



This guide is provided to help facilitate a clear understanding of the Bible passage with a focus on applying God's truth to our lives as individuals and as a group. Therefore, spend at least half your time discussing questions that are application focused. While the guide has been bulked up, you still need to prepare by praying through the passage, reviewing the guide on your own, and thinking about how your group might answer questions and follow-up questions.

Summary of Esther

The book of Esther is set in Susa, Persia, 100 years after Israel's exile. Whilst some Jews had returned to Jerusalem, others chose to remain in Susa; of which Esther and Mordecai, the protagonists of the story, were amongst. Within this story, God seems completely absent - there is no mention of him, and no overt demonstration of his miraculous power. Further, Esther and Mordecai, are unlikely protagonists with their moral ambiguity representative of a people that have compromised their lives, and have abandoned God's law. Yet, in the midst of this seeming hopelessness, God is amazingly at work to fulfil his covenant promise. In an ironic reversal, God uses imperfect people, returning to faith in the midst of cultural oppression and persecution, to see his purposes fulfilled and his Kingdom come.

Introduction

This week's passage draws upon the previous strands of themes, and cumulates in the climax of the book of Esther. We firstly recall the sovereign act of God in the lives of Esther and Mordecai, even in the midst of a hostile culture where worldly and corrupted power is on display. Secondly, we see the faithfulness of Mordecai and Esther as they gradually resolved to identify with their people, trusting in the faithfulness of God in preserving His people. The narrative reaches the climax as we how God works through Esther's faithfulness in her identification with her people and pleading on their behalf. God eventually delivers his people from destruction, destroys their enemies and exalted them to better situation than previously.

Structure of passage

Esther 6:14-7:10:

- Esther hosts Xerxes and Haman
- Esther identifies with her people, pleading for their vindication and the identification of Haman as their antagonist
- The fall and death of Haman

Esther 8:1-17

- Haman's possessions are given to Mordercai and Esther

- At the king's permission, at the request of Mordecai and Esther, a new edict is decreed allowing the Jews to defend themselves against those trying to destroy them
- Mordecai celebrates the triumph over Haman
- The rejoicing of the Jewish people in Susa after witnessing the great reversal

Big idea of the text

God is sovereign. He foils human plans to protect his people. God preserves his people to ultimately bring to pass his redemptive plan in Christ.

What your CG must take away

For your group to be faithful to God wherever he has placed them, trusting that God uses us as he brings about his redemptive purposes.

Read Esther 6:14-7:10

6:14 While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.

7:1 So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. 2 And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." 3 Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. 4 For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king." 5 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?" 6 And Esther said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

7 And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king. 8 And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. 9 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.

1. How did Esther lay out her request for King Ahasuerus? What did it reveal about Esther's approach?
2. What was the king's response to Esther's request?
3. Why was Haman's plea for mercy not answered?
4. When have you seen justice take place in your own life or in the life of someone close to you? It could be either experiencing the consequences of sin, or vindication for righteousness.

Read Esther 8:1-17

¹ On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. ² And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

³ Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king. ⁵ And she said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. ⁶ For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?" ⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. ⁸ But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."

⁹ The king's scribes were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day. And an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews, to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language. ¹⁰ And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. Then he sent the letters by mounted couriers riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred from the royal stud, ¹¹ saying that the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods, ¹² on one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. ¹³ A copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies. ¹⁴ So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king's service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Susa the citadel.

¹⁵ Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. ¹⁶ The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. ¹⁷ And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.

5a. Why did Esther continue to plea before the king even after Haman was executed?

5b. What was Esther's request for the king? (v5-6)

5c. Why didn't the king just cancel his original edict of destroying the Jews?

5d. What does Esther's request reveal about Esther at this point? (v5-6)

6a. What reversals have taken place between 3:12-4:3 and 8:9-17?

6b. What does the reversal of the Jews' fate tell us about God?

7. Why did many people of the country declare themselves as Jews?

8. The Bible shows us again and again that God works in dire situations to save his people through great reversals. What is the greatest act of "reversal" God has done for his people?

9. How do you struggle to see God's purposes, in light of some of the circumstances you are in today?

10a. How is God calling you to be faithful to him in these circumstances, without knowing the specifics of his plans for them?

10b. While we don't know the specifics, we do know that God is working out our salvation for Christ's glory. How does knowing the great reversal of the gospel give you confidence that God can use what is bad for your good?

10c. Knowing that God is working out Christ's work of salvation in us and in the world around us, what do you think might be some ways God can use your current circumstances and relationships for his purposes?

Apply Practically

Encourage one another through your present circumstances, praying for each other that you will continue to trust in God and walk in faithful obedience to Him.