

THE BOOK OF  
**Esther**

BIBLE STUDY GUIDES FOR SMALL GROUPS

RELATIONAL BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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CREATED BY STEVE CASE

# Ruler of the Realm (Right?)

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## OPENING QUESTION

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In your childhood family, was the primary authority figure male or female?

## READ Esther 1:1–22.

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### 1. How impressed are you by the introduction of King Xerxes?

- A. He's my kind of man.
- B. He sounds like most men I know.
- C. His realm seems vast.
- D. This is one "party animal."
- E. He sounds like someone Christians should support.
- F. I think he's quite generous.
- G. It sounds like he has ego problems.
- H. This reminds me of some world leaders today.
- I. Other.

### 2. What stood out to you about the 7-day banquet at the palace?

- A. This was quite the banquet.
- B. The decorating was "over the top."
- C. A no-drinking policy was available.
- D. Drunk people make stupid decisions.
- E. Seventh-day Adventists should be doing 7-day banquets.
- F. The King did this for everyone in the palace.
- G. There's no end to the celebrating in the Persian palace.
- H. The queen held a separate banquet concurrently for the women.
- I. Other.

### 3. What is the significance of the number 7 in this chapter?

- A. Nothing.
- B. I didn't even notice it.
- C. The Jewish number for perfection shows up in the Persian palace.
- D. This seemed like the "perfect" banquet.
- E. The number 7 is significant for Persians.
- F. This provides hints for why the number 7 shows up in Revelation.
- G. This is God's way of showing that he's still in control.
- H. It's just a number; get over it.
- I. Other.

**4. Why did King Xerxes want Vashti to appear before him?**

- A. To show off.
- B. She was beautiful.
- C. He was drunk and out of control.
- D. To honor her.
- E. To stroke his fragile male ego.
- F. He wanted to gawk at her wearing only her crown.
- G. His missed his wife.
- H. He wanted a private moment of intimacy.
- I. Other.

**5. What do you think should have been done to Vashti for refusing to appear at the king's request?**

- A. She should have been honored.
- B. Kill her on the spot.
- C. Take the king and queen to marriage counseling.
- D. Give her a second chance.
- E. Give the king a second chance.
- F. She received what she deserved.
- G. She became an example of what martyrs would later experience.
- H. Other.

**6. What does it mean to proclaim that every man should be the ruler of his home (vs. 22)?**

- A. The man should rule the house.
- B. This is the old patriarchal system still prevalent today.
- C. Proclaiming it doesn't make it reality.
- D. If you have to proclaim it, it probably isn't reality.
- E. Women need to be held in check periodically.
- F. When one group decides for all groups, expect injustice.
- G. I don't want to get into it.
- H. Other.

**7. What would you have done if you were King Xerxes? What would you have done if you were Queen Vashti?**

**8. How do power games between genders play out in your life?**

# Secrets

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## OPENING QUESTION

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As a child, were you good at keeping secrets or bad at keeping secrets?

## READ **Esther 2:1–23.**

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### **1. What do you think of King Xerxes' plan for all the beautiful virgins to come to him?**

- A. He's controlled by his own hormones.
- B. This is a guy who follows the advice of others.
- C. This guy had it made.
- D. The king is raping his own kingdom.
- E. The moral fiber of the kingdom will deteriorate fast.
- F. As king, he can do whatever he wants.
- G. It's not very different from what powerful men still do.
- H. It sounds like the start of an all-girls school to promote education.
- I. Other.

### **2. What do you think of Mordecai?**

- A. He's an opportunist.
- B. I wonder why he didn't return to Jerusalem when given the chance.
- C. He's related to King Saul, the first king of Israel.
- D. This is the kind of relative I'd want to have if I was in need.
- E. He's a manipulator.
- F. He seems to be a "closet-follower" of God.
- G. This man is loyal to the king.
- H. He's powerless to stop Esther being recruited for the king's pleasure.
- I. Other.

### **3. Why was Esther taken to the palace?**

- A. The physical and emotional desires of King Xerxes demanded it.
- B. Mordecai's ploy for more power.
- C. Esther's beauty attracted attention.
- D. She had always dreamed of being in a beauty contest.
- E. That's just the way circumstances played out at that time.
- F. It was God's will.
- G. To highlight the value of the Jews.
- H. She had won the local contest and was going for Miss Universe.
- I. Other.

**4. If you could work on anything for 12 months straight, what would it be?**

- A. Beauty treatments.
- B. Learn another language.
- C. Clean out the garage.
- D. Spiritual formation.
- E. Travel the world.
- F. My marriage/family.
- G. A physically fit and healthy body.

**5. What pleased the king most about Esther?**

- A. Her beauty.
- B. Esther was great at conversation.
- C. Her religious commitment.
- D. Her outfit, including her shoes.
- E. She really knew how to stand up for herself.
- F. The sex.
- G. Her submissive demeanor.
- H. Other.

**6. What is the takeaway from Mordecai uncovering the plot to kill Xerxes?**

- A. A strong loyalty to Xerxes.
- B. The king will forever be indebted to Mordecai.
- C. He continued to invest in Esther's life.
- D. The palace wasn't a safe place.
- E. Not all eunuchs are the same.
- F. Mordecai and Esther have clout in the palace.
- G. This provides a foretaste of the gallows in the overall story.
- H. Other.

**7. What special treatment do you need to be completely beautiful? How long will it take?**

**8. Is it better to keep your relationship with God a secret or go public? Explain.**

# Respect

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## OPENING QUESTION

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What is an early memory you have in which you felt respect for someone?

## READ **Esther 3:1–15.**

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### 1. What causes you to respect someone?

- A. I like them.
- B. They like me.
- C. They have some type of power.
- D. I agree with what they stand for or what they do.
- E. The position they hold or the title they have.
- F. Admiration for what they have already done.
- G. The character traits they exemplify.
- H. Fear.
- I. Other.

### 2. Why did Mordecai refuse to bow or show respect to Haman?

- A. Mordecai saved the king's life, but the promotion went to Haman.
- B. Jews don't bow to anyone.
- C. No one really knows.
- D. Mordecai didn't think Haman deserved respect.
- E. As a relative of the new queen, he didn't have to bow to Haman.
- F. Mordecai would bow only to the king; no one else.
- G. The palace officials were trying to pressure him to bow.
- H. Mordecai wouldn't show respect until a person earned his respect.
- I. Other.

### 3. What might be Haman's issue(s) to have such a strong reaction against Mordecai?

- A. Power.
- B. Ego.
- C. Insecurity.
- D. He was a short man, like Napoleon.
- E. Respect—he demonstrated it and expected others to do the same.
- F. Unfortunate early childhood experiences.
- G. His Amalekite heritage (*1 Samuel 15*).
- H. Other palace officials would lose their respect for Haman.
- I. Other.

**4. How do you deal with people who really, really irritate you?**

- A. Ignore them.
- B. Eliminate them.
- C. Love them.
- D. Push myself to become friends with them.
- E. Get others to put them in their place.
- F. Annihilate them.
- G. Talk about them behind their backs.
- H. Other.

**5. What do you think of King Xerxes' agreement to eliminate a race of people scattered throughout his provinces?**

- A. He's easily influenced.
- B. His leadership seems driven by the moment.
- C. There's a time for this—like when the Israelites entered Canaan.
- D. Xerxes doesn't research things much.
- E. Genocide seems like an easy solution.
- F. I wonder why he didn't accept Haman's offer to pay.
- G. Once again, he's going to regret his kingly decisions.
- H. Other.

**6. Why would people be motivated to kill the Jews?**

- A. The freedom to kill without facing consequences.
- B. The Jews had wormed their way into successful positions.
- C. It was an acceptable way to get their property for free.
- D. To respect the king's wishes.
- E. This was Satan's attempt to eliminate God's people.
- F. They didn't have video games yet so they had to kill real people.
- G. To eliminate the competition in the next Olympics.
- H. Other.

**7. What gave Haman such power? What gives you power?**

**8. If this chapter is a spiritual allegory, what are the key messages?**

# You're Killing Me

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## OPENING QUESTION

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Have you ever looked death in the face? If so, when?

## READ *Esther 4:1–17*.

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### 1. Why was Mordecai so distraught?

- A. His death warrant had been served.
- B. The Jews as a group received a death warrant.
- C. If he would have just bowed to Haman, this wouldn't have happened.
- D. He had to buy a new wardrobe since his clothes were destroyed.
- E. He should have had Esther declare her Jewish identity earlier.
- F. If he had returned to rebuild Jerusalem, he wouldn't be facing this.
- G. He should not have foiled the eunuchs' plot to kill the *King (2:21-22)*.
- H. He wished he wasn't a Jew.
- I. Other.

### 2. How do you express yourself when you're overwhelmed like Mordecai?

- A. Cry.
- B. Wail loudly and bitterly.
- C. Tear my clothes or wear sackcloth and ashes.
- D. Turn inward in silent anguish.
- E. Post like crazy on Facebook.
- F. Through prayer I dump it all on God.
- G. I weep with those who weep.
- H. Reach out to people who will support me.
- I. Other.

### 3. What dynamic do you see playing out between Mordecai and Esther?

- A. They don't talk face-to-face.
- B. Mordecai is still the dominant one.
- C. Esther has resources.
- D. Mordecai is trying to get Esther's focused attention.
- E. Esther's Jewish heritage should no longer be kept secret.
- F. Esther cares about Mordecai.
- G. They have court personnel facilitating their communication.
- H. Years of investing in each other will be heavily tested now.
- I. Other.



**4. What similarities do you see between going in to the king of Persia and going into the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary?**

- A. What?
- B. I don't see any connection.
- C. There's a death sentence if you don't have special clearance.
- D. Most people would never even have the opportunity to enter.
- E. Don't ever compare the king of Persia with the King of the universe.
- F. Irrelevant because the sanctuary had been destroyed.
- G. I thought we now have direct access to God.
- H. Other.

**5. Esther hadn't seen the king for 30 days. What has NOT happened in your life in the past 30 days?**

- A. Communication with my best friend.
- B. Contact with a certain family member.
- C. A romantic date.
- D. Going to church.
- E. Been on my computer or phone.
- F. Received input from God.
- G. Worked out.
- H. Other.

**6. According to Mordecai, if Esther doesn't risk going to the king uninvited, what would happen?**

- A. Nothing.
- B. All the Jews will be killed.
- C. Esther would be killed even though she was the queen.
- D. God will deliver his people without Esther.
- E. This king will forget all about her.
- F. This might be the God-ordained reason Esther became the queen.
- G. Mordecai would disown her.
- H. Other.

**7. Why did Esther call for three days of fasting (with no mention of prayer)?**

**8. When have you made a life or death commitment ("If I perish, I perish")?**

# Anticipation

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## OPENING QUESTION

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When is anticipation fun? When do you dread it?

## READ Galatians 5:1–14.

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### 1. What do you do when you want to look your best?

- A. Dress up in my nicest outfit.
- B. Spend a lot of time primping.
- C. Get input from lots of people.
- D. Go shopping for a new outfit.
- E. Meditate and cleanse my soul.
- F. It's all about the hair.
- G. Do something that will suck in my gut.
- H. I don't worry too much about this type of thing.
- I. Other.

### 2. What emotions do you think Esther felt going in to the king uninvited?

- A. Fear.
- B. Confidence.
- C. Hope.
- D. Uncertainty.
- E. Calm.
- F. Eagerness.
- G. Anger.
- H. Courage.
- I. Other.

### 3. When given an offer of “up to half of the kingdom,” why did Esther simply ask for a dinner date at her place?

- A. She was too flabbergasted to do anything else.
- B. She was an awesome cook.
- C. Her plan included getting the king a bit drunk.
- D. This turned the tables and put her in the power position.
- E. She wanted Haman to be present as well.
- F. Esther knew the king was a sucker for anticipation.
- G. She already had plenty of “stuff” so she wanted to keep this simple.
- H. Her request needed to be on her turf.
- I. Other.

**4. What was so special about Esther's feast?**

- A. She had the best cook in the kingdom.
- B. It was a meal fit for a king.
- C. An extremely limited guest list.
- D. She was trying a new vegan recipe.
- E. By the end, she had the king eating out of her hand.
- F. The king didn't have to pay for it.
- G. Both the king and Haman got fully baited.
- H. Other.

**5. Where is a safe place for you to brag?**

- A. Nowhere.
- B. Anywhere.
- C. On Facebook.
- D. In silent prayer.
- E. To my spouse/best friend.
- F. In Christmas cards and Christmas letters.
- G. I have several places where it's safe for me to brag.
- H. I rely on others to brag for me.
- I. Other.

**6. Why did Haman set up the gallows?**

- A. He wasn't going to take any more disrespect from Mordecai.
- B. So he could fully relish the next, high-level feast for the few.
- C. His wife suggested it.
- D. His friends encouraged him to do so.
- E. It was part of God's overall plan to turn evil into good.
- F. His "shrink" told him to finish the Mordecai matter once and for all.
- G. It's *Proverbs 26:27* all over again.
- H. Other.

**7. Who can easily push your buttons? How?**

**8. If you were offered "up to half of the kingdom," what would be your request?**

# A Particularly Bad Day—Part 1

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## OPENING QUESTION

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How long has it been since you had a bad day? What made it bad?

## READ Esther 6:1–14.

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### 1. What do you do when you can't sleep?

- A. Toss and turn.
- B. Get up and read.
- C. Count sheep.
- D. Pray.
- E. Re-live happy memories.
- F. Take something to knock you out.
- G. Clean the house.
- H. Go on social media.
- I. Other.

### 2. What is something for which you've never received credit?

- A. The success of "a certain someone."
- B. Being an awesome (or at least average) parent.
- C. My amazing sense of humor.
- D. Work for which my boss or teacher gets credit.
- E. Patience.
- F. Forgiveness.
- G. All I did for my parent(s).
- H. My volunteer activities.
- I. Other.

### 3. Why would a king/ruler want to honor you?

- A. I'm special.
- B. I can't come up with anything for this one.
- C. I'm a model citizen.
- D. I saved the king's life.
- E. I didn't try to kill the king.
- F. My humanitarian service.
- G. The accomplishments in my field of work or studies.
- H. I make a difference in my little world.
- I. Other.

**4. How would you like to be honored?**

- A. Public recognition.
- B. A tangible symbol, like a trophy or medal.
- C. Cash.
- D. VIP treatment.
- E. Heaven.
- F. A parade in your honor.
- G. Paparazzi.
- H. Other.

**5. When you have a really bad day, how long does it take you to realize it?**

- A. I have premonitions before it begins.
- B. When the first bad thing occurs.
- C. After the second bad thing happens.
- D. It takes multiple bad things for me to name a day as being bad.
- E. I'm an optimist; I have no idea what you're talking about.
- F. After the day is done.
- G. When someone else points it out to me.
- H. Other..

**6. How sensitive are you to warning signs that you need to change course?**

- A. Razor-sharp.
- B. About average.
- C. What was the question?
- D. It depends on how focused I am on my goal.
- E. I rely on someone else to point these out to me.
- F. The more confident I feel, the less sensitive I am to change.
- G. When I'm sensitive to the Holy Spirit, I'm more sensitive to change.
- H. Other.

**7. How did Haman's ego get him into trouble? How does your ego get you into trouble?**

**8. What is the difference between coincidence, luck, and God's timing?**

# A Particularly Bad Day—Part 2

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## OPENING QUESTION

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When did things go from bad to worse for you in just one day?

## READ **Esther 7:1–10.**

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### **1. What request does the king anticipate Esther will ask?**

- A. For up to half of the kingdom.
- B. The whole kingdom.
- C. Another dinner date.
- D. He has no idea what's coming.
- E. More special attention from the king.
- F. Another party.
- G. The king can hardly stand the suspense any longer.
- H. A remodel of the harem's living quarters.
- I. Other.

### **2. Why did Esther finally disclose her request?**

- A. She had built it to the maximum point of impact.
- B. Action needed to be taken to stop Haman now.
- C. Her patience for Haman had been fully extinguished.
- D. The time seemed just right.
- E. Haman had been set up and he didn't see it coming.
- F. Haman was already reeling and was off his game.
- G. So many had prayed for her that it seemed it was time to act.
- H. The truth of Haman needed to be exposed to the king.
- I. Other.

### **3. What was Esther's request?**

- A. The annihilation of Haman.
- B. The eradication of Haman's family.
- C. Another meal another night.
- D. That her life be spared.
- E. A fighting chance to combat Haman.
- F. To spare the life of her people.
- G. That she and her people be allowed to become slaves.
- H. A bouquet of forget-me-nots.
- I. Other.

