

SMALL GROUP
DISCUSSION GUIDE
SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2025

Esther





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Esther

SERIES INTRODUCTION

Esther is an odd book to be found in the Bible for a number of reasons. First of all, it never mentions God - not even once. Secondly, the characters in the story are not necessarily people you would want to be found hanging out with. The book is full of R-rated content that would keep many of us from letting our children read it much less watch it if it was a movie.

But, through the Holy Spirit, this epic book has been included in the library of Scripture that we call the Bible.

It is a story of how God will accomplish His purposes - oftentimes in the shadows and using people we would never consider. And the depraved setting of this story is the point. It shows us how God is still active, even when it seems like He is distant.

In short, Esther is about the purposeful providence of God at all times.

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

What was your main takeaway from our last series?

STUDY

Have you ever read the book of Esther?

If so, what do you remember about it?

If not, what have you heard about it - if anything?

At this point in history, the Jews had been through a lot. Their land had been conquered multiple times and the Jews taken into exile. The book of Esther is set in Persia who had most recently occupied Israel but King Cyrus had allowed Jews to return home a handful of decades earlier.

What does it do for you to read the Bible in light of human history?

Does it affect your reading in any way?

As we look at the setting of this story, why do you think some Jews did not return to Jerusalem? Why stay in the place of exile?

APPLY

Like the ancient Jews, we live in a world that is not our own and yet there is a city of peace offered to us in Jesus. Why don't we go there? Why do we stay in the place of exile?

What can you do, practically, this week to return to the city of peace?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

What is your favorite holiday to celebrate? Why?

STUDY

While we have not studied the whole book of Esther the end of the story tells us all we need to know about the point of it. The story of Esther is a story of God's providential hand in the lives of His people - even when things seem the darkest.

The story ends with the enactment of a Jewish festival called Purim to celebrate the day God used pur (lots) to save His people. What do you think about a festival to celebrate lots?

How does a yearly festival like that shape the worldview of people?

Look at Esther 9:22. What were they to do to celebrate?

Why do you think they were told to celebrate in that way?

In verses 27-28, we see a generational commitment to the Feast of Purim. Why do you think there was such a strong commitment made?

APPLY

Why don't we celebrate His providence like the Jews with Purim?
What have the effects been?

What do you think would change for you if you celebrated the providence of God like this?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

When you hear the word, “empire”, what do you think of?

STUDY

According to Esther 1:1, how big is the empire of Persia?

What would this mean to and for you if you were living in it?

Esther 1:1-4 show us the power of the Persian Empire. How would you describe it based on those four verses?

Verses 5-11 show us another aspect of the Empire. What do we learn about the Persian Empire from these verses?

Based on those descriptions in verses 1-9, describe the Persian Empire. What would it mean to you if you were living in it? How would it affect your perspective and way of life?

It seems as though appearance carries a lot of weight in the Persian Empire - beauty, splendor, and even reputation. What would it be like to live in a culture like that?

APPLY

Compare the Persian Empire to our country. What do you see?

The Empire and the Kingdom of God are at odds with each other. Contrast the two. What are the major differences?

How can we live as citizens of the Kingdom while surrounded by the Empire?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

If you were in some sort of talent contest, what would you do as your talent? What if it was a contest about weird talents? What would you do?

STUDY

In this chapter we meet Esther. What do we learn about her in verses 5-7?

What does that make you think about her?

Read verse 10. What does this verse tell us about what it was like to be a Jew in the Persian Empire?

According to these first two chapters, in the Empire what sort of people are respected or admired or powerful?

What does that tell us about the Empire?

What qualifications does Esther have to be queen? Why was she chosen? What does that tell us about the Empire?

Esther and Mordecai are Jews. They were given a chance to go back to their home to rebuild the temple for God but they chose to stay in Persia. What does that tell us about them?

APPLY

What sort of people are admired and respected and in power in the Empire we live in?

What does that mean for people of the Kingdom? What should we be aware of?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

What is your favorite movie? Why?

STUDY

What do we learn about the assassination plot in verses 21-23?

What do we learn about Mordecai in those same verses?

Now we meet Haman. We learn that Haman is an Agagite - a descendent of King Agag. Agag was an Amalekite in the days of King Saul, the first King of Israel. **Read 1 Samuel 15:2.** That takes us back to **Exodus 17:8-16. Read Exodus 17:14-16.**

This hatred between the Agagites and the Jews goes way back.

But now Haman decides he can share his kindred and people. Why now do you think?

The chapter ends with Haman and the king having a drink together while the city of Susa is in chaos. What does this show us about the leadership of the Empire?

APPLY

What are you feeling at the end of this chapter?

When was a time you were thrown into chaos and confusion because of a decision or event you did not see coming?

Read Proverbs 16:33.

How does this verse help the people of the Kingdom in the midst of the Empire?

PRAY

Esther 4

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

Are you a planner? If not, who is the planner in your family?

STUDY

Chapter 4 opens with Mordecai crying and weeping and in sackcloth and ashes. Why?

And the Jews are mourning, too. Describe the emotions and feelings in the atmosphere of the Jewish people in Persia now.

Verse 8 says that Mordecai commanded Esther to go to the king. What do you think about him commanding her?

Read Esther's response in **Esther 4:11**. What is she saying?

Mordecai responds with the most famous line in the book of Esther, "who knows whether or not you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this". And something shifts in Esther. Why do you think that question had such an impact on her?

APPLY

Mordecai and Esther have not been described as devout Jews at all. In fact, we are led to believe the opposite is true of them. What does this tell us about God's providence?

Does that question about your placement for such a time as this impact you at all? If so, what does it do to and for you?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

Do you like surprises? Why or why not?

STUDY

At this point we are over nine years into the story and over five years into Esther's reign as Queen of Persia. Think about that. What do you think the last five years have been like for Esther?

What changes have you seen in Esther over the last two chapters?

Read verse 1. Why is Esther dressed like this?

Now we see the tension rising not between Mordecai and Haman but between Esther and Haman. What do you see as the differences between the two of them?

Chapter 6 is one of the more humorous chapters in the whole Bible. What do you make of it?

What do you think was going through Haman's mind in verse 11?

APPLY

Without knowledge of God, this seems like a crazy coincidence. What does this reversal reveal about the hand of God?

Read Proverbs 21:1. What does this tell us about how to read **Esther 6:1** and how to view political leaders in our day and age?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

Do you like amusement park rides? If so, which ones? If not, why not?

STUDY

Until this point, Esther has made two requests of the king. Both were to have Haman to her banquet. But In **Esther 7:3-4**, her request escalated. Why do you think she was courageous enough to ask for that now?

In verse 7, the king makes his way to the garden. Why?

In verse 8, Haman is falling over where Esther is sitting. Why is this detail important for us?

Haman is then hung on the gallows he had constructed for Mordecai. What does that tell us about God's providence?

Go back and read **Esther 6:13**. What did Haman's wife and advisors know about God?

What kept Haman from hearing them?

APPLY

The providence of God includes our enemies. How does that affect how we view them?

Read Esther 6:13 in light of chapter 7 and in light of your life. What truth is there for you?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

Have you ever had your name called on the intercom at school or work to come to the principal's or manager's office? What was that like?

STUDY

If the story ended at the end of chapter 7 it would be a good and powerful story. But it doesn't. **Read Esther 8:1-2**. What do we learn about the character of God?

Look at **verse 4** and then go back to **Esther 4:10-11**. What just happened here in chapter 8?

Somehow this great king, once obsessed with appearance and opulence has developed a heart for the Jews. We have seen the reversal of the parade from Haman to Mordecai, the gallows from Mordecai to Haman, and now the edict from killing the Jews to defending the Jews. But read **Esther 8:15-17**. What does that remind you of from earlier in the book?

If we zoom out we see that God's providence is not just for Esther and Mordecai. God is still fulfilling His promise He made to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1-4**. What does this tell us about God's providential plan?

APPLY

The providence of God is bigger than just us. What would happen in us if we understood that?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

Do you nap? If so, where is your favorite place and what is your favorite time to nap?

STUDY

If the story ended at the end of chapter 8 it would be a good and powerful story. But it doesn't. The beginning of chapter 9 is a violent one - but not without purpose.

If the story ended at chapter 8, what would still be true for the Jews?

Read Esther 9:11-15. One more request from Esther. What is she asking for and why?

Read Esther 9:16-18. Relief and rest are mentioned. Why?

From that rest and relief come a feast. Why is it important to the Jewish people that this celebration happens every year?

APPLY

How does this story relate to us as Christians?

Both individually and corporately?

PRAY

INTRO

What caught your attention from the message today?

When you have a project to do, do you plan it out first? Or do you just jump into it and figure it out as you go?

STUDY

There is more than meets the eye when it comes to the Scriptures.

Look at the structure of the book of Esther on the following page.
What do you notice?

The story of Scripture carries a similar structure.

The Bible begins in the Garden of Eden in Genesis and ends with the Garden City in Revelation.

The Old Testament is the story of the Israelites as God's people and the New Testament is the story of the disciples as God's people.

The hinge is the great reversal of a cross meant for one man but taken by another to save God's people.

What does the structure of both Esther and the Bible tell us about our God?

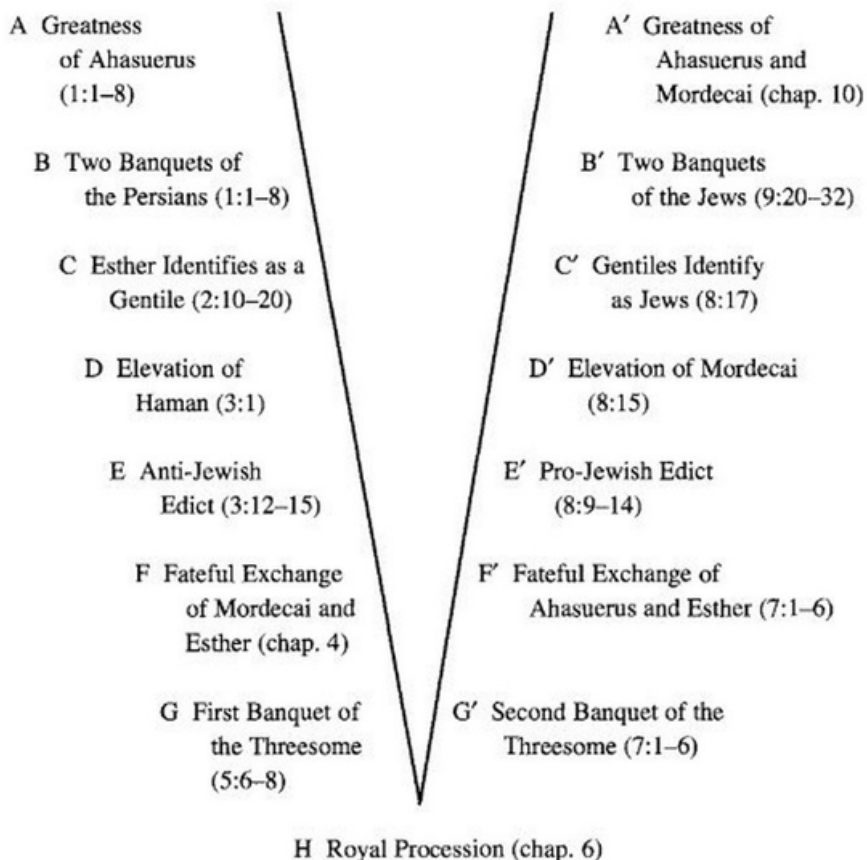
APPLY

How does all of this teach us about life as we know it?

What does it mean for us as Christians?

PRAY

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER



extra notes

Esther

extra notes

Esther

extra notes

Esther

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a church interior. The scene is dimly lit, with a large, dark wooden door or panel dominating the left and center. To the right, a small, arched doorway is visible, framed by ornate, light-colored woodwork. The floor is dark and reflective. The overall mood is solemn and reverent.

TO GOD
be the
GLORY