

## Esther 7

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

**Study Summary:** The first part of this study discusses the contrast between how Esther must approach King Xerxes and how we may approach the throne of God. The second part of the study discusses justice and grace.

**Ask the Group:** When have you had to approach someone who had more power or authority than you? How did you feel or act?

*Possible Answers: This could be a supervisor at work, a professor, a parent (when you were a child)*

**Read verses 1-6 out loud as a group. Option: Give group 2 minutes to look at the passage on their own.**

Esther 7:1-6 (NIV)

**1** So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, **2** and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

**3** Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. **4** For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."

**5** King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

**6** Esther said, "An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!"

**Ask the Group:** Discuss the formalities and precautions Esther took in approaching King Xerxes.

*Possible answers:*

*V1-she "battered him up" with two banquets*

*V2-she waited until her third approach to finally make her request*

*V2-she asked while the king was drinking wine*

*V3-she was very complimentary and meek toward the king*

*V4-she asked and expected very little, only that her and her people's lives be spared*

**Have the group look up Hebrews 4:14-16 and have someone read the passage out loud.**

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NIV):

**14** Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. **16** Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

**Ask the Group:** How does the manner in which we can approach God differ from Esther's petition to the king?

*Possible answers:*

*-We have Jesus, the son of God, to petition on our behalf*

*-Our King empathizes with us*

*-Our King is sinless, so we don't need to worry about an unpredictable rage such as King Xerxes often displayed*

*-God's throne is named the "throne of grace," which tells us what we can expect when we approach*

*-We can approach confidently, without fear, unlike Esther, whose very life was at stake in approaching King Xerxes (Esther 4:11)*

**Ask the Group:** What things might be keeping you from approaching God with confidence?

*Possible answers: Feeling that you are not good enough, or don't deserve to make any requests of God, feeling that your concerns are, being afraid of what God's response might be – maybe not actually wanting to hear what he has to say on a matter, lack of faith in the effectiveness of prayer – maybe not believing that it really makes a difference*

- **Ask the Group:** What truth from the Word can you apply to overcome these things?

*Possible Answers: we have the righteousness of Christ, God has reconciled us to Himself and now invites us to approach Him, God is good and loving and in him we have true fulfillment and joy.*

- **Ask the Group:** What changes in your life when you believe or don't believe these truths?

**Read verses 7-10 out loud as a group.** Option: Give group 2 minutes to look at the passage on their own.

Esther 7:7-10 (NIV)

**7** The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

**8** Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining.

The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?"

As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. **9** Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king."

The king said, "Impale him on it!" **10** So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

**Read the following definition to the group:** Poetic Justice: A literary device in which virtue is ultimately rewarded or vice punished, often in modern literature by an ironic twist of fate intimately related to the character's own conduct

**Ask the Group:** How was poetic justice delivered in the case of Haman?

*Possible answers: Haman's vice was his evil desire to kill Mordecai out of jealousy and pride, and furthermore to annihilate the entire Jewish race. The ironic twist of fate was that the very pole/gallows Haman erected on his own property to execute Mordecai was in the end used for his own execution.*

**Ask the Group:** Knowing that the Jews are saved through Esther revealing Haman's plot, did they also receive poetic justice in this story, in that virtue is rewarded?

*Possible answers: Truly, the Jews did not receive poetic justice, but rather grace and mercy from the Lord their God. It was not their virtue –or anything else for that matter- that saved them or was rewarded; it was God's promise to preserve his people and his decision to intervene to save their lives. Although our initial response to this story might be to cheer for Esther's cunning and the Jews' triumph, we really ought to be cheering for God, who has extended grace to his people even though they did nothing to deserve it.*

**Ask the Group:** In reading this story, we realize that we, as sinners, deserve Haman's fate. Instead, we have received the grace extended to Esther and the Jewish people. Do you feel that you balance both the truths of what you deserve and what you've received?

*Possible answers: Some of us dwell in one of these truths without the balancing truth of the other.*

*If we focus only on our sin and darkness, we will always be “kicking ourselves,” and feel overwhelmed and hopeless in view of our failures. We need to start living in the reality of God’s grace, and that all of our ugliness is paid for and covered in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we are daily renewed and empowered to live a life following God.*

*If, on the other hand, we have little to no appreciation for our sin, we will not appreciate what we have been saved from. In fact, we may on some level believe that we weren’t in much need of saving in the first place. For the grace of God to really hit us, we must realize where we’ve come from. John 7:47 says, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”*

- **Ask the Group:** Do you need to focus more on one of these truths?

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

*Possible answer: When we deal with the many bumps and bruises of living in community, we can remember how God deals graciously with us, and in turn extend that grace in our relationships with others.*

*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.*