



ESTHER

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 1

WELCOME: Dear Ladies, thank you so much for joining our Women's Online Bible Study: *Esther - For Such a Time as This!* It is an honor and privilege to study God's Word with you. I believe that we should take joy in studying the Bible, so get a cup of coffee or hot tea, and find a quiet place to meet with Jesus. Every time we open Scripture, and come before Him with a willing heart, I believe that He will teach us something, and we can enjoy His presence. It's my prayer that the next five weeks are a time of growth and renewal, and that you and I will see God with fresh eyes of faith! I'm asking God to speak to you personally through this study, for such a time as this. That leads us into the key verse for this study.



KEY VERSE - ESTHER 4:14

“For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

HOW THE STUDY WILL WORK: The Book of Esther contains ten chapters. We will study from two chapters per week, and the study will last for five weeks. To get the most out of this Bible Study, you'll want to complete this entire Study Guide! Yes, you'll be answering some basic factual questions, but that will ensure that you understand the key events, characters, and storyline in Scripture. Once we understand it, then we can look for ways to see God in the story, and apply it personally. There will be sections such as Personal Reflection, Life Application, and Personal Prayer as well.

BACKGROUND: The Book of Esther was written sometime after 465 B.C. when King Ahasuerus died. The main events of this Book occur before Ezra's return to Jerusalem, and the setting is the ancient Persian Empire. This Book of the Bible is one of only two Books that bear a woman's name: Esther and Ruth. And you'll find that Esther has one of the most inspiring and compelling accounts of God's sovereignty and unfailing love for His people in all the Bible.

TEACHING VIDEO: Each Friday afternoon by 5pm, we will release the Teaching Video, and then the next Study Guide will follow via email. Thank you again for jumping into this Bible Study! I can't wait to get started!

In Christ,
Michelle Staubs and the Mid-Way Women's Team

CHAPTER 1- THE DETHRONING

We won't meet Esther until Chapter 2, but don't worry, the stage needs to be set for her entrance. Let's go!

Read Esther 1:1-8.

1. Who was the King, and how far did his realm reach? (vs. 1)

2. What city did the King reign from? (vs. 2)

3. What did he do in the third year of his reign? (vs. 3-5)

4. Describe the elaborate decorations of the feasts in your own words. (vs. 5-8)

Read Esther 1:9-12.

5. Who also made a feast, and for what group of people? (vs. 9)

6. What did King Ahasuerus command on the seventh day, and what condition was the King in at the time? (vs. 10-11)

7. How did Queen Vashti respond, and why do you think she responded in that manner? (vs. 12)

8. What was the King's reaction to Vashti's refusal? (vs. 12)

Read Esther 1:13-22.

9. Whom did King Ahasuerus consult for wisdom? List them out by name and how they ranked in the kingdom. (vs. 13-14)

PROVIDENCE

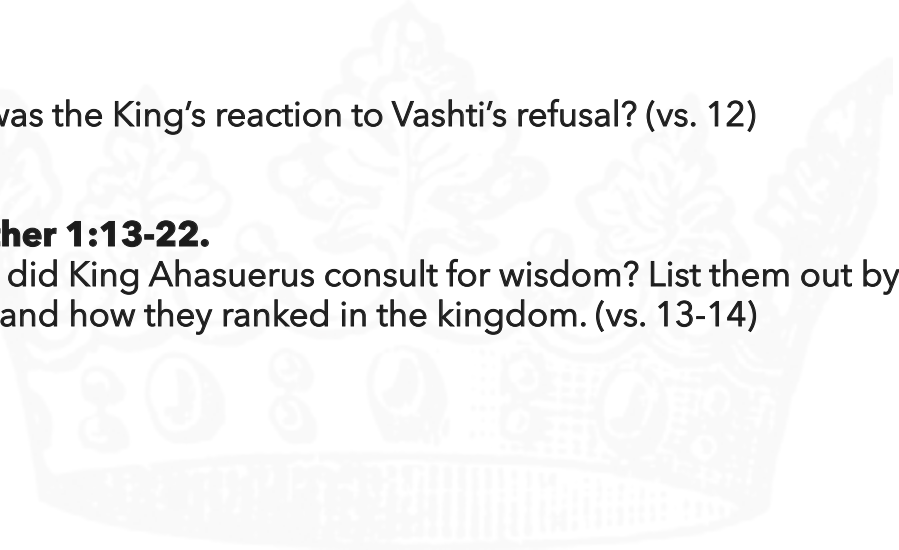
A major theme in the life of Esther is the Providence of God.

Providence is simply the unseen hand of God sustaining and guiding all of human history.

THE KING OF PERSIA

The King at this time is known in history as Xerxes the Great, Persia's 5th king, reigning from 486 -465 B.C.

In some versions of the Bible, he is called Ahasuerus, his Hebrew name, and in some versions he is referred to as Xerxes, his Greek name.



10. What were the concerns of the King's royal advisers? (vs. 16-18)
11. What was their advice to the king? (vs. 19-20)
12. According to verse 19, what was significant about the law of the Medes and Persians?
13. Why do you think King Ahasuerus followed their advice?
14. What message did King Ahasuerus send out to his entire kingdom? (vs. 20)
15. Do you think Vashti was right or wrong to refuse the King's order, and why? Use Scripture to support your answer.

EUNUCHS

In ancient times, it was a common practice for rulers to castrate some of their servants and advisers in order to subdue them and ensure they would not try to usurp power to establish their own dynasty. It was especially common to castrate men who tended the royal harem. Queen Esther's eunuchs are mentioned in Esther 4:4 and King Ahasuerus' eunuchs are mentioned in Esther 1:10-12; 2:3.

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. Even in the pagan culture of the Medes and Persians with a ungodly king, God was moving. God can step into any place, high or low, religious or agnostic, and He doesn't need an invitation. The world is His, and He is free to do as He pleases. He is always at work behind the scenes on behalf of His people in situations that no one would ever suspect. Can you name a place, situation, or person's life that seems unlikely that God could be moving and working, and why?

Just because God doesn't need an invitation doesn't mean we shouldn't ask Him! Take a moment and invite God into this very place, situation, or person's life by simply filling in the blank below:

"God, I invite you to work in _____."

2. There comes a point in time when God decides to change things up. In Scripture, it's called "*the appointed time*." (See Genesis 18:14; Exodus 9:5; 2 Kings 4:17.) Look up Isaiah 43:18-19 and read the passage. Currently, what areas of your life are you in need of God to step in and do something new?
3. Can God use the mistakes, even sins, of your life to bring about His purposes? Why or why not? Include Scripture to support your answer.

CHAPTER 2 - A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Esther doesn't even appear in Chapter 1 of the Biblical Book that bears her name, but we are about to meet her. She sweeps into that stuffy palace as a breath of fresh air. Even though she's beautiful, we will see that she's more than just a pretty face. She's got the favor of God on her life. This chapter reminds me of Psalm 90:17, "*And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.*" That's my prayer for you today.

If you're expecting the "Sunday School version," you won't find it here. The practices of the ancient Persians are simply shocking and unsettling. This is the culture that Esther was forced into. Just because it appears that God is absent, nothing could be further from the truth. We're about to witness God's unseen hand. So jump in and don't miss one detail!

Read Esther 2:1-4.

1. What happened when the King "remembered Queen Vashti?" (vs. 1)
2. What did his advisers propose? (vs. 2-4)
3. How would the candidates be selected to become the new queen? (vs. 3-4)

Read Esther 2:5-7.

4. Describe everything we learn about Mordecai in verses 5-6?

5. Write out every detail we learn about Esther in verse 7.

EXILE

Mordecai's family had been carried away into exile from Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar nearly 100 years prior. Jews in Persia at this time had freedom, but also were treated with prejudice.

Read Esther 2:8-14.

6. Do you believe that Esther was able to make her own decision about going to the King's palace? Why or why not? Use Scripture to support your answer.

As you're reading these Scriptures, note that this is a pagan culture and a gentile king. The behavior of the king and his advisers is enough to anger and outrage us. Yet, Esther is there, and she's alone. She was a pure Jewish girl, living in Persia, far from Jerusalem. And she had little if no access to Mordecai for support or advice. Everything she is about to experience will fly in the face of her modest Jewish upbringing.

7. Who was Hegai and what was his position? (vs. 8)

8. How did Hegai react to Esther? (vs. 9)

9. List the perks that Esther received because of Hegai's favor. (vs. 9)

10. What had Esther kept hidden from everyone at the palace, and why did she do this? (vs. 10)
11. How did Mordecai seek to find out what was happening with Esther? How do you think he felt, as the man who raised her? (vs. 11)
12. What were her prescribed beauty treatments, and what was the purpose of the treatments? (vs 12-14)

As you're reading these Scriptures, keep in mind that many scholars believe that Esther had no say in the matter at all. One Queen had already been removed due to her disobedience of the King's direct order. Now, a new Queen would be selected from the most beautiful virgins in the kingdom. The immorality of the Persian court could give our modern culture a run for it's money.

13. What was the shocking process of the new young women meeting the king? (vs. 12-14)

Read Esther 2:15-18.

14. What was unique about Esther's preparation to meet King Ahasuerus, and what insight does this give us about her? (vs. 15)

15. What month and year of the King's reign was Esther taken to meet the King? (vs.16)

BEAUTY CONTEST?

Some Bible Students see this whole enterprise as an empire wide "beauty contest" and Esther as a contestant who probably shouldn't have entered.

However, others feel that the women were not volunteers but were selected and assembled by the king's special officers. The girls were not kidnapped but everybody knew that the will of an Eastern monarch could not successfully be opposed. In this case I don't think we should condemn Esther for what happened to her since these circumstances were, for the most part, out of her control, and God did not overrule them for the good of her people.

- Wiersbe Bible Commentary, pg 800



16. How did the King respond to Esther? (vs. 17-18)

17. What celebration did the King give, and what was it entitled? (vs. 18)

Read Esther 2:19-23.

18. What plot did Mordecai uncover, and how was Esther involved? (vs. 19-22)

19. Who was behind the plot, and what happened to them? (vs. 21-22)

20. Where were the details of this attempted assassination recorded? (vs. 23)

PERSONAL REFLECTION -

God had been preparing Esther for this role all of her life. In what ways has God been preparing you for your current role? How have you seen His hand at work 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 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.

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?

PERSONAL PRAYER-

Dear God,

Thank You for Your Holy Word, that it has the power to transform me and change me from the inside out. Please grant me growth and renewal during this time of study. Lord, I need Your presence. Let me see You in the story of Esther. Teach me the truths You want me to learn during this season of my life. Help me to see You with fresh eyes of faith. Give me a heart that fully trusts in your sovereignty and unseen hand. In the name of JESUS CHRIST, Amen!

I PRAYED THIS PRAYER ON _____.

TEACHING VIDEO- Look for the Teaching Video to be released this Friday, April 3rd, by 5pm. We'll send you an email when it's ready for you to view!

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?

