



# *Esther*

A Tapestry of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

## **Esther**

### **A Tapestry of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility**

This study is adapted from my teaching notes for a Wednesday evening ladies Bible study. The class uses an inductive method, and my lessons are developed through my personal Bible study, combined with insights from at least two reliable commentaries. My resources are listed below.

Christ Centered Exposition – Exalting Jesus in Esther, Landon Dowden  
Christian Standard Bible, Holman Bibles  
Commentary on the Whole Bible, Matthew Henry  
Esther – For Such a Time as This, Peter Adam  
Esther and Ruth, Iain Duguid  
ESV Church History Study Bible, Crossway  
ESV Study Bible, Crossway  
ESV Expository Commentary, Volume IV: Ezra - Job  
King James Version  
Ruth & Esther: Women of Faith, Bravery, and Hope, John MacArthur

## **Preface**

Let's explore the incredible gift we have in the Bible! It's important to remember that this profound book isn't just for pastors or theological scholars; it's meant for every believer, regardless of background or education. The clarity of Scripture ensures that anyone who can read can grasp its message.

Understanding God's Word transcends age, gender, or social status. When we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, we embark on a journey towards the very heart and mind of Christ. Our goal as followers of Jesus should be to reflect His life and teachings. God has gifted us the Bible so we can draw near to Him and discover His ways.

However, let's not confuse reading with studying. While reading provides knowledge, studying requires attention and effort. It calls us to dig deeper and seek the true meaning behind the words.

So, when you approach a passage of Scripture, set aside feelings of inadequacy. Don't let self-doubt rob you of the joy that comes from studying God's Word! Bible study is a vital spiritual practice that fuels our growth as disciples.

As R.C. Sproul beautifully stated, "It is important to study and learn because God has taken great pains to reveal Himself to His people. He gave us a book not meant to sit on a shelf collecting dust, but to be read, searched, digested, studied, and, above all, understood."

You may wonder why you should explore the Scriptures when you've heard the stories before. The beauty of God's Word is that it offers fresh insights every time you engage with it, no matter how many times you've read a passage.

When you dig deeper into your studies, you unlock greater rewards. You not only gain a true understanding of the God of the Scriptures but also uncover the profound implications of what Jesus Christ has done for us. The Bible is transformational; through regular study, you can expect a closer walk with Jesus. God has an abundance of blessings for those who seek Him—blessings that can be found within the pages of His Word. As Psalm 111:2 reminds us, "Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them."

I urge and encourage Christian women to cultivate a rich practice of Bible study for their own growth, for the benefit of the church, and most importantly, for God's glory. Remember, while we put in the effort, everything we do relies on the power of God's Holy Spirit.

## Introduction

**“You have come to your royal position for such a time as this.” – Esther 4:14**

Welcome to our journey through the Book of Esther—one of the most powerful portraits of a woman’s courage, purpose, and God-ordained influence in all of Scripture.

Esther is not just a queen with a crown—she is a woman with a calling. Her story invites each of us to consider the seasons and situations we’re placed in—not as accidents, but as assignments. Esther lived in a time when God’s people were vulnerable, scattered, and under threat. And yet, through the quiet courage of one woman who chose to risk everything for others, God brought about deliverance and hope.

Though God’s name is never mentioned in the Book of Esther, His presence is everywhere. That’s how He often works in our lives too—quietly, subtly, behind the scenes. But just because we can’t always see Him, doesn’t mean He’s not working.

This study isn’t just about looking at what Esther did. It’s about looking at what **God can do through women who trust Him**—women like you. Whether you’re in a season of waiting, wrestling, leading, or learning, Esther reminds us that **God is writing a bigger story**—and He uses women of faith to move it forward.

So as we walk through these chapters, let’s open our hearts to what God wants to say to us as women: about courage, identity, purpose, and divine timing. Like Esther, **you have been placed where you are—on purpose, for a purpose**. And maybe, just maybe, it’s for such a time as this.

## WEEK ONE

### Days One and Two

Begin with a Preliminary Reading of the Book of Esther.

When studying the Bible, it's important to understand that the chapters and verses we commonly reference were added long after the original manuscripts were written. For example, Paul's letters to the churches were intended for specific audiences and were actual letters. Each book of the Bible has a distinct purpose and falls into a particular genre.

Each part of Scripture should be read and studied according to its literary character. Esther is presented as a historical account of events during the Persian Empire. You will inevitably begin to interpret it. A common phrase used to dismiss the importance of biblical context is "private interpretation." This kind of interpretation is subjective and can distort the meaning of God's Word by linking its definition to the reader's personal perspective. Ultimately, this leads to the Bible's message being influenced by the pride and biases of those who read it. We should always strive to give the Word the respect it deserves. The Bible has an objective meaning, and there is one best interpretation.

The most crucial element of Bible reading is to look for Jesus. As the reader, you must constantly ask yourself, how does this point to or from Christ? Where is Jesus? In reading the Bible, let it be a settled principle in our minds that Christ is the central sun of the whole book. So long as we keep Him in view, we shall never greatly err in our search for spiritual knowledge.

The shared theological foundation of both testaments reveals that God remains constant throughout all ages, and that humanity's nature and struggles are unchanging. The Bible is not simply about being good and doing good deeds. Rather, it shows that God sent a Savior to rescue us because we cannot be good on our own. In essence, the Bible tells a cohesive story of God redeeming the world through His Messiah, Jesus Christ.

It is crucial to understand that the central narrative of the Bible revolves around God's actions throughout history. His revelation provided in various ways and at different times, and the ultimate fulfillment found in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures can be summarized in three main elements:

- Historical: God has actively engaged in history to demonstrate His power and love.
- Progressive and Cumulative: God revealed Himself in multiple ways at different times, culminating in His final revelation.
- Christ-Centered: The peak of God's revelation occurred when He communicated His final word to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ serves as the superior and ultimate agent of God's redemption and revelation, as indicated in Hebrews 1:2-4 and Psalms 2 and 110.

## **Days Three and Four**

After a cursory reading of all four chapters of Esther, we must reread any particular passage selectively. Read two chapters each day, ideally one in the morning and another in the evening. Pay attention to Who? What? Where? When? and Why? of the text. Note-taking at this time will aid your future study. Next, take your reading further and ask these five questions:

- What does this text teach me about God?
- What does this text teach me about fallen humanity?
- How does this text point to Christ?
- What does God want me to know?
- What does God want me to do?

By reading repeatedly, you will notice a significant increase in your comprehension of the text. Each time you read, you are building a foundation that allows you to get more from your Bible study and to apply universal principles. Additionally, reading helps maintain your focus on God, guiding you toward the author's original intent. Finding joy in the Word of God also means finding fulfillment in the Son of God.

If we can read a novel, we can also read the Bible. It is our responsibility to read it thoughtfully and well. Ultimately, when done properly, Bible reading glorifies God.

## Day Five

Research Author, Setting, Characters, and Purpose.

Gather any resources you might own. I suggest Bible maps, handbooks, and dictionaries. A good study Bible will most times include this information. I have conducted significant research on your behalf. I recommend you explore further if you have resources.

**Author:** The Book of Esther is anonymous; it does not name its author within the text. However, scholars generally believe it was written by a Jewish individual who had intimate knowledge of Persian court life and customs. The vivid details about palace protocols, royal decrees, and the setting in Susa suggest firsthand experience or access to accurate records.

Several candidates for authorship have been proposed:

- **Mordecai**, Esther's cousin and guardian, is a common suggestion, given his central role in the narrative and the detailed knowledge of events in the Persian court.
- **Ezra or Nehemiah** have also been considered, especially because of their leadership roles in post-exilic Judah and their literary contributions to the Old Testament.
- Some scholars propose that the author may have been part of the group that returned to Judah with **Zerubbabel**, possessing both historical insight and a strong Jewish identity.

The book's **pro-Jewish perspective**, celebration of deliverance (as seen in the origin of the Feast of Purim), and theological themes of providence and reversal reinforce the likelihood of a Jewish author writing either from exile or shortly after returning from it.

**Setting:** The events of the Book of Esther take place in the Persian Empire, specifically in **Susa (also called Shushan)**—one of the empire's major royal cities and the location of the king's winter palace. The story unfolds during the reign of **King Ahasuerus**, commonly identified as **Xerxes I**, who ruled from **486 to 465 BC**. The narrative begins in the **third year of his reign**, around **483 BC**, and spans roughly a decade.

Esther and her cousin **Mordecai** are Jews living in the **Persian diaspora**—the community of Jewish exiles who remained in foreign lands rather than returning to Jerusalem following the end of the Babylonian captivity. Their presence in Persia reflects the historical context following the decree of Cyrus the Great (539 BC), which allowed Jews to return to their homeland, though many chose to stay in their new regions.

This setting is crucial to understanding the book's themes of **God's providence, faithfulness in exile**, and the **hidden workings of God's hand** even when He is not explicitly mentioned in the text.

**Characters:** The Book of Esther features a compelling cast of characters, each playing a pivotal role in the unfolding drama. **Esther**, a young Jewish woman of great beauty and courage, rises to become **queen of Persia**, positioning her to play a vital role in the preservation of her people. Her cousin and guardian, **Mordecai**, is a faithful Jew who uncovers plots, stands firm in his convictions, and encourages Esther to act with boldness on behalf of her people.

**King Ahasuerus** (also known as **Xerxes I**) rules the Persian Empire with immense power but often relies heavily on his advisors. Among them is **Haman**, the king's chief official, who emerges as the primary antagonist. Consumed by pride and hatred—especially toward Mordecai—Haman devises a plan to annihilate the Jewish people.

Another significant figure is **Queen Vashti**, the king's former wife. Though her role is limited to the beginning of the story, her refusal to appear before the king sets in motion the events that lead to Esther's rise to the throne.

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of the Book of Esther, from a Christian perspective, is to highlight **God's sovereign care and providential rule**, even in times when His presence seems hidden. Though God's name is never mentioned in the book, His hand is evident throughout the narrative—guiding events, protecting His people, and orchestrating deliverance from destruction. Set during a time when the Jewish people were living in exile, the story assures believers that **God remains faithful**, even when His people feel distant or forgotten.

Esther's rise to royalty and her courageous intercession reveal how **God often works through seemingly ordinary individuals** to accomplish extraordinary purposes. The book also emphasizes the **responsibility of human action**—reminding Christians that **trusting in God's providence does not negate the call to act with wisdom, courage, and faith** in the face of injustice and adversity.



## **WEEK TWO**

### **Day One**

Read Esther 1:1-22. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application

## Day Two

Read Esther 1:10-12; Proverbs 21:1.

### POWER, PRIDE, AND PARTIES

Dinner parties in ancient Persia were not just social events—they were statements of power, wealth, and influence. The opening chapter of Esther features a king obsessed with his own image and authority, surrounded by opulence, advisors, and political calculation. Amid this extravagance, Queen Vashti’s refusal to obey an inappropriate command becomes the first domino in a providential chain that leads to Esther’s rise.

Even though God is not mentioned in this chapter, His sovereignty is at work—quietly preparing for deliverance through the unfolding of political decisions, royal egos, and moral courage.

#### Focus on Historical and Cultural Context

- **Ahasuerus (Xerxes I)** ruled from India to Cush (modern-day Pakistan to Egypt), controlling 127 provinces (v. 1).
- His **180-day feast** likely coincided with military planning against Greece.
- The **seven-day feast** that followed was for the residents of Susa—an effort to secure local loyalty.
- **Queen Vashti’s banquet** for the women (v. 9) showed that royal women had influence and authority, even if limited by cultural expectations.
- Persian wine culture was deeply symbolic—gold vessels and an “open bar” (v. 8) emphasized status and self-indulgence.
- The king’s command to bring Vashti before drunken nobles (v. 11) was likely immodest and inappropriate, setting the stage for her courageous refusal.

*Return to your notes from Day One and note key observations.*

#### *A King Consumed with Power (vv. 1–8)*

- Ahasuerus’s extravagance reflects a desire to display his superiority to his subjects and rivals.
- His power is externally impressive but internally fragile—dependent on validation from others.

### *A Queen's Courageous Refusal (vv. 9–12)*

- Vashti's refusal is a bold move. The text doesn't tell us her motives, but it is clear she valued her dignity.
- Her decision cost her everything, yet her integrity stands as a powerful example of conviction in the face of unjust expectations.

### *Advisors and Overreaction (vv. 13–22)*

#### The King's Dependence on Human Wisdom (v. 13)

- King Ahasuerus turns to advisors who "knew the times," likely astrologers or legal experts, indicating reliance on **worldly wisdom** rather than God.
- This mirrors a common biblical theme: earthly kings seeking counsel apart from divine truth (cf. Isaiah 31:1).
- Application: **God's people are called to seek wisdom from His Word and godly counselors** (Proverbs 11:14; James 1:5), not merely from cultural experts.

#### The Advisors Reflect and Reinforce the King's Insecurity

- The king's advisors, especially Memucan, exaggerate Vashti's refusal, turning a domestic issue into a national crisis.
- Memucan's speech reveals **a fear-based leadership culture**, focused on control and image rather than justice or humility.
- Key theme: **Fear of losing power leads to oppressive decrees**—a worldly method of preserving authority.

#### Overreaction Leads to a Misguided National Decree (vv. 19–20)

- Rather than seeking resolution or reconciliation, the king enacts **an irreversible law** to banish Vashti and assert male dominance.
- The decree that "every man should be the master in his own house" reflects a **misuse of authority** and a distortion of biblical headship.
  - Contrast with Ephesians 5:25, where husbands are called to love sacrificially as Christ does.

#### Irrevocable Law and Human Folly (v. 19)

- The Persian law system (cf. Daniel 6:8) was known for **unchangeable edicts**, even when foolish.
- This law is used as a vehicle of **God's providence**, setting the stage for Esther to rise.
- Observation: **God can work through even foolish, sinful decisions to fulfill His sovereign plan** (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20).

### God's Silence Does Not Mean His Absence

- Though God is **not mentioned** in this passage, His providence is already moving through human decisions.
- Vashti's removal paves the way for Esther, who will later save her people.
- Encouragement: Even when **God seems hidden**, He is **sovereignly active** behind the scenes.

### Theological Reflection (Southern Baptist Perspective)

- This passage illustrates how **fallen human leadership**, shaped by pride, fear, and cultural pressure, results in injustice and brokenness.
- Yet, **God remains in control**, orchestrating redemption through flawed people and institutions.
- Believers are called to **humble, Spirit-led discernment**, resisting the patterns of worldly leadership (Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 5:2–3).

## Discussion Questions

1. What does King Ahasuerus's lavish feasting reveal about his leadership priorities?
2. In what ways can pride—especially when combined with power—be dangerous for leaders today?
3. How do we sometimes try to “show off” our status or achievements? What's the spiritual danger in that?
4. Queen Vashti refuses to appear before the king and his drunken guests. Why might her decision be considered courageous or risky?
5. How should Christians respond when asked to do something that violates conscience or dignity?
6. Are there times when standing for what's right might look like rebellion but is actually an act of faith?
7. The king's advisors gave him poor counsel rooted in fear of losing control. Why is wise, godly counsel so important, especially for those in leadership?
8. Have you ever acted out of insecurity or listened to advice that made a situation worse? What did you learn?
9. The response to Vashti's refusal (vv. 16–22) aimed to control women of her era. What does this reveal about the values of the Persian court?
10. How does Scripture affirm the dignity and value of both men and women as image-bearers of God? (See Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:28)
11. How can the church today uphold the dignity of women in both leadership and service while remaining faithful to biblical teaching?
12. God's name isn't mentioned in this chapter, yet His providence is already at work. Where do you see His hand moving “behind the scenes”?
13. Have you ever experienced a season where you didn't “see” God clearly, but in hindsight, realized He was guiding your steps?

## Application Questions

1. What lessons can we learn about decision-making, especially under pressure or emotional influence, from King Ahasuerus?
2. How can we lead others—whether at home, work, or church—with humility rather than pride?

## Additional Application

Esther 1:10–12 highlights a moment of tension and courage: Queen Vashti’s refusal to be paraded before a crowd of drunken men at the command of a king who valued appearances over dignity. While we don’t know all her motives, what’s clear is that she **chose principle over popularity and dignity over fear**—even at great personal cost.

This passage invites us to reflect on how we, too, are called to live with **godly conviction** in a culture that often celebrates vanity, objectification, and compromise. As Southern Baptist women committed to biblical truth, we are not called to blend in but to **stand firm**, even when obedience to God costs us comfort or approval.

### *What Can We Learn?*

- **Wisdom matters when emotions run high.** The king’s command came “when his heart was merry with wine.” Rash decisions—especially in emotionally charged or compromised states—often lead to regret. As believers, we’re called to seek **spirit-filled self-control** (Galatians 5:22–23) and resist making impulsive choices.
- **Dignity is worth protecting.** Vashti’s stand may not have been religious in nature, but her refusal reminds us that **our worth is not tied to the expectations of others**. We are daughters of the King, made in His image, and should carry ourselves with dignity and grace (Proverbs 31:25).
- **God can use even flawed decisions to advance His purposes.** Vashti’s refusal opened the door for Esther’s rise. Even when ungodly people act unjustly, **God is still sovereign**, working behind the scenes for His greater plan (Romans 8:28).

### Practical Steps

1. **Guard your judgment.** Are you making decisions under pressure, fatigue, or emotional stress? Seek wise counsel and prayer before responding to difficult situations.
2. **Value inner beauty and strength.** In a culture obsessed with external appearance, root your identity in Christ (1 Peter 3:3–4).
3. **Stand firm with grace.** Are you facing a situation that calls for courage? Pray for the strength to do what is right, even if it costs you.
4. **Encourage courage in others.** Who do you know who’s taking a stand for what’s right? Support her. Speak life into her. Pray with her.

## Day Three

Read Esther 1:3-8.

### FEASTS FIT FOR A KING

In Esther 1:3–8, we are given a glimpse into one of the most extravagant scenes in the Bible—a royal feast hosted by King Ahasuerus in the palace garden of Susa. This second banquet followed the six-month showcase of the king’s wealth and power and was a seven-day celebration for the residents of Susa, the citadel city of Persia.

The author paints a vivid picture: white and blue linen curtains hung with silver rods, couches of gold and silver set upon a mosaic pavement of marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones. Every element was carefully chosen to highlight wealth, influence, and grandeur. Yet amid this stunning display, one detail stands out—the unusual freedom extended to the guests. Unlike typical Persian feasts, where attendees were expected to follow rigid protocols (including consuming only what was served without refusal), King Ahasuerus relaxed this rule. In Esther 1:8, we read:

*“And the drinking was according to this edict: ‘There is no compulsion.’”*

This small phrase reveals a surprising level of generosity. The king allowed each guest to drink “as each man desired,” a rare indulgence that would have felt gracious and welcoming. Considering what we’ve seen of Ahasuerus’s pride and desire to control perception, we might ask: Was this truly an act of kindness—or a calculated move to secure loyalty and admiration from his people?

From a biblical perspective, this lavish feast points to deeper spiritual contrasts. While Ahasuerus’s banquet was earthly, self-exalting, and designed to display human glory, Scripture repeatedly describes **another kind of feast**—one offered by **God Himself**.

- In Isaiah 25:6, the Lord promises to prepare a feast for all peoples.
- In Matthew 22, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a wedding banquet.
- And in Revelation 19:9, we’re invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

God’s feast is not designed to impress but to redeem. Unlike the king’s banquet, where guests were chosen based on geography and status, God’s invitation is extended freely through grace. The royal feast of Esther contrasts the world’s pursuit of glory with the kingdom values of humility, welcome, and divine provision.

We can also reflect on how indulgence and celebration, when unchecked by spiritual wisdom, can lead to pride or even destruction. As the story of Esther continues, we’ll see how this atmosphere of wine and revelry contributes to a pivotal decision with far-reaching consequences.

## Discussion Questions

1. How does the lavishness of King Ahasuerus's feast reflect his character and priorities? What does it reveal about the culture of power and prestige in ancient Persia?
2. The king allowed guests to drink freely rather than follow strict protocols. Why do you think he made this exception? Was it a sign of kindness, manipulation, or something else?
3. Contrast the king's earthly banquet with the spiritual feasts described in Scripture (Isaiah 25:6; Matthew 22:1–14; Revelation 19:9). How do these different feasts shape our understanding of God's kingdom values?
4. Have you ever experienced a time when abundance or celebration led to poor decision-making or spiritual apathy? How can we remain grounded in times of blessing and celebration?
5. What are ways we can use hospitality and celebration in our homes or churches to reflect God's glory rather than our own?
6. Consider your own life: Are there places where you might be tempted to "feast" on the world's approval rather than seek God's presence and invitation? How can you shift your focus back to God's table?



## Application Questions

1. How does the extravagance of King Ahasuerus's banquet contrast with the humility Christ calls us to?

Read Philippians 2:3–8. In what ways are you challenged to live differently from the values displayed in this lavish scene?

2. What motivates generosity in your life?

Do you give out of genuine love and service, or to be noticed and praised like King Ahasuerus may have? (Matthew 6:1–4)

3. Why do you think the king gave people freedom to choose their own food and drink?

Have you ever used kindness or flexibility as a way to gain influence? How does true biblical hospitality differ from manipulation?

4. When you reflect on your own “banquets” (celebrations, accomplishments, gatherings), who gets the glory?

How can you make Jesus the center of your joy and celebration rather than yourself?

5. What role does self-indulgence play in your daily life?

Are there habits or comforts that you rely on more than God? How can you pursue spiritual discipline and contentment in Christ instead? (1 Timothy 6:6–10)

6. How can we use the resources God has given us—time, influence, money—for His kingdom instead of personal status?

Consider one way this week you can be intentionally generous in a way that honors God, not self.

## Day Four

Read Esther 1:9-12.

### A BOLD REFUSAL

The final day of King Ahasuerus's extravagant feast was charged with excitement and celebration. Wine flowed freely, and the king was deep into revelry when he decided to make a dramatic gesture. Intoxicated and eager to impress, he summoned Queen Vashti to appear before his officials and nobles so they could admire her beauty.

What happened next was nothing short of shocking—**Vashti refused**.

Though Scripture doesn't tell us exactly why Vashti declined, historical and cultural context provides important clues. In Persian custom, women of high rank were not expected to appear before intoxicated men. Once the royal banquets gave way to unrestrained indulgence, concubines—not queens—were typically brought out for entertainment. Vashti may have recognized that the king's request was more about objectification than honor. Rather than submit to public humiliation, she took a stand, even at great personal cost.

Her refusal wasn't just a slight against the king's command; it was a defiance of the deeply patriarchal expectations of the Persian court. For a woman—especially a queen—to say "no" in such a setting was unheard of. It was a bold and dangerous act of dignity and self-respect. We also see a glimpse of King Ahasuerus's temperament. Verse 10 tells us he was "merry with wine"—a polite way of saying he was drunk. Proverbs 31:4–5 cautions rulers against drinking wine lest they forget what is decreed and pervert justice. Ecclesiastes 10:17 reminds us that wise leaders feast at the proper time—for strength, not for drunkenness. In contrast, Ahasuerus's judgment is clouded by indulgence, and it ultimately leads to rash decisions and public embarrassment.

This moment sets the tone for the entire book of Esther. Vashti's removal creates the vacancy that Esther will eventually fill. But it also reminds us that courage often involves personal sacrifice. While Vashti is not the main hero of this story, her bravery leaves a lasting impression. Her actions challenge us to consider what it means to stand firm in the face of cultural pressure, personal risk, and unjust expectations.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Queen Vashti refused the king's request? What possible motivations—cultural, moral, or personal—might she have had?
2. How does the king's drunken state affect the seriousness of his command and the consequences of Vashti's refusal? Compare this to Proverbs 31:4–5 and Ecclesiastes 10:17. What do these verses say about godly leadership?
3. In what ways does Vashti's stand reflect integrity and courage, even though she disappears from the narrative afterward? What does her example teach us about standing up for personal dignity?
4. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to say “no” even though it cost you something? How did you discern that it was the right thing to do?
5. How do our cultural expectations of women today compare to those in Vashti's time? In what ways do women still face pressure to conform, and how can we respond with wisdom and faith?
6. What lessons can we learn about the dangers of pride, drunkenness, or peer pressure from King Ahasuerus's actions in this passage?

## Application Questions

1. Have you ever had to take a stand for your convictions in a difficult situation?

What emotions did you experience? How did others respond? What did you learn about God through it?

2. Vashti's refusal may have come at great personal cost. What does this teach us about courage and dignity?

How do you discern when it's right to respectfully resist cultural or relational pressures?

3. In what ways does the fear of others' opinions (or embarrassment, like King Ahasuerus faced) influence your decisions?

Read Proverbs 29:25. What does godly courage look like in your daily life?

4. How does your faith shape your understanding of true beauty and worth?

In a world that often values appearance over character, how do you remind yourself (and other women) of your identity in Christ? (1 Peter 3:3–4)

5. How do you respond when your authority is challenged—whether as a parent, leader, or friend?

What does this passage reveal about the difference between godly leadership and insecure control?

6. Are there situations where you need to set godly boundaries—even if it's misunderstood by others?

How can Vashti's example inspire you to pursue both wisdom and courage in how you respond?

## Day Five

Read Esther 1:13-22.

### THE KING'S DILEMMA

Imagine the towering halls of the Persian palace, filled with tension. Queen Vashti has refused the king's command. What began as a feast of celebration has turned into a crisis of pride and power. King Ahasuerus, embarrassed in front of his nobles and officials, seeks counsel. But the advice he receives reveals more about the kingdom's values—and its flaws—than any royal edict.

The king turns to his trusted advisors, men considered experts in law and justice. But this isn't a measured legal consultation—it's a reaction to wounded ego. Among these counselors, Memucan emerges as the loudest voice. Instead of addressing the situation with restraint, he escalates the issue. He argues that Vashti's refusal could encourage women throughout the empire to disrespect their husbands, stirring disorder in homes and communities. His proposed solution is radical: depose Vashti and replace her with someone "better."

The decree is made law—**irreversible** under the Medo-Persian system. Vashti is banished, not because she committed treason, but because she embarrassed a prideful, intoxicated king.

This is not the justice of God's kingdom. It's power used to preserve image and authority. In contrast to the rashness of Ahasuerus, God's justice is always righteous, merciful, and rooted in truth.

The text invites us to contrast Ahasuerus with the **promised King** of Scripture. Earthly rulers, like Ahasuerus, are often led by pride, insecurity, or manipulation. But the **Messianic King** promised in the Old Testament is marked by wisdom, humility, and justice:

- **Isaiah 32:1–8:** A righteous king rules with justice, shielding the weak.
- **Jeremiah 23:5–6:** God promises a wise King from David's line who will bring safety and salvation.
- **Zechariah 9:9:** Unlike the pomp of Persia, our King enters humbly, riding on a donkey to bring peace.

For the exiled Jews in Persia, Ahasuerus's throne was a reminder of their displacement. But passages like **Psalms 2** declared that God was still enthroned and His anointed would reign. The people of God may be scattered, but they are never forgotten.

Ahasuerus's banquet dazzled with wealth and gold, yet left behind humiliation, fear, and injustice. In contrast, God offers **feasts of grace**—invitations not for the elite, but for the thirsty and broken:

- **Proverbs 9:1–6**: Wisdom prepares a feast for the simple.
- **Isaiah 55:1–3**: Come, eat what satisfies, without money or price.
- **John 7:37–38**: Jesus invites the thirsty to come to Him and drink.

These feasts culminate in the **Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7–9)**—a banquet not built on pride or wealth, but on redemption, joy, and eternal union with Christ. There, the Bride of Christ—the Church—will be honored, not humiliated. As women of faith, our identity is not defined by cultural pressures or the whims of worldly kings, but by the love and justice of our eternal King.

### Discussion Questions

1. What does the king's reaction to Vashti's refusal tell us about his character and leadership? How does it contrast with the kind of leadership described in Isaiah 32:1–8 or Jeremiah 23:5–6?
2. Why do you think Memucan exaggerated the consequences of Vashti's disobedience? How can fear or pride distort wise counsel?
3. How might this story have impacted Jewish exiles in Persia? In what ways might it have reminded them to place their hope in God's promises rather than earthly rulers?
4. Compare the banquet in Esther 1 with the spiritual feasts described in Isaiah 55 and Revelation 19. What do these biblical images teach us about God's heart and hospitality?
5. In a culture that often prioritizes appearance, status, or control, how can we model the humility and justice of our true King, Jesus?
6. Have you ever faced a moment when standing up for what's right meant risking your reputation or relationships? What helped you remain faithful?

## Journaling Prompt: Daughters of the True King

Queen Vashti's refusal to be paraded before a drunken crowd may have cost her a crown—but it preserved her dignity. Her story reminds us that true worth isn't determined by kings, culture, or status—it is defined by God.

As women of faith, we are **not subjects of a fickle ruler**, but **daughters of the Most High King** (Galatians 4:7; 1 Peter 2:9–10). Our identity is secure in Christ, not shaped by public approval, popularity, or outward beauty.

Take time today to prayerfully reflect:

- Where have I been tempted to find my value in things like appearance, approval, or accomplishments?
- In what areas of my life do I need to resist the pressure to “perform” or “prove” myself to others?
- How does knowing Jesus is the King of kings change the way I see myself—and others?
- Am I living in the freedom and dignity that come from being known, loved, and called by God?

**Write a prayer** asking God to help you walk in confidence—not pride—knowing that your true identity is found in Him.

## **WEEK THREE**

### **Day One**

Read Esther 2:1-24. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application:



## Day Two

Read Esther 2:1-23.

### A KING WITHOUT A QUEEN

In the grand tapestry of life, it's easy to forget that there's a divine hand at work, intricately weaving every thread together. God's presence may not always be visible, but His fingerprints are all over the story. In Esther 2, His name is never mentioned—but His providence is unmistakable.

After the drama of Vashti's removal, King Ahasuerus is left queenless and contemplative. The same man who made rash, irreversible decisions now seems to be in emotional limbo. The Scripture says he "remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her" (Esther 2:1). Was it regret? Loneliness? A bruised ego? Whatever it was, his royal court knew how to respond. His advisors quickly offered a plan: host a kingdom-wide beauty contest.

This wasn't a romantic fairy tale—it was a state-sponsored selection of women based primarily on their appearance. While history paints this as a prestigious opportunity, let's not miss the weight of what it meant: these young women were *taken* from their homes, subjected to a year of beauty treatments, and placed into a contest with only one winner. Most would never return home, even if not chosen.

In a world where beauty was equated with value, these women were judged not by their character, wisdom, or faith, but by their appearance. This was a culture that prized the exterior and overlooked the soul. Yet as believers, we're reminded in **1 Samuel 16:7** that "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Even in this environment, God was working. He didn't abandon these young women—especially not Esther. Though she's not introduced yet in these early verses, the stage is being set for her entrance. In the background of political schemes and royal vanity, **God is preparing a deliverer.**

This chapter invites us to consider how God works even when He feels absent. Like Esther and the other women, we often find ourselves in situations we didn't choose, facing challenges we didn't expect. But God is not idle. **His sovereignty isn't limited to miracles—it's active in the mundane.**

This is a comforting reminder for us today. God is moving even in seasons of waiting, confusion, and hardship. **Romans 8:28** assures us that He works all things for the good of those who love Him.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think King Ahasuerus “remembered Vashti”? What emotions might have stirred in him during this time of reflection?
2. What does this passage reveal about how women were viewed in Persian society? How does this contrast with how God values women?
3. Have you ever been in a situation you didn’t choose? How can you trust that God is still in control, even when His presence feels hidden?
4. What encouragement do you find in knowing that God often works behind the scenes rather than through visible miracles?
5. How can we guard our hearts from placing too much value on outward appearance, in ourselves or others?
6. In what ways can you reflect God’s heart in a culture that often focuses on the external rather than the eternal?

Life doesn’t always follow our plans. Sometimes we find ourselves in confusing or painful seasons—situations we didn’t ask for and don’t understand. That’s where Esther’s story begins: not with glory, but with uncertainty, powerlessness, and silence. Yet even in these moments, **God is working**. Esther 2 reminds us that:

- **God is sovereign over every circumstance**—even when people around us make unjust or foolish decisions. Ahasuerus’s actions were self-serving, but God used them to set the stage for His redemptive plan.
- **We are not forgotten**. Like the young women taken into the palace, you may feel invisible or powerless at times—but your value is not determined by your situation. God sees you and is preparing you for purposes beyond what you can now imagine.
- **Your influence may begin in unexpected places**. Esther wasn’t seeking influence—she was chosen. But God used her obedience, character, and courage to impact an entire nation. You, too, may be called to serve right where you are—in your family, church, workplace, or community.
- **Waiting is not wasted**. Before God raised up Esther, He was at work aligning details behind the scenes. His timing is perfect, even when it feels slow.

## Practical Steps:

1. **Pause and Reflect:** Is there a situation in your life that feels unfair or confusing? Ask God to give you eyes to see His work, even if it’s behind the scenes.
2. **Resist Cultural Pressure:** In a world obsessed with beauty, success, and power, commit to living with inward integrity and Christlike humility. (See 1 Peter 3:3–4.)
3. **Encourage Another Woman:** Speak truth into a friend who may be feeling overlooked or unworthy. Remind her of her God-given value and purpose.
4. **Surrender the Unknowns:** Pray through the areas of your life where you feel powerless. Release them into God’s hands, trusting that His providence is at work.

## Day Three

Read Esther 2:5-11.

### HIDDEN IDENTITY, UNFOLDING PROVIDENCE

In this unfolding drama, the curtain rises on two key figures: **Mordecai** and **Esther**. Mordecai is a Jew from the tribe of **Benjamin**, descended from those exiled during Jerusalem's fall to Babylon. He lives in **Susa**, the bustling Persian capital, a city filled with foreign customs and royal ambitions. Among the exiles, Mordecai remains faithful to his roots, even as he navigates the complexities of life under a foreign king.

Raising his orphaned cousin **Hadassah**, also known as **Esther**, Mordecai becomes both guardian and mentor. Esther's Persian name—meaning *star*—suggests cultural adaptation, perhaps even a strategic move for survival. Although outwardly assimilated, God's providential hand is clearly at work in her story, guiding her path with care.

When the search begins for a new queen, Esther is taken into the king's harem—not by choice, but by royal decree. Her beauty captures the attention of **Hegai**, the chief eunuch, who ensures she receives the best food, beauty treatments, and servants. Esther finds favor not just because of her appearance, but also because of her **grace**, **demeanor**, and **wisdom**.

Yet a striking detail emerges: **Esther conceals her Jewish identity**, just as Mordecai had instructed. Why? The Bible offers no direct explanation, but the historical backdrop of anti-Jewish sentiment and ethnic marginalization makes it clear—revealing her heritage might have placed her in danger or disqualified her from royal favor. Her silence isn't cowardice—it's strategy, wisdom, and perhaps even spiritual discernment, though cloaked in mystery.

Meanwhile, Mordecai walks daily near the harem's courtyard, driven by a father's love and a watchful concern for Esther's well-being. His consistent presence reflects the unseen yet enduring faith of the Jewish people, even when they live in exile and silence.

What's most notable is that **God's name isn't mentioned here**—yet His providence is everywhere. Esther's journey isn't ideal or clean-cut. It's complicated. She moves through a morally murky world, yet God is guiding each step. Like threads in a divine tapestry, her circumstances—though shaped by a pagan culture—will soon serve a higher purpose.

## Discussion Questions

1. What do we learn about Mordecai's character through his care for Esther and his daily presence near the harem?
2. Why do you think Esther chose to hide her Jewish identity? Was this wise, fearful, or both?
3. How does this passage reveal the tension between cultural assimilation and faithfulness to God?
4. What are some modern-day pressures Christian women face to "hide" their identity in secular settings?
5. God is not explicitly mentioned in these verses. Where do you see His hand at work behind the scenes?

## Application Questions

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you had to downplay your faith or identity as a Christian?

What did you learn from that experience? How might you respond differently today?

2. What does Esther's story teach us about trusting God's plan, even when we feel powerless or hidden?
3. Are you more concerned with outward approval (like Esther's beauty) or inward character (like Mordecai's faithfulness)?

How can you cultivate favor with both God and people in a godly way? (See Proverbs 3:3–4)

4. Who has played a "Mordecai" role in your life—mentoring, watching over, or praying for you?

How can you be that person for someone else?

5. Are you in a season where God feels silent?

Reflect on how God might be working *behind the scenes* in your life. How can Esther's story encourage your faith during this time?

## Day Five

Read Esther 2:12-18.

### GOD'S FAVOR IN AN UNLIKELY PLACE

The moment has finally arrived. Esther, the young Jewish woman raised in exile, now steps into the royal spotlight for the night that could change her life forever. Months of intense preparation—twelve months of beauty treatments, etiquette, and strategic observation—have brought her to this turning point. As she enters the king's presence, her wisdom, humility, and inner strength shine more brightly than her outward beauty. And in that moment, **she captures King Ahasuerus's full affection.**

Esther's approach is notably different from the other women. Rather than relying on excess or extravagance, she chooses only what Hegai, the trusted eunuch, advises (v. 15). Her restraint and discernment earn admiration not just from the king, but from **everyone who sees her**. Her favor isn't merely the result of her appearance—it's a reflection of her **character, grace, and spirit-led wisdom.**

When the king crowns Esther as queen, he celebrates with a grand feast—his **fourth** so far—demonstrating joy and newfound pride. Alongside this royal celebration, he issues a tax remission and grants gifts, further marking this as a pivotal moment not only for Esther but for the entire Persian Empire.

This is a story of remarkable elevation. Esther goes from being an orphaned exile to the most powerful woman in the land. Yet behind this dramatic shift is a **greater force at work**. Though God is never named, **His providential hand** is clearly directing the course of events. From Vashti's removal to Esther's crowning, we see how **every detail—every personality, decision, and delay—is part of a divine plan.**

Let's take a closer look at the supporting characters and how God's hand is at work through them:

- **King Ahasuerus:** Often impulsive and emotionally driven, yet God uses his decisions—including his affection for Esther—to fulfill a greater purpose.
- **Queen Vashti:** Her bold refusal sets the entire chain of events in motion. Though she fades from the narrative, her stand for dignity becomes a hinge point in redemptive history.
- **Royal Advisors:** Their human wisdom unknowingly aligns with God's plan to bring Esther forward.
- **Hegai:** This royal eunuch plays a crucial role, granting Esther favor and guidance. His actions echo Proverbs 21:1: *"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord... He turns it wherever He will."*
- **Mordecai:** Ever faithful, ever present—his influence and spiritual grounding lay the foundation for Esther's courage and decisions.

In this passage, we're reminded of the **mystery and majesty of God's providence**. Esther's rise wasn't luck. It was God at work in the shadows, preparing her for a time when **faith, courage, and obedience** would change the course of history.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What stands out about Esther's approach to meeting the king compared to the other women in the harem?
2. How does Esther show discernment and humility in verse 15?
3. In what ways do you see God working through the people around Esther—even those who don't know Him?
4. What does this story teach us about the value of wise counsel (like that from Hegai or Mordecai)?
5. How can we discern God's hand at work in circumstances that seem secular, difficult, or beyond our control?

#### Application Questions

1. In what areas of your life do you feel God may be preparing you "behind the scenes," even if you can't yet see the outcome?
2. Have you ever found favor in a situation you didn't expect? What did you learn about God's sovereignty through it?
3. Like Esther, are there areas where God is calling you to walk in humility and courage, even when the stakes are high?
4. What are some practical ways you can listen to wise counsel and discern God's direction this week?
5. Esther followed the path laid before her with grace—how can you do the same in your current season?

#### Journaling Prompt

*Lord, help me trust that You are at work even when I cannot see You.*

Reflect on a moment in your life when you didn't understand why certain doors opened or closed. How might God have been guiding you through those events? Write about a current situation where you are waiting on God's timing or favor, and ask Him to help you see with eyes of faith.

## WEEK FOUR

### Day One

Read Esther 2:19-23.

#### IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

As the curtain closes on Esther 2, the narrative takes a dramatic turn—one that reveals the undercurrents of danger and destiny flowing beneath palace life.

We begin with **Mordecai**, sitting at the **king's gate**, a location loaded with significance. Far more than a resting spot, the king's gate was the hub of civic authority—where nobles deliberated, laws were enforced, and decisions shaped the empire. Mordecai's presence here tells us that he is a man of influence and awareness, likely holding an official position. He is watching, listening, and paying attention—and it's precisely this posture that leads to a **divine appointment**.

Meanwhile, **Queen Esther** is settling into her royal position. Though she holds one of the highest titles in the land, **verse 20 reminds us** that she still honors Mordecai's counsel. She continues to keep her Jewish identity a secret, just as he had advised. This act isn't deception—it's discernment. In a culture where her heritage could cost her everything, **Esther's obedience is an act of faith and wisdom**. Her humility and loyalty to Mordecai reveal a strength of character that transcends her outward beauty.

Suddenly, a **dark twist** emerges: two of the king's guards—Bigthan and Teresh—are plotting to assassinate King Ahasuerus. It's a high-stakes betrayal. But by **God's providence**, Mordecai overhears the conspiracy. He alerts Esther, who tells the king in Mordecai's name. The threat is investigated, the culprits are found guilty, and the incident is recorded in the royal chronicles.

It seems like a minor footnote in the grand story—but don't miss the importance of that final detail: *"it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king"* (v. 23). Though Mordecai isn't immediately rewarded, this moment will later become a turning point for the entire nation of Israel. **God is setting the stage for deliverance**—not with lightning or thunder, but through a quiet moment of faithfulness.

This passage reminds us that **being in the right place at the right time is no accident in God's kingdom**. He uses watchful hearts and obedient spirits to bring about His will. Mordecai wasn't just lucky. Esther wasn't just charming. **They were ready. They were faithful. And they were placed by God for such a time as this.**

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Mordecai chose to stay near the palace even after Esther became queen? What does that say about his character?
2. Esther obeys Mordecai by concealing her identity. How does this reflect her trust in him and in God's timing?
3. What might have happened if Mordecai hadn't been paying attention at the king's gate? How can we cultivate spiritual attentiveness in our daily lives?
4. Why do you think the king didn't reward Mordecai immediately? What does this teach us about waiting on God's timing?
5. How can we remain faithful and alert in "ordinary" moments that God may use for His extraordinary purposes?

*Lord, help me stay faithful in the small things, trusting that You are weaving them into something greater.*

Reflect on a time when you found yourself in the right place at the right time. Did you recognize God's hand in it then—or only in hindsight? What do you think He was teaching you through that experience? Pray about an area in your life where you need to trust God's timing, even if you don't yet see the reward.



## **Day Two**

Read Esther 3:1-15. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application:

## Day Three

Read Esther 3:1-11.

### THE ENEMY EMERGES

“After these things...” Those opening words in Esther 3 suggest a shift in the story. King Ahasuerus has just survived an assassination attempt (Esther 2:21–23). Still shaken by betrayal, he’s looking for someone to trust. Enter **Haman**, a man who flatters the king and gains his favor.

But the writer of Esther includes a telling detail: **Haman is an Agagite**—a descendant of King **Agag** of the **Amalekites**, a people who long opposed Israel (Exodus 17:8–16; 1 Samuel 15). This isn’t just a political appointment—it’s the resurgence of a spiritual enemy.

When Haman rises, the king commands that all bow down. Everyone complies... except Mordecai.

The king’s servants are confused by Mordecai’s defiance. When they press him, he responds with a bold confession: “**I am a Jew.**” This isn’t just about personal pride or ethnicity—it’s a declaration of allegiance to God and a refusal to honor an ancient enemy.

Haman’s reaction is swift and extreme. When he finds out Mordecai won’t bow, he doesn’t just plan to eliminate him—he plans to **exterminate all Jews** in the Persian Empire.

This is more than hatred. It’s **demonic opposition to God’s covenant people**. Just like Pharaoh tried to kill the baby boys in Egypt, just like Herod sought the life of Jesus—Haman’s plot is part of a larger war between good and evil.

Haman isn’t impulsive—he’s calculating. He casts **lots (purim)** to determine the best time to carry out his genocide. The lot falls on the twelfth month—**Adar**—giving him eleven months to prepare.

Even in this dark detail, God’s hand is quietly at work. **Proverbs 16:33** tells us, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.” What seems random is actually divinely ruled.

Haman approaches the king with a masterful mix of **deception and manipulation**:

- He portrays the Jews as rebellious lawbreakers (v. 8).
- He appeals to the king’s self-interest and greed by offering a massive bribe (v. 9).
- The king, passive and undiscerning, gives Haman his signet ring—effectively **transferring royal power** to an enemy of God’s people.

At this point, the situation looks hopeless.

But just as God's name remains hidden in the book of Esther, **His hand is not absent**. The God who watched over His people in Egypt, through the wilderness, and into exile—is still at work.

### Discussion Questions

1. What does Haman's promotion reveal about King Ahasuerus's leadership and judgment?
2. How does Haman's heritage as an Agagite deepen the conflict with Mordecai?
3. Why do you think Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman? What spiritual principles are at stake?
4. How does Haman's reaction to Mordecai's refusal reflect the danger of unchecked pride?
5. In what ways does Haman manipulate truth to gain the king's support?
6. Read Proverbs 16:33. How does this truth give us peace when the world feels chaotic?

### Application Questions

1. Have you ever faced pressure to compromise your faith or “bow” to cultural expectations? How did you respond?
2. How do pride and prejudice still operate in our hearts and our communities today?
3. When evil seems to go unchecked in the world, how do you respond emotionally and spiritually?
4. Mordecai stood alone at great risk. What helps you stand firm in your faith when others around you give in?
5. Haman's timeline gave God's people eleven months to respond. What does this say about God's perfect timing and our need to trust Him?

### Reflection

*Lord, even when the world seems dark and unjust, help me to trust Your hidden hand. Give me the courage to stand like Mordecai, the wisdom to discern like Esther, and the faith to believe that You are always in control—even when evil appears to win.*

Take a few minutes to pray about an area of your life where you're tempted to bow to fear, pressure, or pride. How might God be calling you to stand for Him instead?

## Day Four

Read Esther 3:12-15.

### EVIL'S RISE, GOD'S PLAN

The tension in the Book of Esther reaches a chilling climax in chapter 3. As Haman's hatred boils over, his deadly plan takes shape—not in a back alley or whispered conversation, but in a royal decree sealed by the king himself. The evil is bold, public, and terrifyingly calculated.

Haman's plan unfolds on the **thirteenth day of the first month—Nisan**, the very eve of **Passover**, the Jewish celebration of deliverance. What bitter irony: while Jewish families were preparing to commemorate God's power to save, a decree was being written that called for their destruction. This wasn't coincidence. It was **spiritual warfare in disguise**, as evil tried to overshadow a divine celebration of hope.

Using the king's **signet ring**, Haman sealed his genocidal decree, ensuring it carried the full authority of royal law. Letters were sent throughout **all 127 provinces**, translated into every language, announcing a terrifying day in Adar—the **annihilation of the Jewish people**. Every man, woman, and child was marked for death in a single day, and the wickedness didn't stop there. The decree permitted the plundering of Jewish possessions, enticing citizens to turn against their neighbors for personal gain. Fear spread like wildfire, and the Jewish people were left stunned and heartbroken.

#### *The Characters—Revealed by Crisis*

- **King Ahasuerus** signs off on this genocide without a second thought and returns to the palace to **drink with Haman**. His indifference is a portrait of moral negligence—leadership without discernment.
- **Haman**, driven by pride and prejudice, doesn't just want Mordecai dead—he wants an entire people wiped from the earth. His cruelty mirrors Satan's ongoing scheme to destroy God's people.
- **The City of Susa** is thrown into **confusion and dismay**. This isn't just about politics—it's about fear, morality, and conscience. The people didn't know what to make of this sudden, violent turn.

## Discussion Questions

1. What does the timing of Haman's decree (the eve of Passover) tell us about the spiritual opposition against God's people?
2. How does the use of the king's signet ring show the seriousness and permanence of the decree? What are some modern parallels to leaders misusing authority?
3. What emotions might the Jewish people have experienced upon hearing this decree? How would you feel if you were in their position?
4. Compare the reactions of King Ahasuerus and the citizens of Susa (v. 15). What do their responses teach us about moral responsibility and leadership?
5. How is God still at work—even when His name isn't mentioned? What clues in the text point to His hidden hand?

## Application Questions

1. Have you ever faced a situation that felt hopeless or unjust? How did you respond? How might the story of Esther 3 encourage you to trust God's sovereignty even when evil seems to prevail?
2. What can we learn from the silence of the Jews in this chapter? What should our response be when we witness injustice or oppression today?
3. Think about a time when you felt powerless. What truths about God's character helped you hold on in the face of fear?
4. Haman manipulated the truth to justify his hatred. How can we guard ourselves against being deceived by partial truths or cultural pressure to compromise?

*Even when evil seems to gain power, God's purposes are never thwarted.*

## Journal Prompt

*Imagine you're living in Susa and just heard the news of the decree. Write a letter to God. Pour out your fear, confusion, and grief—but also your trust. What would you ask Him? What promises would you cling to?*

When evil appears to be winning, and God seems silent, Esther reminds us that **He is never absent**. The wheels of His justice may turn slowly, but they never stop. Esther 3 ends in darkness, but as believers, we know the story doesn't stop here. **God is preparing a response—and He often uses the most unlikely people to bring about His deliverance.**

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.” – Proverbs 19:21

## Day Five

Read Esther 3:1-15.

### THE THIRST FOR HONOR AND THE STRUGGLE WITH EVIL

As we journey further into Esther's story, we encounter a fascinating human truth: pride and the pursuit of honor can twist even the most powerful people into dangerous instruments of evil.

Look at **King Ahasuerus** and **Haman**. These two men, though vastly different in background, share one glaring trait—**an insatiable hunger for recognition and control**. When Queen Vashti declined to appear at the king's banquet, his pride was shattered, and his rage sparked a national decree. Likewise, Haman's fury ignites over **one man's refusal to bow**—Mordecai. From that moment, Haman's bruised ego becomes the fuel for a genocidal plot.

Their reactions are extreme, but they reflect a truth about the human heart: **when our need for admiration outweighs our reverence for God, we are vulnerable to bitterness, insecurity, and sinful ambition.**

#### A Moment of Reflection

Pause and consider:

- Do you ever long to be noticed, affirmed, or admired?
- Have you felt overlooked or slighted and allowed that to breed resentment?
- Have you demanded love, loyalty, or attention from others—and found yourself frustrated when it didn't come?

This isn't just about two men in Persia. It's about **the battle inside every human heart**. Left unchecked, our desire for approval can lead to controlling behavior, broken relationships, and even spiritual compromise.

But here's the good news: **Jesus understands rejection**, and He offers us something better than human applause—**eternal security and purpose in Him**.

Haman's plot isn't just political. It's **spiritual**. It's another chapter in the long war between good and evil—a war that began in Eden and continues today. While many of us may never face genocide or persecution, we still live in a world where evil sometimes seems to go unchecked. And like the Jews in Esther's day, we may wonder: **Where is God in all of this? Why does He seem silent?**

But God is never truly absent. Even when unseen, He is orchestrating redemption. And through His Word, He prepares us to stand firm.

Let's soak in the promises of Jesus:

**Matthew 10:27–31** – You are **deeply known and valued** by your Heavenly Father.

**John 15:18–20** – Rejection is part of the journey of following Christ.

**John 16:33** – “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

What comfort! Jesus doesn't promise a life free from pain, but He promises **victory**.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What parallels do you see between King Ahasuerus and Haman's response to being dishonored? What do their reactions reveal about their character?
2. Can you recall a time when you responded poorly to feeling disrespected or overlooked? What were the consequences?
3. Why do you think we crave admiration or approval so deeply? How can that desire become spiritually dangerous?
4. When you consider the presence of evil in the world, what thoughts or emotions surface? Have you ever struggled with God's apparent silence?
5. How do the words of Jesus in Matthew and John give you courage to face rejection or uncertainty today?

#### Application Questions

1. Are there areas in your life where you are seeking the approval of people more than the approval of God? What would it look like to surrender that to Him?
2. How can you guard your heart against pride and bitterness when others overlook or mistreat you?
3. Is there someone you need to forgive because their actions bruised your sense of worth? How can you begin to extend grace?
4. In moments when you feel discouraged by injustice or spiritual silence, what practical steps can you take to remain anchored in God's promises?

Use these prompts to guide your personal prayer:

1. **Confess** any areas where pride or a desire for human approval has taken root. Ask God to give you a heart that seeks His glory over your own.
2. **Pray** for the strength to trust God's justice even when evil appears to be winning.
3. **Thank** God that your identity is secure in Christ, and that you are deeply known, seen, and loved by Him—even when others overlook you.
4. **Intercede** for persecuted believers around the world who face real threats for their faith. Ask God to give them boldness, protection, and hope.

Esther's world may feel far away, but the challenges her people faced—prideful leaders, unjust decrees, spiritual darkness—are still with us. Yet in every age, **God's hand is still at work**. He calls us to **humility, courage, and trust**, and He never leaves His people alone in the fight.



## **WEEK FIVE**

### **Day One**

Read Esther 4:1-17. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application:

## Day Two

Read Esther 4:1-17.

### A CITY IN CHAOS

Last week's events left a nation shaken and a people grieving. Haman, through political manipulation and personal vengeance, had won the king's support for a terrifying genocide. His decree spread like wildfire, and with it, the once stable coexistence of Jews and Persians in the capital of Susa was fractured. Tension, suspicion, and fear now filled the air. The people of God were suddenly labeled enemies of the state.

#### **In one day, life changed. And grief followed.**

The response from the Jewish community was swift and heartfelt. Public mourning erupted throughout the provinces—a **physical, spiritual, and emotional reaction to devastation**. They wept, fasted, wore sackcloth, and covered themselves in ashes. These weren't empty rituals; they were acts of **spiritual desperation** and **communal identity**. In mourning, the people were calling on God—not just for deliverance, but for meaning, mercy, and a miracle.

Amid this chaos, **Mordecai emerges as a changed man**. Previously operating behind the scenes—cautiously maneuvering through Persian politics—he now steps forward boldly. He **publicly identifies with his people**, refusing to wear royal garb while his fellow Jews mourn. He positions himself not only as a man of sorrow but as one **taking a stand**, risking status, safety, and reputation to declare, "I am one of them."

This is no small act. As verse 2 tells us, **Mordecai enters the king's gate in sackcloth**, fully exposed to judgment and scrutiny. This is where business and political matters take place—yet here he stands in mourning attire, **disrupting the norm, defying the silence**, and choosing **courage over comfort**.

The mourning in Esther 4 reflects a recurring biblical pattern. When God's people face crisis, mourning often becomes the soil where repentance, surrender, and transformation begin.

What we see in each case—including Esther 4—is that **mourning is not weakness**. It's an **honest recognition of dependence on God**, a refusal to numb the pain, and a declaration that **only God can bring redemption**.

Throughout Scripture, mourning is often a turning point in a believer's relationship with God, signaling deep conviction and leading to spiritual transformation. In **2 Samuel 12:15–24**, **King David mourned** the consequences of his sin after his child fell ill. He expressed his grief through fasting, lying on the ground, and pleading with God. Once the child died, David accepted God's will, worshiped, and refocused his life with renewed purpose. In **Joel 2:12–13**, **God's people mourned** their spiritual unfaithfulness. The Lord called them to return to Him with fasting, weeping, and broken hearts—not just outward displays of sorrow. In response, God

promised restoration and a renewed covenant relationship. In the New Testament, **Christians are called to mourn** when pride and worldliness distance them from God, as shown in **James 4:4–10**. They are instructed to weep, humble themselves, and draw near to God, resulting in renewed intimacy and spiritual revival. In each case, mourning led not to despair, but to **grace, healing, and deeper communion with the Lord**.

#### Discussion Questions

1. How did Mordecai's identity evolve from Esther 2 to Esther 4? What do you think prompted his public declaration of faith and grief?
2. What are the risks Mordecai took by mourning openly near the king's gate? What might this teach us about the cost of faithfulness?
3. Why do you think mourning is such a significant part of the biblical response to crisis? How does it prepare us for spiritual growth?
4. Have you ever witnessed a community (church, family, nation) respond to hardship through prayer and repentance? What stood out to you?
5. Compare the mourning in Susa to the biblical examples in David, Joel, and James. What common threads do you notice?

#### Application Questions

1. When was the last time you truly mourned—over sin, injustice, or personal loss? How did God meet you in that moment?
2. Is there anything in your life right now that calls for spiritual mourning and surrender to God? How will you respond?
3. What would it look like for you to stand in "Mordecai's shoes"—to take a bold stand for your identity in Christ, even if it costs you comfort or approval?
4. Are there moments when you've hidden your faith for fear of conflict or loss? How might God be calling you to live more courageously?

## Prayer Points

- **Repentance & Humility** – Ask God to reveal any areas in your life where pride or compromise has silenced your witness.
- **Comfort for the Mourning** – Pray for those in your church or community who are grieving—whether from loss, sin, or discouragement. Ask God to meet them with healing and peace.
- **Boldness Like Mordecai** – Ask God to give you courage to live out your identity in Christ openly, no matter the cultural pressure or personal cost.
- **Unity in Crisis** – Pray that your church or small group would respond to difficulty with spiritual unity, repentance, and hope—just as the Jewish people in Susa did.

Mourning may begin with pain, but it doesn't end there. In God's hands, **sackcloth turns to strength**, and sorrow becomes the starting point for **spiritual renewal**. As you reflect on the grief of Susa and the courage of Mordecai, ask yourself: **What bold step of faith is God calling me to take today?**

*Let your mourning be the soil where **hope grows and faith stands firm**.*

## Day Three

Read Esther 4:4-11.

### ESTHER'S DILEMMA

In the heart of the Persian palace, Esther lived in luxury—protected, adorned, and honored as queen. Yet while she dined in splendor, outside her doors a crisis of unimaginable scale was unfolding. The Jewish people, her people, were facing annihilation.

At first, Esther was **confused**. Mordecai's public display of mourning—clothed in sackcloth and ashes—was shocking to her. How could her wise cousin, a man who once advised her to hide her Jewish identity, now risk everything so openly? Esther sends garments to him, hoping to cover his grief, but he refuses them. This isn't a time to hide pain—it's time to face it. So, Esther sends Hathach, a trusted servant, to learn the truth. The message Mordecai delivers is sobering: **the Jews are under a death sentence**, and Esther is in a unique position to help. He urges her to approach the king and plead for her people's lives.

Now, Esther faces a **life-defining dilemma**. While Mordecai calls for action, she understands the **real danger** involved. In Persian law, no one could approach the king uninvited—not even the queen. Doing so could mean death unless the king extended his golden scepter in mercy.

Esther hadn't been summoned for thirty days. In palace politics, that was significant—it suggested her influence was waning. So, Esther's hesitation is not simple cowardice; it's rooted in **real fear, risk, and uncertainty**. She stands at a crossroads:

- Obey Mordecai's call, risking her life.
- Stay silent, preserving her safety... for now.

But silence, as we'll later see, is not safety. It's surrender.

Esther's story speaks powerfully to our own struggles with fear, identity, and calling. Like her, we sometimes find ourselves **sheltered in palaces of comfort**—seemingly safe, yet distanced from the brokenness around us.

But God does not call His daughters to silence or comfort. He calls us to **courage**, to stand for truth, and to trust Him when obedience feels risky.

Esther's fear was real, and her dilemma was heavy. But her story reminds us that **God often places us exactly where He needs us—not for our ease, but for His eternal purposes**.

## Discussion Questions

1. What does Esther's initial reaction to Mordecai's mourning reveal about her understanding of the situation? Why do you think she sent clothes instead of going to him herself?
2. What do Esther's fears in verses 10–11 teach us about her position in the palace? How do they humanize her?
3. How does Mordecai's message challenge Esther's comfort? In what ways does it reveal God's providence behind her position as queen?
4. Can you relate to Esther's struggle between comfort and calling? When have you felt God nudging you to act, even when it was risky or uncomfortable?

## Application Questions

1. Is there an area in your life right now where fear is keeping you from stepping out in faith? What is God prompting you to do that feels risky or costly?
2. Are you more prone to respond to spiritual crisis by hiding, minimizing, or delaying action—like Esther at first? What does that reveal about your trust in God?
3. Esther had to remember who she truly was—a Jew, God's child—before she could act courageously. Is there an area where you've hidden or downplayed your identity in Christ? Why?
4. What would it look like to trust God with the outcome, even if obedience might lead to loss or rejection? How does knowing He is sovereign help you obey in faith?

## Prayer Points

- **Pray for boldness.** Ask God to give you courage to stand for truth even when it's hard or unpopular.
- **Pray for wisdom.** Like Esther, ask for clarity when faced with hard choices, and for discernment to recognize your role in God's bigger plan.
- **Pray for a willing heart.** Ask God to soften any areas of resistance in your life where fear or comfort is keeping you from obedience.
- **Intercede for others.** Lift up people in your church or community who are in positions of influence—pray they would be brave, faithful, and discerning.

Esther didn't ask for her position. She didn't volunteer for this battle. But God placed her in the palace **on purpose**. Her story reminds us that **our influence isn't about prestige—it's about purpose**.

*Courage is not the absence of fear—it's choosing obedience in the face of it.*

So, what fear is holding you back today? And what might happen if, like Esther, you choose to trust God with the outcome?

## Day Four

Read Esther 15-17.

### A CROSSROADS OF DESTINY

In the heat of Persia's political storm, Esther stands at a pivotal crossroads. The message from Mordecai is clear—her silence could mean the destruction of her people. But speaking up could cost her life.

Imagine her dilemma: Esther hadn't been summoned by the king for 30 days. In that time, anything could have changed. Had she lost favor? Would her approach be seen as bold or foolish? The law was clear: **approaching the king without invitation was a capital offense**—unless he extended his golden scepter. She could be put to death simply for showing up.

But Esther doesn't rush into action. She pauses. She fasts. She gathers her maids—likely fellow Jews living under the same fear—and commits herself to seeking the Lord's mercy before making any move. Her decision to fast wasn't just a religious ritual—it was a **sacred declaration of dependence on God**. She wasn't going to fight this battle in her own strength.

#### *If I Perish, I Perish – A Proclamation of Faith*

Esther's unforgettable words in verse 16—"**If I perish, I perish**"—aren't fatalistic. They're faith-filled. With those words, she embraces her God-given identity and accepts the role God has placed before her.

#### **It's a moment of holy surrender.**

She chooses *God's will* over self-preservation. She chooses *obedience* over comfort. And in doing so, she becomes a vessel for God's deliverance.

"For such a time as this" (v. 14)—those famous words from Mordecai remind us that God's providence is not an accident. He places His people exactly where He needs them, in the exact time and place, for His sovereign purposes.

Esther's story echoes the life and mission of Jesus. Her decision to risk her life for her people prefigures Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Where Esther stood before an earthly king to plead for her people, **Jesus stood before death itself to secure eternal salvation**.

Both Esther and Mordecai straddled dual identities: **Jewish heritage and Persian culture**. Esther had concealed her faith at first. She lived in the palace, bore a Persian name, and moved through the royal court with grace. But the time had come to reveal who she truly was. This raises a poignant question for us: **Do we ever hide our identity in Christ to fit into the world around us?**

The tension between cultural acceptance and spiritual integrity is real. The apostle John warns believers: “Do not love the world or the things in the world...” (1 John 2:15–17)

As Christian women, we are called to **live in the world but not be of it**. Like Esther, we must be ready to step out of comfort and into calling.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What fears do you think Esther faced internally as she made her decision? How did fasting and prayer prepare her for obedience?
2. Mordecai’s confidence in God’s deliverance (v. 14) is striking. How does that faith challenge or encourage you in your own trials?
3. Esther lived with two identities—royal queen and Jewish believer. In what ways do you relate to that dual experience in your own life (e.g., at work, school, or social settings)?
4. What does “If I perish, I perish” mean to you personally? How might it shape your view of obedience and sacrifice today?

#### Application Questions

1. Is there a situation where you feel God calling you to take a stand, speak up, or act boldly? What would it take to obey like Esther?
2. Have you ever chosen comfort over obedience? How did that affect your spiritual growth? What can you do differently now?
3. In what ways can you cultivate a deeper dependence on God like Esther—especially through spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, and seeking godly counsel?
4. How might your unique position—your job, community, or family—be a platform “for such a time as this”? What is God preparing you for?



## Prayer Points

1. **Pray for courage.** Ask God to strengthen your heart to obey Him in difficult circumstances, even when fear looms.
2. **Pray for clarity.** Like Esther, seek wisdom in times of uncertainty. Ask for discernment to know when and how to act.
3. **Pray for bold witness.** Ask God to help you live out your faith publicly, unashamedly, and graciously in a culture that may not always understand it.
4. **Pray for spiritual alignment.** Invite God to purify your motives and give you a heart that longs for His glory more than comfort or recognition.

Esther's bravery wasn't rooted in her status or strength—it was born in surrender. Her fast, her prayers, her cry of "If I perish, I perish" all point to a heart that **trusted God's sovereignty over her story**.

*Today, God still raises up women "for such a time as this." Could that be you?*

Wherever God has placed you, He has a purpose for you. And when your moment comes, may you answer with the same courage Esther did—fully surrendered, fiercely faithful.

## Day Five

### An Exploration of Theological Themes

#### A CALL TO LAMENT, COURAGE, AND FAITH IN GOD’S SOVEREIGN HAND

Esther 4 is one of the most emotionally intense and spiritually charged moments in the entire narrative. It marks a turning point—not just in Esther’s journey, but in the collective response of God’s people to crisis. In this chapter, we see the raw and honest reaction to impending disaster, followed by a deepening reliance on God’s unseen yet providential work. As Southern Baptist women studying this sacred text, we are invited to explore four core theological themes that speak to our own walk with Christ.

#### Lament and Prayer: Crying Out to God in Crisis

When the Jews hear of the decree calling for their destruction, their response is immediate and visceral: **they mourn, weep, fast, and cry out in distress (Esther 4:1–3)**. Mordecai tears his clothes and sits in sackcloth and ashes, a public act of lament deeply rooted in Old Testament tradition.

**Lament**, often misunderstood or neglected in modern worship, is a vital spiritual discipline. It allows believers to pour out sorrow before God without pretense. Southern Baptist teaching affirms that lament is not a sign of weak faith but a bold expression of **trust that God hears, sees, and responds** (Psalm 34:18).

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” — *Psalm 50:15*

Just like Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35), God welcomes our tears. Esther 4 reminds us that crying out to God is not only biblical—it is essential.

#### God’s Sovereignty: Trusting the Unseen Hand of Providence

Though God’s name is never explicitly mentioned in the Book of Esther, His **sovereign fingerprints** are everywhere—especially in Chapter 4. Mordecai’s words to Esther are a defining moment of theological clarity:

“Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” — *Esther 4:14*

Mordecai trusts that **God will deliver His people**, even if Esther remains silent. This confidence reflects a deep belief in God’s **unchanging character and covenant faithfulness**—a belief Southern Baptists wholeheartedly embrace.

Southern Baptist doctrine teaches that **God is sovereign over all things**, including human history, political events, and individual decisions. We may not always understand His timing, but we are called to **rest in His providential care**(Romans 8:28).

#### Communal Prayer and Fasting: The Strength of Spiritual Unity

When Esther decides to respond to Mordecai's plea, she doesn't act alone. She tells him to gather the Jews of Susa to fast on her behalf, and she and her maidservants do the same (Esther 4:16). This is not solitary religion—it's **corporate intercession**.

In Southern Baptist life, the local church is central to discipleship, worship, and spiritual support. Esther 4 affirms this principle: **there is power in unified prayer**. As sisters in Christ, we are called to carry one another's burdens, intercede for each other, and lift up our voices together before the throne of grace (Galatians 6:2; Acts 12:5).

"For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them." — *Matthew 18:20*

#### Faith in the Face of Fear: Courageous Obedience

Perhaps the most moving moment of this chapter comes in Esther's final resolve: "I will go to the king... and if I perish, I perish." — *Esther 4:16*

This is not a reckless statement—it is the voice of **faith-filled courage**. Esther knows the risks. She understands the consequences. But she chooses to obey anyway, trusting that her life is in God's hands.

Southern Baptist theology champions this kind of bold, obedient faith. It echoes the courage of Daniel in the lions' den, the apostles before the Sanhedrin, and ultimately, Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42).

Faith isn't the absence of fear—it's the choice to follow God **in spite of fear**.

## Discussion Questions

1. How does the practice of lament appear in your spiritual life? Have you ever felt the freedom to express grief or sorrow before God? Why or why not?
2. What does Mordecai's statement in Esther 4:14 teach us about God's sovereignty in difficult circumstances?
3. How does Esther's call for communal fasting and prayer challenge our view of Christian community? How might your church or women's group live this out today?
4. Think about Esther's words, "If I perish, I perish." Have you ever had a moment where obedience required personal risk or sacrifice? What was the outcome?

## Application Questions

1. In your current season of life, where might God be calling you to step out in faith—even when you don't feel fully prepared or safe?
2. Are there situations in your community, family, or workplace where collective prayer could bring spiritual breakthrough? How can you lead or initiate that kind of prayer effort?
3. How can you grow in your trust in God's providence, even when His plan seems hidden or delayed? What Scriptures help you anchor that trust?
4. Consider making fasting a part of your spiritual rhythm. What would it look like for you to set aside time to fast and pray over a burden or decision?

## Prayer Points

- **Pray for trust** in God's sovereignty, even when His hand seems hidden.
- **Pray for boldness** to obey God's calling, even when it's risky or uncomfortable.
- **Pray for spiritual unity** within your church or study group as you intercede together.
- **Pray for comfort and healing** for those in seasons of grief or lament, that they would sense God's presence.

Esther 4 reminds us that even in our darkest hour, **God is not absent—He is active.** Through lament, fasting, courage, and obedience, His people participate in His redemptive plan. Like Esther, may we each be found faithful in "such a time as this."

## **WEEK SIX**

### **Day One**

Read Esther 5:1-14. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application:

## Day Two

Read Esther 5:1-8

### ENTERING THE KING'S PRESENCE

After three long days of fasting, prayer, and seeking the Lord, Esther stands at a critical moment. No doubt she is physically weak, but spiritually strengthened. She doesn't delay—she rises with purpose, dresses in her **royal robes**, and makes her way toward the king's throne room.

Until now, Esther has often gone with the flow, doing what others expected of her. But something changes in her here. This is no longer the passive young girl swept up into palace life. This is a **woman empowered by prayer, clothed in courage, and ready to act**.

Standing in the inner court, facing King Ahasuerus on his throne, Esther waits. This is the moment—will he raise the golden scepter or call for her execution?

He lifts the scepter. Grace is extended. Her life is spared. And in a small but significant gesture, Esther touches the scepter, a symbol that she acknowledges his authority, yet she does so dressed as **his queen**—not a servant or concubine. This is **royalty meeting royalty**, and Esther is making a bold statement even before she speaks: *I belong here, and I have something important to say*.

The king greets her warmly, even offering to grant her *anything she desires*—up to half his kingdom! If there was ever a moment to make her plea and expose Haman's evil plan, this was it. But Esther doesn't seize the moment recklessly. Instead, she **invites the king and Haman to a feast**.

Why wait? Because Esther is **wise**. She knows her husband. He can be impulsive, easily swayed, and politically cautious. If she drops this life-or-death request in public, without preparation, she could lose her only chance. Instead, she **builds trust**, softens the moment, and creates space for a more meaningful—and effective—conversation.

At the feast, the king again asks what she desires. Esther responds with another invitation—for a second feast the next day. Clearly, she's setting the stage carefully, prayerfully, and with discernment. Esther is **not just brave; she's strategic**.

## Discussion Questions

1. What emotions do you imagine Esther was feeling as she prepared to enter the king's court? How do you think her time in fasting and prayer shaped her mindset?
2. Why do you think Esther chose to wear her royal robes? What message was she trying to convey—not just to the king, but to herself?
3. How does Esther show wisdom in her timing and words? What might have happened if she had rushed to reveal everything too soon?
4. Can you think of a time in your own life when you had to wait for the right moment to speak or act? What did you learn from that experience?

## Application Questions

1. Are there areas in your life where you need to stop reacting impulsively and instead wait on God's timing? How can prayer and fasting help you discern when to act?
2. Esther stepped into a terrifying situation dressed in confidence and faith. What does it look like for you to "put on your royal robes" when facing a difficult moment?
3. God used Esther's position, wisdom, and courage to accomplish His purposes. What positions or opportunities has God given you right now—and how might He be calling you to use them for His glory?
4. If you're in a season of preparation—waiting for the right moment to speak or act—how can you stay faithful in the meantime?

Esther's courage wasn't just about standing before a king—it was about **trusting the King of Kings**. Her story reminds us that even in fear, **faith can move us forward**. Whether we're stepping into a meeting, a conversation, or a moment of decision, we can do so knowing we're not alone. **God goes before us**, and His timing is always perfect.

## Day Three

Read Esther 5:9-14.

### PRIDE, INFLUENCE, AND THE HIDDEN HAND OF GOD

Haman walks out of Esther's banquet feeling like royalty. He's just shared a private feast with the king and queen—no one else was invited. In his mind, he's climbing the social ladder of the empire. He feels powerful. Important. Untouchable. But then he sees Mordecai.

The same Mordecai who refuses to bow. The same man who sits calmly at the gate, unmoved by Haman's title or ego. And in an instant, Haman's delight turns to rage. It's stunning how fragile his joy is—how easily his pride is pierced. Instead of confronting Mordecai on the spot, he storms home, stewing in resentment.

At home, Haman gathers his wife and closest friends. But he doesn't seek counsel or wisdom—he wants to brag. He boasts about his riches, his many sons, his promotions, and his special invitation from Queen Esther. Yet with all of that, he says this in verse 13: “Yet all this is worth nothing to me so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.”

It's a startling confession. **Haman's entire identity is wrapped up in how others perceive him**, especially someone he considers beneath him. This is pride in its rawest form—obsessive, fragile, and destructive.

Zeresh, his wife, hears his complaints and offers a chilling solution: “Why wait? Build gallows 75 feet high and ask the king tomorrow to have Mordecai hanged on it.”

Her plan is extreme and brutal. But Haman loves the idea. He wants to make Mordecai a public spectacle, a warning to anyone who might dare defy him. So he sets the plan in motion, convinced he's in control.

But **God is still writing this story**—and He's about to reverse the plot.

Even though God's name isn't mentioned in this chapter, His hand is quietly at work. Each character plays a role that sets the stage for what's to come:

- **Esther:** Begins to step confidently into her royal calling.
- **King Ahasuerus:** Passive, easily influenced, yet providentially open to Esther's presence.
- **Haman:** Driven by pride and rage, unknowingly paving the way for his downfall.
- **Zeresh:** Encourages wickedness and furthers God's plan through her misguided counsel.



## Discussion Questions

1. What triggers Haman's shift from joy to rage in verse 9? Why do you think Mordecai's actions affected him so deeply?
2. How does Haman's speech to his family (verses 10–13) reveal what truly matters to him? What do we learn about his heart and identity?
3. Read the following Proverbs. What insights do they give into Haman's behavior?
  - Proverbs 14:29 – *"Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly."*
  - Proverbs 29:10 – *"Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright."*
  - Proverbs 29:11 – *"A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back."*
4. What role does Zeresh play in Haman's decision-making? How does her counsel compare to what Scripture says about godly encouragement?

## Application Questions

1. How has your identity in Christ shaped the way you respond to pride, rejection, or being overlooked? What helps you stay grounded in your true worth?
2. We all have influence—in our homes, churches, friendships, and workplaces. How are you using that influence? Are you building others up or allowing bitterness, pride, or jealousy to shape your words?
3. Can you think of a time when you were tempted to “vent” or respond out of wounded pride? What could have changed if you had paused to pray or seek godly counsel first?
4. Haman's story warns us of pride unchecked. How can you actively guard your heart against the destructive power of pride this week? What spiritual disciplines help keep pride in check?

Haman thought he was in control. He had the power, the position, and the plan. But God had something else in store. **While pride plots, God prevails.** Esther's quiet courage and Haman's loud ego are on a collision course—but only one will stand. Let this chapter remind you that even when God seems silent, **He is never absent.**

## **Day Four**

Read Esther 6. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application:

## Day Five

Read Esther 6:1-3.

### A SLEEPLESS NIGHT AND A SOVEREIGN GOD

Have you ever laid in bed, wide-eyed, heart stirring, mind racing, and wondered why you just couldn't sleep? That's where we find King Ahasuerus—restless, awake, and probably frustrated. Was it the feast? The wine? Maybe. But there's more going on here than a case of indigestion.

The truth is, **God was stirring the heart of a king**, and that one sleepless night becomes the hinge on which the entire story of Esther turns. While the king tosses and turns, Queen Esther's mysterious request lingers in his mind. She had risked everything to approach him, yet asked only for his company at a feast—and then another one. Why? What was she really after?

Unable to sleep and unable to shake his thoughts, the king does what many of us might do—he reaches for a book. But not just any book. He calls for the *book of memorable deeds*, the royal records chronicling notable acts and faithful service within the empire.

And as a servant reads aloud from the archives, the king hears something that stuns him: a forgotten story about **Mordecai**, the very man who saved his life from an assassination plot years earlier. Yet, somehow, no reward had ever been given. That's a dangerous oversight in the Persian court. Honoring loyal subjects was a crucial part of maintaining power and allegiance. It was how kings kept their thrones.

But this “accidental” discovery? It was no accident. **It was divine providence.**

God was working behind the scenes, orchestrating every detail—even insomnia and dusty scrolls—to fulfill His plan.

Consider how the following Scriptures affirm that **God works through the details of life**, even ones that feel random or insignificant:

- **Psalms 139:15–16** – God knows the hidden parts of us and has written every one of our days before they come to be.
- **Proverbs 16:1 & 16:9** – Humans make plans, but God directs every step.
- **Proverbs 19:21** – We may have many ideas, but God's purposes prevail.
- **Proverbs 20:24** – A person's steps are directed by the Lord.
- **Proverbs 21:1** – A king's heart is in God's hand, like a stream of water He channels wherever He wills.
- **Acts 17:24–28** – God determines the times and places of our lives, and in Him we live and move and have our being.
- **Romans 11:36** – All things are from Him, through Him, and to Him.
- **Colossians 1:16** – All things were created through Christ and for Him—even the sleepless moments of kings and queens.

This chapter is a clear reminder that **God is never absent**, even when His name isn't mentioned. The king's insomnia and the reading of an old record are not coincidences; they are pieces of a larger, divine tapestry. At just the right moment, God brings Mordecai's forgotten loyalty to light, setting in motion a reversal of power that will ultimately protect the Jewish people.

God often uses what seems random to accomplish His will. A sleepless night. A forgotten act. An unplanned conversation. These things are not wasted—they are opportunities for God to work.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God chose to work through something as simple as the king's insomnia to advance His plan? What does that say about how God works in our lives?
2. How does the king's discovery about Mordecai serve as a turning point in the book of Esther? Why is it significant that Mordecai had not yet been honored?
3. Which of the Scriptures about God's sovereignty stood out to you most? Why?
4. How does this passage challenge the idea that God only works through "big" or dramatic events?

## Application Questions

1. Think of a time when something seemingly small—an interruption, a delay, or a conversation—ended up being significant in your life. How might God have used it for His purposes?
2. When you're in a season where God seems silent or slow to act, how can remembering His providence help you persevere in faith?
3. What "ordinary" areas of your life—your routine, your work, your relationships—might God be using to accomplish His will?
4. If God truly works through all things, how might that change your attitude toward waiting, disappointment, or frustration?

You may never be queen. You may never save a nation. But your prayers, your steps, even your sleepless nights are seen and shaped by the God who rules over kings and kingdoms. Just like Esther, just like Mordecai—you are part of God's greater plan. Trust Him with the timing.

## WEEK SEVEN

### Day One

Read Esther 6:4-11.

#### A ROYAL IRONY UNFOLDS

As dawn breaks in the palace, the sleepless king is already plotting his next move. Having just discovered that Mordecai was never rewarded for saving his life, King Ahasuerus wants to make things right immediately. He looks around for help—someone to suggest how best to honor a man the king delights in.

Just then, Haman walks into the outer court. Talk about timing! Haman had come to ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows he built the night before. But before he can say a word, the king calls him in and asks a question that fills Haman with pride: *What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?*

Haman's ego kicks in. Who else could the king possibly mean but him? So, he describes an extravagant display of public honor—a royal robe, a horse from the king's stables, and a noble official parading the man through the city streets shouting, *This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!*

But in a twist soaked in irony, the king replies: *Hurry. Take the robe and the horse... and do so to Mordecai the Jew!*

Humiliation replaces pride in an instant. Haman, the man who wanted Mordecai dead, now leads the parade honoring him. It's one of Scripture's greatest reversals—a proud man brought low and a faithful man exalted.

In the Westminster Larger Catechism, God's providence is defined as: *His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all His creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to His own glory.*

That's exactly what we see here. God is silently but sovereignly working through timing, conversations, sleepless nights, and fragile egos to accomplish His will.

The parade ends. Mordecai humbly returns to his duties at the king's gate—unchanged by the praise, content to be faithful. Haman rushes home, utterly humiliated. Let's trace Haman's rapid descent through the story:

- **Esther 5:4–5** – He hurries to Esther's private banquet, riding high on his pride.
- **Esther 6:10** – He hurries to honor Mordecai, commanded by the king.
- **Esther 6:12** – He rushes home in grief and shame.
- **Esther 6:14** – He is hastily taken to the next banquet, still unaware of what awaits.

The pace of Haman's life is frantic. He's no longer in control. Each step draws him closer to judgment. At home, his wife and friends see the writing on the wall: *"If Mordecai is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him."* They sense that Haman has already lost. God's protection over His people is now undeniable.

At the beginning of this chapter, Haman strides confidently into the court. By the end, he is hurried along by others, no longer the master of his own plans. Pride has turned to panic, and he is on a collision course with justice.

### Discussion Questions

1. Where do you see God's providence at work in this passage? What small details show His hand guiding the outcome?
2. What does Haman's inflated sense of self tell us about the dangers of pride? How does his proposed plan to honor the "mystery man" reveal his heart?
3. Why is it significant that Haman had to personally honor Mordecai, the man he despised? What do you think this did to his heart?
4. What is the author communicating through Haman's hurried actions and escalating panic? What warning is there for us in that?
5. How does Mordecai respond to being honored? What does this teach us about humility and faithfulness?

### Application Questions

1. Have you ever experienced a situation where someone else received recognition or blessing and you felt overlooked or even jealous? How does this passage challenge your response?
2. Can you look back on a situation that didn't go according to your plan, but in hindsight you can clearly see God was orchestrating something greater? Share how it shaped your trust in Him.
3. Are there any areas in your life where pride might be quietly growing? How can you cultivate humility and surrender those to God?
4. In what ways can you seek to honor others—especially those who serve quietly or go unrecognized?
5. How do your actions and words at work, at home, or in your community influence others' view of God? What testimony are you offering by how you live?

This chapter reminds us that **God is never absent**—even when He is silent. He lifts the humble, brings down the proud, and works all things according to His perfect plan. You may not always understand His timing, but you can trust His heart. Like Mordecai, keep walking faithfully. The story isn't over yet.

## **Day Two**

Read Esther 7. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application:



## Day Three

Read Esther 7:1-10.

### THE TRUTH COMES OUT

The second feast is coming to a close. The food has been enjoyed, the wine poured freely, and the conversation light—at least for now. Haman, still unaware of what’s about to happen, is likely feeling confident again. Maybe Esther’s favor isn’t just for the king?

But the tension thickens as King Ahasuerus leans in once more, eager to know what his queen really wants. “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you—even up to half the kingdom.”

Esther can delay no longer. The moment she’s been fasting and praying for is finally here. She takes a deep breath and speaks with a mix of humility and boldness: “If I have found favor with you, spare my life—and the lives of my people.”

The king is stunned.

In just a few words, Esther reveals the horror of Haman’s plot. She names herself as one of the condemned, a Jew. She unmasks Haman’s bribe, calling it what it is: the selling of innocent lives. Her words are careful, appealing both to justice and to the king’s self-interest. She doesn’t accuse Haman by name—at least not yet—but the trap is set.

Then, in verse 6, she drops the name: “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!”

The king, now sober with fury, rises in disbelief. Haman, frozen with fear, realizes his world is crashing down.

King Ahasuerus storms out into the palace garden to clear his head. He’s been manipulated, and now he’s reeling from the weight of what he has allowed.

Haman is trapped. Cultural law forbids him from being alone with the queen, but running would look like an admission of guilt. So he falls at Esther’s feet to plead for his life—just as the king returns.

The king sees Haman in a position that looks compromising and assumes the worst. “Will he even assault the queen in my own house?” he roars. It’s the final nail in Haman’s coffin.

Immediately, the guards cover Haman’s face—a sign of condemnation. Then Harbona, one of the king’s trusted eunuchs, speaks up: “There’s a gallows standing at Haman’s house—75 feet tall—the one he built for Mordecai.”

The king, enraged, orders Haman to be hanged on the very gallows he had built for his enemy.

What poetic justice. What a reversal.

What's more, the king's fury—burning only moments before—subsides. But this isn't the end of the story. Esther has saved her own life and exposed the villain, but the decree still stands. The danger to God's people remains. The battle is not yet over.

The gallows that brought judgment on Haman remind us of another “lifting up”—the cross of Christ. But while Haman was guilty and condemned, Jesus was innocent and sacrificed. One died to destroy; the other died to save.

Paul reminds us in **1 Thessalonians 5:9–10**: *God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Esther's courage revealed the enemy. Christ's courage on the cross defeated the enemy forever.

## Discussion Questions

1. What do Esther's words in verses 3–4 reveal about her heart, her courage, and her wisdom? How does she balance humility with boldness?
2. What elements of Esther's appeal seem carefully tailored to catch the king's attention and appeal to his personal interests?
3. Why do you think the king becomes so outraged so quickly, even though he approved the original edict? What does this show about his character—or lack of awareness?
4. How do Haman's final moments reflect his earlier actions in the story? What is the significance of him being condemned by the very gallows he built?
5. What role does Harbona play in this moment, and what does his comment reveal about how others in the palace viewed Haman and Mordecai?

## Application Questions

1. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where speaking the truth required courage? What gave you strength in that moment?
2. Are there areas in your life where you've seen God bring justice or "reverse the story" in unexpected ways? How did it affect your faith?
3. Esther waited for the right moment to speak. How can we develop the wisdom and discernment to know when—and how—to speak hard truths?
4. Like Haman, pride can blind us to reality and bring destruction. Are there places in your life where unchecked pride might be lurking?
5. Even though Haman is gone, his edict still threatens the Jews. What situations in your life feel like the danger still remains even after a breakthrough? How can you continue trusting God when the battle isn't fully over yet?

Consider what the following passages reveal about God's rule over kings, nations, and every twist in your story:

- **Deuteronomy 32:39** – "There is no god besides me... I put to death and I bring to life."
- **Job 42:1–2** – "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted."
- **Psalms 75:6–7** – "It is God who judges: He brings one down, He exalts another."
- **Daniel 2:20–22** – "He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others."
- **Romans 13:1** – "There is no authority except that which God has established."

Esther stood at great personal risk to uncover evil and intercede for her people. Jesus stood in our place to defeat evil and secure eternal salvation. Her courage saved lives. His sacrifice saves souls.

Let us live with Esther's courage and Christ's humility—knowing God is always at work, even in what seems like the darkest hour.

## Day Four

### ESTHER'S WISDOM IN ACTION

Take a moment to reflect on Esther's bold plan to unmask Haman. She didn't rush. She didn't let fear lead. Instead, she waited, prayed, planned, and acted with intention. She didn't barge into the throne room with accusations. She invited the king and Haman to not just one, but two private banquets. Why?

Because Esther understood people—especially the king. She knew how to speak in a way that would be heard. Her patience wasn't passivity—it was purposeful. At just the right time, with just the right words, she revealed the truth in a way the king couldn't ignore.

There's a quiet, womanly wisdom in her approach. She shows us how strength and grace can coexist. Esther teaches us that sometimes the most powerful move is not shouting the truth, but waiting for the right moment to deliver it.

**What about you?** When life feels out of control—when you're facing crisis or crying out for help—do you rush ahead, or do you pause and seek God first like Esther did?

Haman never saw it coming. So sure of himself, so wrapped up in his own ego, he walked right into his own downfall. Pride had made him blind—to others, to danger, and even to his own limitations.

And that's the thing about pride—it distorts our vision. It whispers that we deserve more, that we're better than others, that nothing bad could possibly happen to us. But pride is a trap, and Scripture makes clear that it always leads to a fall.

Haman's story is tragic, but it's also a mirror. It challenges us to look inward. Where might pride be creeping into our own hearts? Is it in the way we seek recognition? In how we compare ourselves to others? In our resistance to correction or change?

Thankfully, God gives us a better way. **1 Peter 5:5–8** reminds us, “Clothe yourselves with humility... Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time. Cast all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.”

Humility begins with surrender. It's trusting God with the timing. It's releasing our fears, our need to control, and even our reputation, into His hands.

## Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you about the way Esther revealed the truth? Where do you see God's wisdom at work in her approach?
2. When facing personal crisis, do you tend to act quickly or wait prayerfully? How do you discern the right timing?
3. What does Esther's patience teach us about faith in God's unseen hand?
4. In what ways do you struggle with pride? How can we recognize it in ourselves before it takes root?
5. According to 1 Peter 5:5–8, what are the steps we can take to cultivate humility?
6. What are some practical ways you've learned to "cast your anxieties on Him"? What difference has it made?

## Consider

- Where in your life do you need Esther's kind of wisdom right now?
- Ask God to give you the courage to wait, the strength to speak when the time is right, and the humility to trust Him with the outcome.

***Lord,***

Help me to walk like Esther—with courage clothed in grace. Guard my heart from pride. Teach me to wait on You and trust that You are always at work, even when I can't see it. Give me the wisdom to speak when the time is right, and the humility to listen before I do.

***Amen.***

## Day Five

Read Esther Chapter 8.

### WHEN GOD TURNS THE TABLES

Sometimes, life feels like it's spiraling out of control. The wicked seem to win, the faithful are silenced, and we wonder where God is in the chaos. But *Esther 7 and 8* remind us of a powerful truth: **God is always at work—even when He seems silent.**

In Esther 7, the moment of truth arrives. Esther steps forward in courage, reveals her identity as a Jew, and boldly exposes Haman's wicked scheme. The king, stunned and furious, orders Haman's execution on the very gallows he built for Mordecai. By Esther 8, the tables have completely turned. Haman is gone, Mordecai is honored, and a new decree is issued—one that allows the Jews to fight back and survive.

This isn't just a good plot twist. It's **the providence of God** on full display.

It's easy to forget in the middle of our trials that God has a plan—even when we can't see it. For months, it looked like evil was winning. Haman's decree hung over the Jews like a death sentence. But just when it seemed too late, God moved.

Christians believe that **God's sovereignty means nothing is outside His control.** Even when He seems quiet, He's weaving together the pieces of His perfect plan. Esther didn't know how it would all turn out, but she chose to trust God—and He used her obedience to bring deliverance.

Esther's bravery didn't come from confidence in herself—it came from trusting God. Her decision to speak up could have cost her life. But instead of shrinking back, she stepped forward in faith, risking everything to stand for her people.

This is the kind of courage orthodox Christians have historically emphasized: **bold, obedient faith that speaks truth, even when it's hard.** Like Esther, we're called to be faithful in the places God has placed us—to shine the light of Christ, to speak up for what's right, and to intercede for others with boldness and grace.

What Haman meant for evil, God reversed for good. The very gallows Haman built for Mordecai became the instrument of his own downfall (Esther 7:10). It's a biblical principle seen throughout Scripture and captured in **Proverbs 26:27**: "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it."

Esther 8 shows not just justice, but **redemption**—a complete reversal of what was meant to destroy God's people. Southern Baptists view this as a reminder that **God can redeem even the darkest moments.** No situation is too far gone for Him to turn around.

In Esther 8, a second decree is sent out with urgency. The Jews must be ready to defend themselves. This echoes a deeper spiritual urgency—the need to proclaim **salvation through Christ**. Just as Esther and Mordecai acted quickly to save lives, Southern Baptists believe we too must live with urgency, **sharing the good news of Jesus before it's too late**.

Esther's story is a testimony to **faithful obedience and total dependence on God**. She fasted, she waited, she sought counsel, and she followed through. Southern Baptists see in her an example of how believers should walk—in step with God's Word, prayerful, and completely reliant on Him.

### Discussion Questions

1. Where do you see God's sovereignty most clearly in Esther 7–8? How does this encourage you when your life feels uncertain or out of control?
2. Esther waited and chose her moment carefully. How can we learn to trust God's timing instead of rushing ahead or giving up?
3. What does Esther's courage teach us about speaking up for what is right, even when we feel afraid?
4. Can you think of a time in your life when God turned a painful or hopeless situation around for His glory?
5. How does the second decree (Esther 8:11–14) remind you of the urgency to share the Gospel?
6. In what areas of your life do you struggle to trust or obey God fully? What would it look like to walk in faith like Esther?

### Personal Application

- **Boldness:** Ask yourself—where is God calling me to speak up, stand firm, or step out in faith?
- **Obedience:** Are you walking in obedience, even when the outcome is uncertain?
- **Trust:** Do you trust that God is working behind the scenes—even when you can't see it?
- **Urgency:** Who in your life needs to hear the Gospel? What would it look like to respond with urgency and love?

*Lord, help us be women of courage like Esther—wise, bold, and faithful. Teach us to trust Your timing and believe that You are always working, even in the dark moments. Use our lives to bring light to others and proclaim the saving power of the Gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## **WEEK EIGHT**

### **Day One**

Read Esther 8. Work through the text inductively.

Observation Notes:

Interpretation:

Application:



## Day Two

Read Esther 8:7-17.

### THE BATTLE ISN'T OVER YET

You'd think, with Haman dead and his estate handed over to Esther, the story would be over. But not for Queen Esther. Her enemy may be gone, but **his evil plan is still alive**. His decree—the one that called for the destruction of the Jewish people—is still scheduled to go into effect. And Esther *cannot rest* knowing that danger still hangs over her people like a storm cloud. Esther wisely refers to Haman as “the Agagite”—a descendant of the ancient enemies of Israel, the **Amalekites**, who had opposed God's people for centuries (see Exodus 17:14). Though the king probably didn't grasp the weight of this detail, Esther knew she was confronting a spiritual battle, not just a political one.

Meanwhile, King Ahasuerus seems tired of it all. He likes Esther, maybe even loves her. But her pleas have stirred up a lot of royal drama. “I gave you Haman's house,” he essentially says. “He's gone. What more do you want?” (Esther 8:7). His frustration shows—and he's trying to spin the story. Notice how he says Haman was hanged *because he planned to harm the Jews*. But when we look back at chapter 7, we see the truth: the king acted because **Esther** was threatened—not because he cared deeply for the Jewish people.

Here's where the story turns again. The king can't *undo* the first law (that would make him look weak), but he can issue a **new** one. And this time, Mordecai—now promoted as the king's trusted advisor—is the one who gets to write it. This new decree flips the script. It says that on the very day Haman's edict was set to go into effect, the Jews can defend themselves. They're not left to be slaughtered—they're empowered to **stand strong** and fight back.

Think of what this meant for God's people, who had already begun facing threats and mockery. Jewish men and women had to listen to enemies boast, “I'll take your house,” or even worse, “I'll take your life.” Persecution had already begun, and fear was thick in the air. But now? **Hope arrives on horseback.**

Letters from Mordecai—sealed with the king's own signet ring—go out swiftly. Mounted messengers deliver the news far and wide. The Jews are not forgotten. They are not helpless. And most importantly: **God is at work behind the scenes.**

Let's take a closer look at the contrast between **Haman's edict** and **Mordecai's new decree**. At first glance, they follow a similar structure—both are written by royal scribes, translated into every language across the empire, and sealed with the king's signet ring. But the purposes behind them couldn't be more different. Haman's decree was filled with death, calling for the annihilation of every Jewish man, woman, and child, and encouraging the plundering of their possessions. It was a message of destruction and dread, and the city of Susa was thrown into confusion when it was announced.

Mordecai's edict, on the other hand, was a message of deliverance. Though it mirrored the administrative process, its content was redemptive. It gave the Jews the legal right to defend themselves against any who would attack them. Not only that, but Mordecai made sure the Jews were specifically addressed in their own language—a sign that this was a decree *for them*, not just about them. Where Haman had celebrated with the king over a plan of violence, Mordecai's decree brought joy and public relief. Confusion turned to celebration, and despair was replaced by honor and hope. It's a powerful reminder that even when evil has a head start, **God's justice always has the final word.**

The chapter closes on a beautiful, almost cinematic note: **Mordecai walks out in royal robes**, a sign of God's favor and faithfulness. The man who once wept outside the palace is now **honored within it.**

The Jewish people across the empire break into celebration. **Joy, gladness, honor, and feasting** replace their mourning and fear. The author even notes that many Persians began to align themselves with the Jews—perhaps out of respect, perhaps out of fear, but certainly because **God's people were now clearly under His protection.**

This moment is a powerful reversal:

- Chapter 3 ends with confusion. Chapter 8 ends with celebration.
- Chapter 4 begins with sackcloth and sorrow. Chapter 8 ends with joy and strength.
- Where there was a death sentence, now there is hope.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Esther emphasized that Haman was an “Agagite”? What spiritual significance does that hold?
2. How do you see King Ahasuerus trying to shift blame or spin the story? Why is that important to notice?
3. What stands out to you most in the contrast between Haman’s decree and Mordecai’s?
4. How does God’s providence show up in the details of this story—even though His name is never mentioned?
5. How would you describe the *emotional shift* that takes place from the beginning of chapter 8 to the end?

## Application Questions

1. Have you ever faced a situation where the real enemy wasn’t a person—but a spiritual struggle underneath? How did you respond?
2. Are there areas in your life where you, like Esther, are being called to speak up, even when it’s difficult?
3. Mordecai’s new position allowed him to bless God’s people. What position, influence, or platform do you have right now that God may want to use?
4. How do you respond when you feel like joy is out of reach? What does this story teach us about trusting God in the waiting?
5. If God is always working behind the scenes—even when we don’t see Him—how does that impact the way you live today?

Esther’s courage and Mordecai’s wisdom didn’t just save a nation—they remind us that **God is never absent**, even when His name isn’t mentioned. He is working through ordinary people, in unlikely places, to accomplish His extraordinary plan. So even if the edict is still in place—even if the danger hasn’t passed yet—**trust that your Redeemer is at work.**

## Day Three

Read Rom 3:23; John 1:29; 1 Sam 2:8; Luke 1:52.

### GOD’S WAR IS AGAINST SIN

Let’s be honest—the **book of Esther is not for the faint of heart**. It doesn’t shy away from bloodshed, retribution, or hard truths. As we continue in Esther 9, we come face to face with intense violence, including the deaths of women and children. And that’s hard to swallow. It’s okay to sit in that discomfort. As modern readers—especially as women—it’s natural to wrestle with the pain in this story. But instead of glossing over it, let’s ask a deeper question: *What is God showing us through all this?*

Here’s the hard truth: **God is not soft on sin**. He never has been. And He never will be. In Mordecai’s edict, the Jews are allowed to defend themselves against anyone—man, woman, or child—who rises up to destroy them. It feels harsh, especially when we think about innocents getting caught in the crossfire. But this passage reminds us of a sobering reality: **Sin always leads to destruction**, and none of us is exempt.

Bible scholar Karen Jobes puts it this way: “From the beginning of time, God’s war has been against sin and evil.... We seem to want God to destroy sin and evil but leave people alone. However, sin and evil do not exist apart from beings who sin and beings who do evil.”

Let that settle in for a moment. We often want justice for *sin* without judgment for *sinners*. But Scripture teaches that **we are the ones infected by sin**—all of us (Romans 3:23). And without a Savior, we too stand under judgment.

That’s what makes the gospel so breathtaking. **Jesus came not to excuse sin but to take the punishment for it**. He stood in our place, bearing the full wrath of God for all the evil we’ve done, thought, or justified. When we read Esther and feel the weight of divine justice, we’re supposed to. It prepares our hearts to grasp the beauty of *mercy* and the cost of *grace*.

**Read John 1:29:** “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” That’s the gospel. Jesus doesn’t ignore sin—He *takes it away*.

Esther isn’t just a story about justice. It’s also a story of **astonishing reversals**. The Jews go from condemned to protected. Mordecai goes from sackcloth to royal robes. Esther goes from orphan to queen to intercessor for her people.

Behind every twist and turn is a **God who delights in flipping the script**.

You see this pattern all throughout Scripture. God exalts the humble and brings down the proud. He uses the weak to shame the strong. He lifts the lowly and gives them a seat at His table.

Think of **Hannah**, who prayed in bitter anguish and later rejoiced: “The Lord raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.” (1 Samuel 2:8)

Think of **Mary**, who sang in awe at what God had done: “He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.” (Luke 1:52)

Esther's story is your story too. **God still reverses broken situations. He still redeems what seems hopeless.**

#### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it's important that the Bible includes stories that are violent or uncomfortable?
2. What does Mordecai's edict teach us about how seriously God views sin?
3. Read John 1:29. How does this verse reshape your understanding of God's justice and mercy?
4. What are some examples of “great reversals” you've seen in your life or in someone else's?
5. How does seeing God's sovereignty in Esther help you trust Him in your own uncertainties?

#### Application Questions

1. Do you ever downplay or excuse your own sin? How might recognizing the horror of sin in Esther push you toward deeper repentance?
2. Take time this week to thank God for His mercy through Jesus. Consider writing a prayer or journaling a reflection based on John 1:29.
3. Is there an area in your life where you need to see God's reversing power? Pray boldly for His intervention and trust His timing.
4. Think of a moment in your past when God reversed your circumstances. Who might be encouraged to hear that story today?
5. Are you quick to extend grace to others, or do you secretly desire judgment? Ask the Lord to soften your heart with His mercy and make you a vessel of peace.

## Closing Prayer

### ***Heavenly Father,***

We come before You today with humbled hearts, awed by Your holiness and Your justice. The story of Esther reminds us that sin is not just a mistake—it is a deadly rebellion, and it breaks Your heart. And yet, You are not a distant judge, but a loving Redeemer who stepped into our brokenness through Jesus Christ.

Lord, help us not to turn away from the hard truths in Scripture. Let the sobering reality of sin awaken our hearts to the wonder of the gospel. Thank You for the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world—our sin. Thank You that Jesus bore the judgment we deserve, so that we could be free, forgiven, and made new.

You are the God of great reversals. When life feels stuck or dark, remind us that You still lift the lowly, You still rescue the humble, and You still bring hope to the hopeless. Just as You reversed the fate of Your people in Esther's day, we ask You to work powerfully in our lives today.

Strengthen our faith. Deepen our repentance. And fill us with courage like Esther, humility like Mordecai, and joy like the people who celebrated Your deliverance.

May our lives reflect Your grace, and may our hearts always be surrendered to Your will.

***In the mighty and merciful name of Jesus,***

***Amen.***

## **Day Four**

Read Esther 9:1-19. Work through Esther 9:1-19 inductively.

Notes from Observation of Esther 9:1-19:

Interpretation of Passage:

Application for Today:

## Day Five

Read Esther 9:1-10.

### TRUST GOD TO DELIVER

Have you ever faced a situation where everything seemed stacked against you—when fear whispered that all hope was lost? That’s exactly where God’s people stood in Esther 9. A deadly decree had gone out. Their enemies were ready. The day had come. But what happened next was nothing short of a miracle.

The first verse of chapter 9 is like a trumpet blast announcing God’s power to reverse the darkest situations:

*"On the very day their enemies had hoped to overpower them, the opposite happened."* (Esther 9:1)

God didn’t just *protect* His people—He gave them victory. Those who had prepared to destroy them were themselves defeated. How? Not because the Jews had the strongest army or clever strategy. The real power shift came when **God stepped in**.

Persian officials who once ignored the Jews now supported them. Why? Because Mordecai, a once-overlooked man of integrity, had been elevated by God Himself. His faithfulness inspired courage and turned the tide of favor toward God’s people. The Jews, armed by a new decree, were empowered to defend themselves—and they did so boldly, in line with the law crafted by Mordecai and Esther (see Esther 8:11

*Sometimes, God doesn’t remove the battle. He equips you for it.*

The battle reached Susa, the capital, and many enemies fell—including all ten of Haman’s sons. Their names are listed one by one, as if to say: “Their pride ends here. Their evil legacy stops now.” Haman had once boasted about his sons (Esther 5:11), but no amount of status or heritage could stand against the will of God.

Here’s the most surprising part: even though the Jews were **legally allowed to take plunder**, they **chose not to** (v. 10). Why? Because their victory wasn’t about revenge or reward—it was about **faithfulness**. They remembered the mistake of King Saul, who had disobeyed God by keeping plunder from the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). Haman himself was a descendant of that same enemy tribe. By refusing the spoils of war, the Jews were not just obeying the law—they were obeying *God*.

This wasn’t just a physical battle—it was a spiritual triumph.



## Discussion Questions

1. Esther 9:1 says “the reverse occurred.” What reversals have you seen in your own life where God clearly turned the tables?
2. How does Mordecai’s rise to influence show us that God can use ordinary people in extraordinary ways?
3. Why do you think the Jews chose not to take the plunder, even though it was allowed? What does that tell you about their priorities?
4. How does God’s justice in this chapter differ from worldly revenge?
5. What does this passage teach us about the importance of **obedience** and **spiritual legacy**?

## Application Questions

1. Are you currently facing a situation that feels like a battle? What would it look like to trust God for the “reverse”?
2. Are you more focused on *winning* the fight or *walking faithfully* through it?
3. How can you be like Mordecai—using your influence to stand for what is right, even when it's risky?
4. Is there any “plunder” in your life—temptations or shortcuts—you need to walk away from in order to honor God?
5. How can this story deepen your confidence that **God always keeps His promises**—even when we can't see what He’s doing?

The book of Esther reminds us that even when God’s name isn’t mentioned, **His fingerprints are everywhere**. He works in secret places, in whispered prayers, and in bold steps of obedience. He is always writing a story of redemption—for Esther, for her people, and for you.

## Closing Prayer

### ***Gracious and Sovereign Lord,***

We praise You today for being a God who keeps His promises. As we read Esther 9 and reflect on the dramatic reversals in this story, we see Your hand at work in powerful and sometimes uncomfortable ways. You are not distant from our battles—you are present, purposeful, and victorious.

Lord, the violence and judgment in this chapter are hard to read, and yet we know they reveal the seriousness of sin and the depth of Your justice. Help us not to turn away from the hard parts of Scripture, but to lean into them with hearts open to Your truth. Remind us that sin is not something to toy with—it leads to destruction. But in Your mercy, You have given us a way out through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

Thank You for the courage You gave Esther and Mordecai, and for the deliverance You brought to Your people. You are the God who turns sorrow into joy, weakness into strength, and defeat into victory. And we trust that You are still at work today, even when the battles seem fierce.

Father, awaken us to the spiritual battle we are in. Guard our hearts against complacency. Give us boldness to stand for what is right, compassion for those who are lost, and gratitude for the grace we've received.

As we study and apply Your Word, transform us to be women of wisdom, courage, and unwavering faith—just like the ones we've read about today.

***In Jesus' victorious name,***

**Amen.**

## WEEK NINE

### Day One

Read Esther 9:10-15.

#### REVERSALS, RESTRAINTS, AND RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

God's people had every legal right to take the possessions of their enemies after defending themselves. Mordecai's edict (Esther 8:11) made that clear. And yet—three times in chapter 9—we are told that **the Jews chose not to take any plunder** (Esther 9:10, 15, 16). The repetition of this detail is no accident. The author wants us to pause and take notice. Why?

This wasn't just a show of self-restraint; it was a **deliberate theological statement**. Centuries earlier, God had commanded King Saul to carry out judgment against the Amalekites—enemies of Israel known for their cruelty. Haman, the villain of Esther's story, was a descendant of those same Amalekites. But Saul disobeyed God. He kept the best plunder for himself (1 Samuel 15:1–23), and because of that rebellion, he lost his crown.

Now, generations later, we see a reversal. The Jews in Esther's time obeyed God in a way their former king did not. They **refused the plunder**, not out of weakness, but as a sign of honoring God's justice over personal gain. They weren't interested in revenge or riches—they were committed to righteousness.

While the streets of Susa are still echoing with the sounds of battle, King Ahasuerus makes an unusual move—he **initiates a conversation with Esther** about what more she desires. This is a turning point. In earlier chapters, Esther had to risk her life just to be heard. Now, the king comes to her, offering favor and open doors. Her influence has grown. Esther makes two bold requests:

1. That the Jews in Susa be granted **one more day to defend themselves**.
2. That **the bodies of Haman's ten sons**—already dead—be **hanged publicly** as a warning.

To some, these requests may seem harsh. Was Esther simply seeking vengeance? Or had she become hardened by power?

Perhaps. But a deeper read suggests something else: **wisdom and protection**. Esther's additional request for defense may have been based on genuine concern—knowing that not all threats were gone. And the display of Haman's sons may have been a necessary deterrent to would-be attackers. These were strategic, not vengeful, choices.

This part of the story isn't easy. **Violence is hard to read**, especially in Scripture. But God's justice has always included judgment against sin. In the Old Testament, "holy war" meant that sin had to be purged to protect God's covenant people. Today, under the New Covenant, we don't fight with swords. We fight with **truth, love, and the gospel**.

As Paul reminds us: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace...” (Romans 3:23–24)

Jesus is our victory. He bore the wrath we deserved, and He now calls us to fight spiritual battles in His name.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the author of Esther emphasized (three times!) that the Jews did **not** take any plunder?
2. Read 1 Samuel 15:1–23. How does the obedience of the Jews in Esther 9 contrast with Saul’s disobedience?
3. What does King Ahasuerus’s new openness toward Esther reveal about her growing influence?
4. Esther’s requests are controversial. Do you think her actions were motivated by wisdom, fear, or something else?
5. How do you respond emotionally to stories in Scripture that include violence and judgment? Why are they difficult?

#### Application Questions

1. Are there areas in your life where you’re tempted to take what’s permitted but not what’s right? How can the Jews’ restraint inspire you?
2. Do you sometimes excuse or downplay your own sin? How does the violence in Esther help you grasp the **seriousness of sin**?
3. Where in your life do you need to fight a **spiritual battle** today—not with anger or fear, but with **faith, prayer, and the Word**?
4. How does the idea of God’s “reversals” give you hope for areas where you feel defeated, ashamed, or stuck?
5. Consider Matthew 28:18–20 and Ephesians 6:10–18. How has the nature of God’s warfare changed in Christ—and how should we live as spiritual warriors today?

Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

Thank You for the truth of Your Word and for the story of Esther that reveals both Your justice and Your mercy. Today, as we reflect on difficult passages—ones filled with battle, judgment, and choices—we are reminded of the seriousness of sin and the beauty of obedience.

Lord, help us to be women who, like the Jews in Esther's day, choose righteousness over reward, obedience over opportunity, and faith over fear. Give us spiritual discernment and courage when the right path is not the easy one. Teach us to recognize Your hand in every reversal and Your sovereignty in every battle.

We thank You that through Jesus, the final battle has been won. In Him, we are justified, redeemed, and equipped to stand against evil—not with weapons of this world, but with truth, love, and faith. Strengthen us with the armor of God. Make us bold witnesses of Your gospel and humble servants of Your will.

As we go from this study, let Your Word take root in our hearts. Help us to live differently because of what we've seen today. May our lives reflect Your glory and point others to the hope we have in Christ.

*In the powerful name of Jesus we pray,*

*Amen.*

## Day Two

Read Esther 9:16-19.

### A FEAST OF REMEMBERING

As the dust settles from the intense days of battle, Esther 9 shifts focus to the broader Persian empire. Up until now, we've been following the events inside the capital city of Susa, but now we're told what took place throughout the provinces. The Jews were victorious not only in the city but also across the entire kingdom. They defended themselves against their enemies and gained rest from their foes.

However, there's a key difference in how these events unfolded between the city and the countryside. According to Mordecai's edict, the Jews were given one day—Adar 13—to defend themselves. And that's exactly what happened for those in the outlying regions. But in Susa, Esther had requested a second day of defense (see Esther 9:13). This means that the Jews in Susa fought on both Adar 13 and 14, while the rest of the Jews across Persia battled only on Adar 13. As a result, the Jews outside of Susa rested and celebrated on Adar 14, but those in Susa rested and celebrated a day later, on Adar 15.

This difference in battle and rest days explains why the Feast of Purim is celebrated on different days depending on where Jewish communities lived. Those in rural areas celebrate on the 14th of Adar, while those in cities like Susa celebrate on the 15th.

Once again, the book of Esther draws our attention to a feast. The story began with royal feasting in the palace and ends with a very different kind of celebration—a feast not of pride and excess, but of remembrance and joy. The Feast of Purim becomes a time of giving, rejoicing, and remembering the great deliverance God brought to His people. It's a beautiful picture of how God's people mark His faithfulness not with forgetfulness but with festivals of gratitude.

Let's take a closer look at the chronology of Esther. The events of Esther span about ten years, highlighting how God was at work through every detail. From the extravagant banquets in King Ahasuerus's third year (483 BC), to Esther's rise to queenhood in the seventh year (479 BC), and Haman's deadly plot conceived in the twelfth year (474 BC), we see divine timing. By the thirteenth year (473 BC), both the date for Jewish annihilation and their unexpected victory are set. God used the ordinary flow of time—banquets, edicts, political promotions—to fulfill His extraordinary plan. This reminds us that God works not just in miracles but in the slow, unfolding of time to accomplish His purposes.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the author of Esther gives so much detail about dates and timing? What does this teach us about God's hand in history?
2. How does the contrast between Susa and the provinces reflect God's attention to local and personal needs within the larger story?
3. What does the establishment of the Feast of Purim reveal about the importance of remembering God's deliverance?

## Application Questions

1. Are there events in your life where you now see God's hand more clearly in hindsight? How might you celebrate or remember His faithfulness?
2. How can you cultivate a rhythm of remembrance and rejoicing in your own spiritual life or home?
3. Do you struggle to see God's purpose in the mundane or in delayed answers to prayer? How does the timeline in Esther encourage you to trust His timing?

## Closing Prayer

***Dear Lord,***

Thank You for being a God who works in both the miraculous and the ordinary. Help us to remember that every detail of our lives—every delay, every decision, every season—is held in Your hands. Just as You turned mourning into joy for the Jews, teach us to trust You in every chapter of our story. May we be women who rejoice in Your deliverance, who celebrate Your faithfulness, and who pass down stories of Your goodness. Give us eyes to see Your providence and hearts that remember.

***In Jesus' name,***

***Amen.***

## Day Three

Read Esther 9:20-10:3.

### A LASTING LEGACY OF JOY

As we near the end of the book of Esther, we arrive at one of its central purposes: the establishment of the Feast of Purim. This joyful celebration arose from the Jews' overwhelming victory over their enemies in Persia, a triumph that was only possible because of God's providence and protection. It began with feasts held on different days: the Jews in the rural areas celebrated on the 14th of Adar, while those in the capital city of Susa celebrated on the 15th. What started as a spontaneous response of joy became a permanent fixture on the Jewish calendar—a reminder not just of survival, but of the faithfulness of God.

Mordecai, who by now is second in command in Persia, writes letters to the Jews throughout the empire, establishing Purim as an annual celebration. He directs the people to remember the great reversal they experienced: their sorrow turned into gladness, their mourning into rejoicing.

Each year on the 14th and 15th of Adar, the people were to commemorate how God rescued them from destruction. These days were to be marked not just by personal celebration, but by community action—feasting, sharing food with one another, and giving to the poor. This ensured that joy would overflow, blessing those around them, especially those in need. Southern Baptists resonate with this emphasis: our faith in Jesus calls us to celebrate God's goodness and extend His love to others through acts of generosity and service.

We are reminded again of how this crisis started: Haman, the enemy of the Jews, cast the lot (called “pur”) to determine the day of their annihilation. But the Lord overturned Haman's evil plot and brought judgment back on his own head. Verse 25 highlights this poetic justice. Psalm 7:12–16 deepens this truth—it is a sobering reminder that God sees every intention of the heart and ensures that the plans of the wicked do not prevail.

The use of “therefore” in verse 26 signals a shift: because of what happened, Purim must be celebrated. It's not just a cultural tradition; it's a spiritual act of remembrance. Psalm 16:5–6 reminds us that God is our portion and our cup—He is the source of our security and joy. Thus, even when we remember painful stories, we do so through the lens of God's provision and mercy.

The Jewish people willingly took on the responsibility to observe Purim each year. It became a sacred rhythm, just like their days of fasting and repentance. These moments marked their calendar with the fingerprints of God's grace.



Esther, alongside Mordecai, sends out a second letter to confirm the observance of Purim. This shows her ongoing leadership and influence in the Persian empire. Esther's name appears here for the last time in Scripture, and she is referred to as "Queen Esther," signifying her continued royal authority. Her place of influence wasn't just about politics—it was used for God's purposes.

Establishing Purim across the empire required coordination and clarity. If you've ever tried planning a wedding or large event, you know the importance of good communication! These letters unified the Jewish people, helping them mark the right days with the right focus.

The passage begins and ends with written records. This is not by accident. Writing it down made the celebration official and permanent. God's people wanted to remember—not just once, but every year—what He had done. As Southern Baptists, we too understand the importance of remembering and proclaiming what God has done. Our ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—are acts of remembrance that keep the gospel central in our hearts.

Purim continues to be a lively and joyful celebration among Jewish people around the world. Even today, families gather at the synagogue on the eve of Purim to hear the story of Esther read aloud. Children eagerly participate, armed with rattles (*graggers*) to drown out Haman's name each time it is mentioned.

The spirit of joy and generosity remains central to modern Purim celebrations. People wear costumes, share festive meals, give gifts of food to friends and neighbors, and provide for the poor. These practices reflect the very values that Mordecai and Esther established—rejoicing in God's deliverance and extending His kindness to others. As Christians, we see in this tradition a picture of how God's people can respond to His faithfulness with joyful worship and loving service.

## Discussion Questions

1. What reversals were the Jews instructed to remember during Purim? Why do you think this is important?
2. How does the idea of commemorating God's deliverance help you understand His faithfulness in your own life?
3. Why do you think Mordecai emphasized generosity—giving food and gifts to the poor—as part of the celebration?
4. What do the two letters (vv. 20 and 29) reveal about Esther and Mordecai's leadership?
5. How does Psalm 7 help you process the idea that Haman's plan "fell on his own head"? What does this say about God's justice?

## Application Questions

1. Reflect on a time when God turned a painful season in your life into something redemptive. How might you celebrate and share that testimony with others?
2. Purim includes generosity toward the poor. How can you cultivate a spirit of joy and giving in your family or church this week?
3. What are some ways you can regularly remember God's faithfulness—perhaps through journaling, prayer, or community celebration?
4. Mordecai and Esther used their positions for God's purposes. In what ways can you use your influence—at home, work, or church—for the good of others and the glory of God?
5. How does understanding that God works through both dramatic deliverance and everyday providence affect your trust in Him today?

## Closing Prayer

### *Heavenly Father,*

Thank You for the story of Esther—a powerful reminder that You are always working, even when Your name is not mentioned and Your hand is unseen. Thank You for the reversals we see in this story, and in our own lives, where sorrow turns to joy and fear into peace. Teach us to celebrate Your faithfulness—not just in grand events, but in daily moments. Help us be generous with what You've given us, extending joy and compassion to those around us. Use our influence, however great or small, for Your kingdom's purposes. And may we always remember that Christ is our ultimate deliverer—the One who rescues, redeems, and restores.

### *In His precious name we pray,*

*Amen.*

## **Day Four**

Read Esther 10. Work through Esther 10 inductively.

Notes from Observation:

Interpretation of Passage:

Application for Today:

## Day Five

Read Esther 10:1-3.

### A GREAT DELIVERER

As we come to the final lesson of Esther, the story closes not with dramatic action, but with an intentional look at leadership, legacy, and the providence of God. King Ahasuerus continues to rule over his expansive Persian empire. After a period of generosity, when he celebrated Queen Esther's rise to royalty (Esther 2:18), he now reinstates the empire's taxes. Though seemingly mundane, this detail reflects the king's ongoing authority and governance.

Directly beneath him in position, but arguably higher in moral influence, stands **Mordecai**. His rise to power is nothing short of miraculous—once a Jewish exile, now he is second in command of the empire. But what makes Mordecai truly great isn't just his title. The people of Persia deeply respect and love him because he **genuinely sought the good of his people and spoke peace** over them (Esther 10:3). He wasn't self-seeking or oppressive; he used his influence to advocate for the welfare of others.

This final note about Mordecai is not just an epilogue—it's a powerful theological conclusion. Mordecai, though a historical figure, also points beyond himself. He is a shadow of **someone greater: Jesus Christ**. Like Mordecai, Jesus came to seek the welfare of His people. But unlike Mordecai, Jesus didn't merely rise to power—He **laid down His life** for His people and spoke **eternal peace** into our souls.

That's why this ending isn't anticlimactic—it's climactic in a spiritual sense. Esther's story closes by connecting God's providence in Persia to the greater plan of redemption unfolding throughout Scripture. The exile of the Jews (the result of past sin) had not removed them from God's promises. On the contrary, God remained faithful. He turned their sorrow into joy, protected them from annihilation, and set a faithful servant in a place of honor.

This same God—**our God**—continues to reverse what is broken, fulfilling His promises in the most surprising and beautiful ways.

Let's look at how other parts of the Bible reflect the same powerful themes we've seen in Esther: **God's faithfulness, providence, justice, and deliverance**.

- **Luke 4:16–19** – Jesus reads from Isaiah, declaring that He has come to set the captives free and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Just as Mordecai and Esther secured freedom for the Jews, Christ offers eternal freedom for His people.
- **John 10:27–30** – Jesus, the Good Shepherd, promises that His sheep are secure in His hand. This reflects God's protective care over His people in Persia and over us today.
- **Romans 8:28–30** – God works **all things** for the good of those who love Him. Even the darkest moments in Esther's story were under God's sovereign control.

- **Ephesians 1:11–12** – We have an inheritance in Christ because of God’s sovereign plan. Mordecai’s promotion reminds us that God’s purposes always prevail.
- **Colossians 1:16–20** – Christ is supreme over all things, reconciling all creation to Himself. The peace Mordecai brought foreshadows the **greater reconciliation** we receive through Jesus.
- **Revelation 19:6–9** – This vision of the marriage supper of the Lamb reminds us that our story ends in **celebration**. The Feast of Purim was a shadow of the greater joy awaiting God’s people at the return of Christ.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why was Mordecai such a beloved and respected leader? What qualities made him stand out?
2. Who do you believe is the true hero of the Book of Esther—Esther, Mordecai, or God? Why?
3. The Feast of Purim commemorated relief and rest. Read Matthew 11:28–30. How does Christ offer you spiritual rest today?
4. How do you see the themes of Esther reflected in your own life? Have you experienced God turning situations around for good?
5. As you reflect on the ending of the book, what excites you most about seeing how God’s plan connects through all of Scripture?

### Big Picture Points

#### 1. The Big Story of the Bible:

Through Esther, we see that the Bible is not just a series of disconnected stories. It’s one grand narrative of **God redeeming His people**—through judgment and mercy, silence and speech, exile and restoration. God’s promises hold firm, even in the shadows.

#### 2. The Character of God:

God is **faithful**. He is **just**. He works behind the scenes in **providence**, even when He seems silent. And He never forgets His people. He is both **righteous Judge** and **merciful Redeemer**.

#### 3. Salvation in Jesus Christ:

Esther and Mordecai point to Jesus. He is the ultimate Deliverer, who doesn’t just save His people from death but gives them **eternal life**. Salvation is not earned by status, good deeds, or clever plans—it is **by grace**, through **faith in Jesus Christ**, who speaks peace to our hearts and brings rest to our souls.

## Closing Prayer

***Heavenly Father,***

Thank You for the story of Esther, a story that reminds us You are always at work, even when we cannot see or understand. Thank You for raising up people like Mordecai and Esther to preserve Your people—and thank You most of all for Jesus, our true Deliverer, who gives rest to the weary and peace to the troubled.

Help us to trust Your providence, knowing that You are faithful in every generation. Strengthen our hearts to follow You boldly like Esther, and to serve others humbly like Mordecai. May our lives reflect Your mercy, justice, and grace. And may we never stop celebrating the joy and freedom we have through Christ.

***In His holy name we pray,***

***Amen.***

## Reflection Questions

1. What have I learned about God's character through the Book of Esther?
2. What new insights have I gained about God's attributes, such as His faithfulness, kindness, and sovereignty?
3. How has this study deepened my understanding of God's love and grace?
4. Were there specific verses or moments that revealed God's nature in a fresh or powerful way?
5. How has this study encouraged me to worship God more fully and personally?
6. How has it impacted the way I view myself and my role in God's redemptive story?
7. What areas of my life is God challenging or inviting me to grow in light of what I've learned?
8. How can I apply the lessons of Esther—courage, humility, trust—to my everyday relationships and decisions?
9. What changes in attitude, speech, or actions might God be prompting in me as a result of this study?
10. How can I more effectively communicate what I've learned through my lifestyle and words?
11. What is the key message or personal takeaway from this study of Esther?