



ESTHER SMALL GROUP SERIES

LESSON 2

Writer: Kate Roache
Project Supervisor: Annie Snyder
Editor: Angela Ivey

Created by Ministry to Youth
www.ministrytoyouth.com

ESTHER SMALL GROUP SERIES

THEME- God's providence is always at work for his children.

LESSON 2

Bible: Esther Chapters 3-5

Bottom Line: God always has a plan, even when we do not know it or see it.

Week 1 Summary:

In the first lesson, we read and discussed the first two chapters of the book of Esther.

In the first two chapters, we learned about three main characters. King Xerxes, who was a boastful king but also a very powerful king.

We also learned about Esther and her cousin Mordecai. Esther and Mordecai were both Jewish, and they were keeping it a secret.

If you remember in chapter one, King Xerxes throws this 180-day banquet to show off his riches and power, then he throws another banquet for seven days, and on the last day asks the queen to come so he can show off her beauty.

The queen refuses and this angers the king. Then the king essentially throws a beauty pageant to find a new queen.

Esther gets chosen by the king to be the new queen, and her cousin Mordecai who took care of her when her parents died, saves the king's life after he overhears two men plotting to kill the king.

We also discussed that even though God is not mentioned anywhere in the book of Esther it doesn't mean that He isn't very much present and orchestrating the story.

As we continue to read, we will find many events that are not coincidental but seem to be planned out by God according to His will and for the good of His people.

Discussion Questions:

1. What parts of the first two chapters do you think God orchestrated? (Example: Having Mordecai overhear the two men plotting the king's death and making Esther beautiful.)
2. How do you think Esther is feeling about being queen and having to hide her true identity?
3. Esther and Mordecai can be considered underdogs. Who else in the Bible could also be considered an underdog, and why? (Examples: David and Joseph)

LESSON

In chapter 3, we learn about a new character in the story of Esther. This character is the villain of the story.

King Xerxes promotes a man named Haman to a position of power that is above everyone else except for the king. Everyone was directed to bow down before Haman.

How many of us thought that King Xerxes would be the villain?

If you take a real hard look at the story, you might be able to figure out that King Xerxes is more like the joker or fool. He is often drunk and easily swayed.

Even though King Xerxes is very powerful, he allows others to dictate his kingdom and his decrees. Also, King Xerxes makes quick decisions without really thinking and processing them first.

You will find out more about how foolish and easily swayed king Xerxes is throughout Esther, but keep a watchful eye on what happens because God will use King Xerxes for his plan.

Read Esther 3:3-6.

Then the palace officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" They spoke to him day after day, but still he refused to comply with the order. So they spoke to Haman about this to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct, since Mordecai had told them he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage. He had learned of Mordecai's nationality, so he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Instead, he looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes.

Haman decides to cast lots to decide the date when the decree to kill all the Jews would take place. The date is 11 months later on the 13th of Adar, which is also known as March 7th.

To cast lots, he used a die called *Purim*. This key element of what a die is called is going to be mentioned again later in another part of this lesson.

Remember nothing in this story is coincidental, even the names of objects and people.

This story just shows how clever and creative God is.

Read Esther 3:8-9.

Then Haman approached King Xerxes and said, "There is a certain race of people scattered through all the provinces of your empire who keep themselves separate from everyone else. Their laws are different from those of any other people, and they refuse to obey the laws of the king. So it is not in the king's interest to let them live. If it please the king, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will give 10,000 large sacks of silver to the government administrators to be deposited in the royal treasury.

The king agreed with Haman's decree and gave him his ring to honor it.

This decree would take place 11 months later just as Haman has planned out.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of person is Haman? (Example: prejudiced, evil)
2. Why do you think Mordecai refused to bow down before Haman?
3. What do you think about Haman rolling the die and letting the date be chosen by chance?

Mordecai learns about the decree, and he tears his clothes and puts on a burlap sack and ashes. Then Mordecai goes out to the city and wails loudly.

As the news of the decree spreads around the city, many Jews begin to mourn and cry. The Jews also begin to fast and pray.

Esther and Mordecai discuss what to do through messages.

Esther knows that if she goes to the king to ask him to reverse the decree she could be killed because nobody can go before the king without an invitation.

Read Esther 4:13-17.

Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is

against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die.” So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why would Mordecai and the other Jews rip their clothes and put burlap and ashes on?
2. How do you feel about the Jews fasting? What does this reveal? (Example: It means they have faith in God.)
3. What do you think about what Esther and Mordecai are planning?

After three days of fasting, Esther puts on her royal robes and enters the king’s court, but before she goes to the inner court, she waits for the king to usher her in.

The king lifts his golden scepter, which is a sign that she can come to him.

When Esther approaches the king, the King asks her what she wants and even tells her she can have anything up to half of his kingdom.

Read Esther 5:4-5.

And Esther replied, “If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet I have prepared for the king.” The king turned to his attendants and said, “Tell Haman to come quickly to a banquet, as Esther has requested.” So, the king and Haman went to Esther’s banquet.

While at the banquet they drank a lot of wine. After drinking for a while once again the king asks Esther what she wants and even offers half his kingdom again.

Esther replies that her deepest wish is to have the king and Haman come to another banquet the next day.

When Haman left the palace, he was a very happy man, but when he walked past Mordecai sitting at the palace gates, he became furious because Mordecai did not tremble or look afraid of him.

Haman restrained himself and returned home. When he got home, he gathered his family all together to boast about his favor with his king.

Read Esther 5:12-13.

Then Haman added, "And that's not all! Queen Esther invited only me and the king himself to the banquet she prepared for us. And she has invited me to dine with her and the king again tomorrow!" Then he added, "But this is all worth nothing as long as I see Mordecai the Jew just sitting there at the palace gate."

Haman's wife and others around him suggested that Haman should make a seventy-five-foot-tall stake and suggest to the king to impale Mordecai on it in the morning before the banquet. This plan pleased Haman, and he was ready to put it into action.

A seventy-five feet tall stake is huge. Nowhere in the Bible does it suggest that Mordecai is a tall man or even a giant.

What is the purpose of such a large stake? The whole purpose of that stake is to show off Haman's power and to put fear in the eyes of Mordecai.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of courage did it take for Esther to go before the king?
(Example: Esther was putting herself in danger of death not only for her life but the life of her people)
2. Why do you think Mordecai wasn't afraid of Haman? (Example: He had faith in God to protect him.)
3. Why do you think Esther wanted to have two banquets?

Conclusion:

In chapters 3-5 of Esther the story takes a pretty dark turn for the Jews. At this point in the story, it looks like the Jews only have 11 more months to live before they will be all killed, and their possessions will be given to whoever murders them.

This is a form of genocide and is a racial war. It is sad to think about!

Remember in chapters 1-2 we discussed how God is hiding throughout the book of Esther, but that that did not mean that God wasn't orchestrating the events in the story.

We must remember that God sees all and knows all. Even though God doesn't show himself, it doesn't mean He isn't there.

There are a couple of parts in the story so far that we can see are not coincidental but orchestrated by God. It wasn't coincidental that Esther was born of the Jews and that she was beautiful. God would need her to be beautiful to get the attention of the king.

It wasn't coincidental that Mordecai overheard the two men plotting to kill the king.

It wasn't coincidental that the dice rolled on a certain date.

It isn't coincidental that Haman finds out that Mordecai is Jewish.

All these events so far throughout the story of Esther are not coincidences.

How much of our lives are filled with moments that are not a coincidence?

You hear many stories of moments where a person was at the right place at the right time, or someone just happened to be led to give someone some money that was needed without even knowing that person needed any money in the first place.

God promises to take care of us, and God promises to never leave us.

Read Isaiah 46:4.

I will be your God throughout your lifetime until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.

What parts of our lives is God directing to make sure we are taken care of and protected? Throughout the entire Bible, not just the book of Esther, you can see events that are not coincidental but completely orchestrated by God.