


Bible Point

God gives us the courage to carry out his plans.

Bible Verse

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Growing Closer to Jesus

- Students will
- talk about what scares them,
 - hear how God gave Esther courage, and
 - offer their fears to God through prayer.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis

- Esther intervenes for her people.

**Esther 3:8-11;
4:1-5:8;
7:1-10**



Haman, one of King Xerxes' high officials, was angry that Mordecai, Esther's cousin, would not kneel down and pay him honor (Esther 3:5). Because of that anger, Haman plotted to get rid of Mordecai and all the other Jews in Persia. Xerxes accepted Haman's plan (Esther 3:8-11). When Esther learned of the plot through her cousin Mordecai, she knew she must tell her husband, the king, about it.

Esther's hesitance to approach the king is understandable. Her statement in Esther 4:11 was absolutely true: She could expect death if she approached the king without being summoned. And since the king hadn't called for her in over a month, it seemed unlikely that he would call for her in the immediate future.

Mordecai encouraged Esther by saying, “Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?”

In an amazing twist of fate, when Esther went before the king and Haman's plot was later revealed, Haman himself was hanged on the very gallows he'd had built for Mordecai. Human evil had been foiled and God's plan fulfilled when God gave Esther the courage to stand up for her God and her people.

Prayer

- Read Acts 4:13.
- Think about the courage it took for Peter and John to stand and speak for Jesus before the Jewish leaders. When has God given you that same type of courage?
- Pray: God, give me the courage I need to follow through on the plans you have for me. I want to be an example to the children I teach so that they, too, may call on you for courage.

Before the Lesson

- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed on the chart.
- Make photocopies of the “Hands-On Fun at Home” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your students.
- Pray for your students and for God’s direction as you teach the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

	What Students Will Do	Classroom Supplies	Learning Lab Supplies
Attention Grabber	Fearful Fun —Make sculptures that represent their fears, and discuss how hard it is to control fears.	Bibles, large sheets of newsprint, CD player	
Bible Exploration & Application	Obstacles —Construct an obstacle course, read the story of Esther from the Bible, and discuss how God gave Esther courage.	Bibles, construction paper, marker, cardboard, paper towel or wrapping paper tubes, tape, scissors	
	Facing Our Fears —Think of situations that make them fearful, read Jeremiah 29:11 and Psalm 138:1-3, and make skits to demonstrate how God wants to give us courage to deal with scary situations.	Bibles, slips of paper, scratch paper, pencils, 2 small boxes, CD player	 
	From Sour to Sweet —Taste unsweetened and sweetened lemonade, listen to Jeremiah 29:11, and discuss how God turns unpleasant situations into good ones.	Bible, water, pitcher, unsweetened lemonade mix or lemon juice, bowl of sugar, spoons, cups, CD player	
	Tied Up in Knots —Make a human knot to demonstrate how fear sometimes makes us feel tied in knots, and then pull the knot out to show how trust in God can make our fears disappear.	CD player	

Welcome



As kids arrive, talk with them about how last week's lesson affected their lives. Ask questions such as, "How did seeing a cross remind you to trust God's plans last week?" and "How did God work out a hard situation for you in a surprising way?"

Tell kids that whenever you shake the *noisemaker*, they are to stop talking, raise their hands, and focus on you. Explain that it's important to respond to this signal quickly so the class can do as many fun activities as possible. Practice the signal two or three times.

teacher tips

Third- and fourth-graders like challenge, but they fear failure. Use this lesson to teach them that God is their safety and strength. Although situations may be scary or difficult, we will not fail if we are accomplishing God's plans. We may be afraid at times, but God will give us the courage to boldly proclaim his love.

Attention Grabber

■ Fearful Fun

SUPPLIES: Bibles, large sheets of newsprint, CD player



track 15

Have kids form pairs. Give each pair two large sheets of newsprint.

Say: **Think of a time you were really scared. Or think of something that scares you quite often. Describe your fear to your partner. Then brainstorm with your partner about how you could use the newsprint to make a sculpture that looks like your fear. For example, if you're afraid of a neighbor's dog, you could tear a shape of a snarling dog. If you're afraid of speaking in front of people, you could make a crumpled-paper sculpture of a microphone. I'll give you four minutes to share with your partner and finish your sculptures.**

After four minutes, shake the *noisemaker*, wait for kids to respond, and have them sit in a circle. Have volunteers share their fears and how their newsprint shapes represent those fears. When volunteers finish describing their sculptures, ask:

- **How hard is it to control your fears?** (I can't control my fears at all; I just get scared.)
- **What do you do to find the courage to handle your fears?** (I find my parents and talk to them; I pray.)

Say: **In our Bible story today, Esther faces a situation that could cause her and her people to die. She is afraid, but she knows that ►God gives us the courage to carry out his plans. And God does have plans for us, as well as for Esther.**

Ask: • **What do you think are some of God's plans for us?** (God plans for us to get jobs when we grow up; God plans for us to tell others about him.)

Say: **Our Bible verse for today tells us about the plans God has for us. Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 29:11: ►“ ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster; to give you a future and a hope.’ ”**

Ask: • **What kinds of things does this verse say God has planned for you?** (Good things; not plans for a disaster.)

• **How can knowing about the kinds of plans God has for you help you face the fearful things in your life?** (I know God doesn't plan disaster for me, so I can believe he will make something good happen.)

teacher tips

Some kids might share fears that seem trivial to you or to the other students, but the fear is real to that person. Make sure kids respect each other's feelings.

teacher tips

If you prefer, have kids use modeling clay or even markers and paper to create representations of their fears.

◀ BIBLE POINT



◀ BIBLE VERSE

Say: **God wants to help us be brave to carry out his plans for us. God helped Esther have the courage to carry out the plan he had for her. Before we hear about Esther, let's sing a song about our Bible verse and then hear a modern-day story about someone who needed courage.**

Play track 15 on the *CD*, and lead the children in singing “The Lord’s Plans” (Jeremiah 29:11). The words are in the back of your teacher guide.

Bible Exploration & Application

■ Obstacles

SUPPLIES: Bibles, cardboard, paper towel tubes or wrapping paper tubes, tape, scissors, construction paper, marker



Place the supplies in a central location. Have students form two teams.

Hold up the *smiley face bouncy ball*, and explain that each group will work to make a track for the other team to use with the ball. Encourage groups to use their incredible collaborative creativity to make a course that is challenging, but not impossible, for the ball to roll through once it starts at the beginning. For example, kids might want to think about using the supplies to create an incline to help the ball through the course.

Allow five minutes for teams to work on their courses. Then have teams switch tracks for a test run with the *smiley face bouncy ball*. Each team will attempt to get the ball to successfully run through each course. Encourage everyone to cheer on the other team and to applaud each other’s creativity.

Ask: • **What was challenging about this activity?** (It was hard for the ball to go through the track; it was hard to create a course that was fun and challenging.)

• **How did you feel during your run as the smile ball got caught in obstacles the other group made?** (It wasn’t a big deal; I was upset that the course was so hard; I wanted it to get through the whole thing.)

• **The ball faced obstacles on the course. What obstacles do students your age face?** (Family situations; not fitting in; bullies; not having enough money to do what everyone else does.)

• **How does it feel to face some of those obstacles?** (Frustrating, because it’s hard to stand out; angry, because it’s not fun to get picked on; lonely, because we just want to hang out with friends.)

Say: **Queen Esther found herself in a situation that seemed full of obstacles, but God gave her courage to handle her fears and face the obstacles. Hold up the *smiley face bouncy ball*. She might not have been smiling the whole time, but she did have courage from God to keep going and carry out his plans.**

Ask the two groups to form four groups. Assign each group one of the following Scripture passages: **Esther 3:8-11** and **4:1-6**; **Esther 4:7-17**; **Esther 5:1-8**; and **Esther 7:1-10**. Ask students to assign roles within their groups: a Reader to read the verses, a Reporter to report to the rest of the class, and a Discussion Leader to encourage the group to talk. Instruct groups to decide what specific obstacle Esther faced in each passage and write what the obstacle was somewhere on an exposed piece of paper along their obstacle course.

teacher tips

As you teach third- and fourth-graders, keep in mind the following aspects of their spiritual development:

- They are able to accept that there are some things about God we don’t understand.
- They are ready to relate individual Bible events to the scope of Bible history.
- They recognize the difference between right and wrong and are able to make deliberate choices about actions.

After a few minutes, ask the first two groups to report on their discussion and what they wrote on the obstacle course.

Say: **Queen Esther is in a serious situation! I'm going to set the smile ball going through one of the tracks again. As it goes, I want you to silently imagine you're Esther. Try to imagine what you're thinking and feeling as you face this obstacle.**

Repeat for the second two groups. Run the *smiley face bouncy ball* through their obstacle course with the same instructions to put themselves in Esther's shoes.

Ask: • **How would you have felt if you were Esther and faced death twice?** (I would have been afraid; I would know that God was on my side.)

• **Do you think you would have responded the way Esther did? Why or why not?** (Yes, because I would do the right thing; no, because it's too risky.)

• **How did Esther find the courage to handle her fears?** (She talked to her cousin Mordecai; God helped her.)

Say: **Esther was really scared. She faced two death threats, one from Haman (HAY-man), who wanted to kill her people, and another when she had to face the king. But Esther didn't let her fears stop her from doing what was right. She knew that ► *God gives us the courage to carry out his plans.* She gave her fears to God.**



When placed on an incline, the ball will run straight through a paper-towel tube. Imagine a roller coaster that runs downhill with a few bends and twists along the way. If the ball doesn't fit through the cardboard tubes you've supplied, show kids how to cut along the side and pull the tubes apart.



The plans God had for Esther were very important. He planned to save all the Jews. God also had plans for Jesus, and Jesus needed courage to carry out God's plans.

Ask: • **What were some of the plans God had for Jesus?** (God wanted Jesus to show us how much God loves us; God wanted Jesus to die for our sins to save us.)

• **Why did Jesus need courage to carry out these plans?** (Lots of leaders got very mad at Jesus; Jesus knew he was going to have to die.)

• **Who gave Jesus the courage to carry out God's plan?** (God did; God sent an angel to help Jesus.)

God's plan was for Jesus to save the world by dying on the cross and being alive again. God gave Jesus the courage to do God's will. Let's find out how God can do that for us, too.

■ Facing Our Fears

SUPPLIES: Bibles, slips of paper, scratch paper, pencils, 2 small boxes, CD player



track 15

Cue the CD to track 15, "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11). Set two boxes and all of the Learning Lab items on a table. Give each person two slips of paper and a pencil. Say: **I'd like you to write your name on one of your slips of paper. On the other, I'd like you to write a brief description of a situation you might face that would make you feel afraid. Examples of these situations**

might be reading aloud in class or standing up to a bully. When you're finished, please put the slip with your name on it in this box (indicate box) **and the slip with your situation on it in the other box.**




teacher tips

Try to keep the skit groups roughly the same size by adding or deleting characters from the situations when you read them. Try to avoid duplicate situations. Be sure to let groups know which characters you added or deleted.

BIBLE VERSE ▶


teacher tips

Make sure to clean the car after each use.


BIBLE POINT ▶


WARNING:
CHOKING HAZARD—

Children under 8 yrs. can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. Adult supervision required. Keep uninflated balloons from children. Discard broken balloons at once. Balloons may contain latex.


teacher tips

As you lead discussions with your class, ask open-ended questions. Rather than rephrasing questions as statements and asking children to agree, wait for kids to answer on their own. Respect what class members say, and let the kids teach you. You'll be surprised how much they know!

Give kids a few minutes to write their names and scary situations on the slips of paper and put them in the boxes.

Say: **I'll draw a situation out of the first box, and then I'll draw name slips out of the other box to form a skit group to help us explore these situations further. I'll give your group your situation slip. Hold onto it until I tell you what else you need to do.**

Draw names for groups of three or four, and give each group a situation. When all of the groups have been formed, have groups read their situations. Then say: **In a minute, I'm going to ask you to think of a skit to demonstrate your situation. But first, you'll need some more information. I'd like you to read a Bible passage that tells us how God wants us to react in scary situations. When you're finished reading the Scripture, begin creating your skit. Be sure to have the characters in your skit use the information that you found in the Bible to help them. You'll need to make sure everyone in your group has a part in the skit, and you'll need to use at least one Learning Lab item as a prop in your skit. I'll play the song based on our Bible verse for today, Jeremiah 29:11, in the background as you work.** Have kids read **Psalm 138:1-3** and ▶ **Jeremiah 29:11** in their groups.

Then say: **Ready? Start creating!** Play "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11) while kids work.

Give kids several minutes to work on their skits. As they're working, circulate among the groups and offer suggestions and help. (If kids need it, you might also want to give them scratch paper and pencils for brainstorming.)

After about five minutes, have groups share their situation skits. Lead the rest of the class in applause after each skit. Collect the Learning Lab items. Then say: **Good job! As we saw in your skits, God can turn our fear into courage if we ask him to. When we trust him with our fears, ▶ he will give us the courage to carry out his plans.**

When we carry out God's plans, God makes situations come out for our best, just as he did for Esther. That doesn't mean we'll always have it easy or never experience difficult situations. But we can trust God to help us carry out his plans.

HANDS-ON BIBLE

Give each child a piece of paper, a straightedge, and a pencil. Have kids make a calendar page for the current month (or the upcoming month if the current month is nearly over).

Say: **Sometimes, we're afraid of what will happen in the future. But God is already there in your future right now. He knows what will happen to you, and he has it handled. Open your *Hands-On Bibles* to Jeremiah 28. Read the "Pick a Day, Any Day" activity, and complete it, using the calendars we just made.**

When kids finish, say: **Don't forget to hang your calendar up at home and read Jeremiah 29:11 when you reach your starred events.**



■ From Sour to Sweet

SUPPLIES: Bible, water, pitcher, unsweetened lemonade mix or lemon juice, bowl of sugar, cups, spoons, CD player



track 15

Before class, make lemonade without adding sugar.

Cue the CD to track 15, “The Lord’s Plans” (Jeremiah 29:11), and have a volunteer read ► **Jeremiah 29:11** again.

Say: **God has planned good things for us. When we trust him with our fears, ► God gives us the courage to carry out his plans. To help us remember how God gives us courage in difficult situations, let’s make something to drink.**

Give kids cups and spoons. Pour a cup of unsweetened lemonade for each person. Have kids taste their drinks. Then ask:

• **What did you think when you tasted the lemonade?** (It doesn’t taste right; I didn’t like it.)

• **How is drinking sour lemonade like being in a difficult situation?** (I didn’t like the lemonade, and I don’t like being in a hard situation.)

Say: **Let’s pretend that you’re facing a difficult situation. It could be the fear you wrote on your slip of paper for our skits. That situation is like your glass of lemonade. It’s sour and unpleasant.**

Hold up the bowl of sugar. **Then you pray and ask God to give you courage to face the situation. God’s courage is like a teaspoon of sugar. God gives us just the right amount of courage. When we have God’s courage, he will change a difficult situation into something good. There is an old saying that goes, When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!**

Ask: • **When people say, “When life gives you lemons…” what are they talking about?** (I think it means hard things in your life.)

Say: **To show how that works, take a spoonful of sugar, and turn your sour drink into sweet lemonade. As you do that, let’s listen again to our Bible verse song.**

Have kids add sugar and drink their lemonade. As they do, play “The Lord’s Plans” (Jeremiah 29:11) (track 15).

Shake the *noisemaker*, and wait for kids to respond.

Say: **God has special plans for each of us. He knows us and knows what will be best for us. When we trust God, he turns difficult situations into something good. ► God gives us the courage to carry out his plans. Let’s read about what happens when we look to God for courage.**

Read ► **Jeremiah 29:11** once more and ask:

• **How can this passage help you have courage in a situation that’s difficult for you?** (It’s easier to trust God when I know he has good plans for me.)

• **How did the courage God gave Esther turn her sour situation into a sweet one?** (She was able to save all her people; the king didn’t kill her for coming to him.)

Say: ► **God gives us the courage to carry out his plans. We can always trust God to watch over us and guide our lives. Our closing activity today will help us remember that.**



◀ **BIBLE VERSE**

◀ **BIBLE POINT**



It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over will help kids remember it and apply it to their lives.

◀ **BIBLE POINT**

◀ **BIBLE VERSE**



◀ **BIBLE POINT**





Closing

■ Tied Up in Knots

SUPPLIES: CD player



Say: Today we learned that ► **God gives us the courage to carry out his plans. Sometimes when we're really scared or worried about something, our fears may make us feel like we're tied in knots inside, just as Esther's fears may have made her feel tied in knots.**

When I talk about feeling like you're tied in knots inside, I'm talking about the tight, uncomfortable feeling in your stomach you get when you're scared or very nervous.

Have kids stand in a tight circle, shoulder to shoulder, so that they can reach hands in the center. Ask kids to take hands randomly; they shouldn't know whose hands they're taking. Emphasize the importance of not letting go of the hands they're holding for this activity. Point out the knot that kids have made.

Ask: • **How does it feel to be tied in knots inside by fear?** (I feel tight in my throat; my stomach feels upset.)

Say: **God doesn't want us to feel tied in knots; he wants to give us courage to face our fears and follow his plans for us. If we ask him for courage, he will make the knots of our fear disappear.**

Choose a leader. Have that child let go of one hand but keep hold of the other hand and walk slowly out of the knot, leading the other kids. One by one, kids will be pulled out of the knot they made.

Have kids make the knot again. Say: **Now I'd like you to think of one situation in your own life right now that is tying you in knots. Praying is the best way to get courage from God. Take a moment to silently turn that fear over to God. Ask God to turn that fear into courage. Then follow the leader out of this knot again.**

Pause for a moment. Then choose another leader to lead kids out of the knot. Play "The Lord's Plans" (Jeremiah 29:11) (track 15) once again as the kids get untangled.

Close with a prayer thanking God for giving us courage.



Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the "Hands-On Fun at Home" handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your kids. Encourage kids and parents to use the handout to spark meaningful discussion on this week's topic.

Hands-On Fun at Home

LESSON 8



God gives us the courage to carry out his plans.



Bible Verse:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope”
(Jeremiah 29:11).

Talk It Over

Have each person answer the following questions:

- What makes you afraid? _____
- How can you find courage to face that fear?

- What is the most courageous moment you’ve ever had?

- How can you help each other find courage?

Check It Out

Read Proverbs 28:1.

How can you be as bold as a lion this week?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:2.

How does God help you to be brave?

Read Psalm 37:5-6.

What scary situation can these verses help you with this week?

Family Fun

On an old bedsheet or a large piece of white

fabric, draw a large rainbow that has six arcs. Write “red,” “orange,” “yellow,” “green,” “blue,” and “violet” on the arcs to help you remember the colors. Draw a cloud at the bottom of each end of the rainbow. Color the arcs with markers, or cut and glue on brightly colored fabric scraps. Make your rainbow as colorful as you can!

Then read Romans 8:28, and discuss how God turns stormy situations into something beautiful, like a rainbow after a storm. Write problems your family has faced on the clouds. Then copy the verse above your rainbow to remind you of how God can work things out for good.

Hang your completed rainbow in your family room. Each time your family faces a scary or difficult situation, write the problem on one of the clouds, and thank God when he works it out for good.



Fun Food

With your family, serve a family snack. Prepare lemonade

without sugar. Give each person a piece of sour candy, such as a sourball or a lemon drop. As family members eat the candy and taste the drink, talk about how Esther faced “sour” experiences as queen when Haman tried to kill her people. Then tell your family the story of Esther’s bravery and how God gave Esther the courage to do what was right. Each time you tell of something brave Esther or Mordecai did, have your family members add a little sugar to their lemonade and take another taste. When you finish telling the story, pray together for the courage to do what’s right as Esther did.

