

# SONRISE

## SMALL GROUPS

HEROES OF THE FAITH

OCTOBER 20, 2019

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### ESTHER: GOD'S HIDDEN WORK (ESTHER 5-7)

#### MAIN POINT

God is always faithfully working—sometimes in the background of our lives—to accomplish His purposes.

#### INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever had a sleepless night, only to learn that God kept you awake for a reason (such as intercessory prayer or tending to a sick child)?
- What was it like to learn that God had a purpose for your restlessness?
- What is something you are struggling with because it seems like it lacks purpose?

Time and again in Scripture we are reminded that God orchestrates even the most seemingly insignificant moments of our lives in order to bring Him glory. That thread is a running truth through the Book of Esther. Esther 5-7 is an example of this. That which is expected to happen does not, and that which is unexpected does. The king had a sleepless night, itself a reversal of the norm. Most importantly, however, the lives of Mordecai and Haman were changed dramatically. Whereas Haman was expecting to be honored by his enemy Mordecai, it was Mordecai who would be publicly honored by Haman. Haman was humiliated. Mordecai was uplifted. Throughout it all, we are reminded of God's sovereign control over the details of our lives.

#### DISCUSSION

> Read Esther 5-7.

- Why did Esther prepare a feast for the king and Haman (see Esther 4)?
- Where do you see the sovereign hand of God in these verses?
- What different emotions did Haman show in Esther 5? Why the wild swing?
- How was Haman feeling about himself? Why? What does this tell you about the influence of other people in your life?
- Do you and your friends give each other a false sense of security by puffing each other up, or do you hold each other accountable to God's commands and truths? Why is this important, even or especially in times when you can't see exactly how God is working?
- What do you learn about Haman's character and motives in Esther 6? What do you learn about the king?
- How does the phrase "full circle" describe what took place in Esther 7?

- How did Haman reap what he sowed? How did Esther reap what she sowed?
- What does this passage teach you about God and the importance of trusting Him, even when you can't see Him working in an obvious way?

## APPLICATION

- What do we learn from Mordecai's example about faithfulness and obedience to God, especially in times of trouble? How will you apply it this week?
- How might this passage and this week's study lead you to greater trust in God's work in your life, even in the moments you can't see clearly what He is doing? How will you apply it this week?

## COMMENTARY

### Esther 5-7

Esther's Banquet (5:1-14). The prayers of God's people were answered because Xerxes received Esther without incident. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet whereupon she would make her request known. Once the guests had enjoyed their fill, Esther wisely delayed her request for another day of feast-ing—no doubt to heighten the king's interest in the petition.

Haman left in a happy mood, but it was tempered by his fury for "the Jew Mordecai." Haman boasted of his authority, but these boasts would later turn into tears of humiliation (6:12-13a; 7:7-8a). Haman's friends and family would be repaid with their own lives on the very gallows they had recommended for Mordecai (7:10; 9:14).

This section features the key reversal in Haman's and Mordecai's fates. Mordecai was honored by the king, much to Haman's humiliation. The final indignity of foolish Haman was his pathetic effort to save himself from the gallows.

Mordecai Honored by Haman (6:1-14). The unstated reason for the king's insomnia was God's providence. To pass the sleepless night, servants brought the royal annals where Mordecai's deed of saving the king was read (see 2:19-23). Haman was consulted, but ironically his egotism caused him unintentionally to honor Mordecai. The depiction of Mordecai dressed in royalty and being led on horseback by Haman anticipates their inverted roles to come. Even his friends and wife voiced the theological proposition of the book: Mordecai is invincible because he is a Jew.

Haman's Hanging (7:1-10). Not only did Mordecai get the best of Haman, but Esther outsmarted him. On the following day, Esther assembled her guests for the second banquet, during which she revealed her entreaty (see 5:7-8). The fivefold repetition of "Queen Esther" in this chapter echoed Mordecai's plea that she had come to power for this moment (4:14). Alluding to Haman's bribe (3:9), she described herself and the Jews as "sold for destruction." She identified Haman as the adversary.

Haman, true to his character as a blundering dunce, begged for the queen's mercy, thus breaking protocol with the king's harem. He magnified his folly by stumbling to her couch, creating the appearance of improprieties and thereby sealing his doom with the irate king. The gallows, whose references tower over much of the narrative (2:23; 5:14; 7:9-10; 8:7; 9:13,25), afforded the Jews their vindication by the hanging of Haman. [Dockery, David S (2009). Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 196). WORDsearch. Retrieved from <https://app.wordsearchbible.com.>]