

# Walking With God

## *Protesters: Esther*



### Prayer Starter

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit...

Dear Lord, we know that you stood up for what was true and good during your time on earth. Help us, too, always stand up for what is right in your eyes. We know we can do this in small ways even now, with your help and guidance. Amen.

## Hye-O

### Prophets and Leaders

CATHOLICOS

GOD

ISAIAH

MESSENGER

NERSESS

PROPHET

SERAPHIM

THRONE

VISION

C	T	Q	O	H	A	I	A	S	I	G	A	B	M	P
T	A	H	E	R	W	O	L	S	I	O	V	V	I	R
H	N	T	H	T	A	D	C	M	Z	D	I	P	H	O
R	V	O	H	M	E	S	S	E	N	G	E	R	P	P
O	I	A	I	O	S	S	E	S	R	E	N	H	A	H
N	R	O	O	S	L	O	T	B	F	Q	X	Z	R	E
E	D	W	L	W	I	I	C	D	J	G	Z	Y	E	T
Y	S	B	K	Q	P	V	C	T	K	T	O	M	S	T
L	N	T	Y	D	W	P	W	O	X	Z	H	A	G	W
A	Q	D	F	H	L	H	J	C	S	I	S	A	T	R



### SCRIPTURE SOURCE

"...And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the King. If I must die, I must die."  
*Esther 4:16*

Esther said this in a message to her step-father, Mordecai. During that time, the King had many laws in his palace. One of them was that nobody could approach the King without being asked to come. So, Esther had many dangers in going to the King to plead for the Jews. Just going into his throne room uninvited was against the law of his kingdom, but she did it anyway to save her people.

# Daily Bread

## Esther: Standing Up for What's Right

King Ahasuerus ruled over the land of Persia which was a very big country with a lot of people. When he needed a wife, he searched for her all over Persia. He chose a woman named Esther. She was good, wise, and very beautiful. She was an Israelite (meaning, she was Jewish) and the King did not know this. A kind relative named Mordecai had adopted Esther as a child, and raised her as his own daughter. He warned her not to tell anyone she was an Israelite, because there were many people in the palace and all over Persia who did not like the Israelites.

A powerful man named, Haman, became angry at Mordecai. Haman knew that Mordecai was an Israelite, and he tricked the King into granting him the right to have all Israelites in Persia killed.

Esther and Mordecai were very afraid for their people and for themselves. Esther wanted to ask the King to send a decree to stop this from happening, but she was afraid. In that time, it was against the law to approach the King if he did not invite you. Also, she did not know how he would react to the fact that she was Jewish. She made a plan to serve a dinner for the King and Haman. While they were there together, she said to the King, "Dear King, if you are pleased with me, I beg you to spare my life. And also spare the lives of my people."

At first the King did not understand why she would be killed. He loved her and she was his Queen. That is when she told him that she was Jewish and reminded him that he had signed a decree given to him by one of his subjects to kill all of the Jews.

The King understood that the fact that others did not like the Jews was unfair. He knew that he loved his Queen and accepted that she was a Jew.

"Who dares to do this?" demanded the king.

"It is this cruel Haman," said Esther, pointing to her enemy. The king ordered the decree to be stopped and had Haman put to death for his tricks.

It took bravery for Esther to approach the king. She risked her life. We, too, may have to take a risk when we speak up for what is right. But, like Esther, we can follow our hearts.



## BIBLE BYTES

**Apostle** The term *Apostle* comes from the Greek word, "apostolos." It means one who is sent out into the world as a messenger. An "apostle" is different from a "disciple." A disciple is a follower and learns directly from a teacher. Thaddeus was both a disciple of Jesus and an apostle of Christianity.

Thaddeus was one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus. He, and another disciple, Bartholomew, came to Armenia after their time with Jesus. They taught as many people as they could about the life and message of Jesus Christ. Thaddeus inspired the Armenian princess Santookht and she became a Christian.

Did you know...!?

## In the Armenian Tradition

The Apostle Thaddeus went to Armenia to spread the word of Jesus. At that time, he met King Sanadrook's daughter, Princess Santookht, and told her about Jesus. She came to believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, so she converted from her pagan religion to become a Christian. When her father heard of her conversion, he was angry with her and tried many ways to get her to return to paganism.

He told her that if she gave up her belief in Jesus, she would have a great life in the palace and wear the most beautiful crown. She believed with all her heart that the way of Jesus was the best and stood up to her father.

The king became very upset, so he finally told her that she had to choose between the crown and a sword. Remaining strong in her faith, she chose the sword and she was put to death.

The Armenian Church remembers her as the first witness for Christianity in Armenia. While she learned from the Apostle Thaddeus, she led many others to convert to Christianity. She became the first Armenian saint to be honored by the Armenian Church.

While she chose the sword of martyrdom, she was given the crown of sainthood by God.

*How is St. Santookht's story like Esther's?*

# CELEBRATE WITH GOD

St. Santookht



## Well Versed

“Keep alert, stand strong in your faith, be courageous, be strong.”

*1 Corinthians 16:13*

## Family Focus

Today, the students learned about two important women of faith: Queen Esther, whose courage saved herself and her people, and Princess Santookht who bravely chose death in order to follow Christ. We learned that sometimes standing up for what we believe can be difficult or even dangerous, but that our faith in God will help us through.

### Living Your Faith

1. Talk together about what a “saint” is. People often say anyone who does something good is a “saint,” but they are much more special than that. Ask your child to talk about the faith and courage of Princess Santookht and why we consider her a saint.
2. Tell your child something you did to help others that took some bravery on your part, such as standing up for a co-worker or sacrificing something to help another person.

## Procedure

1. Welcome students and say the opening prayer together. Have them take the review quiz in **Hye Q**. Use the opportunity to review material from both sessions, flipping back in their textbooks.  
Answers: 1. Moses 2. Joshua 3. Joshua 4. Joshua 5. Moses. 10 min.
2. Write the word “prophet” on the board. Ask children what they think of when they see this word. Now have them look at the definition and pictures in **What’s A Prophet?** Which would they choose to portray a prophet? Their choice will probably be the bearded figure who most probably **does** look like many of the Old Testament men called to prophecy. Point out that the saintly woman pictured at the top left is Anna, a prophetess who was at the Temple when Jesus was brought by his parents to be presented to God, an event she had been waiting for. Conclude that **anyone** can be called by God to share his message and promises with the world so that anyone pictured could be called by God to be a prophet. 5 min.
3. Read **Daily Bread** and **Scripture Source** together. Discuss how children can actually serve as God’s messenger, even today, even in their own young lives. (Since this entails reminding people how to live godly lives, the best way might simply be to serve as an example; or in the case of younger siblings, to teach them). 10 min.
4. Distribute the Isaiah’s Vision handout and crayons/markers. Ask students to take turns reading out loud a verse from Isaiah 6 as outlined in **Celebrate with God**. Pause to reflect on the image presented in each verse. Discuss question. Have the children draw what they think Isaiah’s vision of God looked like. While the children are drawing, read the sidebar **Bible Bytes** to them. 15 min.
5. After the students have drawn their pictures, have them bring them up and tape them on the wall in a grouping, noting that “You know, no matter how differently we all draw, everyone teaches us something from their interpretation.” Point out something notable in each drawing. Leave them there until class is dismissed at which time they should take them home.

6. Segue with “In the Armenian Church, one of its greatest leaders, almost prophet-like himself in his visions and work, was the Catholicos St. Nersess Shnorhali.” Read **In the Armenian Tradition**. Review the prayer with students. Discuss **An Exercise in Prayerful Thinking**. Conclude with everyone saying the prayer together. 20 min.

## UNIT 1 Lesson Seven

## Walking With God *Protesters: Esther*

### Key Concepts

1. Doing the right thing can sometimes be difficult.
2. Nevertheless, God calls us to faithful conviction on behalf of truth and righteousness.

### Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review information about the Prophet Isaiah.
2. Read and discuss the Bible story of Esther.
3. Identify the first saint of the Armenian Church and compare her conviction to Esther’s.
4. Make a stained glass window depicting St. Santookht.

C	T	Q	O	H	A	I	A	S	I	G	A	B	M	P
T	A	H	E	R	W	O	L	S	I	O	V	V	I	R
H	N	T	H	T	A	D	C	M	Z	D	I	P	H	O
R	V	O	H	M	E	S	S	E	N	G	E	R	P	P
O	I	A	I	O	S	S	E	S	R	E	N	H	A	H
N	R	O	O	S	L	O	T	B	F	Q	X	Z	R	E
E	D	W	L	W	I	I	C	D	J	G	Z	Y	E	T
Y	S	B	K	Q	P	V	C	T	K	T	O	M	S	T
L	N	T	Y	D	W	P	W	O	X	Z	H	A	G	W
A	Q	D	F	H	L	H	J	C	S	I	S	A	T	R

### Materials Needed

- St. Santookht stained glass window handout (from Appendix)
- Scissors
- Glue

Crayons/Markers (markers should be pastel for transparency)

Optional: prizes for everyone at the conclusion of the Word Search and review

## Procedure

1. Welcome the children and say the opening prayer together. Ask the students to work on the **Hye Q** Word Search. While they are working, ask them the following questions about last week's lesson and discuss the answers with them; use the opportunity to review concepts and personalities. Optional (but fun): Promise prizes at the end of the review!

— What is a “prophet?” Answer: Prophets are called by God to express his will to others. They share God's plans and promises as revealed to them by God and remind people very boldly of how they are or are *not* following God's ways.

— Who was Isaiah? Answer: Isaiah was one of the greatest of the prophets. He saw a powerful vision of God which we read and illustrated last week. He wrote down and preached to the people many things that God told him about the future of our world. One of those things was the coming of Jesus Christ.

— Who is the “Catholicos” in the Armenian Church? Answer: The Catholicos is the leader of all Armenian churches in the world. He is elected by the National Ecclesiastical Assembly which consists of both priests and lay-people from all over the world. He stays in his post for life, living in the headquarters of the world Armenian Church – Etchmiadzin, Armenia.

— Who was St. Nersess Shnorhali? Answer: He was a great Catholicos of the 12<sup>th</sup> century who wrote many prayers, hymns, poems and essays, most of which are still in use today.

Review Word Search and distribute prizes. 15 min.

2. Tell the children: “Today, we're going to look at yet another special person from the Bible. So far, what amazing people have we come across? (Write their names on the board, as you mention them and wait for answers after each question; or, for more class participation, have two recorders writing names and phrases on the board at your direction.) First, we learned about the first people, Adam and Eve – wasn't it wonderful how they were directly able to talk with God and live happily in Paradise?

Then, who? Yes, Noah. What did he do that you remember? Yes, God gave him instructions to build an ark that would stay afloat in the Great Flood that started with 40 days and nights of rain...and what else? Yes, to bring pairs of the animals of the world. Now *there* was a man who could follow God's instructions! Then (you might want to have them flipping through their student text as you do this), Abraham and Sarah. What were they up to when God called them? Yes, happily living in their home town of Haran. But when God had a huge and glorious plan for the world that they could help begin, what did they do? Exactly – they got together whatever they could bring with them and moved to where God promised would be a new life. Not only that, but they agreed to be leaders. That's not easy. How is a leader's life different from anyone else's? (Listen for answers which might include knowing what they're doing, having a plan, being strong, helping people). Then, the great liberator, leader of the Hebrews, Moses. What do you remember about Moses? (They can use their textbooks to refresh their memories; continue to review Joshua and Isaiah in the same way.) Looking at all the names you've written on the board, say: Wow, that's quite a number of amazing, gifted people who started as ordinary people, just like you and me, and who God helped make amazing things happen. Now we come to...Esther.” 10 min.

3. Have children find the Book of Esther in their Bibles. Tell them that they will be reading a story *about* Esther in their textbooks. Read **Daily Bread**. Ask the children if they thought Esther had some choices. Possible answers:

a.) She could have kept quiet and allowed all of her people to be killed and just pretended that she was not Jewish for the rest of her life. Discussion on this choice might be about how she would have felt after that – guilty, cowardly, regretful.

b.) She could have stormed into the King's throne room, gotten angry, and demanded that they not kill the Jews. Discussion on this choice should include how that would have gotten her killed by the guard because it was against the law to approach the King without being invited.

Conclude discussion of this last option by having students read **Scripture Source**. 10 min.

4. Tell students that there is another royal woman that you are going to tell them about who was the first saint of the Armenian Church. Read or teach **In the Armenian Tradition**. Discuss the question. (Guideline to answers: Both Esther and Santookht were royal: Esther, the wife of a king; Santookht, the daughter of a king. Both felt a loyalty to a unique family of people: Esther to the Jews; Santookht to Christians. Both were faced with a difficult choice: Esther to remain quiet and enjoy her royal life (but see her people killed); Santookht; could remain pagan and enjoy her royal life, but betray her faith in Jesus and see Christians continue to be persecuted. Both risked their lives, without concern for what would happen to them - they stood up for what they were convinced in God's eyes was right.)
5. Distribute St. Santookht stained glass window hand-out and crayons/markers. Have students color the window to mount in a window at home. 20 min.
6. Clean up and conclude with a prayer: "Dear Lord, thank you for teaching us how to know what is right. Give us the courage to protest and fight against wrongdoing, even if it is a scary thing to do. Amen." 5 min.

UNIT  
**1**  
Lesson  
Eight

## Walking With God

### *Mother of the New Creation: St. Mary*

#### Key Concepts

1. St. Mary was the mother of Jesus and the first true disciple, saying a resounding "yes" to God's invitation to serve.
2. We celebrate the Assumption of St. Mary in acknowledgment of the powerful love of the Mother of God that spiritually sustains us.
3. We celebrate the Blessing of the Grapes in thanks for the food that physically sustains us.

#### Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review the stories of Esther and Princess Santookht.
2. Examine the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55), also known as the "Magnificat."
3. Discuss what St. Mary means to us as Armenian Christians.
4. Complete a puzzle featuring the Angel Gabriel's message.
5. Explore the Blessing of the Grapes ceremony and the symbolism of grapes.
6. Color and fill in a depiction of the Annunciation.

#### Materials Needed

Puzzle handout (from Appendix)

Annunciation handout (from Appendix)

Markers

#### Procedure

1. Welcome the children and say the opening prayer together. Have students take the **Hye Q** review quiz. Answers: 1. Esther 2. King Sanadrook 3. Haman 4. Princess Santookht 5. Mordecai 10 min.
2. Ask the children if they know who St. Mary is. Most of them should remember who she is from the well-known Christmas stories. Tell them that when we talk about St. Mary as the mother of Jesus, sometimes we forget that even though she is a saint, she is also a mom, just like their mom or grandmother. Ask them who they go to for comfort when they fall down and skin their knee? Often, it's their mom, or grandmother. (Be sensitive here if there is a child in the classroom without a mom.) Tell them that the love they feel from their own mother is the love that Mary had for her son and was also the love that Jesus says we should all have for all people of the world. St. Mary was not only the mother of Jesus, but she was the first one to believe in him as the Savior. Read **Daily Bread** and **Scripture Source** through the puzzle. (Distribute larger version.) Answer: *Nothing is impossible with God.* 15 min.
3. Pause before you get to the words of the Magnificat. Ask students if they ever sing (show of hands). On what occasions? (They might mention singing "happy birthday," the national anthem – American or Armenian, or camp or school songs.)