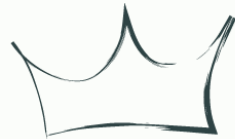




AN INDUCTIVE STUDY IN



Esther

THE CHOSEN LIFE

RCC WOMEN'S MINISTRY
TUESDAY 6:30
JANUARY 25 - APRIL 12, 2022

AN INDUCTIVE STUDY IN

ESTHER

THE CHOSEN LIFE

RCC WOMEN'S MINISTRY
TUESDAY 6:30

SCHEDULE:

JANUARY:

JANUARY 25 - INTRO

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 1 - LESSON 1

FEBRUARY 8 - LESSON 2

FEBRUARY 15 - LESSON 3

MARCH:

MARCH 1 - LESSON 4

MARCH 8 - LESSON 6

MARCH 15 - LESSON 7

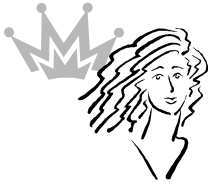
MARCH 22 - BREAK

MARCH 29 - LESSON 8

APRIL:

APRIL 5 - LESSON 9

APRIL 12 - CLOSING



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 1

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 1

“Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Mordecai’s question to Esther encapsulates the great lesson of this book. God is in control. Though unseen, He is on the scene accomplishing His purposes in this world. Although the future is known only to God, He guides and prepares us for our part in His story. As you read the account of this remarkable young woman who fulfilled her destiny, remember that you too have been chosen by God. You may think, *but I have no extraordinary purpose in life*. No matter. Whatever your place in life may be, God has chosen to work His plan through you. It has been said that destiny is not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice. Will you rise to the call?

Background The events recorded in Esther happened during the reign of Xerxes who ruled from 486-465 B.C. “Ahasuerus” was his title as ruler (just like “Pharaoh” is an Egyptian title). Secular history gives us a substantial picture of Xerxes. He inherited a vast empire from his father, Darius, and referred to himself as “the great King, the King of Kings, the King of this great world.” Wanting to add Greece to his empire, Xerxes brought his nobles and military leaders together for a great banquet to plan the invasion. This corresponds with the feast we read about in Esther Ch. 1. His disastrous attempt to conquer Greece is well documented and fits into the four-year time gap between the first and second chapters of Esther. The remaining years of his reign were mostly devoted to ambitious building projects and a life of indulgence. He is remembered by history as a man given to irrational fits of rage and habitual dalliances with beautiful women.

Returning in defeat from Greece, Xerxes began to miss Vashti, whom he’d deposed. He chose a lovely Jewess named Esther to be queen instead, and so begins our story. The events described in this book all take place in the Persian capital of Susa at a time when the first remnant of Jews (under Zerubbabel) are struggling to rebuild their nation in the land of Judah. Esther’s story fits between events recorded in the sixth and seventh chapters of the book of Ezra. By God’s sovereign design, Esther’s influence with the king saves her people from certain extinction. Some fifteen years later, Ezra will lead the second group of exiles back to Jerusalem, followed by Nehemiah fourteen years after.



ANCIENT SUSU.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 1 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 1

New International Version (NIV)

1 This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: 2 At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, 3 and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

4 For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. 5 When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest, who were in the citadel of Susa. 6 The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. 7 Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. 8 By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

10 On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him-Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas- 11 to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. 12 But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

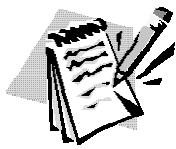
13 Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times 14 and were closest to the king-Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

15 "According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" he asked. "She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her."

16 Then Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. 17 For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.' 18 This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.

19 "Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. 20 Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

21 The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. 22 He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources. You may want to look up names and places in a Bible dictionary, map or encyclopedia. What else can you discover about the people and places mentioned in this chapter?

You can also use this section to jot down your own thoughts and impressions about people and events. What do you observe about the king's character? What do you observe in the character and behavior of others in the story?

Esther 1:1-9

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:

Esther 1:10-12

Bible Facts and Information:

Horizontal lines for notes.

Esther 1:13-22

Horizontal lines for notes.

My Research and Observations:

Large rectangular box with horizontal lines for research and observations.



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



APPLICATION – *How does it apply to me?*

We don't study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Esther 1:1-9

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 1:10-12

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 1:13-22

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it. _____



Take A Closer Look

“But Queen Vashti refused to come...”

Esther 1:12

Sometimes we have to make hard decisions. Thrust into a situation beyond our control, we are faced with a choice. Pressure bears as we weigh the options—do what is right...do what is easiest...do what is safe...do what everyone expects you to do. Queen Vashti found herself in such a situation. Esther would face even greater pressure later.

Over the years, Vashti has been portrayed as both a rebellious wife or as a woman of strong conviction for her refusal to obey the king’s command. The fact is, the writer doesn’t explain her motive. We can’t say with certainty what Vashti’s reasons were but we see that her decision had long-term consequences. We make decisions every day, some more important than others. What do our choices say about us? Take a closer look and consider what the Lord wants to show you about making choices.

How can we learn to make good choices? Contemplate what the following verses teach and answer in your own words.

Psalm 119:9-11 _____

Proverbs 3:5-7 _____

Proverbs 19:20 _____

We can learn from the example of others. The following verses give a glimpse of people making an important choice. Consider two things: 1) How their choice reveals what is important to them; and 2) What their example teaches you.

Eve – Genesis 3:1-6 _____

Lot – Genesis 13:10-13 _____

Joseph – Genesis 39:6-12 _____

Ruth – Ruth 1:14-18 _____

Nehemiah – Nehemiah 5:14-19 _____

Mary – Luke 10:38-42 _____

Paul – Philippians 3:7-14 _____

We don't always see the consequences of our decisions ahead of time. Certainly Vashti, who was not a worshipper of *Yahweh*, the God of the Jews, did not see the far-reaching consequences of her choice. But as a child of God, we have a blessed advantage in making decisions. What can you count on when faced with a difficult choice? As you read, note if there are any conditions to the promise given.

Proverbs 2:1-8 _____

Isaiah 41:10 _____

John 14:16-17 & Romans 8:26-28 _____

Philippians 4:6-7, 13 _____

James 1:5-6 _____

What do our choices say about us? Take some time for reflection. Consider the most important decision or choice you are facing at the present time. As you weigh the outcome, put the following considerations in the order of their importance *to you*, with #1 being the most important.

___ Outcome will be what I'm hoping for.

___ God will be glorified.

___ Being in God's will.

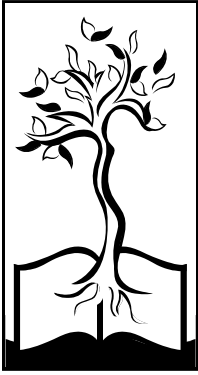
___ Seeing immediate results.

___ Little or no disruption in my life.

___ Spiritual growth.

___ Getting a clear answer.

___ Woman's intuition.



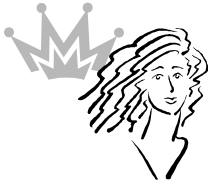
God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

Our choices reveal the kind of person we are, but there is another side to the coin.
We may, by our choices, also determine what kind of person we will become.

- A.W. Tozer -



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 2

Inductive Women's Bible Study — Lesson 2

Esther's story unfolds against such a vividly detailed backdrop that we can see every scene as if we were sitting in a darkened theater. The pomp and drunken revelry of the first scene has died down. The queen is gone and King Ahasuerus appears—if only for a moment—to regret his rash behavior. Gloom is a dangerous mood for such an erratic man, so the king's attendants suggest that he enlarge his harem. The command goes out across the king's vast empire. Countless beautiful young women are brought into the palace compound for an elaborate year-long preparation only to spend one night with Xerxes. In the morning they return to the harem, destined to live out their days in luxury and loneliness. Somewhere in this sea of loveliness Esther appears and, true to her name ("Star"), she outshines all others.

As you read this familiar story, resist any tendency to let Esther slip into the role of a fairy tale princess. Get to know her and she will surprise you. At times, she may puzzle you. Hopefully she will challenge you.

Background Esther was a Jewish orphan who was raised by her cousin Mordecai. We are introduced to Mordecai first. Some scholars believe that the brief description of his genealogy here indicates he was descended from the same family as Saul, the first king of Israel. His ancestors had been carried away in the Babylonian captivity, which is how he came to be a Jew living in Susa.

Mordecai has been faulted by some for allowing Esther, a Jewess, to be taken into a pagan king's harem but there is nothing to indicate he had any choice in the matter. Clearly, Mordecai loved Esther and she obeyed him as a devoted daughter would, even after she became queen. The wisdom and influence of his counsel to Esther is another indication of the unseen yet ever present hand of God in the affairs of His people.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

"Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law." – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 2 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 2

New King James Version (NKJ)

1 After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. 2 Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; 3 and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given them. 4 Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

5 In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. 6 Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

7 And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

Jewish people in ancient times often had two names—a secular name known in their culture, and a sacred name given in the Hebrew tongue. Hadassah was Esther's Hebrew name.

8 So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women. 9 Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women. 10 Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it. 11 And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. 13 Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. 14 In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

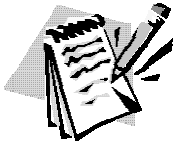
The young women who failed to be recalled by the king would live the rest of their life as a virtual widow isolated in the king's harem.

15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. 16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. 20 Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. 23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.



OBSERVATION — *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

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You can also use this section to jot down your own thoughts and impressions about people and events. What do you observe about Esther’s character? What do you observe in the character and behavior of others in the story?

Esther 2:1–7

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:



INTERPRETATION — *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



APPLICATION — *How does it apply to me?*

We don't study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Esther 2:1–7

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 2:8–16

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 2:17–23

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

“Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.”

Esther 2:15

Esther was a beautiful young woman with a disposition to match. On the surface, it appears she led a charmed life with circumstances falling easily to her advantage. Yet even the phrase *obtained favor* so frequently used to describe Esther’s relationships hints at the providence of God in her life. If we trace this same phrase through the Bible we see an unfolding pattern of God’s hand in the lives of His servants. Each one was given an opportunity to influence their world. Take a closer look and consider the opportunities for influence that God has given you.

The writer frequently mentions that Esther found favor with everyone she encountered. Scan through the scripture references given below—you may want to circle each phrase in your Bible as a reminder of the unseen hand of God in Esther’s life.

Esther 2:9; 2:15; 2:17; 5:2; 5:8; 7:3; 8:5

The Hebrew word for *favor* is a term used regularly in the Bible to describe the character of God. This word may be translated “loyal love.” The frequency of this concept with regard to Esther in this book may be a subtle way of suggesting the presence of the Lord without actually mentioning His name.

-Nelson Study Bible

Trace this same phrase through the Bible to find others who, in the providence of God, found favor with man. On the line beside their name, briefly describe the role they later played in God’s plan.

Joseph – Genesis 39:4, 21 & 41:38 _____

Moses – Exodus 11:3 _____

Samuel – 1 Samuel 2:26 _____

David – 1 Samuel 16:21–22 _____

Jesus as a boy – Luke 2:52 _____

Early Church – Acts 2:47 _____

We would probably all agree that having “favor with man” opens doors of opportunity. Joseph’s work ethic and business acumen earned him a place in Pharaoh’s government. David’s courage and military skills made him a legend in his own time. It was Esther’s physical beauty that brought her to the attention of the Persian royal court. While life seems to favor those who possess attractive qualities or exceptional talents and abilities, many fail to recognize the One who has opened that door, and for what purpose. Favor with man has no lasting purpose unless it is used for the glory of God.

Esther learned that her position of privilege was also a call to responsibility. Even those of us who live more ordinary lives answer to God for the opportunities we are given. Our influence may not reach as far as Esther’s, but we face the same choice she did. What will we do with the life we’ve been given?

Many people see life as a series of relationships and events randomly strung together by circumstances. But God’s Word clearly shows that our lives have a purpose and we are part of a greater plan.

What do Ephesians 2:8—10 and Philippians 2:13 say about our purpose in life? _____

How does God want us to respond to the life we’ve been given in Him? Romans 12:1-2

Esther found herself in a palace, placed there according to the sovereign will of God. Where has God placed you? Consider the roles and relationships you have in life. List what comes to mind.

The concentrated preparations that Esther underwent enhanced her beauty and won her favor and influence with the king. What are the “beauty preparations” we need in order to win favor and influence others?

1 Peter 3:3–4 _____

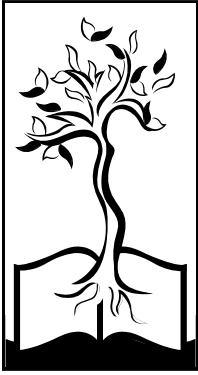
Colossians 3:12–14 _____

Philippians 2:3–4 _____

Titus 2:11–13 _____

Colossians 4:5–6 _____

God has brought you to your position in life for such a time as this. What would you like the lasting influence of your life to be?



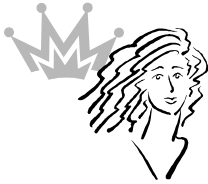
God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

Whatever God is putting into your hands to do today, tomorrow, or next week
is never without meaning, never without significance.
God has brought you to your present position and place in life for His own purposes.

- Alice Mathews -
A Woman God Can Use



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 3

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 3

Four years have passed since Esther became queen. Although we are told nothing about those first years, we can be certain they were filled with wonder for this young woman swept into palace life. We can only imagine the thrills and challenges of adjusting to her royal station. For all appearances, Esther embraced her privileged life with grace and humility. Though far above Mordecai in position, she remained devoted as we shall see later in the story. Mordecai served in the king's gate, most likely in some judicial capacity. Queen Esther's life is comfortable and happy, but an ominous cloud is forming on the horizon. Her world is about to be turned upside-down.

Background In chapter three we are introduced to Haman, a man whose hatred and abusive use of power throws the empire into confusion and brings the Jewish people to the brink of disaster. To this day, when the Feast of Purim is celebrated and the Book of Esther is read, the very mention of Haman's name elicits a strong response: the people stamp their feet and exclaim, "Let his name be blotted out!"

Haman's promotion made him second only to the king himself. The king even issued a special decree that all his servants were to bow down and pay homage whenever they saw Haman. This bit of information implies what Haman's own actions soon confirm: he was an ambitious man with an enormous ego. Mordecai's daily refusal to bow down sent Haman into a rage, but why did he turn his wrath on all the Jewish people in the empire?

Haman was descended from Agag, king of the Amalekites who fought against the Jews during the time of King Saul. Keep in mind that Saul was Mordecai's ancestor (Esther 2:5). But the animosity between Amalekites and Jews goes all the way back to the time of Moses. After leaving Egypt, God's people made their way across the desert only to be attacked by the Amalekites. For this, God declared the Amalekites would be blotted out (Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

When Saul became king, God commanded him to strike the Amalekites and totally destroy everything belonging to them (1 Samuel 15). Saul did attack and God gave him victory, but Saul spared Agag's life and kept the best of his cattle for himself. For his disobedience, Saul lost the Lord's anointing as king of Israel. Samuel put King Agag to death but because Saul failed to obey the Lord, some Amalekites lived.

The ancestral seeds of Jewish hatred that Haman carried were watered by his own pride. The scene is set and Haman's diabolical scheme to destroy all Jews will play out to his own disastrous end.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

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Working Text for Esther Ch. 3

English Standard Version (ESV)

1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him.

2 And all the king’s servants who were at the king’s gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage. 3 Then the king’s servants who were at the king’s gate said to Mordecai, “Why do you transgress the king’s command?” 4 And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai’s words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone.

So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

Babylonian religion believed the gods gathered at the start of each year to decide the destiny of men.

Archaeologists have discovered clay cubes used to cast lots. They resemble dice with prayers for good luck inscribed on each side. How did they cast lots? Some speculate the cubes were rolled onto a board showing each month and day of the year. When the cubes landed on the same day and month after several consecutive throws, it was considered valid.

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. 9 If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will

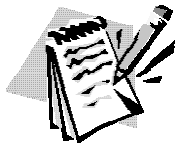
10,000 talents was equal to approximately 70% of the king's annual tax revenues. Scholars speculate that Haman offered this funding for the Jews' destruction out of government funds rather than his own pocket. In any case, he expected the money to be recouped from the plunder of the Jews.

pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries."

10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews.

11 And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you."

12 Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. 13 Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. 14 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. 15 The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources. You may want to look up names and places in a Bible dictionary, map or encyclopedia. What else can you discover about the people and places mentioned in this chapter?

You can also use this section to jot down your own thoughts and impressions about people and events. What do you observe about Esther’s character? What do you observe in the character and behavior of others in the story?

Esther 3:1–6

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



APPLICATION – *How does it apply to me?*

We don't study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Esther 3:1–6

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 3:7–11

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 3:12–15

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it. _____



Take A Closer Look

**“All the king’s servants ...bowed and paid homage to Haman...
but Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.”**

Esther 3:2

Mordecai’s daily refusal to bow in honor to Haman filled the arrogant official with rage. It also created tension within the king’s gate and put Mordecai in a moral dilemma. Why did he refuse to bow? The strongest hint we are given by Scripture is found in verse 4 where it says that Mordecai told them he was a Jew. As a Jew, why would Mordecai object to honoring Haman? Bowing was not a religious act; it was social protocol for that time, much like a curtsy or bow to the Queen of England is today. With that in mind, we can be sure it wasn’t bowing down that Mordecai objected to—it was bowing down to *Haman*. By refusing to bow down to a sworn enemy of God’s people, Mordecai was courageously standing up in loyalty to God. He would honor God no matter what the consequences to himself. Take a closer look and consider what it means to take a stand for God.

The personal conflict between Mordecai and Haman mirrors the enmity between the Jews and Amalekites. For insight into the hostility between these ancient enemies, review the background information provided on the first page of this lesson.

Do your best to explain, in your own words, why Mordecai would not bow to Haman.

Mordecai stood on his principles in spite of pressure. He is not the only person recorded in the Bible for doing so. Read the following scriptures and briefly state how each person stood up for their principles and the pressure they faced.

Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:3-15) _____

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3:8-18) _____

Daniel (Daniel 6:5-15) _____

Nehemiah (Nehemiah 6:10-11) _____

The Apostles (Acts 5: 18-29) _____

Mordecai experienced pressure from his peers to compromise. When he would not bow (to Haman **or** their pressure) they stirred up trouble by calling attention to Mordecai. In the same way, a believer today might be singled out for making a godly stand on principle. What should we do if we find ourselves in such a situation?

Read and *carefully consider* all that 1 Peter 3:15-16 says about preparing for—and responding to—pressure to compromise. Briefly share what you find and be specific.

In what ways have you personally experienced pressure to compromise in your daily life or faith? What has that experience taught you?

What does God promise to those who stand up for godly principles?

Ecclesiastes 8:12 _____

Psalms 97:10-11 _____

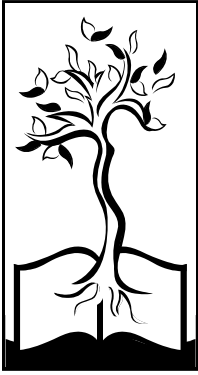
Isaiah 3:10 _____

Luke 2: 8, 11-12 _____

Hebrews 13:6 _____

1 Peter 2:19-20 _____

Is there a particular situation or area of life where you know God wants you to stand up for Him? Consider what would be honoring to God and how you will respond. Share your thoughts.



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

“My conscience is captive to the Word of God.
Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.”

- Martin Luther -

*(This was his response to civil and religious authorities
pressuring him to recant his teaching that the just shall live by faith.)*



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 4

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 4

Here is an interesting observation. Until chapter four, none of Esther's words have been recorded. All that we have seen about this young woman—her beauty, her lovely demeanor, her desire to please, her respectful devotion to Mordecai—has been through the writer's eyes. Thus far, Esther's unspoken example is the picture of a meek and modest woman. Now her own words show us another aspect of her character.

Chapter four records a serious conversation that takes place between Esther and Mordecai through her messenger, Hathach. When the queen learns her cousin is making a very public display of sorrow she tries to discover why and what she can do for him. But Mordecai's request stuns Esther. Her response (which is her first recorded statement) could be summed up in two words. *I can't*. What Mordecai suggests forces Esther to realize that her position of privilege is also a position of responsibility. Compelled to step out of her (literal) comfort zone, Esther makes a choice. Her second recorded statement could be summed up in two words. *I will*. As you read how Esther faced this crisis, ask the Lord what He wants to teach you about courage under fire.

Background It has been estimated that there were as many as 15 million Jews living throughout the Persian Empire during this time. With so many citizens fasting, weeping and wailing, it's hard to exaggerate the devastating impact of the king's decree. While Ahasuerus and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was thrown into confusion. As the news spread throughout the kingdom, daily life was disrupted at every level. Mordecai's loud and bitter crying was echoed millions of times in every town and village.

The practice of torn clothes, sackcloth and ashes was an outward sign of grief. To the modern reader, such a strong display seems awkward and embarrassing. But Mordecai's behavior was more than an uncontrollable outburst of emotion. It was a symbolic act of humiliation and repentance toward God. For Jews, fasting was always coupled with prayer. This too, was a way of expressing deep need and seeking God's guidance and help. Though not specifically stated, we can be certain that Esther fasted *and prayed* for God's mercy and intervention in the crisis she and her people faced.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 4 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 4

New Living Translation (NLT)

1 When Mordecai learned what had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail. 2 He stood outside the gate of the palace, for no one was allowed to enter while wearing clothes of mourning. 3 And as news of the king’s decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in sackcloth and ashes.

The original word for “distressed” is a strong verb that suggests writhing in pain or anguish.

4 When Queen Esther’s maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the sackcloth, but he refused it. 5 Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs who had

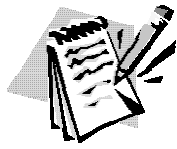
been appointed as her attendant. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was troubling him and why he was in mourning. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square in front of the palace gate.

7 Mordecai told him the whole story and told him how much money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. 8 Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews, and he asked Hathach to show it to Esther. He also asked Hathach to explain it to her and to urge her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people. 9 So Hathach returned to Esther with Mordecai’s message.

10 Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai: 11 “The whole world knows that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him in more than a month.” 12 So Hathach gave Esther’s message to Mordecai.

13 Mordecai sent back this reply to Esther: “Don’t think for a moment that you will escape there in the palace when all other Jews are killed. 14 If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. What’s more, who can say but that you have been elevated to the palace for just such a time as this?”

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 “Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I am willing to die.” 17 So Mordecai went away and did as Esther told him.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

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Esther 4:1–3

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

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Esther 4:1–3

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 4:4–12

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 4:13–17

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it. _____



Take A Closer Look

**“Go, gather all the Jews...and fast for me;
neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day.
My maids and I will fast likewise.
And so I will go to the king...and if I perish, I perish!”**
Esther 4:16 NKJ

One of the things we admire most about Esther is her courage. In a time of crisis and uncertainty she found inner strength and rose to the challenge. “I will go to the king...and if I perish, I perish.” What do you hear in her words? Did Esther utter them in brash self-confidence or from a determined spirit of obedience? Where did Esther’s strength come from? It has rightly been said that courage isn’t the absence of fear; courage is the determination to act *in spite of* fear. Take a closer look at Esther’s resolve with an eye to discover the source of courage under fire.

Esther’s Reluctance

At the beginning of this chapter, Esther appears reluctant and unsure. She sends fresh clothes to replace the sackcloth Mordecai has put on. Perhaps she hopes whatever is troubling her beloved cousin will simply go away. (We mustn’t fault her for wanting an easy solution since that’s human nature.) But when Esther learns how grave the situation is, she knows she must make a choice. We watch and wait while Esther weighs her options, neither of which is ideal.

Describe what Esther’s options were and the probable outcome in either case. _____

Look at Esther’s first response (vs. 11) to Mordecai’s instructions. Why is she reluctant?

Esther’s Resolve

What finally convinces Esther to go to the king? _____

What specific instructions does Esther send back to Mordecai? Why is this significant?

In our modern-day culture, we aren't likely to face Esther's life-or-death situation but we can learn from her example. How are you prone to respond in a crisis situation? Would your response be similar to Esther's? In what way?

Though God's name is not mentioned it is clear, from Esther's actions, that He is uppermost in her mind. Esther waited for three days to act, even though she had already made her decision. What was the purpose for those three days? What can you learn from her example?

Esther's resolve was fortified by waiting on her unseen but ever present God. But what does it mean to "wait" on God? Read Isaiah 40:31 and consider what is promised to those who wait on God. Describe each part of the promise in your own words.

"But those who wait on the Lord..."

"shall renew their strength" _____

"shall mount up with wings like eagles" _____

Eagles have exceptionally good vision. While soaring high in the sky they can spot fish in a lake miles away.

"shall run and not be weary" _____

"shall walk and not faint" _____

There are different ways to wait. Some people grow restless and look at their watch. Some occupy the time with activities they can accomplish while waiting. Someone might "people watch" or just try to catch a nap. Simply put, some methods of waiting can be more productive than others.

Esther waited *with purpose* and God supplied what she needed. He put iron in her soul to confront the situation with wisdom and confidence.

Is there some “pressure cooker” situation in your life? You may have concerns that are pulling you in opposite directions. When you weigh the options, there is no easy solution. Will you choose to respond like Esther, who resolved to obey and wait on the Lord for strength?

Read each of the following scripture promises to give you courage under fire. As God’s child, you can claim all of them, but choose one in particular to carry you through. Write it down and begin memorizing it today.

Isaiah 41:10 ☩ Psalm 32:8 ☩ Isaiah 43:1-2 ☩ Proverbs 3:5-6 ☩ Romans 8:35, 37



God’s Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

“When we have sufficiently waited on the Lord, He gets full control of our spirit. At such moments, we’re like a glove, and His hand is moving us where He pleases. Having known that experience, I can testify, there’s nothing to compare it to. It’s marvelous!”

- Charles Swindoll -



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 5

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 5

After three days of fasting and prayer, Esther was ready to go before the king. Her plan was simple but it involved great risk. Would the king receive her? If so, she would prepare a special dinner for him. As the story unfolds, we see that Esther used wisdom and restraint. She was careful to approach the king in a way that would show respect and win his favor. As you read how Esther dealt with the delicate situation, ask the Lord what He wants to teach you about going forward in His plan *and* in His timing.

Background Imagine what a daunting prospect it must have been for Esther to go, unbidden, into the king's presence. If we could slip into the queen's chamber as she prepared for her unannounced visit, what might we see? Esther's handmaidens would be tending her, seeing to every detail with meticulous care. Where normally this would be a pleasant daily ritual, this was no ordinary morning. For the last three days all routine had been abandoned. There had been no drawing of the bath, or laying out fine silk garments. No need for the perfumes and preparations. The queen had not called for her musicians. She took no visitors. She took no meals.

For three days, Esther and her maids had fasted and prayed. On the third day Esther called for her finest robes to be brought out. She gave extra care to be at her best and we can almost see her maids nodding in admiration as Esther takes one last look in the mirror. They watch in silent apprehension as Esther leaves behind the safety of her chamber.

Ahasuerus would be in the inner court of the king's palace, which was a vast and structurally intimidating space.

Excavations of the palace have shown there was an audience hall measuring over 120,000 square feet. The room was supported by seventy-two columns, each estimated to be sixty-five to eighty feet tall. Can you imagine Esther making her way silently across the cool marble escorted only by the hushed whispers of stunned onlookers?

Ahasuerus was an unpredictable man with a disposition that ran hot and cold. He could be jovial and hospitable at one turn, then moody and withdrawn at the next. Those close to him did well to learn how to read the king—their life depended on it. Esther knew this about the man she was married to. Though he treated her with kindness and was clearly captivated by her beauty, she took nothing for granted. But Esther was prepared for this hour, strengthened in body and mind for what she must do.





Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

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With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 5

New International Version (NIV)

1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.

2 When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

3 Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.” 4 “If it please the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.”

5 “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. 6 As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”

7 Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: 8 If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.”

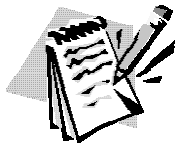
9 Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. 10 Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home.

Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, 11 Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. 12 "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. 13 But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

14 His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to dinner and be happy."

This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.

Gallows: Different from what we commonly call gallows, this was a sharpened post. This cruel punishment was used to execute live prisoners or as a method of further humiliating an already dead person. The body was impaled on a stake and raised up on a pole as a warning to others.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

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Esther 5:1–4

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

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APPLICATION – *How does it apply to me?*

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Esther 5:1–4

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 5:5–8

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 5:9–14

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

**“Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see
Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”**

Esther 5:13 NKJ

Haman was a man with a terminal case of “I” trouble. With all his wealth, status and power, you’d think he would be content. But seeing Mordecai stand while all others bowed low just took the polish off. Haman couldn’t bask in the light of his own glory with that pesky Jew casting his shadow.

Haman is the villain we love to despise and boo. We watch him and shake our heads in wonder that he could be so foolish. With an ego spiraling out of control, he is a classic example of what *not* to do. Let’s examine the attitude that defined Haman’s character with an eye to discover how to avoid making the same bad choices he did.

What caused Haman to be proud? _____

What made Haman angry? _____

A prideful spirit leads to problems. What consequences does the Bible warn us about?

Proverbs 11:2 _____

Proverbs 16:18 _____

Proverbs 28:25 _____

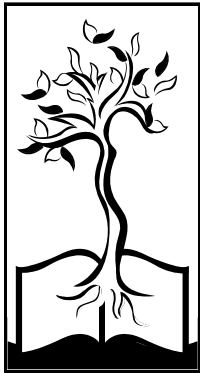
Proverbs 29:23 _____

Psalms 119:21 _____

Why is pride such a dangerous attitude to indulge—or even tolerate—in ourselves?

According to James 4:7–10 what is the correct way to deal with a prideful spirit? _____

Is there an area of your life where you are tempted to be proud? What will you do to guard against allowing this sin to get a foot in the door of your heart? Be specific.



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

“God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves.”

— D.L. Moody —



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 6

Inductive Women's Bible Study — Lesson 6

Is God in the details? The events we read about in this chapter remind us again that a man may plan his way, but the Lord directs his steps (Proverbs 16:9). On this particular day, we see that truth played out in the lives of three men.

After a sumptuous meal with the queen and his most trusted subject Haman, King Ahasuerus crawled into his comfortable bed looking forward to a good night's sleep. Instead, he tossed and turned and finally resorted to having someone read the history books. He discovers that he owes his life to Mordecai, who was never properly thanked. Suddenly, the king's top priority for the day is to reward this man who, until one sleepless night, meant nothing to him.

On this particular day, wicked Haman had already written "hang Mordecai" on his to do list. He planned to get an early start since he was invited back to another private dinner with the king and queen. He fully expects this to be a great day—his spirits rise even higher after assuming *he* is the man whom the king desires to honor.

On this particular day, Mordecai goes to king's gate just as he does every day. A shadow still hangs over his people and Mordecai waits for some sign that Esther has succeeded in winning the king's ear. Whatever he expected this day to hold, he certainly *didn't* expect to see Haman coming towards him with the king's royal robe and a fine horse.

God oversees every detail of life. He determines when a "chance" encounter becomes a turning point in the life of an individual or the course of a nation. Simply put, only God can cause a coincidence on purpose!

Background Mordecai's name was recorded in the king's book of chronicles. This was the official record of events in Persian history. Since the king's sleepless night occurred during the twelfth year of his reign, numerous volumes would already have been filled. Of all the books to choose from, the king's servant *just happened* to reach for the volume containing Mordecai's name!

It was a point of honor among Persian kings to reward their benefactors promptly and generously. But Mordecai's good deed went unnoticed. For five years, Mordecai's service was forgotten. But his reward would come in God's perfect time and work according to God's perfectly detailed plan.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 6 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 6

New King James Version (NKJV)

1 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. 2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 3 Then the king said, “What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?”

And the servants who attended him said, “Nothing has been done for him.”

4 So the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

5 The king’s servants said to him, “Haman is there, standing in the court.” And the king said, “Let him come in.”

6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, “What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought in his heart, “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?”

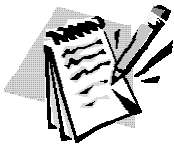
7 And Haman answered the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honor,
8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has
ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let this robe and horse be
delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that he may array the man
whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square,
and proclaim before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to
honor!’”

10 Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have
suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate! Leave
nothing undone of all that you have spoken.”

11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on
horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus shall it be done to
the man whom the king delights to honor!”

12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his
house, mourning and with his head covered. 13 When Haman told his wife Zeresh and
all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh
said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you
will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him.”

14 While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs came, and hastened
to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources. You may want to look up names and places in a Bible dictionary, map or encyclopedia. What else can you discover about the people and places mentioned in this chapter?

You can also use this section to jot down your own thoughts and impressions about people and events. What do you observe about Esther’s character? What do you observe in the character and behavior of others in the story?

Esther 6:1–9

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



APPLICATION – *How does it apply to me?*

We don't study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Esther 6:1–9

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 6:10–14

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take A Closer Look

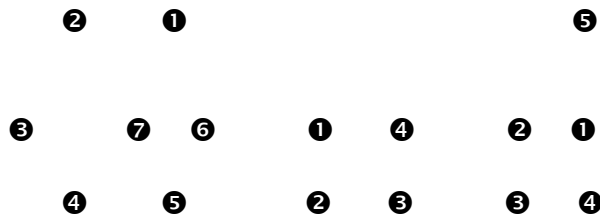
“During that night, the king could not sleep...”

Esther 6:1

Mordecai’s situation appears to go from bad to worse. Haman isn’t content to wait for Mordecai’s destruction along with all other Jews—he wants Mordecai dead *now*. Since ambitious Haman always got what he wanted, who would dare get in his way?

One of the clear lessons from this book is that God is in the details. Seemingly trivial and unrelated circumstances all fit together in the plan of God. From a human perspective, life doesn’t always make sense and certainly doesn’t seem fair. Good deeds are forgotten; evil actions go unpunished. Have you ever been in a situation where you found yourself asking, *where is God?* Those are times to remember we walk by *faith* not by sight.

The circumstances of life weren’t always clear to Mordecai or Esther at the time. Keep in mind that each of the main characters had a limited (and in some cases, faulty) perspective. Do a simple exercise as you review what has happened in the story thus far. When you string together insignificant details and coincidences, who is in control?



1. Ahasuerus gives an elaborate banquet.
2. Vashti refuses to come at the king’s order.
3. Ahasuerus consults his advisors; deposes Vashti as queen.
4. Ahasuerus holds a beauty contest.
5. Esther, a beautiful Jewish orphan, is taken into the palace.
6. Mordecai is Esther’s guardian.
7. Hegai favors Esther more than the other young women.

1. Ahasuerus marries Esther; makes her his queen.
2. Mordecai counsels Esther to keep her Jewish identity secret.
3. Mordecai uncovers a plot; Esther informs Ahasuerus; no reward is given; Mordecai’s good deed is forgotten.
4. Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman.

1. Haman plots against the Jews; Ahasuerus signs a decree.
2. Esther learns Mordecai is mourning at the king’s gate.
3. Esther invites King Ahasuerus and Haman to a banquet. The king offers to grant whatever she asks.
4. Haman builds a gallows; plans to kill Mordecai.
5. King Ahasuerus can’t sleep; plans to honor Mordecai.

According to the following verses, how should we view our circumstances?

Proverbs 15:3 _____

Jeremiah 29: 11 _____

Jeremiah 32:27 _____

Romans 8:28 _____

Matthew 19:26 _____

When circumstances seem to be going against you, what comfort and guidance can you find from the following scriptures?

Isaiah 25:4 _____

Isaiah 41:10 _____

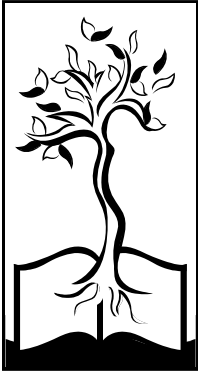
Psalms 37:28 _____

Luke 12:7 _____

Philippians 2:13 _____

Is there a particular situation or area of life that you find difficult to understand? What will you do to practice walking by faith and not by sight? Be specific.

Choose one of the scriptures listed above to be a source of strength and help to you. Write it out here and begin today to memorize it.



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

“To the child of God, there is no such thing as accident.
We travel an appointed way.
When true faith enters, chance and mischance go out for good.
The *woman* of true faith may live in the absolute assurance that *her* steps
are ordered by the Lord.”

— A.W. Tozer —



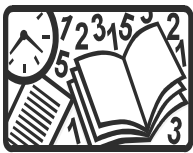
The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 7

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 7

Have you ever dreaded having a certain conversation with someone? No matter how many times you rehearse it in your mind, it doesn't get any easier. The prospect of speaking to the king must have weighed on Esther as she prepared for the second banquet. She had promised to tell her husband what was bothering her, but oh! She must frame her thoughts carefully, choose her words wisely. If Haman's treachery is to be exposed, Esther must confront him to his face. Without openly accusing the king, she must plead for her life and the lives of her people.

Put yourself in Esther's shoes. How would you have approached this difficult discussion? Proverbs 25:15 says, "By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone." Esther waited patiently and prayerfully for the right moment to speak. And in that moment of truth, her wise words persuaded the king and broke the bone of her enemy.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

"Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law." – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 7 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

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Working Text for Esther Ch. 7

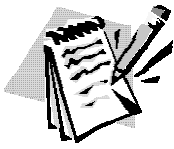
English Standard Version (ESV)

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 had dared to do this?” 6 And Esther said, “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and 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.” 10 And the king said, “Hang him on that.” So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

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Esther 7:1–6

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



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Esther 7:1–6

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 7:7–10

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

And Esther said, “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!”

Esther 7:6a

For nearly a week, Esther has waited to plead her case with the king. Now, at the moment of truth, she does not hesitate to confront the enemy of her people. Though the Bible doesn't record it, Esther's revelation must have been met by stunned silence. The king was astonished that *anyone* would threaten his queen. As Xerxes begins putting the pieces together, his fury rises and Haman's shock turns to terror. He is exposed and powerless, caught in a trap of his own making.

We are reminded that God does not allow wickedness to go unpunished. At times, it seems the enemy has the upper hand, but we can be certain that God will not allow His people to be overcome or destroyed. Take a closer look with an eye to discover how to deal with the enemy.

“This wicked Haman!”

Esther didn't mince words about Haman. She knew he was wicked! Haman thought he could do whatever he wanted, with no consequences. He despised God's people and used his influence with the king to make them suffer. *Why do the wicked prosper?* The prophet Jeremiah asked God that question (Jeremiah 12:1). We can find ourselves asking the same question as we look around the world we live in. Godless behavior is applauded, rewarded, even admired.

Do the wicked prosper? It seems so in the short run. But God sees the big picture. The following verses will help us to see this from God's perspective and make it our own. As you read, look for instructions, promises and warnings. Share what you find.

Proverbs 4:19 _____

Proverbs 5:21–23 _____

Proverbs 16:5 _____

Psalms 37:1–11 _____

(Note: Psalm 37 speaks about the ultimate outcome for those who live righteously and those who live wickedly. You may want to study this entire psalm on your own.)

“The adversary and enemy...”

How does Esther’s example teach us to deal with the adversary? Let’s briefly retrace her steps. First, she determined to obey the Lord, *do or die*. Then she spent time on her knees before God. Here, she found courage to overcome her fears and wisdom to navigate through her perilous situation. God was with her every step of the way.

1 Peter 5:8 says, “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith...”

In *practical* terms, what can we do to resist the enemy?

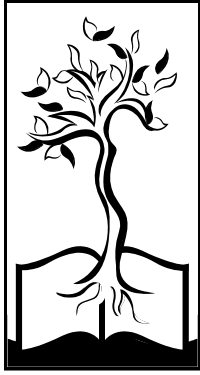
Psalm 119:11 _____

Philippians 4:6–8 _____

Ephesians 6:13–18 _____

Here is something to consider. Haman appeared to be a formidable enemy until Esther confronted him *in the king’s presence*. What weapon did she use? Truth. In light of the facts, wicked Haman was exposed and powerless.

Do you need an extra measure of assurance that God will protect you against the “wicked Hamans” of life? Read and reflect on Romans 8:31–39. Share what encourages you the most from this passage.



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

“Everything the devil does, God overreaches to serve His own purpose.”

— Oswald Chambers —



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 8

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 8

Haman's execution was swift justice, but the evil scheme he set in motion still threatened. The Jews lived under a death sentence that was sure to be carried out unless someone intervened. Esther's next step was to go *back* to the king and plead for her people. Do we wonder what good can come out of personal suffering? Consider this. Esther's own security was assured. Mordecai was safely nearby. But Esther was no longer willing to be isolated in her privileged, comfortable existence. She could see beyond the palace walls. It has been said that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. Esther chose to *do* something.

Background In keeping with Persian law, upon being executed as a traitor Haman's estate became the property of the king. Ahasuerus gave it to Esther and she passed it on to Mordecai. The king also gave Mordecai his signet ring (the very ring Haman had used to seal the death warrant against the Jews) making Mordecai his new prime minister. Everything that wicked Haman had acquired through grasping and greedy manipulation was simply given over to Mordecai. What an illustration this is of Proverbs 13:22 which says, "The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous."



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

***"Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law."* – Psalm 119:18 NLT**

Esther Ch. 8 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 8

New Living Translation (NLT)

1 On that same day King Xerxes gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king how they were related. 2 The king took off his signet ring—which he had taken back from Haman—and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of Haman’s property.

3 Now once more Esther came before the king, falling down at his feet and begging him with tears to stop Haman’s evil plot against the Jews. 4 Again the king held out the gold scepter to Esther. So she rose and stood before him 5 and said, “If Your Majesty is pleased with me and if he thinks it is right, send out a decree reversing Haman’s orders to destroy the Jews throughout all the provinces of the king. 6 For how can I endure to see my people and my family slaughtered and destroyed?”

7 Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “I have given Esther the estate of Haman, and he has been hanged on the gallows because he tried to destroy the Jews. 8 Now go ahead and send a message to the Jews in the king’s name, telling them whatever you want, and seal it with the king’s signet ring. But remember that whatever is written in the king’s name and sealed with his ring can never be revoked.”

9 So on June 25 the king’s secretaries were summoned. As Mordecai dictated, they wrote a decree to the Jews and to the princes, governors, and local officials of all the 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. The decree was written in the scripts and languages of all the peoples of the empire, including the Jews.

10 Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes and sealed the message with the king’s signet ring. He sent the letters by swift messengers, who rode horses especially bred for the king’s service.

11 The king's decree gave the Jews in every city authority to unite to defend their lives. They were allowed to kill, slaughter, and annihilate anyone of any nationality or province who might attack them or their children and wives, and to take the property of their enemies. 12 The day chosen for this event throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes was March 7 of the next year. 13 A copy of this decree was to be recognized as law in every province and proclaimed to all the people. That way the Jews would be ready on that day to take revenge on their enemies. 14 So urged on by the king's command, the messengers rode out swiftly on horses bred for the king's service. The same decree was also issued at the fortress of Susa.

15 Then Mordecai put on the royal robe of blue and white and the great crown of gold, and he wore an outer cloak of fine linen and purple. And the people of Susa celebrated the new decree. 16 The Jews were filled with joy and gladness and were honored everywhere. 17 In every city and province, wherever the king's decree arrived, the Jews rejoiced and had a great celebration and declared a public festival and holiday. And many of the people of the land became Jews themselves, for they feared what the Jews might do to them.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

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Esther 8:1–8

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



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Esther 8:1–8

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 8:9–14

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 8:15–17

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take A Closer Look

“Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears...”

Esther 8:3a NKJ

Esther’s own personal crisis had passed, but she knew that her people were still condemned to die unless something was done. She went before the king a second time, imploring him with tears to counteract the evil scheme of the enemy. Can you picture the queen kneeling at the throne, pleading for her people? Esther’s intercession is a stirring model for every believer to follow. This week, let’s take a closer look at the sacred responsibility and privilege of intercessory prayer.

Intercession: The act of interceding, mediating, pleading, or praying on behalf of another or others.
--Webster’s Dictionary

Moses was a mighty intercessor who prayed passionately and *frequently* for his people. They were stubborn and often rebellious, at times pushing Moses to the limits of endurance—but he prayed for them anyway! If you want to pray with humility, forgiveness and heartfelt compassion, learn from the prayers of a man who spoke

face to face with God. You will find some of Moses’ prayers in: Exodus 32:11–14; Numbers 12; Numbers 14:11–21; and Psalm 90.

Ezra prayed for his nation (Ezra 9), confessing their backsliding and asking God for revival. Likewise, Nehemiah fasted and prayed that God would forgive and restore the Jews to a right relationship with God.

Do you want to be stirred to the very core of your soul? Read and reflect on the intercessory prayer Jesus prayed with *you* in mind (John 17).

The church prayed for Peter when he was in jail (Acts 12), Paul asked for prayer on his behalf (Ephesians 6:18–20) and he constantly prayed for others (Romans 1:9–10, Philippians 1:4, Colossians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:2). Needless to say, the Bible makes it clear that intercessory prayer is the responsibility and privilege of *every* Christian. We must intercede for believers and we must pray for those who need salvation.

**“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,
that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
Hebrews 4:16**

Go over the following scriptures that deal with prayer. Read each one with the purpose of applying it in your prayers for an individual or a specific group of people. What instruction is there for you?

John 14:13 & 1 John 5:14–15 _____

Ephesians 6:18–20 _____

Philippians 1:9–10 _____

James 5:14 _____

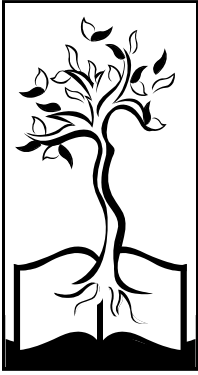
1Timothy 2:1–2 _____

Luke 6:28 _____

Romans 8:26 _____

Esther’s concern for her people compelled her to plead their case to the king. She fell down at his feet and implored him with tears. The king listened and granted her petition. Do you share Esther’s heart? Who has come to mind as you’ve been listening to God speak in His Word? Will you take your petition before God’s throne of grace and intercede on their behalf?

**“On the day I called, You answered me;
You made me bold with strength in my soul.”
Psalm 138:3**



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

“One concerned person devoted to prayer can make a great difference in this world, for prayer is the key that releases the power of God.”

— Warren Wiersbe —



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 9–10

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 9

The book of Esther closes with the deliverance and victory of her people. It's a classic happy ending. Sinister plots have been thwarted. Vile enemies have been defeated. Strength of character shines forth. True loyalty has been rewarded. Unwavering courage has saved the day. As the curtain goes down we expect to find Queen Esther in royal splendor, a magnificent spray of roses in her arms, taking a final bow before a standing ovation. But Mordecai has been placed on center stage. Esther plays a supporting role and slips away before the final scene.

This brings home a significant point. This has not been a story about Queen Esther. The star of this story is Esther's sovereign, providential Creator who chose to work His plan through a lovely Jewish orphan. Though God's name has been silent, His overshadowing presence speaks loudly through every twist of fate. Nothing has been left to chance. God is in control and all is well. Rest in that as you read these final chapters.

Background: Purim is one of the most celebrated and joyous holidays on the Jewish calendar. The Book of Esther (commonly known as Megillah) is read in the synagogue on the eve of Purim and again on the morning of Purim. It's a tradition when the Book of Esther is read to drown out the name of Haman by stomping feet, hissing and loud noisemaking.



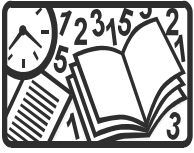
Feasting and drinking is encouraged because Jewish tradition holds that both played a key role in Esther becoming queen (Vashti's removal came during a feast) and the downfall of Haman.

During Purim, it is also required to give gifts to the needy and send gifts of food to friends. A popular food gift is Hamantashen (also called Haman's hats). This sweet pastry is shaped into a triangle that represents Haman's falling hat.



Another custom is for children to dress up and disguise themselves, since the miracle of Purim was disguised in natural events.

Purim is celebrated on the fourteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month on the Jewish calendar. This usually falls in March. A fast called the Fast of Esther may also be observed from dawn until sundown on the day before Purim.



Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 9–10 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 9–10

New International Version (NIV)

1 On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.

2 The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those seeking their destruction. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them.

3 And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. 4 Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.

5 The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. 6 In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. 7 They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, 8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, 9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, 10 the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

11 The number of those slain in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day. 12 The king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted.”

13 “If it pleases the king,” Esther answered, “give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day’s edict tomorrow also, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on gallows.” 14 So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they hanged the ten sons of Haman. 15 The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

16 Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king’s provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder. 17 This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.

18 The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. 19 That is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other.

20 Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, 21 to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar 22 as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

23 So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. 24 For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the *pur* (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. 25 But when the plot came to the king’s attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word *pur*.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, 27 the Jews took it upon themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. 28 These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never cease to be celebrated by the Jews, nor should the memory of them die out among their descendants.

29 So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim.

30 And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Xerxes—words of goodwill and assurance—31 to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. 32 Esther’s decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records.

Purim usually falls in the month of March. In the year 2005, Purim will be celebrated on March 25.

To commemorate the prayer and fasting of Esther, Jews may fast the day before Purim. The fast begins an hour before sunrise and ends 40 minutes after sunset.

Chapter 10

1 King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire to its distant shores. 2 And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king had raised him, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? 3 Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources. You may want to look up names and places in a Bible dictionary, map or encyclopedia. What else can you discover about the people and places mentioned in this chapter?

You can also use this section to jot down your own thoughts and impressions about people and events. What do you observe about Esther’s character? What do you observe in the character and behavior of others in the story?

Esther 9:1–10

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:

Esther 9:20–32 (cont.)

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:

Esther 10:1–3



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



APPLICATION – *How does it apply to me?*

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Esther 9:1–10

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 9:11–19

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 9:20–32

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 10:1–3

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

**“The Jews...gathered together and protected their lives,
...but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.”**

Esther 9:16 NKJ

Esther’s people were singled out for destruction. Haman had declared war—and though he didn’t live to see the battle, there were still men waiting for the opportunity to attack, destroy and plunder. But the tables were turned. The king gave the Jews permission to *defend* themselves against attack. By the wording of this second edict, we understand the Jews were free to strike back at their enemies by doing exactly what was intended against them. Instead, we read that they protected their lives but didn’t lay a hand on the plunder. They held back rather than lash out in revenge. *Wait a minute*, you may say, *look at all the people they killed*. Bear in mind that they were defending themselves against attackers—they didn’t *become* the attackers.

While there are many lessons to be drawn from these last chapters, let’s take a closer look at a subject every believer must learn to address in their own life. Self-control. More to the point, self-control when angry retaliation would be so much easier.

Restraint or Retaliation?

What does godly restraint look like? We see it in David’s behavior toward King Saul. Jealous Saul did everything in his power to ruin David’s life. He forced David away from his wife and his home. He repeatedly tried to kill David, threatened his family and punished anyone who befriended him.

One night, in a cave in the wilderness, the tables were turned. How did David respond? Read 1 Samuel 24:1–22 and briefly share your answer.

Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. As a teen, he was torn from his family, his home, even his country. He endured years of menial servitude and false imprisonment. The course of his life seemed to be one major setback after another. Humanly speaking, he could have traced all his woes back to heartless brothers who cast him away.

One day, in Joseph’s own house, the tables were turned. How did Joseph respond? Read Genesis 45:1–14 and briefly share your answer.

We've all heard the world's advice in that catchy little phrase *don't get mad—get even*. The natural human response is to lash out when we've been hurt or wronged in some way. But Christians are called to live by a higher rule of conduct.

Read and reflect on what the following verses say about retaliation. Briefly explain the instructions given here by God.

Leviticus 19:18 _____

Proverbs 20:22 _____

Proverbs 24:29 _____

Matthew 5:39 _____

Romans 12:17–21 _____

Now read and reflect on what the following verses say about mercy. Briefly explain the instructions, warnings and promises given here by God.

Proverbs 3:3–8 _____

Hosea 12:6 _____

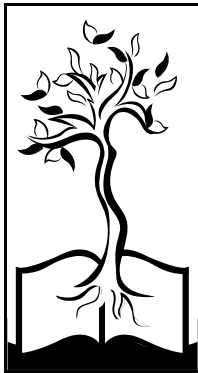
Micah 6:8 _____

Matthew 5:7 & Luke 6:36 _____

There's no getting around it. Unjust treatment is painfully hard to bear. Esther's people did nothing to deserve Haman's hateful vendetta against them. Did God care that they were reviled, rejected and marked for death? Why shouldn't they retaliate? For the next few minutes, lay your pencil down and just read Isaiah 53:3–6. Let the truth and meaning of the words sink in . . .

. . . then go on to the next page.

Will you do some prayerful self-examination? Permit the Holy Spirit to reveal any area where resentment or anger has a grip on your heart. Lay those thoughts and attitudes out and ask the Lord to pour the words you've just read in Isaiah 53:3–6 over them. What has God's mercy done for you? What does God's mercy show you to do? Write your answer in the form of a prayer. (This does not need to be shared during group discussion.)



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

If you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus
have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:15–16, 24–25

