



Day 5: Wilderness Unites

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Esther 4:12-17

Scripture Focus: Esther 4:14

“In fact, if you don’t speak up at this very important time, relief and rescue will appear for the Jews from another place, but you and your family will die. But who knows? Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family.”

Theological Summary: Sometimes we have to do the right thing, even if it is hard or scary.

Daily Goals...

- Assure one another that we are not alone.
- Bravely share our hopes, dreams, and fears.
- Listen for God’s voice through the wisdom of those who have been or are in the wilderness.
- Imagine ways to connect within our communities for help and support.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Crowns for All	LEARN CREATE	Make paper plate crowns
__ Talents Abound	SERVE	Talents teach others
__ Freeze and Thaw	PLAY LEARN	Adaptation of freeze tag
__ Better Together	PRAY	Create a group prayer
__ Twister Challenge	PLAY	Adaptation of Twister
__ Wilderness Walk	PRAY LEARN	Look for signs of God
__ Draw against time	PLAY CREATE	Create group pictures
__ Colorful Prayers	PRAY	Sidewalk chalk prayers

Leader notes: Campers may need a little more background on Esther and her story. Consider the video from [Bim Bam Productions](#) for some additional information on Esther.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, please help me to recognize my strengths, give me the courage to stand up for what I believe in and to help others. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Crowns for All

LEARN

CREATE

Supplies: Paper plates, crayons or markers, and scissors.

How: Read Esther 4:12-17. Remind campers that Esther had to use both her gifts and her courage. What are you good at? What gifts has God given you? For what tasks or situations would God choose you? Campers should color the rim and middle of a paper plate. Then, draw lines across the center portion to create triangles (like cutting a pizza). Help campers as needed to cut on the lines to separate the triangles without cutting the edge. On each triangle, campers can write or draw a talent they have. Once they are done, the triangles can be bent up to form the points of a crown. Each camper can wear their crowns as a reminder of the gifts they have.

Try This: Create a start and finish line. The goal is for the campers, as a group, to get from the start line to the finish line by creating a path with blocks (or other uniform material). The leader calls out an activity or trait, such as singing, drawing, playing soccer, being kind, playing the violin, etc. Each camper who considers themselves talented in that medium places a block on the ground to create a path to the finish line.

Talents Abound!

SERVE

Supplies: None.

How: Read Esther 4:12-17. Invite campers to think of ways that they need to be brave. What can they do to help others be brave? As a group, come up with a few situations where someone must be brave and someone else must help them. Divide campers into groups to act out the scenes for others. Invite campers to look for chances to help others be brave throughout the day.

Try This: Act out the scenes of bravery for another group of campers. What other scenes can they think of?

Freeze and Thaw

PLAY

Supplies: Paper towels or tissue paper.

How: Read Esther 4:12-17 together. Remind campers that Esther had to balance wanting to help the Jewish people and her role as queen. Provide each camper

with a piece of tissue paper to place on their head. Campers move around the space as directed (run, hop on one leg, etc.) The campers keep moving as long as the tissue paper stays on their head (no hands!). If a camper uses their hands to hold the tissue paper on their head, they must “freeze.” If the tissue falls off, the camper must “freeze.” Another camper, while keeping the tissue on their head, thaws the frozen camper by handing them their tissue, and being “thawed,” they can resume playing. See how long the group of campers can keep moving!

Try This: Try acting out the story, like in “Talents Abound,” and with the tissue paper on everyone’s heads.

Better Together

PRAY

Supplies: Paper, markers, and a stapler.

How: Create a group prayer about being brave. Invite campers to imagine situations where they might need to be brave (school, doctor’s office, meeting someone new, trying a new talent, playing a sports game). Divide campers into pairs to choose a situation and draw a picture to show it. Write at the top of each page: ‘God, please help me to be brave when....’ After all the pages are complete, read the book as a group.

Try This: Make an additional copy of the book and share it with another group.

Twister Challenge

PLAY

Supplies: Small kickballs (or soccer balls).

How: Read Esther 4:12-17 together. Remind the campers that Esther did not want to act alone, but asked others to support her. Mark a finish line and a starting line. Divide campers into pairs. Give each pair of campers a ball and ask them to stand back-to-back, joining arms if possible. Each pair of campers must try to kick their ball across to the finish line while alternating who kicks the ball. Campers should be encouraged to help other teams if balls go astray.

Try This: Set a far target and ask the group to move to that location with a different person kicking a ball till everyone has kicked it at least once. They must repeat the process of assuring everyone gets a turn until the entire group and the ball arrive at the destination.

Wilderness Walk

PRAY LEARN

Supplies: None.

How: Read Esther 4:12-17 together. Take a walk around camp. Periodically stop and ask the campers to look for signs that God is present. Find a few challenges along the way, for people or animals, such as a stream to cross, a rock to crawl over, a street to cross, etc., and discuss how God helps us to find our way around the obstacles. Close with the prayer of the day.

Try This: After walking, invite campers to draw a picture of an obstacle they had seen and the ways they think God could help someone overcome it. Hang these around your gathering area.

Draw Against Time

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: Paper, crayons, and a timer.

How: Each camper has 15 seconds to draw something on paper. After 15 seconds, everyone passes their paper to the next camper, who has 15 seconds to draw on the new paper. Continue until every camper has had time to draw on every piece of paper. Show each picture to the group and discuss how working together affected the pictures. How do they think Esther would work with others to help her people? What can they do to help others?

Try This: Invite the campers to each add to a large mural by drawing things that help them be brave, or something that remind them that God is with them. They could also do a Scrabble-style image by writing the names of people who show them how to be brave and overlapping letters to connect all the names. Keep adding names of people as long as there are spaces to start from.

Colorful Prayers

PRAY

Supplies: Sidewalk chalk, and squirt bottles or containers of water.

How: Create a sidewalk chalk design illustrating prayers. Assign a color to a variety of categories of prayer. For example, praying for someone close to you might be yellow, prayers for the campers themselves might be red, prayers for the environment might be green, etc. Campers think about who and what they want to pray for and create a design or picture using

those colors. If desired, hand out spray bottles and let the campers lightly spray water onto their design; it will blur the edges and make it look like a watercolor painting. Alternatively, sidewalk chalk can be dipped in water, and the colors will be more vibrant.

Try This: If chalk is not available, use markers and a spray bottle on paper to cause a similar effect.

Story Resources

The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Cole

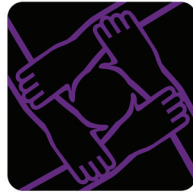
This children's book details the experience of Ruby Bridges, a student at the beginning of school integration in 1960. Ruby bravely attended school as the only black child in a white school. Good to explore the themes of being brave.

Tyrone the Horrible by Hans Wilhelm

A small dinosaur named Boland finds the strength to speak up against a bully.

Speak Up, Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell

Molly Lou Melon tells the truth and sticks up for her friends.



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Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Esther 4:12-17

Scripture Focus: But who knows? Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family.

Theological Summary: God calls us to move bravely toward justice, no matter the position we find ourselves in.

Daily Goals...

- Assure one another that we are not alone.
- Bravely share our hopes, dreams, and fears.
- Listen for God’s voice through the wisdom of those who have been or are in the wilderness.
- Imagine ways to connect with our communities for help and support.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Pulse of Community	PRAY	Rhythm activity
__ Two Houses	PLAY LEARN	Card houses and community
__ Take Something Out	PRAY LEARN	Shadows and fasting
__ More In Common	PLAY	Deeper “getting to know you”
__ Linked	PLAY SERVE	Family-style meal
__ Get In There	PLAY	Game of obstacles
__ Only One	SERVE CREATE	What one person can do
__ Un/Connected	CREATE PRAY	Finding unexpected connections

Leader notes: Esther 4:12-17 is a story in need of context. Courage, justice, and community are only words without the stories that come with them.

Prayer: “God of community, help us to see connections among your people, with one another, and with You. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Pulse of Community

PRAY

Supplies: Mini marshmallows and toothpicks.

How: In advance, place toothpicks into the flat center of each marshmallow. Invite campers to sit comfortably in a circle, with one hand in their lap. Invite campers to feel their wrists to find their pulse point. Give each camper a marshmallow with an attached toothpick and invite them to set the marshmallow on the pulse point. Invite the campers to watch as the marshmallow moves with their pulse. What do they notice most? Are we normally paying attention to this part of ourselves? Why/not? Invite campers to contemplate this simple sign of life and where God might be in it.

Try This: Invite campers to look around the circle at other campers' pulses. Do they begin to move in time with one another, or all keep a similar, steady beat? What does it mean to recognize this sign of life not only in ourselves, but in our community?

Two Houses

LEARN PLAY

Supplies: Bible, playing cards, and table or flat surface.

How: Read Esther 4:12-17 together. Explain that Esther is from one community, but is now a part of another. Ask the campers if they have ever struggled to be part of two communities at the same time. Do both communities need Esther? Invite the campers to work together to build two houses of cards, close enough that they can share a roof. Ask the campers to reflect on how events in one house might impact the other. Challenge the campers to build new houses further from each other. Invite them to think about how one might still impact the other. How do events in one community impact another?

Try This: Try building one house much larger than the other. Houses of about the same size and strength might affect one another, but does a house that is much smaller still matter to the larger one?

Take Something Out

PRAY LEARN

Supplies: Bible (Optional: paper, pencils, sidewalk chalk).

How: Read Esther 4:12-17 together. When Esther decides to talk to the king, she asks her community and her servants to stop eating and drinking for three days. Explain to campers that this is a ritual known as fasting, where the faithful remove something from daily life to help them pray and focus on something else—it doesn't have to be a fast from food, just from something one normally expects to have. Invite campers to find shadows under trees. Invite the campers to focus, not on the shadows, but on whatever is around the shadow. What details are more noticeable when the shadow is ignored? What is it like shifting focus from the most obvious thing to other things? Where is God in the less obvious?

Try This: Invite campers to trace the shadows on paper or the sidewalk and then fill in the non-shadow details.

More In Common

PLAY

Supplies: More In Common Handout.

How: Invite campers to answer questions from the handout by moving to the side of the activity space the leader indicates for each answer. Invite campers to look around each time they move to see who has moved with them and who is on the other side. Afterward, ask them what it is like to know that you have this thing in common, and if any answers that mattered more than others when they looked to see who was with them.

Try This: Ask campers to answer the questions again, but this time leave a space in the middle for those who are somewhere in between the two possible answers. Can all questions be answered easily? What does it mean to be somewhere in the middle?

Linked

PLAY SERVE

Supplies: Larger rubber bands.

How: At mealtime, invite campers to sit around a table together, and then to join their wrists together with rubber bands. Invite campers to go about eating their meal. What happens? We often talk about how we are linked and can work together, but what is it like practicing it in this way? How can we sustain one another and also take care of ourselves?

Try This: Divide campers into pairs and invite them to remain linked past mealtime (bathroom excluded). Are we usually so aware of the person next to us? Are we usually so aware of how we are linked, and how might greater awareness of others impact our choices?

Get In There

PLAY

Supplies: Large paper, masking tape, and sticky notes.

How: In advance, tape a large paper to the wall. Divide the campers into two teams, one with three people in it. The smaller team guards the poster paper, and the larger team tries to get past them to add their sticky notes in a heart shape. The campers may not touch one another. This is true for both teams. They should not try to tag but move their bodies to block the other team.

Name that there are often obstacles to following God's call in the world, but we have to find a way to get past them. As the campers what makes it hard to follow God and what gifts they have that help us live out God's call in our lives.

Try This: Rather than one poster to fill in, try 2 or 3, in varying places. What is it like to guard so many? What is it like to meet the goal?

Only One

CREATE SERVE

Supplies: Sidewalk chalk, paper, and pens or pencils.

How: Ask campers to think about what one person can do to help others and create a list with their answers. Ask the campers if there is a difference between what one person can do and what one person can do alone. Make a list together of things "one person can do" that make a difference to others. Find a path in a commonly used area of camp and copy the list into the space with chalk, starting with the title: "One Person Can..."

Try This: Ask the campers whether there are things that can be done by many "one persons". What difference does it make whether someone is acting alone or as part of a community?

Un/Connected

CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Cardstock paper, black markers, crayons or colored pencils, masking tape, wall, and sidewalk chalk (optional).

How: In advance, tape a piece of paper to the wall for each camper. Invite campers to draw one long, scribbled line all over the page. Invite campers to study what they have drawn—what connections are they able to make? Do any shapes or patterns stand out that weren't first apparent? Invite campers to color them in. What unexpected connections might we make when we study the world around us? What shapes and patterns may exist between seemingly unconnected parts of our world?

Try This: Instead of individual pictures, invite campers to follow the same instructions together on the sidewalk with chalk. What patterns and shapes might we see when we look together? Do we all see the same patterns?



Story Resources

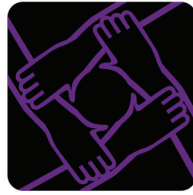
The Who Was? Show, Episode 1—Ghandi and Benjamin Franklin (Netflix, 2018): Short episode describing the lives and achievements of two very different people who both found ways to speak truth to power, at great risk.

More In Common Handout

Who:

- ...likes chocolate ice cream or vanilla ice cream better?
- ...likes brussels sprouts or broccoli better?
- ...likes pie or cake better?
- ...prefers to watch football, baseball, or no sports?
- ...likes to watch movies on streaming or in the theater?
- ...prefers books or movies?
- ...likes school or wants to stay home?
- ...likes everybody at school or wishes one person weren't there?
- ...likes animation or live action?
- ...prefers to go to the mall or the park?
- ...knows what they want to be when they grow up, or has no idea?
- ...prefers dogs or cats?
- ...prefers chocolate or fruity candy?

Feel free to construct your own questions based on what you know of the group!



Day 5: Wilderness Unites

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Esther 4:12-17

Scripture Focus: Esther 4:16

“Go, gather all the Jews who are in Susa and tell them to give up eating to help me be brave. They aren’t to eat or drink anything for three whole days, and I myself will do the same, along with my female servants. Then, even though it’s against the law, I will go to the king; and if I am to die, then die I will.”

Theological Summary: In times of struggle, we must be brave and use our abilities to help those in need. God will be with us in the power and strength of community.

Daily Goals...

- Assure one another that we are not alone.
- Bravely share our hopes, dreams, and fears.
- Listen for God’s voice through the wisdom of those who have been or are in the wilderness.
- Imagine ways to connect with our communities for help and support.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Palace Rules	PLAY	Race to control the game
__ Signal Change	CREATE LEARN	Design protest signs
__ We Are Here	PRAY	Pray in solidarity with others
__ What Do You Need?	PLAY	Recreate a building together
__ Thanking Bravery	SERVE	Letters to those who inspire
__ Shout Your Truth	PRAY	Name hopes and fears
__ I Believe You	PLAY	Guess who is telling the truth
__ Food for Change	CREATE LEARN	Bake Hamantaschen cookies

Leader notes: Today’s scriptures speak to the weight of personal sacrifice and death. Remind campers that being brave in the face of adversity is not always this dangerous, and change can be brought about in many ways. It is also important to remember those who have had to sacrifice their lives for change throughout history.

Prayer: “God help us to be brave and recognize how our talents can support those around us. Give us the strength to stand up for what is right, even if it puts us at risk. Thank you for showing us how to love fiercely and unconditionally. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Palace Rules

PLAY

Supplies: Hula hoop and cones.

How: This activity is a version of the game Red Light, Green Light. Have campers begin on a starting line designated with two cones, with one camper on the other side of the play area standing in a hula hoop. This hula hoop will be designated as the Palace. The camper in the Palace gets to create a rule that must be followed by all the campers (stand on one leg, only hop, etc.) This rule will be in effect the entire round. The goal is to reach the hula hoop and be the next camper in the Palace. To make it to the Palace, campers will move as fast as they can while the Palace camper is turned around. Once the Palace camper has turned to face everyone, campers must freeze. If a camper is caught moving, they must go back to the start. Once a new camper makes it to the Palace, the camper who was there will rejoin the rest of the group at the starting line. A new rule can now be added, but the old rule is still in effect as well. For example, if the first Palace camper's rule was to stand on one leg and the second Palace camper's rule was to hop, campers at the starting line must stand on one leg and hop to the finish. All the rules in play can be disregarded when a camper who reaches the Palace uses their turn to say, "rule break." However, if a camper uses a rule break, they can't add their own Palace rules.

Try This: To make the game more difficult, have each camper start with a different rule that continues throughout the game, despite rule breaks.

Signal Change

CREATE LEARN

Supplies: Construction paper, tape, large Popsicle sticks, markers, and Bible.

How: Invite a camper to read Esther 4:12-17. Enter a time of wondering: How can we show our support for others? What are some forms of protest that we are familiar with? What is a cause or issue that is important in our lives?

Have each camper choose a cause that is most important to them as you hand out the supplies. Invite campers to think about the main takeaway of their

cause. What is something everyone should know about this issue? With these questions in mind, have campers make a protest sign for their cause. These signs can be filled with words or have pictures. Once campers have completed their designs, tape popsicle sticks to the bottom to be used as a handle for the sign. Finally, have the campers go around and share what they know about their cause and explain what their sign means concerning their chosen topic.

Try This: Instead of Popsicle sticks, hang protest signs in a common area and allow the collection to grow. Even if different signs contradict one another, this activity is about teaching campers how to express their support to encourage learning conversations.

Thanking Bravery

SERVE

Supplies: Paper, pens, envelopes, and Bible.

How: Welcome campers into a time of contemplation and ask questions like: What is bravery? How can we show strength and courage in the face of adversity?

Together, read Esther 4:12-17. As Mordecai and Esther inspire one another toward justice, who inspires us to do what is right? Do these people know the impact they have on us or their community?

Hand each camper a pen and paper and have them write a letter to someone who has inspired them to act bravely. These can be friends, parents, teachers, mentors, fictional characters, etc. Once each camper has finished their letter, have them share who they chose to address their letter to if they feel comfortable doing so. Finally, have campers put their letters in an envelope and address them to give to their subject back home or send in the mail.

Try This: Have campers also write letters to the White House to the President and Vice President. These can be letters of gratitude and/or to address an important issue to the camper. This is a great way to get involved in democracy and show that their voice matters.

Shout Your Truth

PRAY

Supplies: Bible.

How: Invite a camper to read Esther 4:12-17 aloud for the group. Have campers ponder the courage it takes to claim an identity. What hopes or fears do they have that are hard to admit? How can we find the

courage to proclaim them? Invite campers to think of one hope and one fear they are willing to share with others. Then, gather in an open area and have the campers shout their truths as loudly as they can. Start with shouting out hopes, and then shout out fears. At the end, lead a prayer saying, “God, hear our hopes and fears as we own and proclaim them. Gives us the courage to boldly name our truths and accept who we are. For this we pray.” Have all campers shout, “Amen!”

Try This: Invite campers to come up with other bold, creative ways to express their hopes and fears (song, dance, art, poem, etc.). Then have them prepare and present this at the camp talent show or as part of the worship service.

What Do You Need?

PLAY

Supplies: Marshmallows, pretzels, two tables, and a folder/curtain.

How: In advance, use marshmallows and pretzels to build a structure on a table and use a folder or curtain to hide it from view. Next, set up another table with enough marshmallows and pretzels to recreate the built structure on the first table. Make sure that the structure on the first table cannot be seen from the second table. Gather campers and divide them into two groups. One group will be sent to the table with the pre-built structure, and the other will be sent to the table with marshmallows and pretzels. Without being able to see what the others are doing, the group with the structure must help and direct the other group to build an identical structure. Once the campers feel like they have completed the task, they will raise their hands to have the structure checked. If it is not right, the two teams must work together to find out what they have missed or gotten wrong.

Try This: This activity can also be done in pairs, with one camper being able to run and see the structure and then return to tell their partner what they need. However, the runner will not be able to help build the structure, they can only give directions.

I Am Here

PRAY

Supplies: Bible.

How: Gather campers and enter a time of wondering: What is wilderness to us? What experiences in our wilderness can help others? How can we support another person’s wilderness even if there is nothing we can do to help? Together, read Esther 4:12-17, and

during the scripture, invite campers to think about the differences between Esther and Mordecai’s wilderness experiences. Next, ask campers to share wilderness experiences they have seen or heard about but have not known how to help. Once campers have finished sharing, enter a time of call and response prayer.

Leader: God help us to recognize and support those in the wilderness. For those (*insert experience a camper had seen or heard about...*)

Campers: We are here.

Repeat until all the experiences are named and then close with, “Thank you, God, for being here with us and giving us the courage to stand with others. Amen.”

Try This: Ask campers to write their own prayer where they ask God to help them be present for all the people/groups named during your discussion. Invite campers to share their prayers with the group if they are comfortable doing so.

I Believe You

PLAY

Supplies: None.

How: Gather campers and sit in a half circle. One at a time, campers will act as the guesser. When a camper is the guesser, they must leave the space at the beginning of their turn so they can’t hear the group discussion. The group must then choose one camper to share a fun fact about themselves. The group must now work to confuse the guesser as to whose fun fact it truly is. When the guesser returns, they will be told the fun fact. Then, the guesser can ask each camper in the group one question about the fun fact to uncover the truth. The campers in the group must make up answers to help trick the guesser. Once a guesser believes they know whose fun fact it is, they will name the camper and say, “I believe you.” The camper whose fun fact was shared in the previous round gets to be the next guesser.

Try This: Have campers write down their fun facts and put them in a hat to be chosen at random, so the reveal is a surprise to the group and the guesser. However, for one round, add in a fact that doesn’t belong to any camper to see how clever they are at coming up with stories to support the fun fact, and to see if anyone is able to guess that it isn’t a fact about a real person in the group.

Food for Change

CREATE LEARN

Supplies: Large eggs, oil, sugar, vanilla extract, all-purpose flour, baking powder, kosher salt, bowl, measuring cup, measuring spoon, spatula, rolling pin, glass cup, pan, oven, apricot jam, and Bible.

How: Explain that a purposeful lack of eating or drinking over a set amount of time, also known as fasting, can be done as a form of protest until a societal change is made. We see an example of this in Esther 4:12-17. However, making and eating food can also be a form of protest. The Hamantaschen is a traditional Purim pastry connected to the triumph of Esther and the Jewish people.

To start, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Have campers help mix two large eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of vanilla extract, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of sugar in a bowl with a spatula. Next, in the same bowl, add 2 cups of all-purpose flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of baking powder, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of kosher salt. Continue to stir until a dough is formed. Then, sprinkle flour on a countertop and roll out the dough to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thickness. With a glass cup, cut circles out of the dough and place them on a baking pan. Next, add a teaspoon of apricot jam to the center of each circle and pinch the dough closed in the shape of a triangle. Finally, bake for 10-12 minutes. This recipe will make 24 cookies.

Try This: Increase the recipe amount to allow the whole camp to enjoy and learn about Hamantaschen cookies. These can be passed out at mealtime or even incorporated into worship as a form of communion or prayer.



Story Resources

Wish (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures 2023): A young girl named Asha sets out to become the next King's apprentice so she can help make the wishes of her kingdom come true. However, she learns that the King is hiding a dark secret from the kingdom. In desperation, Asha wishes on a star. The star falls from the sky and works with Asha to save her kingdom and make her wish come true.



Day 5: Wilderness Unites

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Esther 4:12-17

Scripture Focus: Esther 4:16

“Go, gather all the Jews who are in Susa and tell them to give up eating to help me be brave. They aren’t to eat or drink anything for three whole days, and I myself will do the same, along with my female servants. Then, even though it’s against the law, I will go to the king; and if I am to die, then die I will.”

Theological Summary: Wilderness moments often require courage—not only to survive but to speak up, step out, and take action for the good of others. God will be with us in the power and strength of community.

Daily Goals...

- Assure one another that we are not alone.
- Bravely share our hopes, dreams, and fears.
- Listen for God’s voice through the wisdom of those who have been or are in the wilderness.
- Imagine ways to connect with our communities for help and support.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Stand Up, Speak Out	PLAY	Have you ever...?
__ Royal Court	PLAY LEARN	Acting out the Esther story
__ Wilderness Wisdom	LEARN	Brave stories beyond the Bible
__ Consequences	LEARN	What helps us be brave?
__ Bravery Notes	SERVE	Writing affirmations
__ Lights of Courage	CREATE PRAY	Creating “courage candles”
__ Circle of Support	PRAY	Holding each other in prayer

Leader notes: Today is about standing together in the face of injustice, fear, or uncertainty. Affirm the sacredness of their courage, whether it shows up in grand actions or quiet moments of truth-telling.

Prayer: “God of Esther, when we are afraid, help us trust that we are not alone. When the time comes to be bold, speak through us. When we feel small, remind us of the strength in our community. Give us courage for such a time as this. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Stand Up, Speak Out

PLAY

Supplies: List of statements.

How: Choose one side of your space as “Stand Up” and the other as “Sit Down.” Explain that in the game, everyone will have the choice to move to the “Stand Up” section or the “Sit Down” section, depending on their answers to the prompts listed below. (Remind campers that there is no pressure—silence and stillness are respected responses too.)

Prompts – Stand up if you have ever:

- had to do something that scared you.
- asked for help when you needed it.
- spoke up for someone who was being treated unfairly.
- felt like you were made for a specific purpose.

After the game, debrief:

- What did it feel like to stand up?
- Were there moments when you wanted to stand but didn’t?
- What kinds of support help us be bold?

Try This: Instead of saving the conversation for a debrief, have a conversation in the moment. After each prompt, ask campers why they chose to sit or stand. Then, when the game is over, invite campers to ask each other deeper questions about the stories they shared.

Royal Court

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: Bible (optional props like scarves, paper crowns, or makeshift thrones add fun).

How: Invite campers into an interactive retelling of Esther 4. Assign roles: Esther, Mordecai, messengers, king, community, etc. Encourage campers to act out the story with some dramatic flair. Allow and celebrate improvisation. Afterward, debrief using these questions:

- What emotions did you feel in your role?
- What do you admire about Esther?

- Who plays “Esther-like” roles in our world today?

Challenge the group to retell the story in one of these settings (or try them all), allowing some creative story telling from the campers. Afterwards, invite them to reflect on who the “Esthers” are among us and the challenges they face today.

- School
- Neighborhood
- National

Try This: Explain that in Jewish tradition, on the holiday called Purim the Book of Esther is read aloud in synagogues. As it is read, the congregation responds with cheers for the heroes/heroines, boos for the villains, noisemakers, and other community responses. Read chapter 4 aloud and encourage campers to use those sounds to respond to the story.

Wilderness Wisdom

LEARN

Supplies: Bible and Wilderness Wisdom handout (containing bios of brave figures).

How: Gather your campers into a circle. Read Esther 4:12-17. Then, using the handout, share a few short stories of real people (both contemporary and historical) who have been brave in difficult times.

After sharing these stories, invite campers to discuss:

- What made each of these stories’ wilderness moments?
- Who or what helped these people to be brave?
- What do these stories have in common with Esther’s story?

Try This: You can expand this activity by sharing your own wilderness story, inviting other camp adults to share a story, and/or by inviting campers to share their own wilderness stories. If you invite campers to share stories, remind the group to be respectful listeners and remind them of any mandatory reporting requirements that apply in your context (“what is said in small group stays in small group” doesn’t apply to a story revealing abuse).

Consequences

LEARN

Supplies: Bible, large paper, and markers.

How: Read Esther 4:12-17 together. Talk about the stakes Esther faced as well as the courage it took for her to speak up.

Create two columns on a large sheet of paper and label them: “What scares us?” and “What helps us to be brave?”

Invite campers to name their fears and the supports that help them feel secure. Then ask questions like:

- What might “such a time as this” look like today?
- Where are we being called to act on behalf of others?
- Who/what can help us be brave?

Try This: Fill out the “What scares us?” section of the paper with campers’ fears. Then, item by item, have campers brainstorm “brave-making” solutions for each fear. Encourage them to include a variety of solutions, including music – “What songs might help someone feel brave in this situation?”

Bravery Notes

SERVE

Supplies: Paper, notecards, pens, and markers.

How: Create a space where campers can spread out and write/create. Provide paper, notecards, markers, and other writing supplies. Invite campers to write/create anonymous notes of affirmation to others in the camp community. Help campers focus their affirmations with the following prompts:

- “I saw your bravery when...”
- “You inspire me because...”
- “Your voice matters.”

Deliver these notes throughout the day or post them on a “Wall of Courage” where everyone can see and read them.

Try This: Invite campers to write notes for people back home, too—especially those individuals who have supported them in wilderness seasons.

Lights of Courage

CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Tea lights or small candles (real or battery-powered), strips of paper, markers, tape, and matches or a lighter (if using real candles).

How: Give each camper a candle and several strips of paper. Invite them to write down moments or personal experiences where they have either witnessed or practiced courage. This could include names of people, images/symbols that remind them of events, etc. Invite campers to wrap the strips around their candle and attach them with tape. If using real candles, take care to keep the paper strips down low, away from the wick. Gather campers into a circle and invite them to place their candles in the center to create a “Circle of Courage.” Light the candles.

Pray together: “God of light, bless this circle of courageous people and courageous memories. May our lights shine like Esther, bravely and brightly, in times of struggle. May we be lights for others, and may we be inspired by one another when times are hard. Amen.”

Try This: After creating your courage candles, bring them to a space where the whole camp worships together. Light your candles before a worship service to help others feel inspired.

Circle of Support

PRAY

Supplies: None.

How: Invite campers to form a circle. Begin a time of prayer by encouraging the group to take a few slow, deep breaths. Invite campers to go around the circle and share one word or phrase that expresses what they need right now (examples: strength, rest, courage, help). Then invite campers to go around the circle again, sharing a word of support or prayer for the person on their left.

Close with a prayer: “Holy One, just as you called Esther, you call us. Give us strength for the days ahead, and remind us that no matter the situation, we never walk alone. You are always with us. Amen.”

Try This: If campers seem overly quiet or “shared out,” invite them to do the same prayer circle in silence – silently ask God for what you need and then squeeze the hand of the next person in the circle to indicate that it is their turn.



Story Resources

Hidden Figures (20th Century Fox, 2016): Tells the true story of Black women mathematicians at NASA who overcame racism and sexism to play a vital role in the space race. Like Esther, they spoke up and took action in unjust systems—using their voices, intelligence, and courage.

The Lorax, by Dr. Seuss: While the animated movie is also an option, books often work better at camp, and this 1971 classic takes readers and listeners on a journey from paradise, through “progress”, to the consequences of greed and neglect. The Lorax ends with a hopeful seed planting and is open-ended as to what tomorrow might bring.

Wilderness Wisdom Handout

Examples of People of Valor and Courage:

Malala Yousafzai

Malala is a Pakistani advocate for girls' education who, at age 15, survived a Taliban assassination attempt for speaking out about the right of girls to go to school. Instead of remaining silent, she became even more vocal—eventually becoming the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Her courage shows that one voice, even a young one, can change the world.

Greta Thunberg

Greta is a Swedish climate activist who began protesting alone outside the Swedish parliament to demand action on climate change. Her quiet act of protest sparked a global youth movement. Though she has faced criticism and dismissal, Greta continues to speak truth to power with honesty and urgency. Her courage is rooted in her commitment to a better future.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. King was a Baptist minister and civil rights leader who organized nonviolent protests and spoke out against racism, poverty, and war. His courage led marches, endured arrests, and delivered prophetic sermons—despite constant threats and eventually assassination. He believed that love and justice are stronger than hate and fear.

Harriet Tubman

Born into slavery, Harriet escaped and then returned again and again to help others find freedom via the Underground Railroad. She risked her life every time she went back. During the Civil War, she also served as a spy and nurse. Her courage came from deep faith in God and unshakable commitment to the freedom of her people.

Dolores Huerta

A labor leader and civil rights activist, Dolores co-founded the United Farm Workers alongside César Chávez. She organized strikes and spoke boldly for the rights of farmworkers, women, and immigrants. Her famous phrase “¡Sí, se puede!” (“Yes, we can!”) became a rallying cry. Her courage shows up clearly in her lifelong fight for dignity and justice.

Rev. Dr. William Barber II

Rev. Barber is a pastor and social justice leader who revived the Poor People's Campaign, originally started by Dr. King. He builds multi-racial coalitions to address systemic poverty, racism, and inequality. Despite health challenges, he continues to preach, organize, and march. His courage is both moral and physical, rooted in faith and fierce compassion.



Day 5: Wilderness Unites

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Esther 4:12-17

Scripture Focus: “Don’t think for one minute that, unlike all the other Jews, you’ll come out of this alive simply because you are in the palace” (Esther 4:13).

Theological Summary: Esther experiences a level of protection and comfort that the rest of her people do not, but she still has a responsibility to speak out in the name of justice and make life better for her community.

Daily Goals...

- Assure one another that we are not alone.
- Bravely share our hopes, dreams, and fears.
- Listen for God’s voice through the wisdom of those who have been or are in the wilderness.
- Imagine ways to connect with our communities for help and support.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Drum Circle	PLAY	Rhythm experiment
__ Spectrum	LEARN	Explore diverse opinions
__ Hand in Hand	CREATE	Tracing hands
__ Slang Skit	PLAY	Skits with old and new slang
__ Speak Up	SERVE	Voicing our concerns
__ Charades Prayer	PLAY PRAY	Creative prayer time
__ Teach Something	LEARN	Intergenerational sharing

Leader notes: Campers familiar with the rest of Esther’s story will know that it involves large-scale murder. Be prepared to address these topics seriously and sensitively if campers ask about them, without brushing them away as just “part of God’s plan.” We never want to risk justifying massive acts of violence through the stories in the Bible.

Prayer: God of Esther, we confess to you those times we have chosen to be bystanders, to be silent in the face of wrongdoing. Guide us to boldly and courageously speak up in the name of what is right. Amen.

Daily Activities

Drum Circle

PRAY

How: Create a circle of campers. One camper will begin with a simple, repetitive rhythm. This can include clapping, stomping their feet, patting their knees, etc. After engaging in this rhythm for a while, any other camper can jump in with their own rhythm that syncs to the original rhythm. Then, one by one, people will join in with their own riff on the drumbeat, until the whole group is swept up in synchronicity. Invite campers to pray as they start a rhythm, such as “God we love you” or other short prayer.

Try This: Invite campers to add to the beat in a set order, such as clockwise, if your group is less comfortable with spontaneously.

Spectrum

LEARN

How: Introduce the activity by telling your campers that while there are some fundamental values it’s important we agree on at camp (everyone deserves to be treated with respect, we shouldn’t discriminate on the basis of identity, etc.) there are plenty of other things it’s okay to disagree on. Direct them to stand in the middle of a room (or outdoor space) and tell them that one side is “Agree” and the other side is “Disagree.” You will then read a series of statements, and campers will stand along the spectrum according to how they relate to your statement. Afterward, debrief the experience. Here are some statements to get you going:

- Summer is the best season.
- Bicycles are better than cars.
- I’ve tried something new today.
- I have questions about my faith.
- I feel confident in my ability to stand up for what’s right.

Try this: Invite open discussion after each statement, instead of all at once at the end.

Hand in Hand

CREATE

Supplies: Paper, art supplies

How: Read Esther 4:12-17, then remind campers that Esther had a loving family with Mordecai, even though they were very different. Invite the camper with the largest hand to trace their hand on a piece of paper. Campers should trace their hands by order of decreasing size, so the smallest hand is last. Invite campers to examine the paper, noticing how the hands fit inside each other, or overlap, or blend together, creating a unique work of art that can only be made when everyone contributes something. Invite campers to think of how this might connect to the idea that communities support each other.

Try this: Have the group determine hand size order without using words or have the next size down trace the hand of the one ahead of them.

Slang Skit

PLAY

Supplies: None

How: As an intergenerational program, you have the unique opportunity to hear all different types of language! Challenge each group to perform a skit of a Bible story in which everyone must use one word of slang from another person’s generation in a line of dialogue. Everyone will learn something new and share some laughs. If they need some help choosing some words, you might have each generation brainstorm some words the other can use at the beginning of the activity.

Try this: For an added layer of challenge, encourage groups to make up their own silly words, creating their own intergenerational camp slang.

Speak Up

SERVE

Supplies: Paper, writing utensils, envelopes

How: Read Esther 4:12-17 as a group. Explain that one essential thing we can learn from Esther is how important it is to use our voice in shaping the kind of world we want to see. Invite campers to think of an issue that matters to them in their community. It could be schools, parks, water issues, or recycling for example. Invite campers to create advocacy signs that can be posted around camp to help tell others about

their concerns. Younger campers may need a little guidance in connecting to concerns in the community. If needed, spend a little time talking about problems they or friends have at school such as sharing, bullies, feeling alone, being scared to ask questions, etc.

Try this: Encourage campers to write a letter or draw a picture about their concerns, and when they get home, find out who to send it to in their government district.

Charades Prayer **PRAY** **PLAY**

How: Divide campers into pairs. Partner A will begin by miming a prayer, charades style, with no words. Partner B will then “interpret” their prayer with their own words. This activity is meant to add some levity to what can otherwise be a vulnerable and even intimidating concept (spoken prayer) while also emphasizing teamwork.

Try this: Do this activity for grace, or during worship.

Teach Something **LEARN**

How: Divide campers into pairs or groups of three, with a variety of ages if possible. Campers should find the youngest person in the group. That camper should say something they enjoy doing for fun (that doesn’t involve a computer). Then each camper, from youngest to oldest, should share something they liked doing when they were that age. Pick one activity and try it as a group if possible.

Try this: Have the oldest and the youngest members of the group say their favorite camp/Bible song and teach each one to the group.

Story Resources

“First They Came,” a poem by Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller

First they came for the Communists
 And I did not speak out
 Because I was not a Communist
 Then they came for the Socialists
 And I did not speak out
 Because I was not a Socialist
 Then they came for the trade unionists
 And I did not speak out
 Because I was not a trade unionist
 Then they came for the Jews
 And I did not speak out
 Because I was not a Jew
 Then they came for me
 And there was no one left
 To speak out for me.

[Text pulled from Holocaust Memorial Day Trust]

Use this poem in connection with today’s Bible passage. Esther is almost tempted not to speak out for her people, but Mordecai reminds her: “Don’t think for one minute that, unlike all the other Jews, you’ll come out of this alive simply because you are in the palace.” He knows what Martin Niemöller knows too: there are no distinct categories between “us” and “them.” What happens to our neighbor will circle around and happen to us too, so we want to speak out until *everyone* lives in the conditions that we want ourselves to live in. Brainstorm other groups that could be featured in a poem like this if it were written today. Walk through the journey of a refugee learning how to survive in a new place.