

# MESSY FAITH: FINDING OUR STORY IN ESTHER

Esther 1: Faithful Living in a Faithless World is...Messy!  
Community Group Curriculum for the week of February 15, 2015

## The Story

The book of Esther tells how a Jewish girl became the queen of Persia and saved her people from a plot to destroy them. She is assisted in this by Mordecai, her cousin and guardian. It also explains how a special festival, called *Purim*, was established to recall and celebrate the deliverance that the Jews had experienced.

## The Key Themes

1. *Divine providence*. While God is never mentioned in the book, there are many hints of His presence. As we explore this story, always be on the lookout for how God's plan is being enacted.
2. *Human responsibility*. Although the story shows that the outcome is a divine gift rather than a human achievement, Esther and Mordecai do show great initiative and courage, and their actions are significant.
3. *The absurdity of wickedness*. The arrogant and wicked of this world are not nearly as powerful as they think they are, and when they oppose God's people they only succeed in bringing about their own destruction.

## LET'S DISCUSS!

1. Read Esther 1. Now have everyone close their Bible and as a group **retell** the story in chapter 1 from memory. After rebuilding the story, open your Bible and fill in any "blanks" from your retelling of the story.
  - a) Choose one verse or a phrase from Esther 1 that stands out to you. This could be something you're intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, etc. Write it down below. Discuss in your group.
  - b) What is your initial reaction to King Ahasuerus's decisions? What evidences of **pride** did you see in Esther 1? Now read Proverbs 16:18. How does pride impair our life and our walk with the Lord? Has there been a "pride" issue that you have struggled with in the past or are currently struggling with? How was the pride issue resolved or how are you currently addressing it?
2. In addition to pride, King Ahasuerus displayed **anger**. Read Proverbs 14:17.
  - a) In what ways did the king express his anger? What caused his anger? Why are angry people "blind and foolish"? What is the difference between righteous anger and non-righteous anger?
  - b) Pride feeds anger, and as it grows, anger reinforces pride. Instead of being angry at Vashti, the king should have been angry at himself for acting so foolishly. Why do people turn their anger toward others instead of themselves? What might have been different in this story had the king recognized his own foolishness? Do you have any examples in your life that illustrate the results of misdirected anger?

3. **God's providence** is defined as "the divine intervention in the affairs of man within the confines of natural law to bring about God's objectives."
- a) What are examples of God's providence in chapter 1? For example, when Queen Vashti refused to be put on display, King Ahasuerus grew angry. At the counsel of his advisors, he removed her from office, opening the door for Esther to take her spot. How was this an example of God's providence? Discuss this example and others from this chapter.
- b) Are there examples of God's providence in the world today? In your life? Discuss your response to both of these questions in your group.
4. Finally, seeking to heal his wounded pride, the king agreed to the counsel of his advisors and had Vashti deposed. He sent his couriers throughout the empire to declare a royal edict – one that was unnecessary, unenforceable, and unchangeable. Why did the king issue edicts that were unenforceable? Have you seen similar expressions of pride and power in today's world? In your own life? How are Christians supposed to respond to authorities who issue "edicts" that have potentially negative consequences?

**NEXT WEEK:** Leaders, ask for a volunteer to memorize (the best they can) the next portion of the story told in Esther 2:1-18 over the next week and be ready to tell the story (from memory) to your group when you next meet. After telling the story, then have everyone turn to Esther 2:1-18 and read the story. Compare the telling and the reading of the story. Finally, have everyone shut their Bibles and have the group rebuild the story (Esther 2:1-18) by memory.

### **Response & Prayer**

Note all the areas of your life where you have power and influence over others. Then do a self-evaluation to see if you are acting out of **pride** or **anger** in any of those areas. If so, consider if you need to apologize to anyone (do so) and if you need to change your approach to leadership so you are not acting prideful.

Write a prayer below (or simply pray one in silence), inviting God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you've previously noted. Be honest about your desires and fears.