

Small Group Materials—Esther 2

Pray for your time together in God's Word

Synopsis of Study: In this chapter, events are starting to unfold that will play a critical role in saving the Jewish people later in the book. We see that even in the midst of their exile, God directed events for the good of the Israelites.

Ask the Group: What comes to mind when you hear the word 'providence'?

Leader's Note: Ask someone from your group to summarize what's happened so far in Esther in 60 seconds.

Read: Esther 2 (NIV) Option: Give group 3 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

¹Later when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. ²Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. ³Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them.⁴Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

⁵Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, ⁶who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. ⁷Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

⁸When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. ⁹She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem.

¹⁰Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. ¹¹Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

¹²Before a young woman's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. ¹³And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. ¹⁴In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

¹⁵When the turn came for Esther (the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. ¹⁶She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

¹⁷ Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸ And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality. ¹⁹ When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. ²⁰ But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up. ²¹ During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. ²² But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. ²³ And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

Ask the Group: What specific events or circumstances in this chapter do you see as ordained by God?

Possible Answers:

- *Queen Vashti made a decision that resulted in a need for a new queen*
- *King decides to do a broad search for a new wife*
- *Esther gets selected as one of the "young virgins"*
- *Esther wins the favor of Hegai, and so receives special treatment*
- *The king was attracted to Esther more than any other woman, and chose her for his wife*
- *Mordecai was at the right place at the right time and overheard the plot to kill the king*
- *Mordecai gets the message to the king through Esther, which solidifies her and Mordecai's value and position with the king*

• **Ask the Group:** Why do you think God chose to direct these events/circumstances in this way?

Possible Answers: To set the stage for His later work in Esther/the people of Israel's lives, to teach Esther (and others), etc.

Ask the Group: In what ways do you think God intervenes today?

Possible Answers: He offers us the Gospel to save us. He works in our circumstances/struggles.

Ask the Group: Can you think of a time in your life when you felt like God intervened on your behalf?

- **Ask the Group:** What did you learn about God through that experience?

Read: Titus 3:4-7 and 2 Corinthians 1:9-11

These passages describe how God intervenes in our lives today.

Titus 3:4-7 (NIV)

⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

2 Corinthians 1:9-11(NIV)

⁹Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

Ask the Group: What stands out to you about these passages in relation to God preserving His people?
Possible Answer: God preserves His people both spiritually and also physically/mentally/emotionally.

Ask the Group: In your life, do you find it more difficult to believe that God has intervened through Christ to secure you spiritually, or that He intervenes in your present circumstances to preserve you physically, emotionally and mentally?

- **Ask the Group:** Why is that?

Ask the Group: What implications do these truths have for us in our lives?

Possible Answers: If we have security in Christ of eternal life, then our worries and anxieties are put in proper perspective. We are also given freedom to live for Christ and fight for things that have eternal significance

Optional: Read Philippians 1:15-26 to see Paul's decision to press on for the Philippians' spiritual progress and joy in the faith.

If we believe that God intervenes to help us physically, mentally and emotionally in our current circumstances, then we are given confidence in our prayers. We can also rely on God day-to-day for strength, direction and provision.

Read: Romans 8:35-39; 2 Corinthians 4:8-11; and 2 Corinthians 12:10

Leaders Note: We want to remind people with these passages that God doesn't promise a struggle-free, pain-free, or trouble-free life. But He does give us Himself, and promise to be with us to the end of the age (Mt 28:20).

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 12:10

For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Ask the Group: Do these passages align with how you view (have experienced) the Christian life? Why or why not?

Ask the Group: What ways do you see God preserving His followers in these passages?

Possible Answers:

- *By being faithful to us even through death.*
- *By keeping us in His love through all different kinds of life troubles.*
- *He doesn't allow us to be completely destroyed, completely driven to despair, nor forsaken.*

Ask the Group: How can we remember and apply these Truths when faced with hardship?

Ask the Group: What is our community application of this passage?

Leader's Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.