



ESTHER

THREADS OF SOVEREIGNTY & SACRIFICE

GETTING STARTED: POWER OF STORY

Stories are powerful; they can inspire, challenge, encourage, teach, and connect. The book of Esther is a story that has stirred the mind and soul every year since it was written. This semester let's use our own stories to challenge, encourage each other to grow.

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?

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

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



Have someone in your group read **Esther 2:19-3:15**

- Esther 2:19-23, how does Mordecai's loyalty to the king ultimately benefit the kingdom? Do you think Mordecai received the recognition he deserved for his loyalty? How might this relate to instances of unrecognized loyalty in our own lives or communities?
- In Esther 2:19-3:15, we see the introduction of Haman and his rise to power. What do we learn about his character?

- Read the “**Looking Back in History**” note found at the end of this group study. How does this historical context give you a better understanding of what was happening in Esther?

GETTING PRACTICAL

1. Compromise can be a real risk to our faith and nearly every other area of our lives. Why do you think people make compromises that are contrary to their values or goals? What impact might compromise have on our faith, work, relationships, or integrity?
2. We can tend to overlook instances of disobedience in the Bible. However, if we are honest, many of us can identify with struggles related to obedience. What makes obedience challenging sometimes? How can you cultivate greater intentionality in following God’s instructions and commands?

Looking Back in History

When you meet someone new you might introduce yourself by talking about your job, your faith, or your family. Introductions help us tell people who we are and what we are about. In Chapter 3 the author wants to make sure that the reader knows that Haman was an Agagite (3:1) and that Mordecai was a Jew (3:4). To say that there was some racial tension between the Agagites (also known as the Amalekites) and the Jews would be an understatement.

The Amalekites were nomads who often attacked Israel while they were a vulnerable group of refugees fleeing Egypt (Ex 17:8-16). They were the first to try to destroy God's covenant nation and He promised that one day He would remove them from Israel's presence.

When Israel finally had a king and the strength to overthrow these people who had plagued them for so long, Saul chose to disobey God's command to destroy them. The Amalekites (Agagites) lived as did their hatred for the Jews (1 Sam 15).

This is yet another example of antisemitism, the age-old conflict between Israel and the powers that sought to destroy her.

The story of Haman and Mordecai mirrors the story of Israel and the Amalekites and all those powers that look to destroy her still.