



ESTHER

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 5

Welcome back to Week 5 of Esther! I hope you viewed the Teaching Video for Week 4 already, if not go ahead and do that now. In last week's study, chapters 7 and 8, we saw God turn the tables in the Jews' favor. Haman was exposed for the wicked man that he was and his plot to destroy the Jewish people, from whom the Messiah would one day come, was revealed. Haman was then hung on the very gallows that he had intended for Mordecai. I love it when God gives us a plot twist. Esther went in before the King for the second time, to plead for the lives of her people. She also revealed to the King the close, father-like relationship she had with Mordecai. The King gave them permission to write a new decree, and he gave them his signet ring to seal the deal. The Jews would have royal authority to defend themselves against their enemies when the evil day came!

CHAPTER 9 - TIME TO CELEBRATE!

In this chapter, we're about to see God literally turn mourning into dancing, and sorrow into joy. I hope you have a good imagination, and can picture the celebration that took place after the sorrow that Esther and the Jews endured.

Read Esther 9:1-19.

1. What was the month and day that was approaching and why was that day significant?
Look back at Esther 3:7,13 for more insight. (vs. 1)

2. Whom did the Jews seek to attack? (vs. 2)

3. Instead of the enemies of the Jews overpowering them, what happened? (vs. 1-2)

4. What government officials sided with the Jews and why?
(vs. 3)

5. How had Mordecai's standing with the King changed? (vs. 4)

6. What happened to the enemies of the Jews in verse 5?

7. How many of the Jewish attackers were killed in Shushan, and list out the names of Haman's ten sons who were among those killed? (vs. 6-9)

8. What did the Jews refrain from doing to the spoils of Haman's sons, and why do you feel they took this action? (vs. 10)

9. The King extended another request to Esther. What did she ask for and why? (vs. 12-14)

THE NEW LAW

"Haman had decreed that on the 13th day of the 12th month anyone could kill the Jews and take their property. Mordecai's decree could not reverse Haman's because no law signed by the King could be repealed. Instead, Mordecai had the King sign a new law giving Jews the right to fight back. When the dreaded day arrived, there was much fighting, but the Jews killed only those who wanted to kill them, and they did not take their enemies' possessions, even though they could have." (See Esther 8:11; 9:10; 9:16)
- Life Application Study Bible, pg. 759.

16. What was the significance of the name of this new holiday, "Purim"? (vs. 24; 26-28)
Look up Esther 3:7 for more insight.
17. Why do you feel that it was so important to Mordecai and Esther that this tradition be passed down for future generations? (vs. 25-28)
18. Why did Esther feel it was necessary to send out a second letter? (vs. 29-32)

ESTHER CHAPTER 10 - GOD'S PROMOTION OF MORDECAI

Apparently behind every good King, is a good right-hand man. We saw what the King was capable of with Haman wielding the signet ring of power. And now, we can see the difference a godly man makes. Proverbs 29:2 tells us "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan." We definitely can see that is true in ancient Persia, and it's still true for us today. The final chapter of the Book of Esther contains only 3 verses, and they serve as a tribute to Mordecai.

Read Esther 10:1-3.

1. What other book included the details of Mordecai's success? (vs. 2)
2. Who ended up as second in command in the kingdom, in place of Haman? (vs. 3)

3. What strikes you in the description of Mordecai in verse 3 and why? (vs. 3)

PERSONAL REFLECTION -

1. In Esther 9:4, Mordecai rose to power and was greatly respected. Yet before, he was a lowly worker at the King's gate, and was despised and hated by Haman. In Mordecai and Haman's lives, we can see two different ways of handling power and authority, and it comes from the heart. Compare and contrast Haman's and Mordecai's attitudes, as they were both promoted to second in command. What can we learn from these two very different men?

2. When the Jews defended themselves, they didn't lay hands on the plunder, meaning they didn't take the property or possessions of those who had been killed. Why did they refrain from what they were given access to by law? David, in 2 Samuel 23:13-17 also refused to drink water that his mighty men risked their lives to get for him. In what ways should we learn from this self-restraint? Has there been a time that you've refrained from something you were able to do, but felt that it wouldn't be right, or willingly chose to refrain, and why?

3. In the book of Esther, the King had two right hand men: Haman and Mordecai. No two could be more different. But it reveals to us how important close advisors, friends, and confidantes are in our lives. Following the wrong advice can lead us to a very destructive path. Consider who you are close to. What people are you giving access to your life, your thoughts, your heart, and who are you allowing to speak into your life? Are they godly, or do they advise you against what God's Word teaches?
- a. Look up Psalm 1:1-6, and Proverbs 27:5-6, 17 and summarize these verses in your own words below.
- b. Who do you need to draw closer too, and who do you need to distance yourself from? Ask God to show you what to do in this area.
4. The Jewish people were ready to embrace this new annual holiday, to celebrate God's great deliverance. And I love how the Scripture includes "and all those who would join them" in Esther 9:27. This meant that others, not only Jews, took part in this holiday and feast! This is modeling "attractive faith." Is your faith and walk with God attracting others to Him? What does this concept teach us, and how can we apply this to our lives today?

5. It's our job to pass down what God has done to the next generation. And that's what Esther and Mordecai intended to do by installing the Feast of Purim as an annual celebration throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus. The future generations would never forget the story of Esther going in before the King, and the great salvation of God who rescued them! Look up Psalm 78:4-7 and write out what this passage means in your own words.

a. What has God done in your life that He is calling you to share with your children, family, or others, to pass down the greatness of our God to the next generation?

b. What is the best way for you to share this? Will you write a letter to older children, tell your story to young kids or grandkids, or will you gather your family to tell them how God has worked in your life?

THE BIG STORY -

We're studying Esther, but really we're studying God. Looking at the "Big Story" means we are recognizing that God is the central person in the entire Bible. Everything is about Him. What did you learn about God in this story? What do these Scriptures teach you about the God we serve, His heart for His people, His nature, and His character? Pray and ask God to help you see Him in the storyline, and capture your thoughts below.

THE LITTLE STORY -

The Story of Esther is a smaller story within the Big Story of God. We can take an imaginary magnifying glass, and peer down throughout history to focus in on her life. As we're studying the Scriptures, what can we learn from Esther's character, faith in God, and examples? Or, what can we learn from other characters in this story?

LIFE APPLICATION -

What can you apply to your life from these chapters?

**THE BIBLE
IS THE
STORY OF
GOD**

The Bible is a story about God, His love, His redemptive purposes for humankind, and how He reveals Himself to His creation. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is telling us about the reign and rule of God.

PERSONAL PRAYER-

Dear God,

I come before You in the mighty Name of Jesus, and I thank You for the beautiful story of Esther in Scripture. I thank You for the picture of the Gospel in Esther's life. Jesus, You truly turn my mourning into dancing, and completely changed my eternal destiny when You took my sins upon the cross of Calvary. I humbly praise You for all You've done in my life, and I invite You to continue to work in this situation:

Just like Esther, I humbly bow before my KING, and ask You to come into my life and turn the tables on my enemies, give me freedom, write a new decree for my deliverance, seal me with Your Holy Spirit, and give me new reasons to sing, praise, dance and celebrate all You have done!

In Jesus' powerful Name,
Amen.

I PRAYED THIS PRAYER ON _____.

THE FEAST OF PURIM -

I have asked my dear friend Shari Sasser to share her personal experience with the Feast of Purim on the following pages. I know you will love reading her reflections of growing up in a Jewish home and how this beautiful tradition was celebrated in her family. She brings it to life for us, even including pictures of herself as a child! She also included a recipe for Hamantaschen that I know you will love and I hope you can enjoy with your family.

In Christ,
Michelle Staubs

PROVIDENCE

[God's Unseen Hand directing and guiding all human history.]

In what ways do you see God's Hand of PROVIDENCE in these chapters?



THE JEWISH FEAST OF PURIM

Written By: Shari Sasser

WHAT IS IT?

Purim is a very festive and fun Jewish holiday, celebrated every year, as requested by Mordecai and Queen Esther. The word Purim means "lots," since Haman cast lots to decide what day to kill all the Jews in the kingdom. Of course, now that we have studied this story, we know how God turned all that around, and that's what is celebrated at Purim. You can pronounce the word as *PUH-rim* or *poo-REEM*. Growing up in a Jewish home, I have sweet childhood memories of Purim, which is more of a lively party than a somber religious observance. Each year, our family went to our temple on Purim, and it was definitely a highlight, especially for kids!

THE MEGILLAH

The celebration centered around the reading of the Megillah, which is a hand written scroll containing the book of Esther.

Unlike the torah scroll, (*the scroll containing the five books of Moses, which has two wooden poles, one on each end, and a portion is read each week during services, and it is then rolled back on either end to hold the place for next week*), the

Megillah has one wooden pole, is read in its entirety at Purim, and then rolled back up for next year. If you've ever heard the expression, "the whole megillah"... this is where it comes from!



Megillah

You might think it would be tedious and boring for kids to sit through hearing the entire book of Esther... but it wasn't! Because everyone is given a "grogger," which is a noisemaker. As the rabbi reads the story, every time he says the word "Haman," everyone stomps their feet, yells "BOOO!" and twirls their groggers to try and drown out the name of the evil villain. Conversely, we all cheer loudly when

Mordecai's name is mentioned. In this way, everyone listens with great anticipation, and participates in the telling of the story. It was always so fun to get to do this in temple, whereas all other holidays required somber quietness.



Groggers

HAMAN?
BOOOOO!!!



Here I am, dressed as Queen Esther, in 1973 and 1977.



COSTUMES

There is music, songs and dancing at Purim, and one of my favorite things was dressing up! Traditionally, people wear masks or costumes, and there is a parade so everyone can display how they are dressed. Of course, most of the boys dress up as Mordecai, and the girls all get to be Esther for a day! It is said that the tradition of hiding yourself in a costume is a nod to the idea that God was working, clearly seen, yet "hidden" behind all of the events that He orchestrated "behind the scenes."

GIFTS and DONATIONS

Sometimes, people would give gifts on Purim, but always there was an emphasis on giving money or food to the poor. Donations would be taken and distributed. This is called doing a "mitzvah" which is a Hebrew word for "commandment, or good deed." The entire family would participate in any way they could, even children giving money from the little that they owned.

FOOD!!

While there is feasting and food of all sorts, the most well known Purim treats are "hamantaschen" which means "Haman's pocket" or "Haman's ears." Legend



hamantaschen

has it that Haman wore a three corned hat, and perhaps that is why the pastries are shaped as they are. They used to contain poppy seed filling, but now are more commonly filled with apricot or other fruit jam, chocolate, or even savory fillings. See the back of this page for a recipe!

While I appreciate my sweet memories of celebrating Purim and other Jewish traditions, I am deeply thankful for God's providence in my life. Much like we see in the story of Esther, I can see His Hand as I look back on my life, as He pursued my heart, revealed to me the truth of Jesus, saved me, and is now the Lord of my life.

Shari Sasser



HOW TO MAKE

HAMANTASCHEN



INGREDIENTS

2 large eggs
 2/3 cup sugar
 1/4 cup canola oil
 1 tsp orange zest
 1 tsp vanilla
 2 1/4 cups flour
 1 tsp baking powder
 1/4 tsp salt
 Nonstick cooking oil spray
 Preserves or jam in desired flavor

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, sugar, canola oil, orange zest and vanilla.

In another bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt.

Slowly stir the dry ingredients into the wet, until a dough begins to form.

Knead until smooth and slightly tacky to the touch. Try not to overwork the dough, only knead until the dough is the right consistency to roll out.

Lightly flour a smooth, clean surface. Use a rolling pin to roll the dough out to 1/4 inch thick. Scrape the dough up with a pastry scraper, lightly re-flour the surface, and flip the dough over. Continue rolling the dough out until it is very thin (*less than 1/8 of an inch*). Lightly flour the rolling pin occasionally to prevent sticking, if you need to.

Use a 3-inch cookie cutter (*or larger, but not smaller*) or the 3-inch rim of a glass to cut circles out of the dough, cutting as many as you can from the dough. Gather the scraps and roll them out again, and cut out more circles. Repeat process again if needed until you've cut as many circles as you can from the dough.

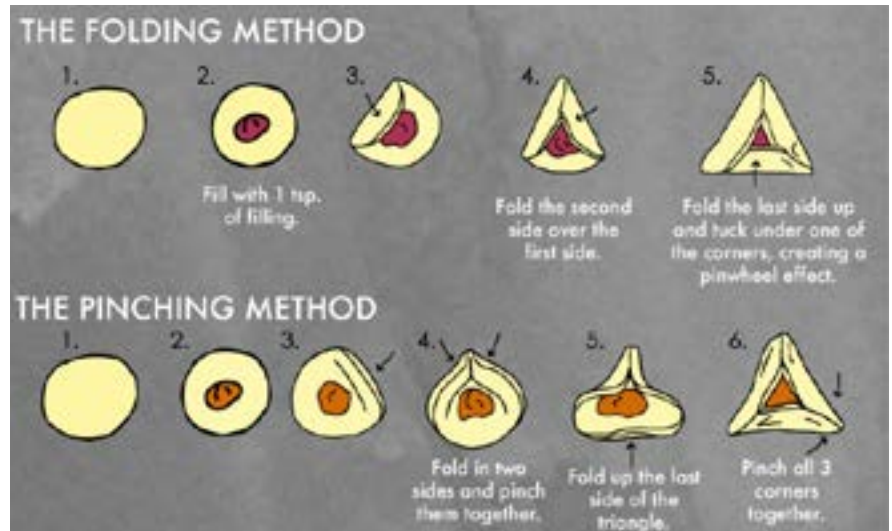
Place a teaspoon of filling (*preserves or jam*) into the center of each circle. Do not use more than a teaspoon of filling, or you run the risk of your hamantaschen opening, and the filling spilling out during baking. Cover

unused circles with a lightly damp towel to prevent them from drying out while you are filling.

Assemble the hamantaschen as shown in the gray box above.

When all of your hamantaschen have been filled, place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or nonstick foil, evenly spaced. You can fit about 20 on one sheet... they don't need to be very spaced out because they shouldn't expand much during baking.

Bake for 20-25 minutes, until the cookies are cooked through and lightly golden. Cool the cookies on a wire rack.



TO FOLD, OR TO PINCH?!



There are two ways to shape hamantaschen into triangles. You can fold them, or pinch the corners. Try them both ways, and see if you are Team Pinch, or Team Fold!!



Hamantaschen... they don't have to be just for Purim! :)