

God's Heroes



Héroes de Dios

From Ordinary to Extraordinary!

Here am I. Send me! Isaiah 6:8
Heme aquí, envíame a mí. Isaías 6:8

Adults

**GOD'S HEROES:
FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!**

Day: Monday

Adults

Theme: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego remain faithful

Lesson 1: *God saves 3 faithful young men from the fire*

Bible reference: Daniel 3:1-12 (13-28)

Memory verse: Daniel 3:28

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. Dan. 3:28ab (NRSV)

OBJECTIVE

Students will know the story of three men who trusted in God despite the threats to their lives decreed by a King.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE TEACHER:

- *Pray to God not only to get wisdom and understanding, but also suitable words in order to prepare and deliver your lesson. Pray also to have the Holy Spirit of God act upon the life and hearts of your students.*
- *Devote enough time to prepare your class;*
- *Read the Bible text bearing in mind the cultural and biblical context underlying the story (Daniel 1 y 2);*
- *Read the bible text as many times as needed in order to master the core of the story;*
- *Prepare and organize your teaching material in order to deliver your lecture as best as possible;*
- *The "memory verse" should be preached by example. Make sure you know it well.*

MATERIAL:

- *Puzzle to help group memorize the passage. Make three or four and use them in teams according to the number of students.*
- *Blackboard or butcher paper, chalk or marker:*

BIBLE CONTEXT

The people of Israel had been conquered by Babylon, and King Nebuchadnezzar sent for "young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace" (Daniel 1:4, NIV); "children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace" (Daniel 1:4 KJV).

It was the tradition of the conquerors at that time to impose the customs, religion and traditions on the conquered people.

The king's objective for bringing these young men to the palace was to make them faithful servants, not only to the king, but also to the gods of Babylon. It should be said that because of their good behavior, the king had made them administrators of the provinces of Babylon, and therefore their commitment to the king was greater.

INTRODUCTION

- *Welcome your students, helping them into feeling happy about learning more about God.*
- *Give students their name tags, ask them to introduce and say something about themselves (name, age and where they are from, for instance):*
- *Call for a volunteer to pray to God to open their minds and to understand what God prepared for them today.*
- *Share the name of the general subject of the week **HEROES OF GOD: i FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!***
- *Introduce the title of the lesson of the day: **God saves from the fire 3 faithful young men***
- *Prepare a Puzzle for the "Memory Verse." Make several puzzles. Split the class into groups of 3 people each. Give each group the puzzle with instructions to put it together. Let them play until they can put the puzzle together on time.*
- *A word of advice: After the Puzzle activity, put the "Memory Verse" in a place where everyone can see it.*

STUDYING THE BIBLE PASSAGE OF THE DAY

- *Ask students to share a story when they have suffered a burn, and have them describe the pain they felt, how close they were to the fire, for how long and what were the consequences. Or, ask them if they have been near or have seen things that produce heat, like an oven or an iron, etc. Have them share their experiences.*
- *Invite the class to find the bible passage to begin the lesson*
- *Tell your students. Today we will speak about a king named Nebuchadnezzar and three good looking, holy (set apart) young men who showed their faithfulness to God, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Their choices led them to live extraordinary experiences, since they walked in the fiery furnace without being hurt.*
- *Nebuchadnezzar was a severe and authoritarian leader, difficult to please and egocentric. It was a challenge for anyone to serve him.*
- *After laying siege to Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took objects from God's temple and put as treasure in the temple of his gods. He also looked for handsome young men (Daniel 1:4) who were able and wise. Among them were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They had to prepare to serve the King. The official in charge changed their names: Hananiah he named Shadrach; Mishael he named Meshach; and Azariah he named Abednego. (Daniel 1:7)*
- *They seemed like ordinary youth, but there was something special that distinguished them from the other youth: their fear of God. Besides being from the nobility, handsome, and intelligent, they were called to be administrators of a province in Babylon. During their time to prepare to serve the King, they decided not to be defiled by the food (Daniel 1:8) or in their faith, since they did not bow down to the Babylonian gods (Daniel 3:12).*
- *These youth knew the consequence of not obeying the decree given by the King (Daniel 3:4-6) that at the sound of the horn all should "fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." (mention the details found in Daniel 3:1-2)*
- *Was there anyone in the land who would not worship the image of gold set up by the king? Yes, the 3 Jews Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.*

- At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced them. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted in God and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than worship any God except their own God. Then the king summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and asked them "is it true Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that, you do not worship the image of gold I have set up? They replied to the king "the God we serve is able to save us from the blazing furnace and will rescue us from your hand." (Daniel 3:17) Then the king was furious and ordered the furnace heated 7 times hotter than usual and commanded soldiers to throw them into the blazing furnace. These 3 men firmly tied, were thrown into the blazing furnace. The king was amazed because 3 men were tied up and thrown into the fire but he could now see 4 men walking around in the fire unbound and unharmed, and the fourth person looked like a son of the gods. The king approached the opening of the blazing furnace and called them to walk out. They came out of the fire and the crowd around them saw that the fire had not harmed them. These men trusted in their God and defied the kings command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

THINKING OVER THE BIBLE PASSAGE FOR TODAY.

- There was a time in the story when the king gives Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego an opportunity to live for he says "If you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace".
- They could have stepped back and worship the image of gold but they did not. They were faithful to their God and replied to the king that the God they served was able to save them from the blazing furnace as well as to rescue them from the king's hand. They were convinced that their God would carry-out extraordinary signs upon them if appropriate.
- Was there any reason why these men should have worshiped the image of Gold ?

GRATITUDE	YES	NO
	Because they were chosen amongst slaves and set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. This at the	Because of their knowledge that by the grace of their God they found favor in the eyes of the king to be set over

	service of the King.	the affaire of the province of Babylon.
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FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES	YES	NO
	Because capital punishment was placed upon those who would not worship the image of gold	Because of their knowledge that the God they served was their benefactor and protector at all times.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego chose to remain loyal to their God even though the King threatened them with death if they wouldn't serve the god of the king and worship the image of gold set up by the king.

King Nebuchadnezzar was amazed with the extraordinary sign the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego offered. The king ended up praising the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for he said "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any God except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon (Daniel 3:28-29).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

- Choose an adjective for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Courage, faith, trust...)
- What is the first adjective that comes to your mind?
- What would you say the end of the story would had been if these 3 men would have asked the king not to put them inside the blazing furnace?

Frequently in our lives we face difficult situations. Perhaps not as challenging as the test Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went through. Maybe a situation where speaking the truth is all it takes to overcome the test we are confronted with. We can learn from the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that those who remain faithful to God are protected and favored by God beyond expectations. Any trial in our life will have the best ending when we trust God to lead our lives as best as possible. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were at a disadvantage under

the decree of king Nebuchadnezzar, however they were protected and taken care of at all times.

Faith that God will work the best possible path for us to follow shall prove to be the best choice we can ever make.

Help the group discuss the way the passage touches their lives. Ask them to think of examples of situations they have been in when they felt pressure to abandon or deny their faith in God in order not to look bad in the eyes of friends or people in authority.

- What do you have in common with the dilemma Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced?
- How do you think it helped these biblical characters to have each other as support?
- In what way can the members of this class support one another when they face this or other types of dilemmas?

CONCLUSION

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were chosen amongst the royal family and the nobility of the Israelites (Daniel 1:3).

The God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego protected and took care of them when they were thrown into the blazing furnace in such extraordinary manner! (Daniel 3:25-27).

These men found favor in the eyes of the king after the extraordinary sign of salvation displayed by their God (Daniel 3:30).

To sum up, believers in the true God are protected and taken care of at all times and against all odds. They are exalted in front of all.

Prepare the students whom God has chosen to accept Christ this week. Tell the class: God loves you so much! God wants to help and bless you. When you come to church you learn more and more about God's love. We hope that what you learn this week will help you feel that love, and will allow you to deepen your relationship with God. Let's ask God to fill us with gratitude for his love.

Conclude the class with a brief prayer.

God's Heroes: From Ordinary to Extraordinary...

Héroes de Dios: De Ordinario a Extraordinario...

Joseph Interprets Dreams

Day One Adults

THEME:	God makes us extraordinary when God gives us different gifts.
BIBLE PASSAGE:	Genesis 41:1-28 (29-37) 38-40.
MEMORY VERSE:	We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. Rom. 12:6a

Objective	Students will learn that when we serve God faithfully, we can accomplish extraordinary feats.
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask God for wisdom and understanding of what God would have you teach through His Word. Psalm 119:18 is a good prayer for both the leader and the students: "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." Prepare for this lesson by reading Genesis 41.• The focus of the lesson will be verses 1-28 (29-37) 38-40, but the rest of the chapter tells the results of Joseph's God-given wisdom. Also read Gen 37:2-11 and Genesis 40 that show other times that God used dreams in Joseph's life.• You might also want to read the passages on spiritual gifts: I Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:11-13 and 1 Peter 4:11.• Read through the lesson and time it. Make sure your plans fill the time allotted without being rushed.
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bible, newsprint and marker or blackboard and chalk, paper and pencil for each person to take notes or for the optional activity.• Wrap a box like a gift you might give for a birthday or Christmas.

Introduction

Greet the group. Let the students know how happy you are to be there with them. Make them feel welcome and happy to be learning about God.

Meanwhile hand out nametags to the students and write their names on a list.

Introduce yourself and tell a little about yourself. Invite them to introduce themselves to each other.

Open with a brief prayer (or invite one of the students to open with prayer)

Introduce today's memory verse: Rom. 12:6a: We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. As you invite them to memorize the passage, invite them to look at the larger passage of Romans 12:6-8.

How many of you like to give and receive gifts for birthdays or Christmas? We all do, don't we? God also likes to give gifts to His children - not material gifts but spiritual gifts. Our memory verse for today's lesson comes from a passage in Romans that talks about spiritual gifts God gives to every believer. This is only one of four passages in scripture that tells us about spiritual gifts. Do you know that if you are a believer in Christ, God has given you at least one spiritual gift to use to glorify Him? *You might want to include here something helpful that you learned from the scriptures on spiritual gifts that you read ahead of time.*

Today's lesson is about an ordinary young man named Joseph and the gift God gave him that made him extraordinary. Joseph, the eleventh of Jacob's twelve sons, was his father's favorite and was given a special brightly colored tunic by his father. His brothers were jealous and hated him, especially when Joseph told them about his dreams in which his family bowed down to him. When he was only 17 years old, his brothers plotted to kill him, but instead sold him to a caravan going to Egypt. He became a slave but because God was with him, he prospered and was put in charge of his master's (Potiphar's) household. Falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, he was put in prison. Again the Lord was with Joseph and because of his administrative skill, he was put in charge of the prisoners.

Two former servants of Pharaoh, his cupbearer and baker, offended Pharaoh and were put in the same jail with Joseph. They each had a dream that they asked Joseph to interpret for them. God gave Joseph wisdom to interpret their dreams -- the cupbearer would live but the baker would be killed. Joseph asked the cupbearer to speak to Pharaoh about him, but the cupbearer did not remember Joseph for two more years. When Pharaoh asked his wise men to interpret two dreams that he had, they couldn't. The cupbearer remembered Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and Joseph was called before Pharaoh.

Studying the Bible passage

Ask the students to open their Bibles to Genesis 41. This is a long passage. You can read it yourself, or break it up into smaller portions and ask the group members to take turns reading aloud until the passage is finished. After the group has read to verse 40, you can summarize the remainder of the chapter:

As Pharaoh commanded, Joseph was put in charge of all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. He stored up grain during the seven years of plenty and distributed it to the people during the seven years of famine. Verse 57 tells us "all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world." Those countries included the family of Jacob whom God named Israel. God gave Joseph the wisdom not only to save Egypt, but also Israel and the countries around Egypt.

Reflecting on the Bible passage

Ask your students some of the following questions to discuss the main events of this chapter. If you have a large group, you may want to divide into smaller groups. Each group can discuss two or three questions and then return to the larger group and share answers.

What were Pharaoh's two dreams about? (seven fat cows and full heads of grain; seven lean cows and thin heads of grain)

Why do you think the wise men in Pharaoh's court were unable to interpret the dreams? *(God, in his perfect timing, had a plan.)*

What was the interpretation God gave to Joseph? *(seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine)*

Joseph had spent years in prison for something he didn't do. How might Joseph have reacted to his suffering? How did he react? *(with patience, forgiveness, lack of bitterness)*

How do we see Joseph's humility and dependence upon God in his meeting with Pharaoh? *(verses 16, 25, 28, & 32)*

How does Pharaoh describe Joseph? *(verses 38 & 39)*

Applying the Bible passage to our life

If you were Joseph, what might you have thought about during those years in prison? Will I be here forever? What did I do wrong to deserve this? Why God have you abandoned me? Haven't I served you faithfully?

When we are going through a difficult time and we think this way, who is our focus on? *(self)*
Where should it be? *(God)*

- Joseph is an example of how we can, in God's power, control our feelings instead of reacting in the way our society says we should. He was an ordinary young man who loved and trusted God in the most trying of circumstances. God cared for Joseph while he was in prison, causing him to grow spiritually and to become the kind of man in whom Pharaoh recognized the spirit of God.
- God gave Joseph the gift of wisdom and discernment, speaking through him to reveal the future to Pharaoh and all of Egypt. As a result Joseph became extraordinary in that he was used by God to save his family, Israel, Egypt, and the world. God gives us different gifts and through situations in our lives nurtures our special gift to bless others and our gift grows.

You have the potential through God's power to use your spiritual gift to be an extraordinary person for God. God has a plan for your life just as he had a plan for Joseph.

Do you know what gift or gifts God has given you? Are you willing to commit yourself to God and His plan for you?

Romans 12:1-2 tells us "in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of

this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

When we present ourselves to God in this way, He shows us how He has gifted us and, according to his perfect plan and timing, how He wants to bless us and use us to glorify Him. God is sovereign and unchangeable. Nothing and no one can hinder His plan for us.

Optional Activity 1

As time allows, you might want to have students read and discuss one or several of these passages on spiritual gifts: I Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:11-13 and 1 Peter 4:11.

Optional Activity 2

Ask your class if they learned something about God through the story of Joseph that they did not know before. Have them take paper and pencil and list some of the attributes/characteristics that they have seen about God in this lesson. You might want to have them list what qualities they see in Joseph that are Christ-like. Then have them share their lists with the class.

Conclusion

God has special work for each one of us. God wants us to use the gifts that God gave us. God loves us a great deal. When you come to church you learn about the love of God, but you also learn that we human beings sin and that this becomes a barrier for our connection with God. This week, let's ask God to help us overcome that barrier through Jesus. In this way, we can use the gifts God has given us.

Close in prayer asking God to help you and the class to live in the light of the truths that they have seen through the life of Joseph and thanking God for His Word.

GOD'S HEROES: FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!

Day: Wednesday

Adults

Theme: Queen Esther Saves Her People.

Lesson 3: Esther the Brave Queen.

Bible reference: Esther 3:12-13, 4:1-17, 5:1-4, 7:1-6, 10

Memory verse: Esther 4:14

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 royal position for such a time as this? Est.4:14 (NIV) (use all or part of the verse).

OBJECTIVE

Students will know the story of Queen Esther. Students will identify Queen Esther's wisdom, love and desire for justice on behalf of her people.

PREPARATION

- *Pray to God not only to get wisdom, understanding as well as suitable words in order to prepare and deliver your lecture but also to get the holy spirit of God to act upon the life and hearts of your students.*
- *Devote enough time to prepare your lecture;*
- *Read the Bible text bearing in mind the cultural and biblical context underlying the story about Queen Esther;*
- *Read the bible text as many times as needed in order to master the core of the story;*
- *Prepare and organize your teaching material in order to deliver your lecture as best as possible;*
- *The "Memory verse" should be preached by example. Make sure you know it well.*
- *Carry your Bible with you when delivering your lecture.*

MATERIAL: (required for your lesson)

- *Cards or pieces of paper where student will write what they feel to be positive and negative aspects found in the story of Esther.*
- *Puzzle to help students remember the "line to memorize" of the day.*

BIBLICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

This happened during the time of King Ahasuerus who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush (Esther 1). Some Jews were dispersed and scattered among the people of the land ruled by King Ahasuerus (Esther 3:8).

At that time King Ahasuerus reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa (Esther 1:2). There was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin named Mordecai who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (Esther 2:5-6). Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, who was also known as Esther (Esther 2:7; 2:15). Even though both the parents of Esther passed away she was brought up by cousin Mordecai who had taken her as his own daughter (Esther 2:7).

Esther, descendant of the tribe of Benjamin, from the house of Israel, was beautiful, lovely in form and features. The book of Esther describes the time when all the Jews in the 127 provinces of kingdom of Ahasuerus got relief from their enemies with the help of Queen Esther.

The story revolves around king Ahasuerus. It was the third year of his reign when he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. One of those days King Ahasuerus was in high spirits, and he asked for Queen Vashti to be brought before him, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. But Queen Vashti refused to come into the presence of the King.

As a consequence of the Queen's conduct King Ahasuerus consulted his experts in matters of Law and justice. He inquired about what must be done to Queen Vashti, for she had disobeyed a royal command. Foreseeing that the Queen's conduct would be known to all women in the Memucan kingdom, one of the wise advisors of the king predicted that women of the nobility would respond in the same way to all the nobles of the king. Therefore, disrespect and discord amongst men and women would have no end in the kingdom. In this context, Memucan proposed that Vashti should never again enter the presence of king Ahasuerus, and that the King would give her royal position to someone else who was more worthy than she. As a

result, all women would respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.

The King and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. Beautiful girls were selected in every province of the kingdom. The one who pleases the king would become Queen instead of Vashti. Once chosen, a girl had to complete 12 months of beauty treatment before she was taken to the presence of the King.

Esther was selected amongst the beautiful girls of the kingdom. She was put under care of Hegai, who was in charge of the women in the Harem at the citadel of Susa. Esther pleased him and won his favor. He took good care of her and moved her to the best place in the Harem. When the time came for Esther to go to the King she followed Hegai's advice. Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. The King was attracted to Esther more than to any other woman, and she won his favor and approval. He set a royal crown on her head and made her Queen instead of Vashti.

In those days two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. At this time Mordecai would not receive honor or recognition for saving the life of the king.

After these events, King Ahasuerus honored Haman, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. The king commanded that all the royal officials at the king's gate should kneel down and honor Haman. This they did, except Mordecai, for he said he was a Jew. Haman was enraged because of the conduct of Mordecai and looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. To do so Haman spoke to the King. Haman told king Ahasuerus about the existence of people in the kingdom whose customs were different from those of all the other people and who wouldn't obey the laws of the king. He persuaded king Ahasuerus into issuing a decree to destroy them.

From this moment on, Esther would use her gifts and wisdom to save all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus from those enemies who sought to annihilate them- young and old, women and children- in a single day.

INTRODUCTION

- *Welcome your students, helping them into feeling happy about learning more about God.*
- *Give students their name tags, ask them to introduce and say something about themselves (name, age and where they are from, for instance);*
- *Call for a volunteer to pray to God to open their minds and to understand what God prepared for them today.*
- *Share the name of the general subject of the week **HEROES OF GOD: i FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!***
- *Introduce the title of the lesson of the day: : **An extraordinary Queen***
- *Prepare a Puzzle for the "Memory Verse." Make several puzzles. Split the class into groups of 3 people each. Give each group the puzzle with instructions to put it together. Let them play until they can put the puzzle together on time.*
- *A word of advice: After the Puzzle activity, put the "Memory Verse" in a place where everyone can see it.*

TEACHING THE CLASS

- *Carry out a brainstorm activity with the question: What would you be prepared to do if you were to know that some people will destroy all your countrymen - young and old, women and little children - on a single day?*
- *Write a summary of the answers and talk with your students about these answers.*
- *Then continue with the story of Esther. She was Queen of the kingdom of Ahasuerus.*

Customs of the Jews would not allow Mordecai, cousin and foster parent of Esther, to kneel down and pay homage to Haman, even though the latter was commanded by king Ahasuerus. As a consequence of the conduct of Mordecai Haman plotted to destroy all the Jews dwelling in the kingdom of Ahasuerus and he offered ten thousand talents of silver for the men who carry out this task.

Haman persuaded king Ahasuerus by saying that certain people in the kingdom did not obey the laws of the king and proposed a royal decree to destroy them in one day.

In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning amongst the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing.

When Mordecai learned of all that had been done he sent word to Queen Esther explaining about these events and urging her to go to the presence of the king to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

All of the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces knew that for anyone who approached the king in the inner court without having been summoned had to be put to death except those to whom the king would extend the gold scepter as a sign to spare their lives.

Esther reminded Mordecai about the law but Mordecai sent back this answer "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 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 royal position for such a time as this?"

Afterward love for her family and people moved Esther to approach the king without being summoned by him, therefore risking her life.

To do so she prepared herself with 3 days of fasting and sent word to all the Jews who were in Susa asking them to fast for her the same 3 days as she fasted.

On the 3rd day Esther stood in front of the king's hall. When King Ahasuerus saw her he was so pleased with her that not only he held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand but also, after Esther approached him and touched the tip of the scepter, asked her "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

Queen Esther invited king Ahasuerus and Haman to a Banquet she prepared for them. During that banquet she invited them again for another banquet the day after. That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the record of his reign to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthama and Teresh who had conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Then the king found out that Mordecai received no honour nor recognition for helping the king. Therefore King Ahasuerus commanded Haman to honour Mordecai and it was done even through the city streets.

Afterward the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. Over a cup of wine King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther about her petition for he loved her and was willing to give her half the kingdom if she would just but ask for it. Then Esther opened her heart and unveiled her thoughts to the king. She asked the king to grant her her life and to spare her people because herself and her people had been sold for annihilation. The king asked Queen Esther about the identity of the man who dared to do such a thing. Then Esther spoke unto the king "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman". Haman was terrified before the king and Queen.

The king commanded to have Haman hanged.

Esther uncovered Mordecai to the king as her cousin and foster parent. King Ahasuerus presented Mordecai with the signet ring which would give him the place of honour which was Haman's once. In addition, Esther appointed Mordecai over Haman's state.

Then Esther made a call for justice by begging king Ahasuerus for a royal decree to overrule the dispatches that Haman devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the kingdom for she would not bear to see disaster fall on her people nor destruction of her family. King Ahasuerus authorized Esther and Mordecai to write such decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews in the provinces of his kingdom.

For the sake of justice, this new edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves.

On the 13th and 14th days of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was carried out and the Jews struck down all their enemies.

As from those days all the Jews throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus celebrate annually the 14th and 13th days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. This became known as the celebration of Purim.

REFLECTING ON THE PASSAGE

Ask the following questions to help the children analyze and remember the lesson.

- What was Mordecai's concern?

- Why did he have word sent to Esther to inform her of what was happening?
- What was Esther's reaction?
- What did she do?
- What would you have done?
- Would you have had the same courage and conviction that Esther had?

This courage comes only from God, for He knows you-He knows your needs and worries.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY 1

Share the cards or pieces of paper. Ask students to write what they feel to be positive and negative aspects found in the story of Esther. What impacted you the most in the story? Tell them to be brief.

APPLYING THE MESSAGE

What I want you to do is that through this lesson you look beyond your own desires. Look at what would be different if you had to offer support to your community, your country, or how things would be different if you looked at the needs of others before looking at your needs.

Esther acted with faith, along with her people, in prayer. Faith brings us to conviction, which brings us to action, which results in blessing. The result is up to God. Remember that God will not abandon us, and He always protects His people. Everything that happens is guided by Him and is for our good. God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things, just as in this story He used Esther, who was just like you and me. She became queen and saved the lives of an entire people, and she accomplished all this by trusting in God.

Can you imagine what it must feel like to be orphaned with out parents to take care of you? Esther was an orphan but had a cousin who took care of her and taught her to trust in God. Esther completely trusted her cousin. When her cousin asked her to protect the Jewish people, she took a great risk to do so.

Have you ever obeyed your parents to do something that scared you, but since your parents were asking you to do it you did it anyway? Esther was not

afraid to face the danger of speaking to the King without permission. The rule was that if the king did not extend his scepter to her, she ran the risk of being executed by order of the king.

Have you ever prayed for God to help you when you had a big problem? Have you seen your parents pray when they had a big decision to make? God listens to the prayers of God's people. The story tells us of a special way of praying. It's called Fasting. Do you remember what I told you fasting was? It is not eating in order to focus on praying to God. It is a very special way of praying and God listens to these prayers because they show how serious the people who are praying are. God heard the cry of his people praying, and God made the king to extend his scepter towards Esther and therefore sparing her life. Esther not only accomplished this, but also got the king to order the Jews to be able to defend themselves and be saved. As a result, the Jewish people had light, joy, happiness and honor in a foreign land.

CONCLUSION

Esther knew that she would accomplish more by praying and fasting along with Mordecai and their people than she could have accomplished alone. This doesn't mean that if we pray alone God doesn't listen to us, but He likes to hear the voice of all His people. Esther knew this because she was part of the people of God.

Do you want to be an extraordinary person? God makes ordinary people to become extraordinary, just like the lesson. God wants to be in your heart and make you a part of God's family.

I invite you to surrender your life to Christ, confess your sins, and ask God for forgiveness. *If you have a positive response from any adults, ask them to stay for a moment and finish presenting the plan of salvation. If you can't do it yourself, ask another teacher for support in doing so. (If possible, get the full names and addresses of these children).*

Conclude the class with prayer, giving God thanks for Jesus and for the members of the class.

God's Heroes: From Ordinary to Extraordinary

Mary Prepares to Serve God

Adults

Before class

Prepare Ask God for wisdom and understanding of what He would have you teach through His Word. Ask Him to open the hearts and minds of your students to receive what God has for them through this lesson. Pray that the Holy Spirit would speak through God's Word.

The scripture passage for this lesson is Luke 1:26-38. Besides reading these verses, you might want to prepare for the lesson by reading all of Luke, Chapter 1, but particularly verses 26-56. Also read Matthew 1:18-25 about the angel appearing to Joseph and Philippians 2:12-13.

If you plan to do the optional activity and the students do not all have the same Bible translation, you will want to have the verses written ahead of time on newsprint, blackboard, or individual copies of the last page of this lesson.

Plan Materials you will need for this lesson: Bible, Paper for each student, pencils and a blackboard or something to write on. If the students want to take notes, they need to have paper and pencils or pens available.

Practice Read through the lesson and time it. Make sure your plans fill the time allotted without being rushed.

Welcome

Greet the group.

Briefly go over the lesson learned yesterday.

Memory Passage for Today

" 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May it be to me as you have said.' Then the angel left her." Lk.1:38

Introduction

You might introduce the lesson by asking the students to imagine they were living in the town of Nazareth during the time of Mary and Joseph.

How would you have reacted if you were told that an unmarried teenage girl was claiming to be expecting a baby by the power of the Holy Spirit? Would you have believed her if she said she was a virgin?

Believers looking through the eyes of faith can believe the miracle of the birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary. If we believe that our God created the universe and formed man from the dust of the earth, we can accept the fact that God has the power to create a child in a virgin's womb.

Another reason we can believe the truth of Luke's Gospel is the fact that Luke was a medical doctor who researched what he wrote by interviewing eyewitnesses to the story of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. Tradition says that the story we are going to read today is Mary's story as she told it to Luke.

Bible Lesson

Open your Bibles to Luke 1:26-38. (You can either read the passage, ask one of the students ahead of time to be prepared to read the passage, or have students each read a verse. You might want to have two students role play the parts of the angel Gabriel and Mary, in addition to or in place of reading the scripture.)

Mary was an ordinary young woman, probably a teenager, engaged to be married to a man named Joseph. What in this passage tells us why God chose her to be part of His plan of salvation? (verses 28 and 30) To be so highly favored by God, she must have been a woman of great faith.

What else in the passage tells us of her belief and trust in God? (verse 38)

What risks did Mary face by submitting to God's will for her? (Joseph could divorce her because in those times betrothal could only be broken through death or divorce. She faced humiliation and rejection by her family and the community. Ultimately she faced death by stoning.)

Although at first she was troubled and puzzled at the angel's words, she accepted her position as a servant of God and was willing to follow His plan for her life. God gave her the faith to believe that, as the angel said, "nothing is impossible with God" (verse 37).

Why do you think God tells us in verse 26 that this was the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy?

- Elizabeth was a relative of Mary's, an older woman well past childbearing years (verse 36). This was an example to Mary of God's power to do the impossible.
- In verse 39 Mary travels to visit Elizabeth and stays with her three months (verse 56) until Elizabeth's baby, (John the Baptist), is born. Elizabeth, as an older woman could be a mentor and encourager to Mary and prepare her for her own labor and delivery. (If there is time, read and discuss verses 39-45. How would Elizabeth's greeting and knowledge of her pregnancy have affected Mary?)

Let's Take It One Step Further

You might want to share from your own life a time when God asked you to do something that seemed to you to be impossible. How did God enable you to be obedient?

Application

Have the students take pencil and paper to write down their thoughts as you ask the following questions:

Do you believe that God can choose you to do something special for Him?

Is there a situation or opportunity in your life in which God is asking something of you that you might consider impossible?

Are you willing to submit to God as His servant, as Mary did and then to believe and trust that God will do what He says He will do?

Optional Activity

Before closing in prayer, have the students read together Mary's song of faith, known as the *Magnificat* (verses 46-55), the first word in the Latin translation of this passage.

Conclusion

All God asks of us is our availability, just as He did of Mary. God never asks us to do anything that He doesn't equip us to accomplish in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul says "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." Although Mary was troubled and confused by the angel's proclamation, she humbly accepted God's will for her knowing that His power would make all see His plan.

Prayer:

Loving and merciful God, we thank you for your plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thank you for Mary's willingness to be obedient and to trust you to carry out that plan through her. Thank you that you love us so much that you choose us to serve you and be a part of your plan. Enable us through the power of your Holy Spirit to listen and be obedient to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

**My soul glorifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for He has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me -
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
He has scattered those who are proud in their
inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as He said to our fathers.**

HEROES OF GOD:
I FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY !

Day: Friday

YOUTH

Theme: Peter walks on water.

Lesson 5: Peter takes a risk

Bible passage: Matthew 14:22-33

Line to memorize: Matthew 14:28

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." Mt 14:28 (NIV)

OBJECTIVE

Students will know the story when Peter walked on water and will be encouraged to take decisions that help them grow in their faith in Jesus.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE TEACHER:

- *Pray to God not only to get wisdom, understanding and suitable words in order to prepare and deliver your lecture, but also to get God's Holy Spirit to act upon the life and hearts of your students.*
- *Devote enough time to prepare your lecture;*
- *Read the Bible text bearing in mind the cultural and biblical context underlying the story when Peter walked on water;*
- *Read the bible text as many times as needed in order to master the core of the story.*
- *Prepare and organize your teaching material in order to deliver your lecture as best as possible;*
- *The "Memory verse" should be preached by example. Make sure you know it well.*
- *Carry your Bible with you when delivering your lecture.*

MATERIAL: *(required for your lecture)*

Prepare a puzzle for the "line to memorize". Have 4 copies ready.

BIBLE CONTEXT

Jesus Christ was walking beside the Sea of Galilee and asked Simon, also known as Peter, to follow him. From there he became one of the 12 disciples of Christ (Matthew 4:18-20; 16:16).

Peter was impulsive (Matthew 16:22, 17:4, 26:33, 35; John 18:10) and full of weaknesses (Matthew 14:28, 30; 19:27, 26:40; John 18:17, 25, 27)

Jesus Christ predicted that Simon Peter would become the building rock upon which the church of Christ would be built (Matthew 16:17-19)

Peter disciplined himself through years of trials. He was strengthened by the Holy Ghost. After the Ascension of Christ Peter wrote some letters which show a difference on the character of Peter.

First epistle of Peter

Peter had become what Christ predicted: a rock for his church (Matthew 16:17-19)

This letter is likely to have been written during the last years of his life

The epistle is addressed to God's elect, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia & Bithynia.

The letters aims:

- *·to encourage them to endure and overcome grief in all kinds of trials*
- *·to call them to a life of holiness*

Second epistle of Peter addressed to all believers by faith. This aims

- *·to strengthen their faith*
- *·to highlight that the prophesy of the scriptures is inspired by God*
- *·to warn about false prophets who shall be among people on the last days*
- *·to bring hope about the coming of God*
- *·to call them to a life of holiness*

INTRODUCTION

- *Welcome your students. Then move on to carry out an icebreaker activity for your students to get to know each other better. Ask them to write down 3 activities they like on a piece of paper. Then each student will ask everybody else whether they like at least one activity named in the piece of paper. If they do then s/he will ask him/her to write down his/her name on the piece of paper.*
- *When the students finish this activity they will know people who have at least one interest in common.*
- *Teachers should write down the names of the students who are attending the lecture.*
- *Recall the name of the general subject of the week: "Heroes of God: From ordinary to extraordinary"*
- *Recall the names of the previous lessons you studied over the week.*
- *Ask for volunteers to tell a summary of the lessons*

- *Introduce the lesson of the day: Peter takes up the challenge.*

Activity to help students memorize the line of the day.

- *Split the class into small groups*
- *Give each group the bible verse to memorize (you can use the puzzle here)*
- *Give all groups instructions to practice to speak it out loudly enough as a group and uniformly. That is to say, at the same time, but clear enough.*

STUDYING THE BIBLE PASSAGE OF THE DAY

Ask the students to find Matthew 14:22-33 in their Bibles.

Read the Bible passage.

In the story, Peter also took up a challenge as some of you did today. A challenge of Faith, for he said "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water". After Christ called him "Come", Peter got down out the boat, walked on the water. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid because he doubted. As a result, he began to sink, but even then he called Christ for help and immediately Christ reached out his hand and caught him. Peter experience was Extraordinary.

When you read about the life of Peter then you will see that his life was like anybody else's. Then after the public life of Christ and after his death, Peter's life was transformed into an extraordinary life.

THINKING ABOUT THE BIBLE PASSAGE OF TODAY.

The Bible tells about many extraordinary signs carried out by God to show favor to the people of the living God.

To look at some examples,

- Moses raises his staff and stretched out his hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground (Exodus 14:16)
- Joshua followed God's commands in order to take the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:2-5, 20)
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego not only were saved by God from the blazing furnace but also rescued from the hands of king Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:27-28)
- Jesus Christ carried out extraordinary signs (Mark 1:32-34, 40-41; 6:39-44)

- The apostles of Jesus Christ healed many people (Acts 3:6-8, 5:12, 16; 9:34, 40)

In today's story Jesus Christ teaches Peter that all he needed was to strengthen his faith for he said to Peter "you of little faith" (Matthew 14:31)

FAITH in the living God is what Moses, Joshua, Jesus Christ, the apostles of Christ and many other believers spoken of in the Bible have in common.

Christ preached faith to all his disciples. For instance we can read in the Bible about the day Christ replied to his disciples "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also can you say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea', and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for **in prayer.**"

PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

There are times in our lives when you will have to make a decision like Peter's. Maybe you are in that moment right now! Peter made an uncommon decision and took a risk in trusting Jesus' words. He was not afraid of failure; the strong wind that was blowing did not intimidate him initially. He had Jesus in his heart; his eyes were on Jesus and even when he became afraid, he cried out to Jesus and Jesus saved him from his fears and the adversity he faced.

Now if you have Jesus in your heart, you can face anything life can throw your way. Success only comes from the right decisions and perseverance. The right decisions come from doing the will of God. Jesus said he was the way, the truth and the life, and that no one could come to the father but through him. If you wish to be successful in your endeavors remember that there is only one effective road. Jesus gives you the chance to grow. It is not the easiest or most comfortable road. Jesus warned that there would be difficulties we would face, but we need to trust him. He has won the battle for us.

Take the risk and believe in Jesus. Jesus has the best plan for your life, no matter what tests, storms or fear might come. Remember that it is not only about believing; we must do as God asks us and stay with God in order to become extraordinary people.

We have the option of taking a risk and do things that are impossible for human beings, things that defy the very rules of nature, as with Peter walking on water, for God is making all things possible. If we have Jesus in our heart, if we trust

completely in him, he can help us not to be afraid. If one day you find yourself in a situation that offers you the chance to live out your faith life, place your trust in God and he will do what for you is impossible. *Have the students look up the definition of faith, Hebrews 11:1.*

CONCLUSION

When Peter took his eyes off Jesus and focused on what surrounded him in this story -the strong wind- he no longer showed complete trust in God. But Peter knew that despite not having trusted fully, Jesus would bring him across the water. He would never leave him -it was to Him that he turned when he was sinking because he knew that He was his Savior and that He would never abandon Him.

This shows us that we should have faith in God. Faith is having complete confidence in God, although often this is difficult for us. There are moments and situations when fear invades us. This is not a bad thing, on the contrary, it shows us that we always need God, and alone we cannot save ourselves.

We should always turn to Jesus; he alone can save us. It is part of our It is part of our calling to share this joy from God with others. Tell your siblings, your parents, and your friends that having Jesus in your heart makes you feel his love.

Jesus wants to be in your heart. If you have not yet invited Jesus to enter into your heart, you can do it now. *If you have a positive response from any children, ask them to stay for a moment and finish presenting the plan of salvation. If you can't do it yourself, ask another teacher for support in doing so. (If possible, get the full names and addresses of these children).*

Conclude the class with prayer. Thank the students for coming all week. Tell them goodbye and invite them to keep coming to Sunday School