



Sunday School Study Plan
December 2023 with Dr. Dewayne Dickens and Mrs. Hazel Reed
Topic for December 3, 10, and 17

(With no in-class sessions for 24th and 31st due to holidays: self-study these days)
“Esther as a Model of Heading God’s Plan in Moments of God’s Silence”

Week 1 (December 3): For Such a Time as This
Varied, but general reading Esther 1

Guiding Questions:

1. Read Esther 1:1-8. Consider the lavish display of wealth and power by Xerxes. What is the relationship of money, wealth, power, and responsibility? How would you rate your relationship in these areas?
2. How do you think the king (or we) would react to losing the money, wealth, and power?
3. Read Esther 1:9-12, along with Daniel 2: 20-21. How do the verses connect, and what do the actions in the Book of Esther reveal?
4. Read Esther 1:13-22. Evaluate the counsel given to the king. How does an act of fear ultimately become a tool for God’s plan?

Week 2 (December 10): The Plans of the Powerful
Esther 2

Guiding Questions:

1. Read Esther 2:1-4, along with Proverbs 19:21. Evaluate the counsel given to the king. Who is left out of the group of people providing counsel? And which group of people are most directly affected by the advice provided to the king? Why does understanding who’s left out and who is included matter?
2. How does the provided counsel relate to God’s plan for the Hebrew people?
3. Read Esther 2:5-7. Discuss the significance of Esther’s two names; how do the names reveal Esther’s reality as a young woman and a person from Israel in Persia?
4. Read Esther 2:8-11. Discuss who has control and choice in these passages. How do individuals use their control and choice throughout these passages?
5. Read Esther 2:12-18. Is Esther a role model—or should we judge her actions as deplorable? Explain.

WEEKLY HOMEWORK

1. READ TEXT FOR THE WEEK
2. USE A STUDY APPROACH TO RE-READ TEXT FOR PERSONAL AND BIBLICAL CONNECTIONS
 - A. CONSIDER 3 INSIGHTS, 2 SIGNIFICANT VERSES, AND ONE KEY WORD FOR DISCUSSION
 - B. USE BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES ON TEXT TO GIVE CONTEXT OR BACKGROUND
 - C. REVIEW VARIED TRANSLATIONS TO COMPARE MEANINGS
3. CONNECT LESSONS TO SERMONS FROM PAST DECADES AND LAST SEVERAL MONTHS

-continued on next page-

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." **2 Timothy 2:15**, NASB: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."



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Week 3 (December 17): Haman Plotting and God's Plan for His People

Esther 3 and 4

Guiding Questions:

1. Read Esther 3:1-4. Why is there historical tension between Haman the Agagite and Haman the Jew?
2. Read Esther 3:5-15. What was the intent of the pur (v.7)? And how does this affect the Hebrew people during the first and twelfth month of the edict from the King Xerxes?
3. Why do Jewish people have a holiday Purim?
4. Read Esther 4:1-5, along with Joel 2:12. How does the passage from Joel serve as a literary echo for the situation in Esther for the Hebrew people? How do these experiences reveal how God uses pain and injustice?
5. Read Esther 4:6-14. How does Esther respond to the risk of the defining moment of her life?
6. How do we recognize defining moments in our lives?
7. Read Esther 4:15-17. Note that these verses represent a shift in how Esther acts. In previous chapters her actions are reported in passive verb terms. Describe the active verbs ("actions") from the verses. How do these shifts from passive to active actions redefine the agency of Esther?

Week 4 (December 24): Walking with/in God's Plan when Evildoers Plot

Esther 5-8

No Sunday School due to Christmas Eve, so review Esther 5-8, considering how God blesses us in front of our enemies (Psalm 23:5)

Week 5 (December 31): How the Enemy's Traps for Us Turns into Pits for Them

Esther 9

No Sunday School due to New Year's Eve, so review Esther 9, considering how God protects us and assures us that the enemy's snares are pits for themselves (Proverbs 26: 27)

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