

MESSY FAITH: FINDING OUR STORY IN ESTHER

"God Keeps His Promises" (Esther 8-10)
Community Group Curriculum for the week of March 22, 2015

The Story Concludes

After Haman hangs on the gallows, Esther saves the Jews. Mordecai is promoted. The Jews defend themselves against their enemies and prevail, and the feast of Purim is established (which is still celebrated today) to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews from the wicked Haman. What a story! What an ending! Big takeaway: God's divine providence is on display throughout this book then and is evident today.

Let's Discuss!

If someone volunteered to summarize the passage of Esther 8-10, let them do so. If not, start your discussion with general feedback from your group on this finale of the story. Was there something that stood out to you, that intrigued you, or that resonated with you? Share!

Chapter 8

Read Esther 8:1-8. Summarize the passage.

1. In this passage Esther solves the apparently unsolvable problem of how to address the King's edict against the Jews. What does she request and how does the King respond? Have you had an "unchangeable" problem that was changed through/by God? Share in your group!

Read Esther 8:9-17. Summarize the passage.

2. How much time had passed from the first order to kill all the Jews (Esther 3:12) to the second order allowing all the Jews to defend themselves (Esther 8:9)? The actual day that the Jews were to be annihilated was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (Esther 3:13). How was God's providence evident in these dates? Have you personally seen "God's timing" in your life? Share!

Chapter 9

Read Esther 9: 1-19. Summarize the passage.

1. This is the climax of the story, where the tables are turned and the enemies of the Jews are addressed. What are your thoughts on the following comment by Christian author Warren Wiersbe: *"The fear of God protects those who fear God and believe His promises. Because the Jews believed Mordecai's decree, they had new courage and were not afraid of the enemy, and their courage put fear into the hearts of the enemy."*
2. Why did they kill Haman's ten sons (Esther 9:7-9)? Why did they not take the plunder ("their stuff")?

3. 75,000 people were killed (Esther 3:16) by the Jews who were defending themselves. Spread out over 127 provinces, this averages to about 600 people per province. How were the Jews able to overcome the enemy so convincingly throughout all the provinces?

Read Esther 9:20-32. Summarize the passage.

4. Purim is a Jewish holiday celebrating the deliverance of the Jews in Persia from destruction by Haman. It is celebrated to this day and was recently celebrated on March 5-6 in Israel. Celebration is important in our lives. What do you celebrate? As a person? As a family? At your work? In your faith? Share!

Read Esther 10. Summarize the passage.

1. This story has a happy ending but God doesn't always give this kind of "happy ending" to everyone's story. Today, not all faithful Christians are promoted and given special honors. Some of them are laid off (e.g. oil industry) or are facing persecution because of their Christian faith. God hasn't promised us riches or a high position. What has He promised us?
2. The story is over and the key theme of God's divine providence is evident throughout. As a final question – where do you see God's divine providence at work today? In your life? In our church? In our country? In our world? Share!

Prayer

- Esther is packed with details that are specific to the culture at that time. But God is in these details just as He is in the overall message. Pray that God would reveal to you just what He wants you to discover among the story of Esther.
- This story focuses on primarily trusting God and walking boldly in your faith. Pray for help in trusting Him more and become more confident when faced with tough circumstances.
- Pray for others that God would reveal truth, that the Holy Spirit would guide them, and that each person might grow in spiritual maturity according to God's will.