



## **ESTHER SMALL GROUP SERIES**

### **LESSON 3**

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## **ESTHER SMALL GROUP SERIES**

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

### **LESSON 3**

Bible: Esther 6-8

Bottom Line: God uses imperfect people for his work.

#### **Week 1 and 2 Summary:**

In the last two weeks, we've been learning about some interesting characters in the book of Esther. Not only were these characters interesting, but they were imperfect people.

In the first week, we learn about the King of Persia and how he was throwing these elaborate banquets to show off his riches and power.

On the last day of the banquet, he asked for the queen to come to the banquet so he could show her off. But she refused to come, which made the king mad.

The king decided to essentially throw a beauty pageant to find himself a new queen.

Esther, a Jew, hides her identity and enters the beauty pageant.

Through the beauty pageant Esther, a Jewish girl who is hiding her Jewish identity, becomes the king's favorite, and he makes her his new queen.

Esther's cousin Mordecai overhears two men plotting to kill the king, and Esther reports this to the king on behalf of Mordecai.

The king makes Haman, the villain of our story, a leader.

And Haman, who does not like Mordecai, makes a decree to kill the Jews. The king agrees to the decree not knowing that Queen Esther is Jewish.

This decree is supposed to take place 11 months from then. When it came to pass, anyone in the kingdom could kill the Jews and claim their possessions.

Esther and Mordecai, who are both Jewish, are afraid not only for their lives but the lives of their people.

Many of the Jewish people went into mourning, then fasted and prayed.

Esther and Mordecai plan to have Esther go before the king to change his mind about this decree.

Esther holds a small banquet for the king and Haman to essentially butter them up. At the banquet, Esther asks for Haman and the king to come again the next day for another banquet.

When leaving the first banquet, Haman sees Mordecai and becomes angry that Mordecai is not afraid of him.

Haman makes a 75-foot-tall stake to ask the king to allow him to impale Mordecai on it.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What kind of people are Haman and King Xerxes?
2. Where in the first 5 chapters of Esther do we see God orchestrating the events?
3. What movie characters have similar personalities to Haman, Xerxes, Mordecai, and Esther? (Example: Haman is like Snow from *The Hunger Games*, Xerxes is like Haymitch, Mordecai is like Peeta, and Esther is like Katniss.)

### **LESSON**

In chapter 6 of Esther, the king struggles to sleep. To help him sleep, he has the chronicles read to him. The chronicles are the stories or events of the kingdom.

One chronicle is read that brings interest to the king. This chronicle is the event where Mordecai saves his life by reporting about the two men who were plotting to kill the king.

King Xerxes is surprised that nothing has been done to honor Mordecai for his good deed.

That morning Haman comes to the king to request permission to execute Mordecai, but instead, the king asks Haman how to honor someone.

### **Read Esther 6:6-9.**

*So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?" Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?" So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden one with a royal emblem on its head."*

*Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honor is dressed in the king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, 'This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!'"*

Haman was shocked when he learned that the king wanted to honor Mordecai instead of him.

Haman honored the king's wishes and paraded Mordecai around the city square.

Afterward, Haman went home defeated and embarrassed.

At home, Haman's wife told him to stop going against Mordecai because it would do him no good and could possibly be fatal.

While Haman and his wife were still discussing what to do, the king's messenger came to take Haman to Esther's banquet.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How would you feel if you were in Mordecai's shoes, being honored by the king and having your enemy being the one having to parade you around the city square?
2. How do you think Haman felt when he returned home? Do you think he expected the response he got from his wife? (Example: He must have been angry, defeated, and embarrassed.)
3. In what part of chapter 6 do you see God working out His plan? (example: The king's inability to sleep and have the chronicles read to him.)

In chapter 7 we see that Haman and the king arrive at Esther's banquet. After a while of drinking wine, the king asks Esther a third time what her request is.

### **Read Esther 7:3-4.**

*Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor with the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my request, I ask that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had merely been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would be too trivial a matter to warrant disturbing the king."*

King Xerxes is furious and demands to know who wants to hurt Queen Esther. Esther informs the king that it is Haman and his decree.

The king, in a rage, leaves Esther's side and goes to the palace garden.

Haman stays and pleads to the queen for his life. Haman ends up falling on Esther where she was lying down.

The king returns and sees Haman. The king thinks Haman is trying to attack the queen and has Haman taken away.

Then the king has Haman executed on the very stake that Haman had made for Mordecai.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why does Esther serve alcohol at the banquet even though she is Jewish and they are not to get drunk? (Example: She probably knew that the alcohol would help get King Xerxes to do what she needed him to do.)
2. Why does Esther say that being sold as a slave is trivial? (Example: Jews have been known to be slaves in the past, and being a slave is less of a punishment than death.)
3. How do you feel about Haman being impaled on the same stake he had made for Mordecai?

In chapter 8 we see King Xerxes give all of Haman's possessions to Queen Esther. Esther informs the king that Mordecai and she are related.

The king takes off his signet ring that he had originally given to Haman and gives it to Mordecai, which makes Mordecai second to the king.

Esther goes before the king once again and he holds up his golden scepter, showing her that she can approach him.

Esther falls before the king in tears asking for the king to change the decree to save the Jews.

The king cannot change a decree he has sealed with his signet, but King Xerxes gives Mordecai permission to write a new decree.

### **Read Esther 8:9-12.**

*So on June 25 the king's secretaries were summoned, and a decree was written exactly as Mordecai dictated. It was sent to the Jews and to the highest officers, the governors, and the nobles of all the 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. The decree was written in the scripts and languages of all the peoples of the empire, including that of the Jews. The decree was written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with the king's signet ring. Mordecai sent the dispatches by swift messengers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king's service.*

*The king's decree gave the Jews in every city authority to unite to defend their lives. They were allowed to kill, slaughter, and annihilate anyone of any nationality or province who might attack them or their children and wives, and to take the property of their enemies. The day chosen for this event throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes was March 7 of the next year.*

Mordecai left the king's side wearing royal robes, which showed how much the king honored Mordecai.

### **Read Esther 8:15.**

*Then Mordecai left the king's presence, wearing the royal robe of blue and white, the great crown of gold, and an outer cloak of fine linen and purple. And the people of Susa celebrated the new decree. The decree was sent throughout the entire kingdom and Jews everywhere celebrated. Many people even became Jews in fear of what the Jews might do to them.*

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Were Queen Esther and Mordecai perfect and upstanding Jews?
2. Why does God use imperfect people for his work? (Example: So, we know that our strength comes from the Lord.)
3. Where do you see God orchestrating His plan in chapters 6-8?

## **Conclusion:**

We have seen so many times throughout the book of Esther where God orchestrated events for the good of His people, but let's look over the people that God helped direct for His plan.

Even though Haman was not a Jew and is the villain of this story, you can see where God used him to fulfill His plan.

Why would God use someone who was blatantly not a good person?

God can use anyone, and even though Haman made many evil choices, God was able to take Haman's choices and use them for good.

Another person that God used for his plan was King Xerxes.

The king was a drunken fool with huge anger problems. He would make impulsive decisions based on the anger and rage that stemmed from his drinking.

One of the key events that changed the whole story around was the night that the king couldn't sleep. This was one major event where we can see that God was using King Xerxes for his plan.

Now Esther and Mordecai were not even close to the type of bad people that King Xerxes and Haman were, but they too are imperfect people and were not qualified to work out God's plan.

But what is so amazing about God is that He takes the unqualified and makes them qualified for His plan.

Throughout the story of Esther and the entire Bible, we can see many people who were not qualified but were used by God anyway.

## **Read Romans 8:28.**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Many of the events that happened throughout the story were filled with irony.

One good example of this is that Haman builds a huge 75-foot stake to have Mordecai killed on, but he ends up being killed on it himself.

Another ironic event is that Haman was second in command and while he was working to take down Mordecai. The tide turned, and Mordecai became second in command.

All God's plans had a huge impact on the Jewish culture in Xerxes kingdom.

Not only did the Jewish people get out of being killed, but they gained power and a new position in the kingdom.

All these events go back to the overall theme of Esther: that even though God is not mentioned, and He seems to be hiding, it doesn't mean God isn't orchestrating His plan.