

## Small Group Materials: Esther 5

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### A Tale of Two Characters

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*Leaders Note:*

*This study takes place in two 'acts.'*

*In the first act your group will divide up into two subgroups. One subgroup will look at Esther and the other at Haman. The subgroups will look for information about the character of Esther and Haman and will bring that back to the overall group for general discussion.*

*In the second act, members of the group will divide up into pairs (hopefully pairing up individuals who were not working together in act one). They will look at other individuals from the Bible and will report back to the group how the individual that they looked at resembles Esther, Haman or both.*

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

**Act One:**

#### **Read Out Loud: Esther 5**

##### *Esther's Request to the King*

<sup>1</sup> On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. <sup>2</sup> When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

<sup>3</sup> Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

<sup>4</sup> "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."

<sup>5</sup> "Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks."

So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. <sup>6</sup> As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, "Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

<sup>7</sup> Esther replied, "My petition and my request is this: <sup>8</sup> If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."

##### *Haman's Rage Against Mordecai*

<sup>9</sup> Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai.

<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home.

Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, <sup>11</sup> Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. <sup>12</sup> "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. <sup>13</sup> But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

<sup>14</sup> His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up.

*Leaders Note: Divide into two subgroups. Group one will be looking at vv. 1-8 and group two will be looking at vv. 9-14. Group one will be focusing on Esther and group two will be focusing on Haman. Have each group work together to answer the following questions about their passage:*

**Ask the Group:** What does this passage tell you about the character of Esther/Haman?

*Possible Answers:*

*Esther – Bold (willing to go before the king) vs.1, Respectful (If it pleases the king vs. 4)*

*Haman – Boastful (vs.11) full of rage (vs. 9 and 14)*

**Ask the Group:** How does the author communicate the heart of Esther/Haman?

*Possible Answers:*

*Esther – by describing her attire vs.1 and her demeanor vs. 4, vs. 8*

*Haman – by describing his heart vs. 9, by describing his boasting vs. 11*

**Ask the Group:** From popular culture, find someone who resembles Esther/Haman. Why do you think that this is the case?

*Possible Answers:*

*Esther – Mother Theresa, Gandhi, a whistle blower*

*Haman – Donald Trump, Talk show hosts, rock stars, Kim Jung Un, Charlie Sheen*

## **Act Two:**

*Leader's Note: Have pairs of people each look at one of the passages listed below, answer the following questions about that passage, and bring their answer back to the group.*

- *How is the main character in your passage like Esther and/or Haman? Why?*

## **Simon the Sorcerer - Acts 8:9-24**

<sup>9</sup> Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, <sup>10</sup> and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." <sup>11</sup> They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he

preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. <sup>14</sup> When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. <sup>15</sup> When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money <sup>19</sup> and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." <sup>20</sup> Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup> You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup> Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." <sup>24</sup> Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

- How is the main character your passage like Esther and/or Haman? Why?  
*Possible Answer: He is like Haman in that he boasted to be someone great (vs. 9) but he was like Esther in his eventual humility (vs. 24)*

#### **Peter Disowns Jesus – Mark 14:66-72**

<sup>66</sup> While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. <sup>67</sup> When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

<sup>68</sup> But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.

<sup>69</sup> When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." <sup>70</sup> Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

<sup>71</sup> He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

<sup>72</sup> Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

- Is the main character in your passage more like Esther or Haman? Why?  
*Possible Answer: Peter is both like Haman and Esther in this passage. He is brash at the beginning of the passage (vv. 66-71), but he understands his true place by the end (vs. 72).*

### **The Faith of a Syrophenician Woman – Mark 7:24-30**

<sup>24</sup> Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. <sup>25</sup> In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

<sup>27</sup> “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”

<sup>28</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

<sup>29</sup> Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

<sup>30</sup> She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

- Is the main character in your passage more like Esther or Haman? Why?  
*Possible Answer: The woman is more like Esther in that she is bold but respectful and shows courage.*

### **The Parable of the Rich Fool – Luke 12:13-21**

<sup>13</sup> Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” <sup>15</sup> Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

<sup>16</sup> And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. <sup>17</sup> He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

<sup>18</sup> “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’

<sup>20</sup> “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

<sup>21</sup> “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”

- Is the main character in your passage more like Esther or Haman? Why?  
*Possible Answer: The rich fool is more like Haman in that he is self-seeking and boastful.*

### **The Faith of the Centurion – Matthew 8:5-13**

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup> “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “I will go and heal him.”

<sup>8</sup> The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup> For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

<sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. <sup>11</sup> I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>12</sup> But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour.

- Is the main character in your passage more like Esther or Haman? Why?  
*Possible Answer: The Centurion is more like Esther in that he is bold (vs.5) and respectful (vs.8).*

**Ask the Group:** Take a moment to look at who you are as a person. Look at the characters that we have studied today. How does your character resemble Esther and how does it resemble Haman? Ask God to mold your character to be more like Esther.

**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.*