



WEEK 5

HACKS FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

BRAVE

BY EUGENIA LEE

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In children's ministry, you've got a wide range of ages you need to engage every week, but kids with special needs tend to get overlooked, so here are a few adjustments you can make to this week in order to keep your kids with special needs more engaged.

GENERAL TIPS

Provide guidelines for discussion activities. Some students with special needs are very rigid in their thinking and actions, making it very difficult to work in groups where they have to listen to others and be flexible in problem solving. Frustrated peers let the rigid student have their way to avoid conflicts. When that routinely happens, it is no longer motivating for peer students to participate and work together. Have an adult volunteer lay out some simple guidelines such as: take turns on sharing ideas, listen when others talk, combine different ideas, choose a better idea, vote, make sure to listen to everyone, and so on.

Set up a reward system. If a kid exhibits good teamwork behavior (like listening, taking turns, making positive comments, etc.) five times, you will have a reward. Have a student earn a token/star and have the student rewarded for following up. ([Here](#) is a video on using tokens to reinforce good behavior.)

Use timers. Many students with special needs are familiar with timers. It is often used to manage their behaviors, for example, to give them heads up on time remaining to engage in certain activity, or to help them with transition to next activity, or to provide them cues to activate certain actions like using the bathroom or to turn off TV. Sand timer can be used in our church classrooms as well for similar functions. We are going to clean up for 2 minutes. Set timer. We will move to next room for worship in 5 minutes. Set timer. When the timer goes off, we will go back to our seats. Set timer.



Prevent sensory overload. Loud music and noisemakers is auditory. Dimmed light, disco ball and streamers are visual. Dancing activates vestibular senses for our body movement sensory system. Bumping into people is tactile. Festive foods add smell and taste senses. This can be too much to handle and regulate. Give a heads up to students if you are about to engage in activity with many sensory components. If your student is nonverbal, talk to parents and gather information on how the student copes with sensory issues. Loud music, too many people in a room, and lights (too dark or too bright) are common factors to look out for. Start with soft music and slowly make it louder but not too loud. Same with lights, dim lights slowly if possible. Offer noise blockers or headphones, if available.



WEEK 5

ELEMENTARY LESSON GUIDE

BRAVE

BIG IDEA

God has a plan for my life.

THE BIBLE

Esther Saves Her People: Esther 8:5-17;
(Ephesians 2:10)

LARGE GROUP TIME

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

MUSIC | Made for This

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Spend some time in worship with your kids! You can choose any song you'd like, but check out "[Made for This](#)" by Group.

ACTIVITY | Under Construction

- We are wrapping up our Brave series by talking about how God has a plan for each of us. By listening to God and following the plan, we can do great things together.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Provide plastic cups, dry spaghetti, marshmallows, yarn, string, and Jenga blocks to build a tower. Encourage them to devise a plan, construct their tower, and then present it to the group.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Ask: Do you feel like you are better at making a plan or working a plan? Do you like to be the plan maker or the plan doer? The good news is, God is good at both! And he has a good plan for your life.
- I have something I'd like you to come up with a plan for. Using the materials provided, I want you to get into groups of two or three and construct the tallest tower. Everyone must work together and you must use all of your supplies. Ready? Go!

ACTIVITY | Blank Canvas

- Each day is a gift and sort of like a blank canvas, ready for us to take it and make it into a beautiful masterpiece.
- Here is a blank canvas (*Hold up a blank piece of paper*). Think of a plan for how you'd like to design it and then go for it. Use it to make any design you'd like.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Encourage the kids to use crayons, markers, colored pencils, or paint to create any type of design they'd like on their paper. Talk with them about how they chose their design, the colors, etc.*

OBJECT LESSON | Water Flow

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Crunch up a large piece of wax paper to look like a mountain and place it in a shallow pan. Pour colored water from the top of the mountain, watching it flow into the pan. Then, add a small ball of wax paper to block the path of the water and watch it change its path to end up in the pan.*
- Water always ends up at the lowest point. Even if something blocks its path, it will find another way to reach the lowest point. Today, we will learn how Esther followed God's plan to save the Jewish people.

THE BIG IDEA | God has a plan for my life.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Write the Big Idea on a roll of butcher paper in pencil. When it's time to reveal the Big Idea, unroll the paper and invite a couple kids to come and trace over the lines with a marker, then hold it up for the rest of the group to see.*
- This week's Big Idea: **God has a plan for my life.**

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

VIDEO | Brave, Episode 5

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's [teaching video](#).*

SCRIPTURE | Esther 8:5-17

- Last week, we heard Esther's story of having to make a difficult decision. Today, we'll hear more of her story and see how God had a plan all along.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Look up Esther 8:5-17 in your Bible and encourage the kids to do the same. Read it!*
- Let's quickly review last week's story. Mordecai, Esther's cousin, asked her to go before her husband, King Xerxes, to ask him to save the Jewish people from being killed. King Xerxes didn't know Esther herself was Jewish. In those times, no one was allowed to go to the king unless they had been called, so Esther could have been killed for going to him unannounced. It was a difficult decision for Esther to make.
- Today's passage brings us to what happens next. It opens with Esther standing before the king.
 - **What did Esther ask King Xerxes to do?**

- **What was the king’s response?**
- Esther’s secret was out – she was Jewish and she wanted the king to save the Jewish people.
 - **How did Esther’s actions help to carry out God’s plan?**
- God had a plan for Esther to help save the Jewish people. She was in the place she was as queen in order to carry out God’s plan.

VIDEO | The Story of Esther

- Let’s review Esther’s story again by watching this video.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show [this video](#), “God’s Story: Esther” by Crossroads Kids’ Club.
- God chose Esther to save the Jews from harm and depended on Esther’s bravery to follow through with those plans.

VIDEO | Sand Painting

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold up an hourglass.
- This is an hourglass. An hourglass is a device to measure time. You turn it one way and all the sand goes into the bottom. That’s when you know time is up.
- We can think of God’s plan like the sand in this hourglass, or we can look at the sand of time in another way.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show the kids [this brief video](#) of sand painting.
- How cool was it that the artist created pictures from sand?
- The plans God has for our lives are revealed over the course of our lives and through the things we experience.

SCRIPTURE | Ephesians 2:10

- **What is this verse telling us?**
- **What were we created for?**
- God created us to do good things because it’s part of the plan for us. Our lives matter to God. The work God has planned for us is already prepared for us. Like Esther, we are called to do the work God has planned for us.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Show an image of the front and back of a large tapestry. The back looks like a mess- string everywhere, threads hanging out. . . .it doesn’t make sense. That’s sometimes how we view our lives. But God sees the front. A perfect and beautiful picture that illustrates his plans.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

ACTIVITY | Praise Party

- Esther 8 tells us that after the Jews were saved, there was a time of happiness and joy. Let’s celebrate today with a praise party!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play upbeat music and encourage the kids to dance. You can add in festive elements such as streamers and noisemakers, if you want.

ACTIVITY | Victory Feast

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Set out a couple of snacks for the kids, such as Rice Krispy treats, fruit, popcorn, or veggies and dip. Play upbeat music during this time.
- In our Bible story, we read the Jews celebrated being saved by having a feast. Let's celebrate God having a plan for us with a feast of our own!

PRAYER

- Dear God, thank You for what You've taught us today. Thank You for helping Esther be brave in saving the lives of her people. Help us to be brave, too, and trust You. Thank You for having a plan for my life.

MEMORY VERSE | Verse Hunt

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Write each word of the memory verse on an index card. Hide the cards around the room and encourage the kids to hunt for them. Then, allow them to put the cards in the correct order.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- How was Esther brave in today's story?
- How did the king respond?
- How did the Jews celebrate?
- Re-read Ephesians 2:10. Do you believe you are God's masterpiece? What does that mean to you?
- What do you hope are God's plans for you?
- Do you trust that God knows the best plans for you?
- How can you trust God when you don't understand everything God does?

ACTIVITY | My Plans vs. God's Plans

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show [this image](#) to your kids. Discuss the images and what the kids think they mean. Then on a piece of paper, have the kids recreate a similar image by using different vehicles and/or route shapes.
- What are some plans you are thinking of making for yourself?
- How might God have different and better plans than the ones you do?
- Why are God's plans better?

MEMORY VERSE | Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Introduce kids to this month's memory verse, teaching them the signs (a combination of SEE and ASL) we've provided.

