

## Small Group Materials—Esther 6

**Pray for your time together in God's Word.**

**Synopsis of Study:** In this study we contrast Haman and Mordecai's responses to recognition and draw from Christ's example of living in humility as a way to glorify God and kill sin in our lives.

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

**Ask the Group:** Have you ever done something good that went unnoticed? How did you react?

**Read: Esther 6:1-10 (NIV)**

Option: Give group 3 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

1 That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. 2 It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

3 "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked.

"Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.

4 The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him.

5 His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court."

"Bring him in," the king ordered.

6 When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?"

Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" 7 So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, 8 have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!'"

**Ask the Group:** This passage provides an example of a form of recognition during the time period of Esther. What can receiving recognition look like today?

*Possible Answers: Promotion or raise at work (or some other employee-incentive), verbal praise or public acknowledgement in a work or school setting, announcements we make about ourselves on social media.*

**Ask the Group:** What are some areas of your life where you seek recognition?

*Possible Answers: Academic or job success, being a good parent (or husband, wife, friend, etc.).*

**Ask the Group:** Why is recognition important to people?

*Possible Answers: Increases sense of self-worth, feels like it validates their actions.*

**Read: Esther 6:10-14**

10 “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.”

11 So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!”

12 Afterward Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, 13 and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him.

His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!” 14 While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

**Ask the Group:** Why do we often feel entitled or deserving of praise for our work?

*Possible Answers: We’re looking for some time of satisfaction or validation that our efforts are worthwhile. The root of these desires is often found in pride.*

**Ask the Group:** In what ways can praise be a good thing? A bad thing?

*Possible Answers: It can be a tool for motivation. “Words of Affirmation” is a love-language. Praise can be used to speak Truth into other’s lives. It can be a bad thing when it shifts people’s motivations in a negative (sinful) way about serving others, etc. People’s praise can become something we crave more than God’s praise.*

**Ask the Group:** Mordecai and Haman have two very different attitudes towards recognition. Do you identify with one of their attitudes more than the other?

**Ask the Group:** In what ways could you change your focus?

*Possible Answers: Thinking about long-term reward, discerning your heart-motives and why recognition is important to you.*

**Ask the Group:** What are some ways that you can protect your heart against pride?

*Possible Answers: Expressing thankfulness (to God and others), renewing our minds with truth that enlarges our view of God.*

Optional Transition: Our ultimate example of leading a life that doesn’t seek recognition is Christ. Let’s take a look at how being humble can convey the Gospel.

## **Read: Philippians 2:1-11**

1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,<sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:  
<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God,  
    did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
    by taking the very nature of a servant,  
    being made in human likeness.  
<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
    he humbled himself  
    by becoming obedient to death—  
    even death on a cross!  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
    and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
    in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
    to the glory of God the Father.

**Ask the Group:** What does it mean to be a servant?

*Possible Answers: See Mark 10:42-45; John 13:1-17. Not seeking self-recognition, not defining ourselves by a position or qualification, humbling ourselves.*

**Ask the Group:** How does being a servant differ from the attitude and actions of Haman?

**Ask the Group:** What is at stake when we seek self-recognition?

*Possible Answers: Our actions should flow out of our love for Christ and desire to bring Him glory (1 Peter 2:11-12). The danger is in distorting the Gospel--doing good deeds to "earn" favor with God, out of some sense of obligation, or to continue in sin such as pride.*

**Ask the Group:** How can we cultivate a desire for God's worth to be made known more than our own?

**Ask the Group:** What is our community application from 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.*