

Small Group Materials - Esther 8

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Synopsis of Study: How do you change the unchangeable? That's what this small group is about. How did Esther and Mordecai change the edict condemning them, how are we reconciled to God and His absolute holiness and righteousness, and what can we learn from Esther, Mordecai, and the Jew's response in Esther 8?

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

Read passage out loud as a group. Option: Give group 3 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

Esther 8:1-8 (ESV)

That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. ²The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman's estate.

³Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. ⁴Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him.

⁵"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. ⁶For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"

⁷King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. ⁸Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."

Ask the Group: Up to and including this point, how many times has Esther gone to the King? What did those other times look like?

Possible Answer: Esther presents herself to the king and asks him to come to a feast for him and Haman [5:1-6]. During that feast she asks him to come to another feast [5:7-8]. During the second feast she reveals Haman's plot to the king [7:16], and finally here in [8:3-6].

Leaders Note: Have your small group read through these passages quickly if your small group needs a refresher. We're going to unpack this a bit.

Tell the Group: All of these interactions lead to the point in verse 5 where Esther asks, "If it pleases the king... let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman... devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces."

- **Ask the Group:** Why do you think the king doesn't just revoke the old edict?

Possible Answer: Decrees writing in the king's name and sealed with his ring cannot be revoked (also seen in Daniel 6:8).

- **Ask the Group:** What does the king offer to Esther and Mordecai as their solution to changing the unchangeable decree?

Possible Answer: 'Here's my power, you write it.' The king allows Esther and Mordecai to write a new edict on behalf of the Jews.

Leaders note: Now we're going back and bit by bit, comparing and contrasting the salvation of the Jews in Esther with our own salvation.

Ask the Group: As the Jews stand condemned by the edict, Esther continuously pursues the King in order to save her people. How does the Jew's standing compare to our status before Christ came? What is/was the unchangeable 'edict'?

Possible Answers: We stood condemned [Ephesians 2:3]! None of us were righteous [Romans 3:10]. We all have gone astray [Isaiah 53:6]. The unchangeable 'edict' is that God is absolutely righteous and holy and we are tarnished by sin. No part of us is exempt from sin.

- **Ask the Group:** How does the example of the Jews in Esther compare to the reality of our condemned status before God?

Possible Answer: We are/were hostile to God. We can't approach him and we didn't pursue Him [Romans 1:21; 8:7]; He relentlessly pursues us [Titus 3:4-7]

- **Ask the Group:** Esther and Mordecai come up with a new decree that overcomes the old condemnation. How does this compare to what Christ has done regarding the law that condemned us?

Possible Answers: As Mathew 5:18 states, the law cannot be changed and Jesus had to fulfill it in order to prevent our condemnation.

Ask the Group: Romans 5:10 says, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." How is this truth an even greater salvation than Xerxes granted to the Jews?

Possible Answer: God saved us before we pleased him, unlike Esther and Xerxes [v5]; now that we are saved, we enjoy his pleasure and work from the Righteousness He has given us, not for that Righteousness, God did not save us to condemn us, but to sanctify us and make us pure and spotless.

- **Ask the Group:** What do you need to remember and believe about the Gospel and your salvation?

Esther 8:9-17 (ESV)

⁹ At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai's orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush.^[a] These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language.¹⁰ Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king.

¹¹ The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children,^[b] and to plunder the property of their enemies.¹² The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.¹³ A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made

known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

¹⁴ The couriers, riding the royal horses, went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa.

¹⁵ When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. ¹⁶ For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. ¹⁷ In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

Ask the Group: Have you ever had to anxiously await news that could have drastically changed your life? What does the waiting feel like?

Ask the Group: In verse 9 and 12. What is significant about the time frame and expediency with which the second edict was communicated?

Possible Answers: Esther spreads the good, saving news of the new edict as quickly as possible. Esther had 9 months to spread this news in order for it to effectively save her people; the quick communication of the edict, however, leads to joy and celebration.

Read: The Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20:

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

Ask the Group: How does the communication of the Jews' salvation in Esther tie into the Great Commission?

Possible Answers: As the Gospel is the greatest news that anyone can receive and leads to rejoicing we should take Esther's lead in spreading this good news as quickly and effectively as possible.

- **Ask the Group:** How is the spread of the edict to the Jews similar to the spread of the Gospel in other ways?

Possible Answers: The news was widespread and for everyone regardless of their response to it, it was "in the script of each province and the language of each people"(v9), similar to Acts 2:6 during which many peoples heard the Gospel in their own language.

Ask the Group: What is the most joyful and freeing aspect of the Gospel to you?

Leaders Note: Remind your small group of the material from the first section of the study.

Ask the Group: Consider how the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ has affected your life? How are you sharing that with others?

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.