD CAN USE MY LIFE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS FOR GOOD.**

## 4

## Sharing the Lesson

### You Need:

- small muslin/cloth draw-string bag or small plastic bag per child
- potpourri
- card stock

### Sweet-Smelling Thanks

Let the children fill the small bags with potpourri and pull the drawstring tight.

Say: **Think of someone who has been a good influence in your life. On your card write "Thank you for being a good influence."** Attach the card to one of the strings.

**Take a moment to plan how and when you will give the potpourri to the person.**

### Debriefing

Ask: **Would anyone like to share one way someone has been a positive**

**influence on them? With whom are you planning to share your bag?**

Allow time for sharing, but do not force those who may not want to share.

Say: **God can use anyone who is willing to spread His love to those they meet. Let's say our message together:**



**GOD CAN USE MY LIFE TO INFLUENCE OTHERS FOR GOOD.**

### Closing

Pray that the children will always be a good influence on the people they are with at home and in school.

# Prayer and Praise **Any Time**



## Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study and review last week's memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



## Suggested Songs

"I Will Make You Fishers of Men" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 135)

"Give Me Oil in My Lamp" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 132)

"We Are His Hands" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 129)

"I Would Be True" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 117)

"This Little Light of Mine" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 134)



## Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Emphasize the theme of service and how we, too, can serve God where we are.



## Offering

Say: **Kindness is like sweet perfume to others. We serve others by being kind. Another way to serve is to bring our money to help others learn about Jesus.**

### You Need:

- perfume bottle or gold box



## Prayer

Say: **When we pray, it is like coming before our King—King Jesus. We can tell Him everything. Write or draw something for which you want to thank or ask King Jesus. When you are finished, come and pin (or tape) it to the cloth behind the throne.**

When everyone has finished, gather in a circle and pray specifically for each child's concerns. (Large class, divide into small groups with an adult facilitator in each.) You may want to use this idea throughout the month.

### You Need:

- pretty piece of fabric to hang behind the "throne"
- small squares of paper
- pencil
- straight pins or cellophane tape



## An Unusual Competition

### References

Esther 1, 2;  
*Prophets and Kings*,  
pp. 598–601

### Memory Verse

“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NIV).

### The Message

God can use my life to influence others for good.

*Have you ever entered a competition? Did you win? Today’s story is about a beauty competition with a very special prize. It may have happened like this:*

“Cousin Mordecai,” said Esther. “Did you hear? King Xerxes is sending his men to bring unmarried girls to the palace. He’s looking for a new queen.”

“I heard,” said Esther’s Cousin Mordecai. “But he’s not sending for all the unmarried girls. Just the pretty ones. I’m sure you’ll be chosen.” He smiled.

“Oh, Cousin Mordecai,” said Esther. “I can’t leave you. You’ve taken such good care of me since my parents died.”

“Don’t worry about me, Esther,” said Cousin Mordecai. “It will be a good opportunity for you. Remember everything that I’ve taught you. But no matter what happens, don’t let anyone know you are a Jew or that you are my cousin.”

“But why, Cousin Mordecai?” asked Esther, looking puzzled.

“Because this is not our home. We are Hebrews. Although our people have lived in Persia for a long time, a lot of people don’t like us. They want to get rid of us,” said Cousin Mordecai quietly.

“I will do as you say,” Esther nodded.

“Don’t look so sad, Esther,” said Cousin Mordecai. “A lot of other beautiful girls will be at the palace. But remember, beauty is as beauty does. Be kind to everyone. That’s the best kind of beauty.”

When Esther was taken to King Xerxes’ palace, she remembered what her Cousin Mordecai had told her. There were a lot of beautiful girls at the palace. Some of them were not very nice. But Esther was kind to everyone.

The king’s eunuch, Hegai, noticed Esther. (Eunuchs were chosen to watch over all the women at the king’s palace.) Hegai noticed Esther’s kindness to others. He quickly chose her to begin beauty treatments. He also gave her special food. Then he gave her seven servant girls and moved them all to the best part of the women’s quarters.

For a whole year, Esther received beauty treatments at the palace. She was bathed, oiled, and perfumed every day.

The beauticians fixed her hair.

The designers made new clothes and shoes for her. Hegai gave her anything she asked for.

Meanwhile, Esther’s Cousin Mordecai walked back and forth near her rooms every day. He couldn’t talk to Esther. And she couldn’t talk to him. But they could see each other from far away. Cousin Mordecai wanted to make sure she was all right. But he didn’t want anyone to know that they were related. If they did, they would know Esther was a Jew.

One day Hegai came to Esther, smiling. “Esther,” he said. “The king wants to see you.”



“Really? Oh, my. What shall I do?” asked Esther. “What shall I talk about?”  
 “Whatever you want,” said Hegai, smiling.  
 “I’m so nervous,” said Esther, excitedly. “I can’t even think right now.”  
 “Esther, don’t worry,” said Hegai. “I think the palace people and the king are really going to like you.”

Hegai was right. Everyone liked Esther, especially the king. He liked Esther more than any of the other young women he had seen. So he made her his queen.

## Daily Activities

### Sabbath

- With your family, collect sweet smelling flowers or pine cones. Place them on newspaper to dry. When they are dry, put them in a pretty bowl as potpourri.
- Read your lesson story together. How many Bible stories can your family think of that are connected with things that smell?
- Thank God for our sense of smell.

### Sunday

- Make a crown for Queen Esther. On the crown write the memory verse. Place the crown where you can see it every day. During worship, teach the verse to your family.
- Ask your family to name some countries that have kings and queens today.
- Who is your country’s leader? Ask God to bless that person.

### Monday

- During worship, ask if someone in your family has a passport. If so, ask to look at it. Read Esther 1 and 2 together. What nationality was Esther? What nationality are you?
- Pray that God will guide the leaders of your land.

### Tuesday

- During family worship, ask your family to name something they like to smell.
- Think of one thing that makes each person in your family beautiful inside. Tell them what

you think. Why is it important to be beautiful inside? Read 1 Samuel 16:7 together for a clue.

- Thank God for making us beautiful inside.

### Wednesday

- With your family, play follow the leader. Then read 1 Corinthians 11:1 to discover whom we should follow in order to be a good influence.
- Ask your family to help you find the kingdom of Medo-Persia on a Bible map. Then find the area on a modern day map.
- Sing a song of praise. Then ask God to help you be a good influence.

### Thursday

- With an adult’s help do a secret service for someone in your family today.
- During worship, give each person a small piece of paper. Ask them to write the name of someone they can influence. Fold the papers in half and put them in a dish. Pick one, and let the person tell one way they could be a good influence on that person.
- Review your memory verse together. Then ask God to help you make right choices.

### Friday

- During family worship take turns reading from Esther, chapters 1 and 2. Act out the story with your family. Say your memory verse together.
- Talk about ways your family can serve others. Ask God to help your family be better servants.