

# Esther Discussion Guide/Questions

## Recommended Resources

Thanks for checking out our college group's discussion guide of the book of Esther. I hope this helps you study and reflect on the book as we prepare to discuss it together. Here are some helpful resources for studying the book of Esther:

- [The Bible Project: Esther Video & Discussion Guide](#)
- [For Such a Time as This](#) article by Bethany Jenkins
- [Esther and the Silent Sovereignty of God](#) article by Bethany Jenkins
- [How to Read Esther](#) podcast episode (37:01) by Stephen Witmer.
- [The Man the King Delights to Honor](#) sermon (33:41) by Timothy Keller
- [VeggieTales: Esther - Small Group Discussion Questions](#)

If you have any questions, please let me know! God bless.

In Christ, Pastor Jonathan

Web: [CornerstoneWestford.com](http://CornerstoneWestford.com)

YouTube: [Pastor Jonathan Romig](#)

## Esther 1:1-22

1. What do we know about the time and setting of the book of Esther?
2. Why do you think the first chapter includes a description of the king's wealth? How might it compare to [Israel's temple](#)?
3. What type of person is King Ahasuerus? What does his relationship with Queen Vashti tell us about him?
4. How were women treated in that culture? How does this chapter frame Esther's journey in the coming chapters? How might she be feeling?
5. How does the King misuse his authority and power? How should we treat those we have authority over?
6. What does this story teach us about the dangers of drunkenness? How does that compare with your personal or family experiences with alcohol? Read Ephesians 5:18.
7. [Stephen Witmer](#) asks, "What does it mean to live faithfully in a post-Christian culture?" Esther had to struggle with what it means to live faithfully in a pagan culture.
8. [Stephen Witmer](#) also encourages us to not read Esther looking for moral examples of how we go live. How then should we read it? Where might we see examples of God's providential care and grace?

## Esther 2:1-23

1. How would you describe Esther in this chapter? How does she contrast with the Esther we meet by the end of the book?
2. How would you compare the person you were with the person you are? Can you see God's hand shaping and molding you? What does this teach us about patience?
3. Bethany Jenkins [writes](#), "Men are measured by wealth and power, women by beauty and sexuality." How does our culture value men and women? How can we as Christians model a different way of valuing people?
4. Why do you think Esther hid her Jewish identity? What does this tell us about the Persian society and the Jewish people in exile?
5. There is a great deal of drunkenness and sex in the book of Esther. How do we as Christians typically feel about these topics? How does God work through them in surprising ways?
6. By the end of the chapter Esther is queen and Mordecai has saved the king's life. By all outward appearances they are safe and secure. How often do you find yourself trusting in your circumstances instead of in God?

## Esther 3:1-15

1. Mordecai is a Benjamite and a descendent of a man named Kish (Esther 2:5), which 1 Samuel 14:51 tells us is King Saul's father. Haman is described as an Agagite, which would be descendents of Agag the Amalakite. God told Saul to exterminate the Amalakites, but he disobeyed (see 1 Samuel 15:1-3, 7-9, 32-33). How does this understanding frame our understanding of Haman and Mordecai's relationship?
2. In his [Esther sermon](#), Timothy Keller talks about pride being the chief sin and yet a sin that is like carbon monoxide, undetectable in ourselves. Why is pride so deadly?
3. Verse six says, "Haman sought to destroy all the Jews..." Have you ever witnessed anti-semitism or ethnic hatred of any kind? What can we do as Christians to stand up for Jewish people or any nationality targeted by others?
4. Keller points out that Haman doesn't name the people he is going to kill and King Ahasureus doesn't ask. This dehumanizes those they are going to murder. How common is it to dehumanize those we dislike?
5. Proverbs 29:29 (NIV) says, "When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan." How do we see this truth in this passage? What can we do about it in our culture?
6. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV) says, "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." What does this passage teach us about praying for those in charge?

## Esther 4:1-17

1. Where is God when bad things happen? The book of Esther doesn't mention God. Why do you think that might be the case?
2. When Mordecai hears the edict, he tears his clothes and clothes himself in sackcloth and ashes. What's your response to seeing injustice and evil around you? What can Mordecai's response to injustice and evil teach us about our own?
3. Sackcloth and ashes is also a sign of repentance (see Jonah 3:5-6). Why is repentance an important part of asking God for mercy?
4. It says the people fast, weep, and lament. It's safe to assume they also prayed, although the text does not mention it. Have you ever tried prayer and fasting? Why or why not? What was it like? How can we use this spiritual discipline in troubling times?
5. What does Esther's initial response in verse 11 tell us about what she was feeling? How does her response change in verse 16? "...if I perish, I perish." (NIV)
6. What does Mordecai's response in verse 14 tell us about his faith in God?
7. How does Esther tell us about Jesus and the gospel in this passage? What about her actions point forward to the things Jesus will do?

## Esther 5:1-14

1. Esther approached King Ahasuerus's throne at great risk to herself. Hebrews 4:16 (NIV) says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Why can we approach God's throne this way? Hint: Think about Esther and Jesus' similarities.
2. The king was not sexually faithful to Esther alone (Esther 2:12-14). He was also a drunk. Esther, in many ways, is caught in the system, and yet God is still at work. How does this give us hope in our culture and in the mistakes we make?
3. How does James' New Testament warning help explain the pathway Haman takes from pride to mass genocide? How does it warn us today? How can sin grow and gain power in our own lives?

**James 1:14-15** (NIV) 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

4. What sins do you need to address in your own life before they grow further? **1 John 1:9** (NIV) says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Receive God's grace and forgiveness.

## Esther 6:1-14

1. When Mordecai saves the king, his deed is recorded in the king's book of chronicles (Esther 2:23; 6:1-3). When the king remembers what he did, he rewards him. Read about the book God has of our lives and deeds in Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 56:8; 139:16; Daniel 7:10; 12:1; Malachi 3:16-18; and Revelation 20:12. How does God's book make you feel? Hopeful, afraid, or something else?
2. Jesus says in Matthew 23:11-12, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (NIV) Where do we see this truth in Esther chapter 6? What does this teach us about our own lives?
3. 1 Peter 5:6 (NIV) "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." How do we see the truth of this verse in Esther?
4. Does Mordecai's exaltation as "the man whom the king delights to honor" give you any hope for the way Jesus will one day reward you? Why do you feel that way?
5. It becomes evident to Haman's wife that he will be defeated by Mordecai and the Jewish people. What does this tell us about the providence of God? Providence is the protective care of God in our world.

## Esther 7:1-10

1. How does the story of Esther, Mordecai, and Haman help us understand the injustices we see in our world today? How can we respond where God has placed us today? (Esther 4:14)
2. In Esther 5:8 and 7:3, Esther finds "favor" in the king's sight. [Stephen Witmer](#) explains that finding the king's favor is a subtle way of implying Esther has God's favor. How does Esther have God's favor? How might we find it too?

### **Psalm 84:11** (NIV)

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
the Lord bestows favor and honor;  
no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.

3. Esther has come before the king to save herself and the people she loves, even at great risk to herself. How does this tell us about the gospel?
4. In Esther 5:14 Haman made gallows fifty cubits high (75 feet) to hang Mordecai. In Esther 7:10 Haman is hanged upon those gallows instead of Mordecai. According to Jewish law in Deuteronomy 21:23, "...anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse." How does Haman's substitutionary death contrast with Christ's? What are the similarities and differences?

**Galatians 3:13** (NIV) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."

5. How does King Ahasuerus's wrath against Haman teach us about God's wrath against our sin? Metaphorically, why can we be counted with Esther instead of with Haman?

**John 3:36** (NIV) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

**Romans 1:18** (NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

**Romans 5:8-10** (NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

## Esther 8:1-17

1. Where do we see the truth of Proverbs 21:1 in the book of Esther?

**Proverbs 21:1** (NIV)

In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water  
that he channels toward all who please him.

2. What do you think of Mordecai's reward? Was it just and fair? Should we repay those who seek to wrong us? (see Matthew 5:43-48). How should we respond to systemic injustices like slavery, racism, and abortion?
3. While the king could not revoke his edict, he did allow Esther to write a new one. What do you think of the Jews' opportunity to kill and plunder those who would have attacked them? As Christians, how should we respond?
4. Although the king allowed the Jews to plunder their enemies, if you read Esther 9:10; 15-16, they choose not to do so. Why do you think the Israelites responded that way? What held them back?
5. Why is it good to rejoice when deliverance comes? In what areas in your own life has God delivered you? How did you feel? How have you rejoiced?

## Esther 9:1-32

1. In this chapter, those who were most at risk receive power and justice while those who intended to harm the weak and the marginalized are destroyed. What does this tell us about the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God?

2. What do you think of Esther's request to extend the edict by a day and to impale Haman's ten sons on poles? Was she being vindictive? How might this tie into Israel's war against the Amalakites?
3. Just because the Bible describes a historic event doesn't mean it prescribes it for us today. What parts of Esther do you think are descriptive and what parts of Esther do you think are prescriptive?
4. Esther 9:22 tells us why Mordecai initiated Purim "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." Where do you need to see God's sovereign hand at work in your life to help you rejoice?
5. How can you rejoice and thank God for everything he has done for you this week?
6. If the unwise King Ahasuerus can become an instrument of divine justice and judgment, what does that tell us about the nature of God?
7. How can we remember and observe what God has done for us? Do we have any modern-day festivals God calls us to participate in?
8. How does Esther and Mordecai's relationship contrast with that of King Ahasuerus and Vashti?

## Esther 10:1-3

1. The book ends highlighting how Mordecai helped his people. Esther 10:3 says, "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." What connections do you see, if any, with the story of Joseph? (See Genesis 37-50).
2. Jeremiah the prophet wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon. Jeremiah 29:7 says, "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." How do we see this truth illustrated in the book of Esther?
3. Four years after these events, King Ahasuerus suffers a terrible military defeat to Greece, losing much of his wealth and power. As [Stephen Witmer](#) notes, "Things are not always as they seem." What might this teach us about trusting in ourselves and our own strength versus trusting in God?
4. What most surprised you about the book of Esther?
5. Who would you recommend read this book? Why?