



# E S T H E R

THREADS OF SOVEREIGNTY & SACRIFICE

## GETTING STARTED: THE POWER OF STORY

Stories are powerful; they can inspire, challenge, encourage, connect, and teach. The book of Esther is a story that has stirred people's hearts since it was written. We will also use Esther's story, as well as our own stories, to challenge and encourage each other to grow this semester.

1. Each week, choose someone to share a 5-minute story at your next gathering.
2. Consider having them follow one of these prompts:
  - When did you choose to follow Christ for the first time?
  - Describe time of hardship when you experience God's provision.
  - When was a moment you vividly remember celebrating God's goodness.
  - Has God answered a big prayer for you, or answered a prayer in a big way?


Persian Culture:

Men were distinguished by their wealth and power, and women were appraised by their beauty.

Tim Keller notes, "Not much in the world has changed. What you have and how you look often matters more than who you are in today's culture."

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read the following Scriptures together, and then use the questions (or any you wish to add) to discuss the text and unpack its meaning.

 Have someone in your group read **Esther 1**.

- What do you think about the context of the book of Esther?
- How is King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) portrayed in Esther 1? What do his actions reveal about his character?

- What insights do we gain about Queen Vashti from her actions in this chapter?
- What does power look like in the court of King Xerxes?
- How do characteristics like gender and social status influence these characters' interactions?
- Do you see evidence or absence of God's providence in Esther 1?

## GETTING PRACTICAL

Perhaps the most striking thing about the book of Esther is not what the author tells us, but what they don't tell us. The book opens with themes of wealth, power, and brokenness, but there is no mention of God. The characters don't seek God, pray, or praise. God's purpose and plan aren't referenced. Initially, it appears as if God is entirely absent from the story. However, this perceived absence highlights a deliberate storytelling tactic: when God seems invisible in a story, He is actively working to fulfill His plans.

- 1) What do you find difficult about trusting, loving, and following an invisible God? How does God reveal Himself to us?
- 2) How does the difference between visible and invisible things show what God values, especially in a culture that often emphasizes outer appearances and material wealth?
- 3) How can we learn to value others' unseen qualities like character over their external characteristics, like beauty and wealth?