

Age-Level Overview

	Open the Bible	Activate Faith
Lower Elementary		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: We don't have to keep our faith in God secret.	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles	SPARK RESOURCES: None
CLOTHES MAKE THE CREATURE: Kids color lizards to both hide and be seen.	SUPPLIES: None	SUPPLIES: Paper, markers, scissors, crayons, patterned fabrics, Lizard Pattern
Upper Elementary		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: We're all precious to God.	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers	SPARK RESOURCES: None
PRECIOUS METALS: Kids test the properties of common metal objects.	SUPPLIES: None	SUPPLIES: Newspapers, shallow plastic dishes, paper towels, metal and plastic knives, clear glass jars, hot water, cold butter, aluminum foil, scissors, paper, magnets, wooden craft sticks, sewing needles, toothpicks, bobby pins, metal washers, poster or white board, marker, tape
All Kids		
WORKSHOP FOCUS: We are created in God's image, and we are unique.	SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles, Spark Bibles, Spark Bible Stickers	SPARK RESOURCES: None
CALLED TO BE UNIQUE!: Kids celebrate their unique selves by experimenting with skin color.	SUPPLIES: None	SUPPLIES: Paper (white, brown, yellow, red, and blue), plastic containers, spoons, cornstarch, solid white shortening, measuring cup, food coloring (red, green, yellow, and blue), craft sticks, water, paper towels, pencil



Visit www.sparksundayschool.org for more Spark content. Watch a short Lesson Prep Video that will prepare you and give you confidence to explore this Bible story with the kids you are leading. You will also find a downloadable Family Page for this rotation's story filled with ideas for families to use to explore this story and live out their faith at home.

Workshop Focus: We don't have to keep our faith in God secret.

Keep these tips in mind as you welcome kids to the workshop and explore the story together.

- Each week, remember to welcome kids to the rotation. Keep in mind that for some kids it may be the first time they are visiting your workshop!
- If kids have heard the story several times during previous weeks, read it again! Kids learn through repetition, and every workshop will explore the Bible story in a slightly different way.
- Remember that the Shepherds are there to support you as they accompany kids each week.
- Be sure to visit www.sparksondayschool.org to download the Family Page for this story. Make copies of it and ask Shepherds to distribute it during the Wrap Up.

Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Queen Esther Storytelling

Welcome to Science. Have you ever had to wait for the right time to do something? Like the right time to eat dinner? Or the right time to go to a party? When else have you had to wait? (*birthdays, going on a trip*).

In today's story, the main character is Esther. She is keeping a big secret. She has to wait until the right time to tell the secret to her husband, the king. As we read the story, try to find out two things. Number one, what is Esther's secret? Number two, how does she know when it is the right time to tell her secret? Let's open our Bibles and read the story of Queen Esther. It starts on page 153.

What was Esther's secret? (*that she was Jewish*)

How did she know when it was the right time to tell her secret? (*when it would save the lives of the Jewish people*)

It was important for Esther to keep her faith hidden as a secret. Why? (*many people did not like Jewish people*) **We are lucky. We don't have to keep our faith hidden as a secret. We can show it proudly.**

Spark Resources
Spark Story Bibles

Supplies
None

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Clothes Make the Creature

Set Up:

- Make copies of the Lizard Pattern— from page 121 of this guide
- Spread the fabrics out in separate areas to create lizard habitats.

Activity Instructions

Here are a few things I noticed in today's story. Esther wore dazzling clothes. The king had a crown. Haman wanted people to bow down to him. The king gave Mordecai a special ring. What do these things have in common? (*People were trying to get attention. They wanted to be special. They wanted to be noticed.*)

Sometimes we like to be the center of attention. The same is true with animals. Male peacocks have big, fancy feathers to show off to the females. Moose have huge antlers to show they are strong. Wolf leaders expect all the other wolves to do what the leader wants. What other animals can you think of that like to show off? (*male cardinals, colorful butterflies, bullfrogs*)

Sometimes we like to hide. When Esther was adopted by her cousin, Mordecai, she moved to a new place where she wasn't supposed to tell anyone that she was Jewish. She put on new clothes and makeup so that she would look just like everyone else.

There are several animals that change to match their environments, too. Does anyone know of an animal that can change? (*chameleons, arctic fox, ptarmigans*)

We're going to experiment with changes to get noticed, and changes to blend in.

1. Distribute paper lizards. **Lizards are amazing animals. Usually they are hard to see. Some of them have skin that can change colors so it blends in with their habitat. Anoles (e-no-lees) are one type of lizard. The color of their skin can change depending on the temperature and where they live.**
2. **Look around the room. The different fabrics are the habitats where the lizards live. Pick one habitat for your lizard. Color one side to be a camouflaged anole. It's easier to color it first and then cut it out. Leave the other side blank.** Distribute crayons and scissors.
3. After the kids have colored their lizards and cut them out, have them put them on their chosen habitats. Do they want to make any changes to make their anoles even harder to see?
4. **Anoles are very protective of their home areas. They don't want other anoles to move in too close. The skin on the under side of an anole's neck is called the dewlap. When anoles want to get attention, the color of the**

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Paper

Markers

Scissors

Crayons

Patterned fabrics

Lizard Pattern (one for each kid)

dewlap gets very bright and they puff it full of air so everyone can see it. Color the other side of your lizard as a look-at-me anole.

5. After the kids have colored their lizards, have them put them on their chosen habitats. Do they want to make any changes to make their anoles stand out even more?
6. **Look at both sides of your lizard. Whether it is colored to blend in or stand out, you still know it is a lizard.**

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received them, and come together for Wrap Up.

Remember Esther? When Esther was young, it was better for her to blend in with the other girls and be quiet about her faith. It was like she was camouflaged. When she became queen, she realized it was time for her to stand out and speak up about her faith and protect the Jewish people. Whether she was in hiding or getting attention, she stayed true to her faith. God calls us to be faithful, encouraging us to be who God has created us to be in our bodies, minds, and hearts. Repeat the first line of our closing prayer in a whisper after me to remind us of Esther's quiet patience. Then repeat the second line with a shout to remind us of when Esther revealed her faith and saved her people.

Spark Resources
Family Pages



Supplies
None

Prayer Time

Dear God,

There are times when we can better serve you by being quiet. There are other times when we should loudly proclaim our faith. We praise you, God!

Amen.

Workshop Focus: We're all precious to God.

Keep these tips in mind as you welcome kids to the workshop and explore the story together.

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Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Queen Esther Storytelling

Welcome to Science. Imagine you were trying to explain team sports, like soccer or baseball, to me. My questions might be: What is a team? How do you choose a team? How do you know who is on your team? What does a team do? Can you switch teams?

In today's story, Esther has to leave one type of team and become part of another. Where will her ultimate loyalty be? Let's find out by turning to the story of Queen Esther. We'll start in the book of Esther, Chapter 2, which begins on page 534, using these texts: 2:16-18, 3:5-6, 8:3-8. Before reading, say: Esther is a queen. She is also a Jew, and many people in the country of Persia did not like Jews. So at first, Esther's cousin Mordecai told Esther not to tell the king that she was a Jew. But, when an evil man named Haman threatens to kill all the Jews, Esther gathers her courage and confronts the king.

What were the two teams Esther belonged to? (*Jewish, the royal family*)

Do you think she was a good team player? (*yes*)

What was the winning play that she made? (*She saved the Jewish people.*)

Spark Resources
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
None

Do you ever get anything when you are a winner? (*a medal, a trophy, a ring*)

Winning is a precious thing. And precious things are exactly what we're going to study today.

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Precious Metals

Set Up:

- Use the newspaper to make small group work areas.
- Place the other materials in the middle of each work area.

Activity Instructions

Today's story included golden crowns, rings, and scepters. Why are these things considered to be valuable? (*They are rare. They cost a lot of money.*)

Are these things very useful? (*Yes. No. The ring was used to seal letters. Crowns identify important people.*)

1. **The crown, ring, and scepter were made out of metals. Let's make a list on the poster of things made out of metal or with metal in them.** (*coins, cars, cans, houses, lamps, pens, scissors*) **That's a good start. If you think of anything else, add it to the list.**
2. **In 486 to 465 B.C.E., when this story occurred, people knew how to mine and use gold, copper, tin, iron, and brass. Metals were, and still are, very important. We're going to find out why.**
3. **Form groups of 3 to 4 kids. Each group should find a work area. One experiment will take a bit of time, so let's set it up first. Fill your jars with very hot water. Have the Shepherds do this. Stick one end of a plastic knife, a metal knife, and a wooden craft stick in the water. Put a small dab of cold butter on the top of each. Put the jar to the side, but look at it every few minutes.** Metal conducts heat better than wood or plastic. The heat from the water will move up the metal knife faster and melt the butter sooner.
4. **Fill your shallow dishes with cool water. Stroke a needle 100 times on a magnet, making sure you always rub it the same direction. Have the Shepherds do this. Do the same with a toothpick. Rub each across the top of your hair. Gently lay one in each bowl of water and watch what happens.** (*They both float. The needle turns around and then stops.*) **Look at the needles in every group's bowls. What do you notice?** (*They all point the same direction. The toothpicks don't.*) **By magnetizing the iron in the needle, you've turned it into a simple compass. That's another thing metal is good for.**
5. Is there anything happening with the butter?

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Newspapers
Shallow plastic dishes (2 for every 3 kids)
Paper towels
Metal and plastic butter knives (1 for every 3 kids)
Clear glass jars (1 for every 3 kids)
Hot water
Cold butter
Aluminum foil
Scissors (1 pair for every 3 kids)
Paper
Magnets (2 for every 3 kids)
Wooden craft sticks (1 for every 3 kids)
Sewing needles (1 for every 3 kids)
Toothpicks (2 for every 3 kids)
Bobby pins (1 for every 3 kids)
Metal washers (10 for every 3 kids)
Poster or white board
Marker
Tape

6. **Cut a piece of paper in half. Cut a piece of aluminum foil the same size. Fold each one in half as many times as you can. Compare them side by side. Which one is thicker?** (*the paper*) **Many metals are *malleable*. They can be hammered or rolled thinner than most other things, or they can be pulled into thin wires.**
7. **Cut a piece of paper about 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide and 4 inches (10 cm) long. Roll it into a skinny tube and tape it together. Bend this tube in half to make a paper bobby pin. Holding the paper and metal bobby pins each by one arm so they look like U's, thread washers, one at a time, onto the pins. Which one can hold more?** (*the metal one*) **Metal is very strong.**

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received them, and come together for Wrap Up.

Metals are strong, flexible, and good conductors. They are very useful, and we consider them to be precious. Your faith can be like a metal. Your faith can be so strong that it can be used in service to others. Your faith can be flexible in the variety of ways you can practice it. And your faith can be a good conductor as your actions inspire the faithfulness of others. To God, your faith is as good as gold. Think now of the most precious thing you own. Be ready to share it in today's closing prayer.

Prayer Time

Dear God,

You took Esther, who had nothing, and put a golden crown on her head. For Esther, the value of the crown was not in the gold, but in the opportunity it gave her to help her save your people. Help us to be like Esther and realize that our faith is more precious than (*my skateboard, my guitar, my cell phone . . .*). Your love is the most precious thing we have.

Amen.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None

Workshop Focus: We are created in God's image, and we are unique.

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Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Queen Esther Storytelling

Welcome to Science. Whom do you admire? Is there anyone you'd like to be like? (*sports player, a famous actor, a singer*) **We say that these people influence you. This means that you might try to dress, talk, sing, play, or act like that person. You might read the things they read, listen to the music they like, or eat the same foods they do.**

While you are watching others, others are watching you. In today's story, we see Esther blend in with those around her in the palace, and we see her acting courageously for others. We'll read Queen Esther starting on page 153 of our Spark Story Bibles. Ask the older kids to open their Spark Bibles to page 534 and place a Spark Bible Sticker in the margin noting a part of the story that is most interesting to them.

Esther had the courage to be the person God called her to be. Let's look at ourselves a bit and see how are unique!

Spark Resources
Spark Story Bibles
Spark Bibles
Spark Bible Stickers

Supplies
None

Activate Faith (25 minutes)

Called to Be Unique!

Set Up:

- Make lotion base for 8 kids by mixing 2 cups of cornstarch with 1 cup of shortening.
- Keep the food coloring in a well-supervised location.

Activity Instructions

In today's story, Esther stepped forward and was proud to be the person God called her to be. Let's see how unique we all are just by looking at our skin color: no two are the same!

1. **Find a partner. Put your bare arms side by side. What do you notice?** (*The colors are different.*) **Put a piece of white paper under your arms. How does that change how you see your skin?** (*It makes our arms look darker, yellowish, reddish, bluish, etc.*) **One at a time, put each of the other colors of paper under your arms. Notice how each seems to make your skin color change just a bit.**
2. **Our skin color really can change. One example is that you might look green when you are sick. What other colors do we use when we are talking about our skin?** (*red with embarrassment, white with fright, yellow with fear, browned by the sun, blue when you are cold*)
3. **Most of those colors occur due to changes inside your body. Red faces and ears happen when more blood is near the surface. A very pale face occurs when there is less blood near the surface. To change the color of our skin from the outside, we need to put something over it. We're going to do that now. Everyone needs to put one spoonful of lotion base into a plastic container and get a craft stick.**
4. **Now, let's try to make a bit of skin lotion just the same color as our partner's skin. Work together and use a craft stick to put a very small dab of lotion base on your partner's arm. We will use the food coloring, one drop a time, to try to match our partner's skin color. Every time you add a drop, record the color and number of drops on a sheet of paper. Use the craft stick to mix in each new drop. Shepherds, go around and help each pair with color choices to get them started.**
 - **Get just one drop of food coloring at a time.**
 - **Every time you add a drop, record it on a sheet of paper.**
 - **Use your craft stick to mix in each new drop.**
 - **After each color change, put a tiny dab on your partner's arm.**
 - **If your lotion gets too colorful, ask for more base or if you can start again.**
 - **Use the paper towels and water to wipe off lotion or clean up any spills.**
5. Let the kids experiment and test their creations until they get as close as they

Spark Resources

None

Supplies

Paper (white, brown, yellow, red, and blue)
Plastic containers
Spoons
Cornstarch
Solid white shortening
Measuring cup
Food coloring, red, green, yellow, and blue
Craft sticks
Water
Paper towels
Pencil

can. Encourage them to share hints and their mixtures. When everyone is done, gather the group together. **Wasn't it fun to try to match one another's skin color? We all are so unique! Let's share the recipes we made.** (*My partner's skin is two drops red, three drops yellow, one drop blue.*)

Esther was unique. Mordecai was unique. King Ahasuerus was unique. God used all their gifts and abilities to do good and accomplish God's will. God created us in God's image and God is all colors!

Send (5 minutes)

Wrap Up

Remind the Shepherds to distribute the Family Page for this story if the kids haven't already received them, and come together for Wrap Up.

For most of today's story, it was very important for Esther to blend in, to look and act like the people around her. Even while she worked to hide who she really was, Esther remained true to her faith. When trouble came, Esther did not hesitate to reveal her true identity. She was willing to risk everything she had in order to save the Jewish people. It isn't a bad thing to be a part of a different group. The important thing is to remain true to who you really are and be willing to stand up for what is right. Think of a group you belong to and be ready to add it to today's closing prayer.

Prayer Time

Dear God,

Thank you for all the things that make us unique. May we be proud of the people you have created us to be. May we remember that we are made in your image and give you praise forever!

Amen.

Spark Resources

Family Pages



Supplies

None

Lizard Pattern

