

Esther 3

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Read to the Group (Synopsis of Study): Studying Esther chapter by chapter provides us the opportunity to look at the smaller stories of Esther within the larger more well-known narrative. Chapter 3 focuses upon Mordecai's stand against Haman and Haman's prideful call for genocide. In this study we look at Mordecai's stand for his faith and Haman's stand for his pride. We then look at our lives comparatively and use the gospel to better understand how our "stands" should look as Christians. Awesome!

Ask the Group: Do you have issues in your life for which you will always take a stand? What does standing up for those things look like?

Possible Answer: "I take stands when I think I'm right."

Read Esther 3:1-6 (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.

Ask the Group: Let's set the stage: there are three players in this chapter. King Ahasuerus, Haman, and Mordecai. Who are they? What roles have they played in the prior chapters?

Possible Answers: King Ahasuerus - King of the Medes and Persians (India to Ethiopia), Esther is his queen; Mordecai - Esther's uncle who raised her (2:5-7), a servant of some sort or at least hangs out with the servants; Haman - a high ranking official in Ahasuerus' court.

- **Ask the Group:** Verse 1 begins by saying, "After these things." What are the "these things" to which this verse is referring? What is the context of this story?

Possible Answers: Mordecai saves the king's life by uncovering a plot.

Ask the Group: The king commanded everyone to bow to Haman, and everyone was doing it; why do you think Mordecai did not bow down?

Possible Answers: It seems most likely that it has to do with Mordecai being a Jew and most likely Haman being an Agagite. There's a lot between these two nations and a history of enmity. (1 Samuel 15). Mordecai is taking a significant stand here against Haman.

Leaders Note: There's a lot to extract from here. Some commentaries even go so far as to indicate that Mordecai is picking and choosing which Jewish laws to obey (since he instructs

Esther to pretend not to be a Jew). While that may be true, the point emphasized here is that in these few verses, Mordecai takes a bold and unwavering stand to something that would have been way easier to compromise on.

- **Ask the Group:** Have you ever been in a position to take a bold stand on something? How did that experience affect you?

Ask the Group: How do people (not Haman) react to Mordecai's not bowing down?

Possible Answers: They appear surprised, they persist in questioning him

- **Ask the Group:** In verse four it says, "they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them." What can you infer about Mordecai's motivations and what do you suspect was the impression his stand made on the servants?

Possible Answers: It shows that Mordecai has integrity and that he did not make the decision to disobey the king's orders on a whim. This seems to be clear to the servants since they tested him to see "If his word would stand."

Ask the Group: We see Mordecai take a stand as one of God's children and he gets tested for it. What are some things that you take a stand for because of Christ?

Possible Answers: We are called to be imitators of God - this will often make us look drastically different in society.

- **Ask the Group:** Are there people in your life that test your resolve?

Read Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Ask the Group: What does this passage reveal about the reality of how followers of Christ are to live?

Possible Answers: the purpose is to live differently so that God is proclaimed and praised

- **Ask the Group:** Are there times in which this passage is easier or more difficult to live out?

Leader's Note: *It's important for us to ponder that as Christians, we are different than nonbelievers. The Holy Spirit is alive in us and is changing our hearts. This internal change has external manifestations, both in how we chose to act and what we chose to partake in. We are called to be a light in the darkness.*

Ask the Group: How does what we stand for and *how* we stand for it affect those around us for the Gospel?

Leader's Note: This could lead to discussion concerning conversations with individuals in love vs. broad sweeping demonstrations that seem to neglect heart conditions and solely focus on actions/sins. In the words of Cor "because matter and manner, matter." The discussion could include how believers need to be sensitive to their audiences.

Further discussion topics associated with this application could be: being in the world but not of the world, being all things to all people, being wise as serpents but gentle as doves, speaking truth in love.

Esther 3:7-15 (ESV)

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. 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 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.

Ask the Group: What do you think is at the root of Haman's reaction?

Possible Answer: He's infuriated he's not getting the 'respect' that he feels entitled to, pride, his identity is threatened

Ask the Group: By the king's decree everyone was supposed to pay homage to Haman and he demanded it. It's easy to judge Haman and distance ourselves from him, however do you ever have times where you feel entitled to respect or power?

- **Ask the Group:** What do your actions look like in those situations? How can you consider what is best for the body of Christ in those moments?"

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

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