

SESSION 6 KEEP STANDING

▶ The Point

Don't become complacent—maintain vigilance.

The Passage

Esther 8:1-8; 9:20-22

The Bible Meets Life

Your parents probably celebrated some fairly large milestones in your life. Your first words. Your first steps. Your first day of school. Your graduation from high school or college. And why not celebrate? These events—small victories, perhaps—show that you were growing up. But your parents were not content with that. Even as they celebrated, they worked with you so that your words became sentences, your baby steps developed into walking and running; and your daily trips to school led to an education and perhaps a diploma. As we celebrate each milestone, we continue moving forward to reach the next milestone—and another reason to celebrate.

During Ahasuerus's reign in Persia, the Jewish people achieved a great victory through the prayers and efforts of Mordecai and Esther. One great victory, yes, but their work was not complete. They had addressed one injustice, but another still loomed ahead. There was no time to settle into complacency! We see in the lives of Esther and Mordecai great examples of persistence against injustice.

The Setting

At a second banquet with Ahasuerus and Haman, Esther revealed her request that the king spare her and her people's lives. When Ahasuerus learned Haman had devised the plot against the Jews, the king left the banquet in anger. Haman fell at Esther's feet to beg for his life. When Ahasuerus returned, he interpreted Haman's act as an attempt to violate the queen. Ahasuerus ordered Haman hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai.

What does the Bible say?

Esther 8:1-8; 9:20-22

8-1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. ² And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. ³ Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king. ⁵ And she said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. ⁶ For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?"

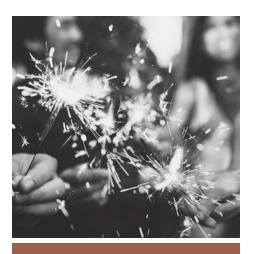
⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. ⁸ But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."

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^{9,20} And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far,
21 obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

GET INTO THE STUDY





DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 121 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): "What are some of your favorite ways to celebrate?"

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): To create a festive environment similar to modern Jewish "Purim" celebrations commemorating this story, consider doing the following: play some Hebrew or Yiddish music (or a fun music video from the Jewish band, The Maccabeats, which can

be found at the Leader Extra! blog at biblestudiesforlife.com/adultextra), serve bread or cakes, and pass out some small presents.

GUIDE: Direct group members to "The Bible Meets Life" on page 122 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of maintaining vigilance against injustice by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** on page 122 of the PSG: **"Don't become complacent—maintain vigilance."**

SAY: "It's easy to become complacent, but we we must remain vigilant even as we celebrate the victories we've experienced over injustice."

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking the Lord to help us maintain vigilance and to praise Him in our celebration. Thank Him for the victories He has allowed us to achieve.

Notes



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Esther 8:1-2

¹ On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. ² And the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Esther 8:1-2 on page 123 of the PSG.

RECAP: Read the first few paragraphs after the Scripture on page 123 of the PSG.

Honor came to two people in two ways on the same day.

- Esther. On the same day Haman was executed, King Ahasuerus granted to Queen Esther all of Haman's estate and fortune. It was customary for the property of criminals to be seized by the crown. As the king, Ahasuerus could have taken these new spoils and enriched himself, but he generously gave them to his wife, the queen. Esther wisely delegated the management of this newfound estate to Mordecai.
- Mordecai. The king had taken his signet ring from Haman in dishonor; now he gave it to Mordecai in great honor. Mordecai would essentially be the prime minister of Persia. The king chose a man of great faithfulness and personal integrity to replace one who was neither.

GUIDE: Use the last paragraph of the Commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to share background on the power and influence entrusted to Mordecai by Esther and the king.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 123 of the PSG: "What rewards should we anticipate for standing against injustice?"

TRANSITION: Honor comes to those who live with an upright character. In the next verses, however, we see that we cannot rest until the victory is complete.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are some ways God has rewarded you in the past?

Esther 8:1-2

[Verse 1] Honor comes to those who live with an upright character, as it did for both Mordecai and Esther. **That day** refers to the day of Haman's execution. Something which is given may be tangible such as a reward, a document, a present, or a person, or something less tangible such as permission, compassion, or a blessing. Esther received Haman's **house**. In the Old Testament the word can designate an ordinary house, the king's house or palace, and the Lord's house or temple. The term also can apply to the household or family as well as to the material contents of the house.

King Ahasuerus gave Esther Haman's property most likely in partial compensation for all she had suffered because of Haman's evil deeds. According to Persian law, the king had the power to confiscate the property of persons who were condemned as criminals. Haman's estate surely included great wealth. Thus we see a continuation of the theme of the turning of the tables or reversal.

In addition to Esther's receiving Haman's estate, **Mordecai came before the king** as a result of Esther's revelation that Mordecai was a relative. The phrase *came before the king* indicates Ahasuerus elevated Mordecai to a position similar to the one Haman previously held. Mordecai became one of a select group who enjoyed the privilege of access to the king's presence. (See Esth. 1:14.)

[Verse 2] Ahasuerus gave Mordecai the **signet ring** that Haman had previously worn. The Hebrew term rendered *signet ring* comes from a verb that basically means "to sink into something." The king used his signet ring to make decrees official by means of the ring's imprint. When the king gave this ring to an official, he was giving that individual power to act in the king's name. This ring had once symbolized death for the Jews. It had sealed the edict that sentenced them to destruction. (See 3:8-13.) In Mordecai's hands, however, the ring became a symbol of life for God's people. (See 8:9-13.)

In addition, Esther put Mordecai **over the house of Haman.** With the events recorded in Esther 8:1-2, Mordecai possessed the wealth, power, and title that had once belonged to the enemy Haman. A great reversal had occurred. These verses demonstrate that honor eventually comes to those who display an upright character.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What promises from Scripture can help us persist when we'd like to quit?

Esther 8:3-8

³ Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. 4 When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king. 5 And she said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. ⁶ For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?" ⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. 8 But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Esther 8:3-8 on page 124 of the PSG.

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 125 of the PSG.

- Esther and Mordecai had cause to celebrate. Haman had been executed. Mordecai held a powerful position and Esther had great wealth. However, they could not rest until all their people were safe.
- Haman was dead, but his edict was very much alive. The king could not simply overturn his previous decree. He could, however, propose a new law that would counteract the previous one.
- Esther and Mordecai's boldness paid off. Permission still stood to kill the Jews, but the Jews were now given the right to protect themselves.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 125 of the PSG: "How would you describe the role of persistence in the Christian life?"

TRANSITION: We definitely can't rest until the victory is complete. In the next verses, we see that the time comes to rejoice in what God does.

Esther 8:3-8

[Verse 3] Although Mordecai and Esther secured a significant victory with Haman's execution, the edict Haman instigated remained in force. The Jews could enjoy total victory only after dealing with Haman's decree. The queen displayed great emotion as **she fell at** the king's **feet**, she **pleaded** with him to avert Haman's evil edict against her people. The verb translated *pleaded* basically means "to be gracious," also "to beseech" or "to implore." In the Old Testament the verb often appears in contexts of beseeching God's grace or favor. This helps us better understand the attitude with which Esther approached Ahasuerus. The verb rendered *avert* literally means "to cause to pass over" or "to cause to take away," thus the idea of removal. In the expression **plan ... he had devised** a wordplay occurs in the Hebrew text. *Plan* derives from the verb rendered *had devised*. The play on words becomes more obvious if we render the phrase "his device he had devised" or "his plot he had plotted."

[Verses 4-6] For a second time Ahasuerus held out the golden scepter to Esther. (See 5:2.) This time it signaled his permission or encouragement for Esther to rise and speak. So Esther rose from her prostrate position and began her request: "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight." The word translated pleases literally means "good." The term rendered favor is chen that we have seen several times before in this study. Esther added two other expressions: "If the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes." The first softened the fact that it would be regarded as highly improper to suggest that a king's edict needed to be changed or reversed. With the second part Esther cleverly appealed to her own charm.

Reversing an edict required great diplomacy. She tactfully associated the edict with Haman, rather than with the king. Furthermore, Esther did not use the term *law* because she knew Persian laws could not be revoked. Instead she used a term translated **letters**. This word literally means "writings" or "books." Esther indicted Haman and cleared the king by reminding Ahasuerus that it was Haman who had written the documents aimed at destroying the Jews. Esther concluded her plea with two parallel questions: "For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?" The word rendered *calamity* literally means "evil." The word translated *destruction* derives from a verb meaning "to perish."

[Verses 7-8] According to Persian law no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring could be revoked. Both Haman's previous edict and the new one composed by Mordecai and Esther received Ahasuerus's seal, making both edicts irrevocable. Haman's edict could only be neutralized by the new one. It would counter but not rescind the original decree. Mordecai wrote in the king's authority and sealed the documents with the king's signet ring. Couriers delivered the documents. The edict gave the Jews the right to defend themselves and to destroy any army hostile to them. It also allowed them to take their enemies' possessions as spoils of war. The Jews greatly rejoiced and celebrated. (See vv. 9-17.)



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes **ALTERNATE QUESTION:** How has rejoicing been part of your spiritual life?

Esther 9:20-22

²⁰ And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Esther 9:20-22 on page 125 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 126 of the PSG: "How can our group do a better job of celebrating God's victories in our lives?"

GUIDE: Summarize page 126 of the PSG. Emphasize that we still have much to do for the kingdom. Our work will not be complete until Christ returns—but we have much to celebrate.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 126 of the PSG: "What principles have stood out to you throughout this study from the Book of Esther?"

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "Standing Strong" on page 127 of the PSG. As time permits, encourage volunteers to share responses.

Evaluate your life in light of the story of Esther and Mordecai and answer the following questions.

What is one example of a time where you struggled to maintain a stand for what is right?

What could you have done that would have made a difference?

Check the Bible passage below that resonates most with you for maintaining vigilance and strength in spite of difficulties or opposition: (PSG has verses printed.)

How can you incorporate this verse into your daily life?



Esther 9:20-22

[Verse 20] These verses depict the annual celebration the Jews were to observe in remembrance of the victory that God accomplished for His people. The statement Mordecai recorded these things can literally be translated "And Mordecai wrote these words." Some Bible scholars interpret the words to refer to events leading to the two edicts. Jews living outside Susa did not know about Haman's actions and Mordecai's and Esther's counteractions. Mordecai wrote to give them the background of the events that had occurred. Other scholars identify the term as referring specifically to recent events that resulted in the Jews celebrating their victory on two different days. Yet other Bible scholars specify that the words do not refer to the preceding narrative, but rather to the letters mentioned in the latter part of verse 20.

Mordecai also **sent letters** to the Jews in all the king's provinces. The term rendered *letters* can designate written instruction or decrees, legal documents, or books or scrolls. In context it probably refers to letters of instruction. In these missives Mordecai gave directions for celebrating the Jews' victory over their enemies. These letters apparently differ from the previous writings mentioned in 8:9. Mordecai directed those previous writings or letters to the officials throughout the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire. In contrast Mordecai sent the letters mentioned in 9:20 **to all the Jews** in these provinces.

[Verse 21] Mordecai's primary purpose in sending these letters to his fellow Jews concerned the time of celebrating their victory over their enemies. He authorized them to commemorate their defeat of their foes on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year. Adar was the twelfth month in the Jewish calendar. It included parts of our February and March. Mordecai established two days in this month for resting and rejoicing because the king granted the Jews in Susa an extra day to defeat their enemies. While Mordecai's letter appears to command a two-day celebration for all Jews, Mordecai may have intended that they celebrate whatever day was appropriate for their location. If they lived in a walled or fortified city, the appropriate day was the fifteenth of the month. If they lived in an open or unwalled village or town, they were to celebrate on the fourteenth day. (See 9:19.)

[Verse 22] The observance commemorated the days when the Jews got relief from their enemies. The Jews' had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday. Instead of the fasting that had accompanied the king's edict (see 4:3), the holiday would involve feasting and sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor. The giving of gifts emphasizes community among the people.

This celebration commemorating the Jews' deliverance from genocide through the efforts of Esther and Mordecai became known as the Festival of Purim. In later history, the Jews read the Book of Esther in their synagogues as part of the celebration of Purim. These two committed individuals maintained vigilance until they won victory for their people.



LIVE IT OUT

Notes

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 128 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications:

- **Express thanks.** Reflect on how God has rescued you from death through Jesus Christ. Pray and give thanks to God for the victory you have in Christ.
- **Stay vigilant.** If you have previously committed to helping an organization fight injustice, stick with it. Continue to look for ways you can help and make a difference.
- **Celebrate together.** Plan an event when your group can celebrate together the work of God in your lives. Use this event as an opportunity to invite others to participate and learn why you are celebrating.



TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 128 of the PSG:

Everyone loves a celebration, but we must remain vigilant lest our gains be lost. There's no room for complacency for the child of God; we must keep standing!

PRAY: Conclude by thanking God for the many victories He has given that give us cause to celebrate. Ask Him for opportunities to share this joy with others in the coming week.



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THE ROLE OF QUEEN ESTHER

King Ahasuerus's throne hall or second audience hall in right of photo.

BY JANICE MEIER

"Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esth. 4:14). The words of Mordecai addressed to his cousin, Queen Esther, reflect Mordecai's conviction of God's providence at work in Esther's life. God had guided in her selection as queen to bring her to the place where she could play a crucial role in delivering His people in an hour of crisis.

What was that time for which God had given Esther such a crucial role? Specifically, it was a time when Haman, prime minister under King Ahasuerus, devised a plot to exterminate Esther's own people, the Jews. More generally, it was a time when the Persians ruled the Jewish people.

Ahasuerus (486-464 BC) had selected Esther to replace his former queen, Vashti. Vashti's actions, as well as those of Queen Esther, grant us brief glimpses into the role of a queen during the era of the Medo-Persian Empire. What privileges and restrictions characterized the queen's role in



The famous Hammurabi stele from Shushan in ancient Babylon, which contains the laws of Hammurabi (1792–1750 BC).

"such a time as this"? The question is difficult to answer, and biblical scholars hold conflicting viewpoints on many related issues. This article will present some of those various viewpoints and conclude by summarizing Esther's contributions to the image of the Persian queen.

A Medo-Persian Queen

The role of the queen, of course, can be understood only in conjunction with that of the king. In the time of King Ahasuerus, the Persian king typically viewed himself as possessing unlimited personal power, as being above the law, and as displaying great splendor.² The king displayed that power in dethroning Queen Vashti when she refused to comply with his whims. As punishment for failure to appear before the king when summoned, this queen was never again to enter his presence. The king and his counselors immediately recognized the disastrous repercussions that could occur throughout the land if other women followed the queen's example of refusing to defer to the king's wishes. (See 1:12-18.) Queen Vashti has earned a place in history as one who was deposed for challenging not only her husband but also the royal law of the Medes and Persians.³ Vashti's courage in refusing to come before the king when summoned parallels Esther's courage in approaching the king without first being called.

The reference to Ahasuerus's process of selecting a new queen also sheds light on the queen's role. (See 2:1-4,12-14.) This procedure reveals that to a large degree, women were merely objects to satisfy a king's personal desires. Obviously, polygamy characterized marital practices in the palace. The Persian king surrounded himself with a large harem of women—some of whom were wives and others concubines. Chapter 2 of Esther refers to two different parts of the harem. Evidently virgins had to stay in one area of the harem. (See vv. 8-9.) After a woman had sexual relations with the king, she then was moved to another part of the harem. (See vv. 12-14.) The women in this latter group had no guarantee the king would ever summon them again. Many virtually became like widows.

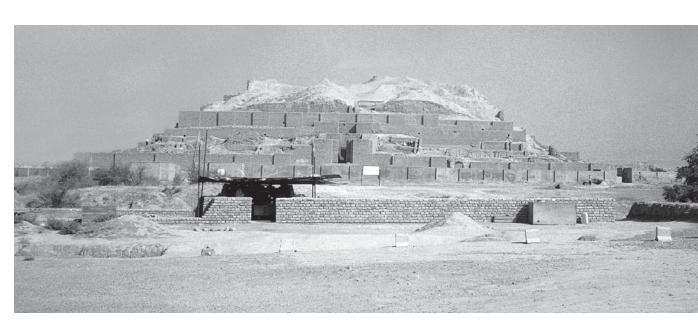
Although the women of the harem were isolated and dependent on male favor, a woman nevertheless could wield great power within the palace, particularly if she were selected as queen. Ahasuerus himself was eventually killed in a harem coup. Thus although limited in many ways, these women did have the potential to acquire great influence and control.⁴

Esther as Queen

After winning King Ahasuerus's favor, Esther succeeded Vashti as queen. (See 2:17.) She had faithfully kept Mordecai's instruction not to reveal her identity as a Jew. As the plot of the story unfolds, Haman succeeded in getting the king to issue a decree to destroy the Jews. (See 3:8-11.) Mordecai urged Esther to approach the king and plead with him for her people's lives. (See 4:8). Aware that such an unbidden approach to the king was a violation of the law and was punishable by death, Esther courageously agreed to enter the king's presence. (See v. 16.) Herodotus, a fifth-century BC Greek historian, affirmed that Persian kings had such a law. The Jewish historian Josephus recorded that men holding axes stood near the king's throne to punish anyone who approached the king without first being summoned.

A person desiring an audience with the king was to make such a request by first sending a message. Such a law provided defense against assassination attempts. As queen, Esther was bound by this law. Yet she demonstrated uncommon courage by her willingness to risk her life for the lives of her people by approaching the king unbidden. As Vashti had displayed courage by refusing to humiliate herself to fulfill the whimsical desires of her husband,⁷ Esther demonstrated courage by risking her life for her people.

When Esther finally revealed to King Ahasuerus that she was a Jew and accused Haman of plotting evil against her and her people, she wisely avoided criticizing the king—who had authorized the genocide. She



Ziggurat at Susa (Shushan), Iran, from 1250 BC. Originally five floors tall, the top two have been destroyed. Queen Esther may have ruled from Susa.

prudently recognized that she must enlist the king's help to bring about a reversal in her people's fortunes. Esther's power was that of a queen who knew herself and who refused to be defined by her circumstances.

Several other passages specifically point out the status and power Esther possessed in her role as queen. First, according to Esther 8:1-2, she received the estate of Haman after he was hanged. This reward was in line with the indication we have that Persian kings took possession of the goods and property of condemned criminals. Second, the king also instructed his queen, along with Mordecai, to write a decree in the king's name concerning the Jews and to seal it with the king's signet ring so that none could revoke it. (See 8:8.)

Furthermore, Esther 9:29-32 emphasizes that the queen used her royal authority to help establish the Feast of Purim. The Hebrew word translated "authority" in 9:29 literally means "strength" or "power." The noun comes from a verb root meaning "to prevail against" or "to overpower." The noun "authority" is modified by the adjective "full," a translation of a Hebrew term literally meaning "all." Esther's authority appears to be in line with that of women of the royal house described in the ancient Persepolis texts. These royal women are portrayed as resolute, enterprising, and positively active. They participated in royal feasts and organized their own banquets, traveled across the land and issued instructions, and supervised their estates and work force.

Esther's Contributions

What contributions did Esther make to the image of the role of a Persian queen? In many ways she fit the typical model of a female Persian ruler. She acted prudently within the limitations of her role. Yet she also brought a distinct dimension to that role. Because of her faith in God, she dared to step outside the confines of the expected behavioral patterns of a Persian queen when the lives of God's people were at stake. She recognized both through Mordecai's instruction and by examination of her own experiences that God was providentially at work orchestrating her life's circumstances. She responded courageously when she recognized her place in God's plan. Queen Esther demonstrated that being faithful to God involved being faithful to His people. Thus, faithful to the meaning of her name, she became a shining "star" for her people in a time of darkness.



This is an edited version of an article by Janice Meier that originally appeared in the Spring 2004 issue of *Biblical Illustrator* magazine. Each quarter *Biblical Illustrator* offers in-depth articles and information that support our weekly Bible study lessons.

- 1. Others identify Mordecai as Esther's uncle, for example, *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 438.
- 2. Josef Wiesehoefer, *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD*, trans. Azizeh Azodi (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 80.
- The Jewish historian Josephus, however, recorded that Vashti acted out of regard for the law of the Persians, which forbade wives to be seen by strangers (Antiquities of the Jews, XI.6.1).
- 4. Sidnie White Crawford, "The Book of Esther: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 889.
- 5. Herodotus, Histories, 3.118.
- 6. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, XI.6.3.
- 7. Many think that Vashti was expected to appear unclothed before the king.
- 8. Herodotus, Histories, 3.128-129.
- 9. Ronald F. Youngblood, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1980).
- 10. Persepolis, built by Darius the Great, functioned as one of the royal capitals of the Persian Empire (John Bright, *A History of Israel* [Louisville: Westminster John Know, 2000], 374–375). The city was enhanced by Darius's son Xerxes (Wiesehoefer, Ancient Persia, 83).
- 11. Wiesehoefer, Ancient Persia, 85.

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ENDNOTES

- 1. Abraham was originally known as Abram and Sarah as Sarai. Throughout this session, the names God gave them, Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17:5,15), will be used.
- 2. Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, vol. 1A in *The New American Commentary* [NAC] (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1996), 392.
- 3. Brad Creed, "Names of God" in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. ed. (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 1144.
- 4. Douglas K. Stuart, Exodus, vol. 2 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 346.
- 5. "Terebinth" in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. ed. (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 1548.
- 6. Thomas Arnold, *Christian Life, Its Hopes, Its Fears, and Its Close*, 6th ed. (London: T. Fellowes, 1859), pp. 15-16.
- 7. "Harvard Law Professor Examines the Evidence of Jesus' Resurrection," *Y-Jesus: The Facts about Jesus Presented by Scholars*, March 28, 2017, http://y-jesus.com/simon-greenleaf-resurrection.
- 8. Nick Morgan, "Why We Fear Public Speaking and How to Overcome It," *Forbes*, March 30, 2011, https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorgan/2011/03/30/why-we-fear-public-speaking-and-how to-overcome-it/#32c779f7460b.

COMING NEXT QUARTER

Why Are We Here?

Session 1	Why Are We Even Here?	
Session 2	Why Are We in This Mess?	
Session 3	Why Can't We Fix It?	Deuteronomy 5:32-33; Galatians 3:10-12,19a,24-25
Session 4	Why Did Jesus Come?	Luke 1:68-79
Session 5	What Should We Do Now?	Acts 2:37-47
Session 6	What Will We Do Next?	Revelation 21:1-8
Tithing:	An Obedient Response to a G	racious God
Tithing:	An Obedient Response to a Gracious (God Malachi 3:7-12
Nehemi	ah: Building a Life of Service	
Session 1	Pray	Nehemiah 1:1-11
Session 2	Plan	Nehemiah 2:1-8,17-18
Session 3	Persist	Nehemiah 4:1-3,6-9,14-18
Session 4	Protect	Nehemiah 5:1-13
Session 5	Prioritize	Nehemiah 6:1-3,15-16; 8:1-3,5-8
Session 6	Praise	Nehemiah 8:9-12; 12:27-31a

GROUPSMINISTRY



FOR GROUP LEADERS

We believe in group leaders. So we are offering free resources to help you be even more effective in your ministry. Please visit LifeWay.com/FreeLeaderResources to gain access to all of this:



- The complete January Bible Study **Deuteronomy: A Challenge to a New Generation**
- The eBook 3 Roles for Guiding Groups: Teacher, Shepherd, Leader by David Francis

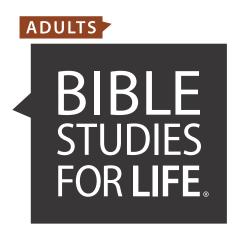


- How to Lead a Small Group PDF download by Chris Surratt
- 7 Realities of Experiencing God excerpt
- A Daily Discipleship Guide devotional excerpt



- Helpful information from the Groups Matter and 5LQ Podcasts
- Tips and advice for group leaders from the Groups Ministry Blog





Coming Up Next

New Studies for Summer 2018

TOPICS

Why Are We Here?

BY KEN BRADDY

Nehemiah: Building a Life of ServiceBY SAM RAINER

SCRIPTURE

Studies from Nehemiah and various Old and New Testament passages.

Want to use Bible Studies for Life with other age groups?

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Volume 12: Come, Lord Jesus

God's Prisoner

by Christian George

The God Who Makes All Things New by Robert Smith, Jr. and Brandon Smith

GospelProject.com



Scripture: 2 Samuel

General Editor: Jason Allen

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