

I Have a Special Purpose

Quarter 5 | Lesson 12 | Life Skills

1. **Connecting:** Do an activity to show that all people are special to God.
2. **Teaching:** Learn about Esther and God's special plan and purpose for her and her community (Esther 1—10).
3. **Responding:** Think and pray about God's special plans for their own lives.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- *The Action Bible*, images of Esther
- Memory Verse poster
- *The Action Bible*, images of Esther
- Pencils
- Student Pages

Teacher Devotion

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14

God placed Esther in a unique position to do exactly what He had called her to do. The same can be said for Moses, Joseph, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the apostle Paul. The Bible is full of ordinary people whom God placed in unique positions to do extraordinary things to impact their communities and further His kingdom purposes. The same is true for you. Spend a few minutes thinking about the unique and extraordinary opportunities God has given you.

Think about your circumstances: where you live, the people you know, your talents, and your personality. No one else in the world is exactly like you. And no one else in the world is exactly the right person to do what God has called you to do. As you prepare for this lesson, ask God to reveal to you more of His plan for your life. He can and will use you in big and little ways to work in the hearts and lives of the teens you teach. Your life will be a living example of how God can use each person to help the community. Pray that He will continue to help you see new and unique ways to use your gifts and talents in His ministry for His glory.

Teacher Tip: Over the past few weeks, the teens have learned some difficult things about sexual abuse. This final lesson encourages them to have a positive view of themselves and to believe that God has a purpose for their lives. Young people who develop a healthy view of themselves are more likely to honour their bodies and have the courage to ask for help in dangerous situations.

This lesson does not include sensitive topics, so all of your students—male and female—can be together in class.

Lesson Time

1. Connecting: Do an activity to show that all people are special to God.

Teacher Tip: Your male and female students are back together for this lesson. It is possible that you have not talked with some of your students for several weeks. Therefore, greet every student by name as he or she arrives. When students know you care about them, they will begin to feel that your class is a safe place.

Have the students line up in order from tallest to shortest. Then divide the line in half. Have the taller half of the class stand on 1 side of your area and the shorter half stand on the other side. Explain that you will ask some questions and the groups should shout their answers.

- **Does God love the shorter people in the class more than the taller people?**
- **Does God notice people who are short? Does He notice people who are tall?**

Have all the young women stand on 1 side of the area and all the young men stand on the other side.

- **Does God love the girls more than the boys? Does He love the boys more than the girls?**
- **Does God see and care about the girls? Does He see and care about boys?**

Tell the students to sit down.

God notices each person He created. He notices you. You matter to Him. During Bible times, people brought animals to the temple and sacrificed them to God. Rich people would bring valuable animals such as sheep, goats, or cattle. Poor people would bring birds, often sparrows. Sparrows are common birds that were cheap and unimportant. Let's read a Bible passage that talks about sparrows.

If possible, have a teen read Luke 12:6–7 aloud from the Bible.

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Luke 12:6–7

- **Turn to someone sitting near you. Explain the verse in your own words to each other.**

Give students about 1 minute to share with their partners. Then call on 2–3 students to share their answers with the class. Then have students answer the next 2 questions as a class.

- **What did you learn about God in these verses?**

Students may answer that God notices the sparrows, and He notices everything about us.

- **What did you learn about yourself in these verses?**

Students may answer that they are special to God. God knows everything about them. He even knows how many hairs they have on their heads. They are very valuable to God.

Teacher Tip: The same students may always want to answer every question. Try to call on several different students. Assure the class that you want to hear from everyone, but you will only call on 2–3 students per question so that you can keep the lesson moving.

2. Teaching: Learn about Esther and God’s special plan and purpose for her and her community (Esther 1—10).

Today we will hear a true story about a young woman in the Bible named Esther. Many things in her life were very ordinary, and some were even bad. But God had a special plan for her life, and He put her in a unique position to help others. The same is true for you, though God’s plan for you is different. No matter what has happened in your life, you are special, and God has a special purpose for your life.

Teacher Tip: If you have a Bible, open it to the book of Esther and show it to your students. It is important for them to understand that the story you are telling comes from the Word of God.

If you are using the images from *The Action Bible*, show them as you tell the story.

Almost a hundred years before Esther, the Babylonians defeated the Jewish people. They took many of the Jewish people captive as slaves. The Persians later defeated the Babylonians and inherited the captive Jewish people.

Esther was an orphan girl living in Persia. Her uncle, Mordecai, cared for her. As an orphan, Esther may not have seemed important or special.

The Persians worshipped many gods, but the Jewish people worshipped only the One True God. Because Esther was Jewish, she was just one of many people living as captives in Persia. So she may not have seemed important or special.

Have you experienced things that have made you feel unimportant? Think about those things. That may be how Esther felt.

Pause for a minute for the teens to think about ways they relate to Esther.

Optional: If you are using *The NIV Action Study Bible*, your students can read more about Esther in the “God in Action,” “People in Action,” and “Faith in Action” sections on page 433.

During this time, the king of Persia became angry with the queen and decided to look for a new queen. He called for all the beautiful young women in the land to be brought to the palace and trained for a year. He would then choose a new queen from among them. Esther was taken to the palace and lived away from her uncle. She and the other young women prepared for the time they would meet the king. Let’s read what the Bible says about when Esther met the king.

She was taken to King Xerxes . . . Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen.

Esther 2:16–17

As queen, Esther had all of her needs met. Many people probably thought she was important and special now. But she was expected to obey whatever the king said, including having sexual relations with him whenever he wanted. Esther was not a wife for the king in the way God intended for Christian marriage. If Esther did not please the king, he could have her killed or banished as he did with the queen before Esther.

Have you ever been afraid that your actions might anger someone and it might endanger your life? Think about that experience. Then think about how Esther must have felt.

Some time later, a powerful man named Haman convinced the king to make a law that would allow Haman to kill all the Jews in Persia. Remember, the king did not know that Esther was Jewish.

Have you ever been worried that something horrible might happen to you or the people you care about? Think about how you felt in that situation. Then think about how Esther must have felt.

Esther's uncle, Mordecai, told Esther to beg the king for mercy to save her Jewish people. But Esther was afraid because no one was allowed to talk to the king unless invited. Going into the king's presence uninvited could cause a person to be killed! Esther was also afraid to let the king know that she was Jewish. Listen to the advice that Mordecai gave her.

Have a student read Esther 4:14 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, use the verse printed here.

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14

- **What do you think the first part of the verse means: "For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's family will perish?"**

Students may answer that if Esther did not talk to the king, God would still save His people. He would use someone else to save them.

- **What do you think the second part of the verse means: "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"**

Students may answer that God put Esther in position as queen of Persia at this time in history so that she could talk to the king and save the Jews. This may have been God's special purpose for her.

Have you ever done something courageous or wise or kind that no one else could have done? Have you ever felt that others depended on you and that no one else could help them? Think about that situation. Then think about how Esther must have felt.

Esther told Mordecai and the rest of the Jews to seek God with her. With God's wisdom, Esther came up with a plan. Esther asked to see the king and invited him to a banquet. Because she had found favour with him, he attended her banquet. He was pleased with Esther and asked her what he could do for her. She revealed to the king that she was Jewish and asked him to save her people. Listen to what Esther said to him.

"If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king." "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king."

Esther 7:3–4

- **What did Esther do to gain favour with the king?**

She asked God for wisdom. She treated the king with respect by hosting a banquet and by speaking to him respectfully. She honoured his position of authority.

- **How do you think the king responded?**

The king could not change the law because, in Persia, even the king had to obey the law. But he did make a law that the Jews could defend themselves. And with God's help, they did. Many of the people who had tried to kill the Jews died, including Haman. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, became an important advisor to the king. Esther was special to God and He used her to help her people.

Bad things had happened to Esther. She was an orphan. She was a queen who had to please her king whenever he wanted. Her life and the lives of those she cared about were threatened. Though God did not cause these bad things to happen to Esther, He did use her experiences for good. In spite of her difficult situation, Esther trusted God and He worked in her life for His purposes.

There was only 1 Esther, and God had a purpose for her. He had a plan for her to help her community. Similarly, there is only 1 you, and God has a purpose for you. Here are some things we can learn from Esther's life.

Esther listened to godly advice. When she learned about the plan to kill all the Jews, Esther did not make the decision on her own. She asked for advice from her uncle Mordecai, whom she knew to be a godly and wise man. Godly advice will always align with what is in the Bible.

Esther used her God-given skills and talents. Besides being beautiful, she was intelligent. She knew how to approach the king in a way that would gain his favour instead of make him angry. Esther was also courageous. She was willing to risk her life to do what God had called her to do.

Esther was concerned for others. She knew that her purpose was not just to protect her own life. It was to protect the lives of all of the Jewish people. When God reveals His purpose in our lives, it is never selfish. God works for our good and for the good of others.

3. Responding: Think and pray about God's special plans for their own lives.

Whoever you are, you are important to God. Whatever your talents are, God can use them to make a difference for others in your community and your world. He has a special purpose for your life. Even if someone has hurt you or mistreated you, in God's eyes you are beautiful and honourable. Your life is filled with purpose. With God's help, you can discover what that is. Listen to what God said to His people through the prophet Jeremiah.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

- **How do you think we can discover the purposes and plans God has for our lives?**

Allow 2–3 students to share their thoughts.

- **When Esther needed to discover her special purpose, what did she do?**

Allow students to recall the answers from the lesson.

Read the following questions to the students and pause between the questions. The students will not answer them aloud. Instead, they will use their fingers to write the answers on the palms of their hands.

Esther listened to godly advice. Think of someone who can give you godly advice and use your finger to write that person's name on the palm of your hand.

Pause to allow the students to do this.

Esther trusted God's direction for her life. Think of an area where you need God's direction and use a finger to write 1 word about that on your palm.

Pause to allow the students to do this.

Esther used her God-given skills and talents. Think of a skill or talent you have that God can use in your life or others' lives. Write it on your palm.

Pause to allow the students to do this.

Esther thought of others. Think of a need you see in your family or your community that you can help to meet. Write it on the palm of your hand.

Pause to allow the students to do this.

Teacher Tip: Encourage every teen to participate. If a student cannot think of a personal strength, you or the other students can help him.

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, the students can do this activity on them.

Now place the hand that you wrote on over your heart. The words you wrote can help you to discover God's special purpose for you. When you follow God's direction, you will be surprised at what He will do with your life!

Have a student read the Romans 8:28 aloud from the Bible. Show the Memory Verse poster if you are using it.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

This verse promises that God works for the good of those who love Him. He can use the things we have learned from our good and bad experiences. He can use the things we like about ourselves and the things we do not like. He can take all the things that have happened in our lives and use them for good when we follow His purpose.

With your hand over your heart, pray or think about your special purpose. You may have an idea of something you can do to help others and bring glory to God. Pray about that. You may not yet have an idea of what God's special purpose for you is. Pray about that. You may not be sure you want the future God has planned for you. Talk to Him about that.

Give the students 1–2 minutes to pray. Then have them form a circle. Invite the students to go around the circle and share the special purposes they thought of. If they choose not to share, they can say, "Pass." Remind them that they are special and God has special purposes for each of them, even if they do not know them yet.

Close class by praying a blessing based on Romans 8:28:

Blessing: May you rest in the knowledge that God will work all things together for good in your life. May you find God's purpose for your life, and may you have hope in His special plan for your future.

Family Connection: Encourage the teens to ask a family member, "What are your hopes for the future?" They can then share that God has a special purpose for each of us.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Great Are You Lord" by All Sons and Daughter: <https://youtu.be/vQLMnPYoR9k>