

Lifegroups^x

STUDY GUIDE

**THE
BOOK OF
ESTHER**

FALL SEMESTER 2021

SCHEDULE

Reading by Week

- Week One 09/12 – 09/18 Intro / Ice Breaker
- Week Two 09/19 – 09/25 Esther 1
- Week Three 09/26 – 10/02 Esther 2
- Week Four 10/03 – 10/09 Esther 3
- Week Five 10/10 – 10/16 Esther 4
- Week Six 10/17 – 10/23 Esther 5
- Week Seven 10/24 – 10/30 Esther 6
- Week Eight 10/31 – 11/06 Esther 7
- Week Nine 11/07 – 11/13 Esther 8
- Week Ten 11/14 – 11/20 Esther 9
- Break 11/21 – 11/27 No class – Thanksgiving
- Week Eleven 11/28 – 12/04 Esther 10 / Review
- Week Twelve 12/05 – 12/11 Pot luck

GROUP EXPECTATIONS

- Be faithful in **attendance**.
- Come **prepared**.
- eXemplify **humility** by not interrupting or being argumentative.
- Things shared are **confidential** and not to be shared outside the group without permission.
- Passionately **participate** in the discussion.
 - If you're shy, pick out a couple items ahead of time that were meaningful to you.
 - If you're talkative, please share while remembering to allow others the opportunity to speak.
 - If on Zoom, please mute yourself when not speaking to reduce interruptions from background noises (children, pets, TV).
- Commit to **pray** for one another
- Be **authentic**. It's okay to be real, imperfect people serving a perfect God. Integrity is the art of being the same person everywhere you go...No phonies.

HOW TO BEGIN EACH READING

- Pray before you begin, asking Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to hear what He has to say to you.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

- Be eXpectant that God is going to speak to you and reveal new truths.

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. – Mark 11:24 (NKJV)

- Read and meditate on the passage before consulting a commentary. This allows Holy Spirit the freedom to personally teach before the commentary influences you.
- Read/study daily, allowing yourself time to hear God speak to you through His Word.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. – Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

- Keep a notebook to write down what the Holy Spirit teaches you and what you hear Him saying to you through the Word. Use these notes both for your own personal reflection and for sharing in the group discussion.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. – John 14:26

STUDY & DISCUSSION

As you study the Scriptures this week, ask and answer the following questions of the passage.

- **AUDIENCE**
Who is the audience? What characteristics defined this particular audience?
- **PEOPLE**
Who are the main characters or people groups in this passage?
- **PLACES**
Where is this taking place? List everything you know about this location.
- **TIME**
When is this taking place? What time of day? Year? Where does this take place on the historical timeline? What was the culture like when the author wrote this? How might culture have influenced this author and audience?
- **THEME**
What is the overall theme, topic, concept, or event of this passage?
- **KEYWORDS**
What are the keywords in this passage? Be sure to clearly define any key terms.
- **VERBS**
What verbs are used in this passage? What tenses are used?
- **CHALLENGES**
What questions do you have about this passage? Is there something you don't understand?
- **APPLICATION**
What is Holy Spirit teaching you? What truth has He revealed to you? How does this passage apply to your life today?

THE BOOK OF ESTHER - OVERVIEW

Author

While the name of the author is unknown, the book was written by a Jew who was familiar with Persian customs and words. Mordecai or Ezra may have been the writer.

Background

The Book of Esther is a remarkable narrative that relates how God's people were preserved from ruin during the fifth century B.C.

The book takes its name from the beautiful, orphaned Jewess who became the queen of the Persian king Ahasuerus who lived in the capital city of Shushan. He is generally believed to have been King Xerxes I, who succeeded Darius I in 485 B.C. and ruled for 20 years over 127 provinces from present-day India to Ethiopia. At this time, a number of Jews were still in Babylon under Persian rule, even though they had been free to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1; 2) for over 50 years. The story takes place over a period of four years, starting in the third year of Xerxes' reign.

Content

Esther is a study in the survival of God's people amidst hostility. Haman, the king's second-in-command, wants the Jews destroyed. He manipulates the king to call for their execution. Esther is brought on the scene and God uses her to save her people. Haman is hanged; and Mordecai, a leader to the Jews in the Persian Empire, becomes prime minister. The Feast of Purim is then instituted to mark their deliverance.

A unique feature of Esther is that God's name is not mentioned. However, we can see the imprint of God and His ways throughout the book, especially in Esther and Mordecai's lives. From a human perspective, Esther and Mordecai are two of the most unlikely people to be chosen to play major roles in shaping a nation. He is a Jewish Benjamite eXile; she is his adopted, orphaned cousin (2:7). We can see Esther's spiritual maturity in her choice to wait for God's timing to make her request to save her people and to denounce Haman (5:6-8; 7:3-6). Mordecai also demonstrates a maturity to seek God for timing and direction. As a result, he knows the right time for Esther to disclose her identity as a Jew (2:10). These restraints, which are obviously under divine control, prove to be crucial and testify to the book's spiritual base (6:1-14; 7:9, 10).

Both Esther and Mordecai fear God, not people. Regardless of the consequences, Mordecai refuses to pay homage to Haman; Esther risks her life for the sake of her people by going to the king without being summoned. They make it their mission to save the lives that Haman had planned to destroy (2:21-23; 4:1-17; 7:1-6; 8:3-6). As a result, Esther and Mordecai lead a nation into freedom. They are honored by the king and given greater authority, privileges, and responsibilities.

Personal Application

The Book of Esther shows us a classic eXample of successful teamwork, which we see in the way Esther and Mordecai conduct their lives. Their relationship vividly portrays the unity that the Lord Jesus prays for His disciples to eXperience (John 17:11, 21-23). The success of their individual roles, even their very survival, depends entirely upon their unity. Esther also shows us how God destroys those who try to harm His people. This reminds us that God is faithful to destroy Satan and that His sovereign purposes ultimately prevail.

Christ Revealed

Queen Esther reminds us of Jesus in several ways:

- Esther lived in submission, dependence, and obedience to Mordecai and King Ahasuerus, her God-given authorities, even as the Lord Jesus, during His earthly ministry, lived in total submission, dependence, and obedience to His Father God.
- Esther fully identified herself with her people and fasted for three days as she interceded to God on their behalf (4:16). Hebrews 2:17 tells us, "In all things He [Jesus] had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest." As such, He both fasted and prayed for His own (Matt. 4:2; John 17:20).
- Esther gave up her right to live in order to save the Jews from certain death. For this, she was exalted by the king. In like fashion, Jesus gave up His life that a world of sinners might be saved from eternal death and God highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:5-11).

The Holy Spirit at Work

Although the Holy Spirit is not mentioned directly, it is His work that produces, in Esther and Mordecai, a deep level of humility, leading to their mutual love and loyalty (see Rom. 5:5). The Holy Spirit also directs and energizes Esther to fast for her nation and to call her people to do the same (see Rom. 8:26, 27).

ADDITIONAL TO ESTHER

Esther 4

KINGDOM DYNAMICS 4:1 Rising to Meet Your Destiny (Esther), BIBLICAL WOMEN.

Esther was a Jewish orphan—a virtual nonentity, raised by her cousin, Mordecai, and with no particular promise. But the account contained in this book unfolds the way God opens destiny to any person who will keep His priorities. Even in the presence of recognition, success, wealth, and luxury—an environment many may covet, but which has so often proven destructive to spiritual commitment—Esther retained her sense of perspective and integrity.

Esther's Hebrew name was "Hadassah," which means "Myrtle," referring to the well-known and beautiful evergreen shrub. She reflected the myrtle in her courage and obedience, which clearly did not wither, even when she faced death! In Persian "Esther" means "Star"; again, Esther's beauty, grace, and character shone, bright and unwavering, against the darkness threatening the Jewish people.

Note: (1) Esther's response to Mordecai's call to recognize God's providence in her placement: She believed God, not her beauty, had put her on the throne (4:14). (2) Her respect for the power of prayer and fasting: She recognized the reality of the spiritual realm and the Holy Spirit's resources (v16). (3) Her unswerving will to lay down her own life for others and her practical good sense and patience in pursuing her enterprise (ch. 5). (2 Kings 22:3-20 / Luke 1:26-56)

INSIGHTS

KINGDOM DYNAMICS 4:13-16 A Woman's Courage Under Pressure, MEN AND WOMEN IN GOD'S DESIGN. Through the instruction of Mordecai (analogous of the Holy Spirit), Esther realized that her life had far greater purpose than merely maintaining her own immediate comfort and status quo. Mordecai's words pierced her heart; and at great risk, she committed herself to follow his advice. Esther's heart was turned from her own self-interests to the plans and purposes of God. Ultimately, not only did the king receive her, but he offered her co-rulership with himself (5:3) and later awarded her his signet ring, symbolizing a new level of authority in her life. Her courage resulted in a great deliverance of God's people. Truly effective women are those who are turned from their own shortsighted agenda to God's eternal purposes. (1 Sam. 25:2-35 / Prov. 12:4)

Esther 7

KINGDOM DYNAMICS 7:9, 10 Caught in His Own Trap, DELIVERANCE. Scripture often affirms that the devices of our Adversary come down upon his own head (Ps. 7:16; 35:8; 37:14, 15; Prov. 26:27). The prime example of this truth is seen in the crucifixion of Jesus. Meant by Satan to undo the plan of God, the Cross instead stripped the devil of all power and authority and brought about our deliverance (1 Cor. 2:8; Col. 2:14, 15). Likewise, the high gallows Haman built to humiliate his enemy platformed the delivering power of God instead. When great adversity is met with courageous intercession (Esth. 4:16), the Lord will confound the enemy, redeem every trial, and deliver His people from bondage (see Rom. 8:28). (Josh. 10:24, 25 / 1 Chr. 4:9, 10)

TRUTH IN ACTION

TRUTH ESTHER TEACHES	TEXT	ACTION ESTHER INVITES
<p>Growing in Godliness</p> <p>As we grow in godliness, we should ask for and expectantly seek God's favor. God extends His favor toward us in order to advance His kingdom, bless His people, and accomplish His purposes.</p>	<p>2:15-17</p> <p>4:12-14; 10:3</p> <p>8:17</p>	<p>Recognize that favor is given for a purpose. For Esther, God's favor led to position, which led to provision and protection for His people.</p> <p>Realize that God places people in positions to advance His purposes. Seek the welfare of God's people anytime you find yourself in an advantaged position.</p> <p>Know that God grants seasons of favor for His people in order to extend His kingdom. Press in to God for all He has for you in these seasons, and give Him all the glory.</p>
<p>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</p> <p>Esther reveals the power of a life unconditionally devoted to God and His people. She risked prominent position, wealth, and her own life to intercede on behalf of God's people. Her radical devotion saved people from annihilation by their enemies.</p>	<p>4:15-17</p>	<p>Devote yourself to the Lord so that when your faith is tested, you will be able to rise to the challenge and stand firm. Ask others to fast and pray with you when the enemy seeks to bring destruction. Cast yourself wholly on the Lord. He is trustworthy and will never fail you.</p>

TION

TRUTH ESTHER TEACHES	TEXT	ACTION ESTHER INVITES
<p>Pursuing Holiness</p> <p>Living holy lives means we worship nothing and no one but the Lord. Mordecai, in the face of persecution and threats of death, models steadfastness and faithfulness to worship God alone.</p>	<p>3:2-4</p> <p>3:8-15</p>	<p>Remain firm in your resolve to worship only the Lord. Recognize that others may come and try to wear you down. Resist them, and hold fast to the Lord.</p> <p>Be aware that pursuing holiness and not conceding to others who may exhibit hatred or hostility is important. Be comforted, knowing that God will reward you. (Matt. 5:11, 12)</p>
<p>The Walk of Faith</p> <p>People of faith do not need to strive or seek recognition. They can rest in knowing that God, who sees all things, knows and will reward in due time (Matt. 6:1-6).</p>	<p>6:1-11</p>	<p>Remember, the Lord will not forget acts of service. Believe that He is able to bring them to light in His perfect time in order to bless you and further His plans and purposes.</p>

*Most of this booklet's content was copied directly from *the Spirit-Filled Life Bible* by Jack W. Hayford.



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