

Personal weekly Bible readings to go deeper into Scripture.

Memory Verse: *Malachi 3:10*

Day 1 – Chapter 21 of “The Story”

Day 2 – Ezra 7

Day 3 – Nehemiah 1-2, 4

Day 4 – Nehemiah 6-8

Day 5 – Malachi 1-4

Questions to consider while reading the Bible:

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to rely on?

Is there a command to obey?

Is there a challenge in which to respond?



Chapter 20

The Queen of Beauty and Courage

Esther

Please use this space to take notes during the message today.



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And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this? Esther 4:14b

For additional resources go to www.stpaulig.org

Adult and teen small group discussion points

1. Can you think of someone you know or read about who took risks to stand up for something they believed in?
2. Analyze the positives and negatives of King Xerxes as a leader.
3. The book of Esther is full of irony, such as Queen Vashti who would not come before the king when requested and Queen Esther who came before the king when not requested. What other examples of irony can you find in this chapter?
4. What drives a person like Haman and how have you had to negotiate a relationship with a person with similar motivations? What life lessons does Haman teach us about pride, self-centeredness and hatred? What wisdom would you give a Christian who is forced to work, live, and exist around a Hamanlike personality?
5. What characteristics marked the life and behavior of Mordecai? How can we take steps to grow character like Mordecai as we seek to follow God's upper story in our lower story lives?
6. Review the correspondence between Mordecai and Esther concerning an appeal to the king (p. 281-282). What is the relationship between God's providence and our responsibility?
7. Throughout this entire chapter, what strikes you about Esther's character, how she related to people, and the risks she took? What can we learn and gain from her example?
8. What risk was Queen Esther taking by approaching the king and how did she prepare for it (p. 281-282)? What factors do you suppose could account for Esther finding favor in the eyes of the king?
9. Esther is not the first Hebrew that God positioned in a place of influence to be a source of deliverance for his people. Who are the other deliverers we have studied in "The Story" and what common threads connect Queen Esther's story to theirs?
10. How does the lower story of Esther fit into the covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3)? How does it fit with God's upper story of redemption?

Close in prayer.

Family's with kids discussion points

Please use these discussion questions with your children.

Key verse: "Show me your favor ... Please spare my people. That's my appeal to you" —*Esther 7:3*

1. What do you think Esther made for the big dinner with King Xerxes and Haman? What's your favorite food?
2. Queen Esther was King Xerxes' favorite, but she took a risk by speaking to the king without being invited. Did she just barge in and demand to be heard? Why not?
3. Esther kept it a secret from King Xerxes that she was Jewish. Do you think it was good for her to keep that secret?
4. When is it okay to keep secrets? When is keeping secrets a bad idea?
5. By being respectful and humble, the king granted Esther's wish. Tell of a time where respect and humility helped you.
6. If you were in Esther's place, what would you have asked the king to do?

Living Faith: Persian kings were famous for lavish banquets. So when Esther invited King Xerxes to a "big dinner" (Esther 5:8), the pressure was on. Queen Esther's story is truly remarkable, and Esther is only one of two books in the Bible named for a woman. As a family, make a big Persian dinner in honor of Queen Esther, although you may not want to break out the solid-gold dinnerware. During the Achaemenid empire, Persian kings could get nearly any food they wanted. Fruit was very common, especially cantaloupe. A spinach salad may be an authentic touch for your meal. Fish was also popular. Have fun as a family planning out the menu early in the week. Set aside one night where everybody can be together to prepare the big dinner. Try something new. Use an exotic spice.

For dessert, your family may want to bake Hamantaschen (ha-man-tosh-en), a traditional Jewish cookie made for Purim (see Esther 9:18-32), a celebration that honors Esther and Mordecai for saving the Jewish people from extermination. These triangular cookies look a little funny, and the name Hamantaschen means "Haman's ears." But they're fun to make and taste delicious. Look in a cookbook or go online to gloriadeionline.wordpress.com for the recipe for Hamantaschen.

Pray together: Lord, we want to be used for your Kingdom, just like Queen Esther was. Fill us with your Spirit, so we are ready for such as time as this. Amen.