



ESTHER SMALL GROUP SERIES

LESSON 4

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

LESSON 4

Bible: Esther 9-10

Bottom Line: God keeps his promises and wants only good for his children.

Lessons 1-3 Summary:

In the last three lessons, we covered chapters 1-8 of the book of Esther.

In the first lesson, we learned about King Xerxes and his elaborate 180-day banquet. Then he has another banquet that lasted seven days. These banquets were elaborate, with fine linen and plenty of alcohol for everyone to drink.

The queen at the time was having her very own banquet.

On the seventh day, he calls for his queen, but she refuses to come. King Xerxes becomes very angry and decides to hold a beauty pageant to find a new queen.

Esther, an orphaned Jewish girl hiding her identity, joins the beauty pageant and becomes the king's favorite. He makes her queen.

Esther's cousin Mordecai overhears two men plotting to kill the king. Esther tells the king, and he is very grateful.

In the second lesson, we learned about how Haman, who is King Xerxes' right-hand man, doesn't like Mordecai or the Jews and plans a decree to kill all the Jews in the entire kingdom.

Mordecai, Esther, and all the Jews are upset about Haman's decree.

Esther goes before the king to request a banquet between Haman, the king, and herself. Esther was very bold to go before the king because going before the king without a request from the king could mean death.

Esther was willing to take that chance and even fasted three days prior. When Esther goes to the king, he is more than willing to see her.

She asks for a banquet.

After the first banquet, Haman leaves and sees Mordecai, who looked very calm. This angers Haman, and he plots Mordecai's sudden death.

His plan is for Mordecai to be killed on a seventy-five-foot-tall stake that he built for Mordecai.

Then in the third lesson, we saw how everything unraveled. The king struggles to sleep and has someone read the kingdom's history where he learns how Mordecai saved his life.

When Haman comes to the king, the king asks Haman how to honor someone. Haman thought the king was talking about himself, but he was talking about Mordecai.

The king makes Haman parade Mordecai around to honor him.

At Esther's second banquet, she asks for King Xerxes to change the decree.

King Xerxes can't change the decree, but he does kill Haman, moves Mordecai to power, and allows Mordecai to make a new decree that allows all the Jews to defend against their attackers on the same day that Haman had chosen to kill all the Jews.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your favorite part of the book of Esther?
2. Why do you think God kept hidden throughout the book but kept orchestrating the events for His people?
3. What have you learned so far from the book of Esther? (Example: That even though God might not seem to be in the picture, he very much is.)

LESSON

March 7th came—the day that Haman determined (through casting lots) would be the day the Jewish people would be killed in a mass genocide.

Due to God's plan, March 7th became the day that the Jews were allowed to kill anyone who tried killing them. On that day, both decrees went into effect, the one Haman planned, and the one Mordecai planned.

The enemies of the Jews hoped they would be able to overpower the Jews, but all the Jews gathered in their cities and were able to stand up for themselves and attack anyone who came to attack them.

Many of the people were afraid of the Jews.

What was amazing is that Mordecai had been promoted to be second in command.

All the nobles and leaders stood beside the Jews because they were afraid of Mordecai. Once Mordecai was promoted, his fame and power spread throughout the kingdom.

Read Esther 9:5.

So the Jews went ahead on the appointed day and struck down their enemies with the sword. They killed and annihilated their enemies and did as they pleased with those who hated them.

Even in the city of Susa, 500 men were killed and 10 of them were members of Haman's family.

When the king heard about the number of killings, he called for Queen Esther and asked her what she wanted now.

Esther asked the king if the very next day the Jews in the city could once again attack any of their enemies. The king granted the Jews permission, and they ended up killing 300 more enemies in the city of Susa.

Throughout the kingdom 75,000 enemies were killed, and no Jew took any plunder for themselves.

The last request Esther had was for the 10 sons of Haman to be placed on a stake. The king granted Esther's request.

Read Esther 9:17-19.

This was done throughout the provinces on March 7, and on March 8 they rested, celebrating their victory with a day of feasting and gladness. (The Jews at Susa killed their enemies on March 7 and again on March 8, then rested on March 9, making that their day of feasting and gladness.) So to this day, rural Jews living in remote villages celebrate an annual festival and holiday on the appointed day in late winter, when they rejoice and send gifts of food to each other.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think no Jew took any plunder from the people they killed?
(Example: Because the Jews were not out for plunder; they were just defending themselves.)

2. How do you feel about the fact that part of God's plan led to people dying?
(Example: It is important to note that the Jews didn't harm anyone who didn't attack them first. God's plan was for the Jews to be allowed to protect themselves, It was their enemies' choice to attack.)
3. What part of the Esther story has surprised you the most?

In the last part of chapter 9, we learn about the festival of Purim.

Mordecai recorded all the events that had taken place with the attacks.

He sent out letters to all the Jews he could telling of the events and calling for all of them to celebrate these two days.

Read Esther 9:22.

He told them to celebrate these days with feasting and gladness and by giving gifts of food to each other and presents to the poor. This would commemorate a time when the Jews gained relief from their enemies, when their sorrow was turned into gladness and their mourning into joy.

The Jews followed Mordecai's letter and celebrated.

The queen also writes a letter to back up Mordecai's letter, and the Jews decide to celebrate Purim for generations and generations till the end of time.

Read Esther 9:29-32.

Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote another letter putting the queen's full authority behind Mordecai's letter to establish the Festival of Purim. Letters wishing peace and security were sent to the Jews throughout the 127 provinces of the empire of Xerxes.

These letters established the Festival of Purim—an annual celebration of these days at the appointed time, decreed by both Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther. (The people decided to observe this festival, just as they had decided for themselves and their descendants to establish the times of fasting and mourning.) So the command of Esther confirmed the practices of Purim, and it was all written down in the records.

Go back to lesson 2 when Haman planned the decree to kill the Jews.

Haman rolled a die called a *Purim* to plot the date for the mass killings.

This is why the holiday that celebrates the Jews' victory is called the Festival of Purim.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it a coincidence that the book of Esther begins in a celebration and ends in a celebration? (Example: No, because God was and is in control and he overturned the power and is allowing the ones who deserve to celebrate to have their chance.)
2. Why do you think Christians do not celebrate the Festival of Purim?
3. Jews today still celebrate the Festival of Purim. What kind of things do you think they do on this special holiday? (Jews celebrate Purim by fasting before the holiday just like Esther did before going to the king. They read the story of Esther. They help the needy, have a special feast, and give gifts to friends.)

In the last chapter of Esther, chapter 10, we read how great King Xerxes and Mordecai had become.

Read Esther 10:1-3.

King Xerxes imposed a tribute throughout his empire, even to the distant coastlands. His great achievements and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Media and Persia. Mordecai the Jew became the prime minister, with authority next to that of King Xerxes himself. He was very great among the Jews, who held him in high esteem because he continued to work for the good of his people and to speak up for the welfare of all their descendants.

Conclusion:

We have covered in depth the whole book of Esther and all the key characters in the story. Throughout each lesson, we've discussed how we can see God moving even though He was hiding.

Now is the time to discuss why God hid in the first place.

Some believe Esther is the fulfillment of what God has said in Deuteronomy 32 through Moses about hiding from His people.

Another reason God might hide from us is for us to learn to seek Him. Esther was a good role model for this since she fasted and prayed when she needed an answer.

God is often looked at as our parent, and even parents often let their children out on their own to learn to stand on their very own two feet.

But even if a parent lets her child out on his or her own, it doesn't mean that the parent is far from that child.

Parents still watch, pray, and care for that child. Parents will also often intervene when a child needs help.

The act of hiding is a good way to help us grow up. Not everyone has parents like this, but many do have someone in their lives who is rooting for them from afar.

Another thing about God hiding is that God is showing us how He works.

Not everything God does is always revealed to us right away. How often do we question God and what He is doing?

Sometimes we question for years, and then one day we look back and we can see exactly what God is doing and the big picture of it all.

Even now as we speak, we might not know what God is up to in the world and one day when we are with Him, the whole big picture will be revealed to us.

Not knowing all the ins and outs of what God is doing allows us to build our faith and trust in Him.

Both Esther and Mordecai could not see what God was doing. He was hidden from them, but both had a huge amount of faith and trust in Him.

Esther had so much trust in God that she was willing to go before the king, even if that meant death.

Mordecai had so much faith and trust in God that he wasn't even afraid of Haman.

We can learn so much from the story of Esther about how God will always be there for His children and how we need to learn to have trust and faith in God.

We can learn how prayer and fasting are important to our lives.

Lastly, we can learn how God keeps his promises to us even when we don't see how.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your biggest takeaway from the story of Esther?
2. What is going on in your life that makes you wish you understood what God was doing?
3. How can we pray for you to have more faith in God?