



Week 1 Study Sheet

Searching for Springtime

Consider

Esther is a unique story in the pages of Scripture. The book never mentions God's name, his law, or his temple. God is bizarrely missing from the story of Esther. Or is he? Even though we do not see his name mentioned we see God's invisible hand at work throughout every detail of the story. Consider the question presented to us by this story: How are we to continue trusting in God when we can't see him or even hear his name?

Discover

The Book of Esther takes place during the fifth century B.C. following the Babylonian exile. The passage of 2 Chronicles 36:15-23 outlines the history of God's people leading up to the story of Esther.

Read [2 Chronicles 36:15-23](#)

- How had God's people responded to his messengers?
- How would you summarize the experience of God's people during the Babylonian exile and the rise of the Persian empire?
- Why would God cause his people to experience so much pain and suffering?
- In what ways does this passage illustrate how God works providentially through the events of human history to accomplish his purposes?
- Ultimately, what does this passage reveal about the character of God?

Pray

Express your trust in God as the one who orchestrates all the events of history in accordance with his perfect will. Recall his faithfulness throughout all generations. Ask for his help to interpret your present circumstances through the lens of his strength, sovereignty, and steadfast love rather than your own feelings.

Practice

Read the Book of Esther in one sitting. The story of Esther is best understood when consumed as one narrative, complete with an arching plot and unforgettable characters. There is much to learn from the events in this story, but we must remember that the entire story carries a singular message and every detail included contributes to that message. As you read consider what God is saying and how the message of this ancient story can help lead us to know and trust God more today.

Engage

In this week's reading, approach the passage as a short story, and take notice of the setting, characters, plot, themes, conflict, and resolution. Read [Esther 1-10](#)



Week 2 Study Sheet

The Emperor Has No Clothes

Consider

Have you ever felt like God was distant, silent, or uninterested in the events of your life? Feeling far from God is not an unfamiliar feeling for God's people. The Psalms are full of cries and laments in search of God. When God is silent, where is he? How are we to respond when God seems far off? Consider the example of [Psalm 77:7-12 NET](#):

I asked, "Will the Lord reject me forever?
Will he never again show me his favor?
Has his loyal love disappeared forever?
Has his promise failed forever?
Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has his anger stifled his compassion?" (Selah)
Then I said, "I am sickened by the thought
that the Most High might become inactive.
I will remember the works of the LORD.
Yes, I will remember the amazing things you did long ago.
I will think about all you have done;
I will reflect upon your deeds."

Discover

Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

Read [Esther 1:1-22](#)

- What do we learn about the character and motives of Vashti and Xerxes (Ahasuerus)?
- What insight do we gain from the king's request of Queen Vashti and how women were treated in Xerxes' kingdom?
- How did God use the pride of King Xerxes and the courage of Queen Vashti to redirect the circumstances to align with his greater purposes?
- Why does God allow godless leaders into positions of power over his people?
- Have you ever had to follow the leadership of someone you thought was unjust? How did you respond? What did you learn through that circumstance?

Pray

Share your questions, concerns, and doubts with God. Be honest. Let him know how you feel about the circumstances of your life and the events unfolding in our world. Sit in silence, listening for his reply. Declare your trust in him as the one who rules over all things – even if your present circumstances and feelings don't make sense to you.

Practice

Pray for the leaders God has appointed to lead locally - in our church, city, state, nation, and around the world. Use the instructions in [1 Timothy 2:1-4](#) to guide your prayers. Create a list of leaders and pray for them regularly.

Engage

Discover additional insight on God's role in establishing kings and rulers: Read [1 Samuel 8:4-9](#), [Daniel 2:21](#), [Proverbs 21:1](#), [Proverbs 29:2](#), [Psalm 75:6-7](#)

Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 2](#)



Week 3 Study Sheet

The Girl with Two Names

- Consider** Imagine an insignificant, orphaned, refugee girl experiencing a meteoric rise to power, becoming the queen of the greatest empire on earth, and the heroine who saves God's people from being annihilated. Even the best storyteller could not have imagined the story line God wrote for Esther (Hadassah), and certainly not even Esther herself. But that's exactly what happened. God has a plan for each of our lives, and he prepares good works for us to do. But how are we to ready ourselves for those moments when he calls on us?
- Discover** Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.
- Read [Esther 2:1-23](#)
- What do we learn about the character and motives of Mordecai?
 - What do we learn about the character and motives of Esther?
 - What lessons can we learn from Esther and Mordecai about the people we surround ourselves with and seek counsel from?
 - What might Esther have felt as she found herself in the king's harem in competition for his favor? How does God prepare us for the tasks he gives us?
 - Why would Mordecai instruct Esther not to reveal her nationality? Under what circumstances should we boldly proclaim our faith or be more discrete about our faith?
 - How were Mordecai and Esther able to use their positions to earn the favor of the king? How might God be arranging the past and present circumstances of your life to be a blessing to others?
- Pray** Thank God for all the ways he has sovereignly arranged the circumstances of your life to prepare you for his purposes. Express your gratitude for the strong relationships, wisdom, and material blessings he has provided to you. Thank him for the hardships and challenges that have refined your character and nurtured your endurance. Ask him for faith and patience when life gets confusing and painful. Trust that he is writing a beautiful story.
- Practice** Worship God with praise and singing. Dedicate a specific time this week to create your own private experience of worshipping God. Eliminate all possible distractions. Begin by reading Psalm 145 aloud and then enter into an extended time of praising God, through song, for his faithfulness, mercy, provision, and abounding love.
- Select your favorite worship playlist or play the [OHC – Worship 2020 playlist](#) on Spotify. Let your affections for God be stirred as you lift your voice in praise to him.
- Engage** Consider what the Bible teaches about being ready and prepared. Read [Joshua 1:1-2](#), [Isaiah 6:8](#), [1 Peter 3:15-16](#), [Ephesians 2:10](#), [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), [Matthew 24:36-44](#)
- Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 3](#)



Week 4 Study Sheet

He Refused to Bow

Consider We all love heroes. Our culture is obsessed with fictional superheroes who win spectacular battles against horrifying villains. Our appetite for heroics is ultimately rooted in a recognition that we need to be rescued but can't save ourselves. Our cinematic and literary heroes simply emulate the one true hero who conquered death and evil once and for all. How can our lives point to Jesus as the hero of our stories?

Discover Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

In [Esther 3:1](#) we learn that Haman is an Agagite, which means he is a descendant of Agag the king of the Amalekites. Read the following Old Testament passages before reading Esther 3 to gain insight into the relationship between the Israelites and the Amalekites.

Read [1 Samuel 15:8-33](#)

- Who is the king of the Amalekites, and what is a follower of the king called?

Read [Exodus 17:8-16](#)

- How would you characterize the relationship between the ancestors of the Israelites and the Amalekites? What new insights do you have into the tension between Mordecai and Haman?

Read [Esther 3:1-15](#)

- What do we learn about the character and motives of Haman?
- How did Haman respond to learning of Mordecai's refusal to bow?
- Why wasn't Haman satisfied with simply punishing Mordecai?
- How did Haman determine the timing of his plan to annihilate the Jews?
- What is the consequence of not taking a stand for the things you think are right?
- Have you ever refused to do something that went against your convictions? What was the situation and the result of standing up for your beliefs?

Pray Praise God for being holy, righteous, just, and merciful. Ask him for wisdom to know what is right and strength to act upon your convictions. Ask him to show you how to fight against evil by standing for what is right. Ask him to give you the discernment to recognize injustice and the courage to stand against it.

Practice Consider the spiritual forces of darkness ([Ephesians 6:14](#)) that are waging war against our souls. Watch this short doodle-illustration video (<http://bit.ly/CSLewisDoodle>) summarizing chapter 6 of C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*. The story demonstrates how uncertainty and anxiety can be used by Satan to cause us to doubt God's sufficiency and goodness. Remember Esther and ask God to give you the same courage in the face of uncertainty and fear.

Engage Consider what the Bible teaches about standing firm in the face of evil: Read [Exodus 14:10-14](#), [Psalm 125:1-2](#), [Matthew 7:24-27](#), [John 16:29-33](#), [1 Corinthians 16:13-14](#), [Ephesians 6:10-15](#), [Philippians 1:27-28](#), [1 Peter 5:8-11](#)

Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 4](#)



Week 5 Study Sheet

The Call to Courage

Consider Faith is trusting God to do what he's said he will do. Sometimes faith expresses itself in seemingly simple acts such as reading God's Word, praying, or giving. Other times faith feels extremely risky and requires courage. The pages of Scripture are filled with examples of courageous faith. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son. Moses had the courage to confront Pharaoh. Rahab risked her life to protect the spies from the Canaanites. David faced the giant. Mary submitted to God's plan to bring the Messiah from her womb. Peter stepped out of the boat. Esther faced her fears and appealed to the king on behalf of her people. What simple and courageous steps of faith has God called you to take?

Discover Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

Read [Esther 4:1-17](#)

- How did Mordecai and the Jewish people respond to the king's edict?
- What did Mordecai want Esther to do on behalf of her people? What was the risk?
- What was Esther's initial reaction to Mordecai's instruction? Why did Esther change her mind?
- What preceded Esther's courage to say, "If I perish, I perish"?
- Have you sensed God positioning you at just the right place and time to do something for his glory?
- How can you encourage someone to take a step of courageous obedience?
- Have you engaged in the spiritual practices of prayer and fasting in preparation for an act of courage?

Pray Praise God for being the all-knowing and all-powerful ruler over all things. Acknowledge that he alone is worthy of our praise, deserving of our trust and the anchor for our hope. Rest in his loving care for you. Ask him to free you from the need to control the circumstances of your life and the world around you. Ask for the provision you need to faithfully serve him today.

Practice Participate in a fast. The spiritual practice of fasting involves intentionally abstaining from a normal behavior in order to focus our attention on God. Esther fasted from food and drink for three days and asked the Jews to join her ([Esther 4:16](#)). If medical conditions are not a concern, consider a one day fast from food. During your fast, use your hunger pangs, cravings, and regular mealtimes as opportunities to seek God's will in prayer.

Engage Consider what the Bible teaches about God's wise and intentional direction of all life events: Read [Proverbs 20:24](#), [Proverbs 16:9](#), [Acts 17:26-28](#), [James 4:13-17](#), [Jeremiah 29:11-13](#), [Psalm 139:1-6](#), [Romans 8:28](#)

Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 5](#)



Week 6 Study Sheet

A Beautiful Bravery

- Consider** Chapter 5 of Esther delivers all the elements of a great story – a struggle between good and evil, an underdog, suspense, unexpected turns, and a cliff hanger. As the story builds, so do our hopes. Will Esther be welcomed into the king’s presence? Will she have the courage to speak up for her people? Will God use Esther to deliver his people from Haman’s evil plan? Our questions don’t immediately get answered in this chapter, but as we wait for the resolution, we remember that God always comes through on behalf of his people, without fail.
- Discover** Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.
- Read [Esther 5:1-14](#)
- Why did Esther invite the king and Haman to a banquet instead of just stating her true need?
 - Why did Haman respond to Esther’s invitation the way he did?
 - What contrasting character attributes and motives can you identify between Haman and Esther?
 - What does the story of Esther reveal about the need to take bold risks for God?
 - What long-standing fears do you sense God calling you to face?
 - When has waiting patiently for God to act been harder or scarier than taking matters into your own hands?
- Pray** Thank God for the opportunity to talk with him today and every day. Tell him you are listening for his voice. Share with him each concern, hope, fear, need, and request as they come to mind. Make “Your will be done” the refrain of your prayers.
- Practice** Wait with God this week. Our lives are full of waiting, but often waiting produces anger, frustration, or fear. Waiting with God teaches us to relinquish control and embrace what God is doing this very moment. View every moment of waiting as an opportunity to let go of your expectations and trust God’s perfect timing. Allow him to cultivate a greater sense of contentment and readiness in your spirit. Choose a verse (such as [Psalm 46:10](#) or [Isaiah 40:31](#)) that reminds you of God’s timing and recite it to yourself in your moments of waiting.
- Engage** Consider what the Bible teaches about God’s faithfulness: Read [Joshua 21:45](#), [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#), [Philippians 1:6](#), [Ezekiel 12:28](#), [Lamentations 2:17](#), [Lamentations 3:22-23](#), [Isaiah 14:27](#), [Job 42:2](#), [Exodus 34:6](#), [Numbers 23:19](#), [Deuteronomy 7:9-11](#)
- Prepare for next week’s lesson: Read [Esther 6](#)



Week 7 Study Sheet

God is Loudest When He Whispers

Consider Have you ever had a gentle breeze tickle the back of your neck at the end of a long hot day? Instantly, you feel the heat of the day disappear as the coolness of the evening reinvigorates your body and soul. A small breeze with a big impact. Small things, which often go unnoticed, sometimes make the biggest impacts on our life. Have you ever done a small thing, that at the time seemed unremarkable, that later became a big deal? What was that moment and how did it change your life?

Discover Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

Read [Esther 6:1-14](#)

- What did Xerxes reach for on a restless night?
- How do you think Mordecai felt when his actions seemed forgotten?
- What happened when Mordecai's actions were noticed?
- How does the trajectory of the story change because of this moment?

Read [1 Kings 19:9-18](#)

- When does God speak to Elijah? Why do you think God uses that moment?
- Has God ever whispered to you in a moment of depression? How did God guide you?
- Why did God reveal the abundance of those who are with Elijah? (v. 18) How would knowing you had a community behind you effect your faith?
- How can you and your community help each other in this moment?

Pray Thank God for his omnipresence. Seek God's help with the assurance that God sees the smallest actions of your life. Invite him to reveal his plan and will for the small moments. Ask God to allow those moments to impact others for his glory.

Practice Spend time listening and journaling. Recall and journal a small moment that seemed inconsequential but developed into a major theme in your personal story. Ask God to show you where he was in both the small and large moments.

Engage Consider what the Bible reveals about how God's voice calms us during chaotic moments:
Read [Exodus 3:1-17](#), [1 Samuel 3](#), [Psalm 18:1-19](#), [Psalm 107:1-22](#), [Matthew 5:25-34](#), [Mark 4:35-41](#)

Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 7](#)



Week 8 Study Sheet

The High Price of Evil

Consider

As the story of Esther unfolds, it becomes clear that doing evil comes with a high price. We sigh in relief and celebrate when the story reveals that evil is thwarted, and unjust things come to justice. But what about our own stories? Where is God's sovereign hand of justice when we face evil in the form of persecution, hatred, and division. In Esther's story, injustice is restrained by the courageous actions of Esther and Mordecai. Have you experienced injustice in your life? How did you react and how did God intervene in that moment?

Discover

Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

Read [Esther 7:1-10](#)

- Where do you see God's sovereign hand in this part of the story?
- What can we learn from Esther about how to handle those who wrong us? (v. 3)
- What does this passage teach us about justice?
- What does this moment in the story teach us about hatred and vengeance?

Read [Romans 8:28](#)

- When have you seen God redeem a bad situation for your good?
- How can this experience give you a great trust in God when you face difficult circumstances in the future?

Pray

Ask God to help you forgive those who have wronged you in the past. Ask him to show you what his intentions were for you in that moment of injustice. Thank him in advance for bringing justice to the situation.

Practice

Release the bondage of injustice in your life by writing down three situations where you felt wronged. Pray for God to reveal his sovereignty and show you how he has brought justice to each situation. When God shows you his purpose, sigh in relief, celebrate, and tear up the list, keeping no record of wrongs. ([1 Corinthians 13:5](#))

Engage

Consider what the Bible teaches about how God works to ensure good triumphs over evil: Read [Exodus 2:1-10](#), [Joshua 5:13-6.25](#), [Judges 7](#), [1 Samuel 19](#), [Matthew 2:1-18](#), [Acts 12](#)

Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 8](#)



Week 9 Study Sheet

The God of Grand Reversals

- Consider** Falling out of a boat in swift waters is a frightening experience. Your first instinct is to try to get back into the boat. Your second instinct is to fight against the current and swim to safety. The safest water exit is to float belly up with your feet down river until the current takes you close to land. This may seem counterintuitive, but it's the best way to survive. God often intervenes in this way. Our ways are not his ways and we often have to stop fighting and instead trust in God's rescue plan. What have you been fighting against that you need to start trusting God for in this moment in your life?
- Discover** Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.
- Read [Esther 8:1-17](#)
- How did the king's edict change the future of the Jews?
 - What does the permanency of a king's edict teach us about facing obstacles in life?
 - How does this passage foreshadow the future work of Jesus?
 - Recall a time when God worked all things for good in your life. How did he help you? How did you feel?
- Read [Romans 8:28](#)
- When have you seen God redeem a bad situation for your good?
 - How can this experience give you a great trust in God when you face difficult circumstances in the future?
- Pray** Ask God to reveal his purpose for the journey of your past. Seek to understand how he is working at this current moment in your life. Praise him for his abiding hand over your life and ask him to help you trust in his plan for your future.
- Practice** Write out your story. Take time to celebrate the grand reversals of your life. Write about a time when God intervened and rescued you. Share your story with someone this week and encourage them to stop struggling and start trusting.
- Engage** Consider what the Bible teaches about reversing your circumstances: Read [Genesis 50:15-21](#), [Job 1:6-22](#), [Job 42](#), [Ruth 1-4](#), [Matthew 5:1-12](#)
- Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 9](#)



Week 10 Study Sheet

Crisis, Confusion, Covenant

Consider

On a dark Friday night, the enemies of God thought they had put the nail in the coffin of hope. But now the people of God rejoice over that dark day - calling it Good Friday, because God reversed the darkness and sadness of that day through the resurrection of his Son. Esther and Mordecai must have experienced a similar feeling after King Xerxes' first edict condemned God's people. But through the courageous obedience of Mordecai and Esther God provided a way for his people. So also, the resurrection of Christ now makes provision for all of us to be called sons and daughters of God. How has the resurrection changed your despair to hope?

Discover

Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

Read [Esther 9:1-17](#)

- What was God's role in the triumph of the Jews?
- How can God turn the tables on your enemies or the bad situations you are facing in life?
- Why does the writer of Esther emphasize that the Jews did not take plunder in their conquest?
- As followers of Jesus, when and how are we called to defend our rights and stand up for ourselves?

Read [Matthew 5:43-48](#)

- How does Jesus teach us to turn the tables on our enemies?
- What actions can we take when dealing with others who desire to harm us?
- Why does Jesus ask us to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors?

Pray

Thank God for loving you and providing a way to be in relationship with you. Submit all your relationships to him and ask him to help you love your enemies. Seek courage to step out in obedience and let the Holy Spirit lead you through tough moments.

Practice

Participate in a fast. During this fast, instead of abstaining from food, refrain from consuming media. Select a specific day or multiple days, to disconnect from the noise, confusion, and subliminal pressures of social media and television. During your fast, use your free time to encounter God and focus your attention on him. Delight in his love. Celebrate his mercy. Rest in his strength. Set your mind on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, or praiseworthy. And let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. ([Philippians 4:8-9](#))

Engage

Consider what the Bible teaches us about facing moments of crisis and confusion within the security of a covenant: Read [Genesis 9:1-17](#), [Genesis 15](#), [Exodus 20:1-21](#), [2 Samuel 7:1-17](#), [2 Chronicles 32](#), [Matthew 7:12](#), [John 15:12](#), [Ephesians 4:32](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:13](#), [1 Peter 2:17](#)

Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Esther 10](#)



Week 11 Study Sheet

A Purim People

Consider Life often seems like a rollercoaster. From uncertainty within a pandemic, to calls for social changes, we are constantly bombard by news cycles that bring unrest. When every day is filled with chaos and confusion, it becomes even more important to lean into God's provision and plan. One way to cultivate our faith and trust in God is to celebrate his goodness. Throughout in the Old Testament the Israelites had monuments and feasts to reminded them of God's provision. We find many of those same feasts being observed in the New Testament, but they're not very common today. How can you celebrate with others what God is doing in your life?

Discover Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

Read [Esther 9:18-32](#)

- What are the key elements of the Jewish celebration of Purim? (v. 22)
- Why was this celebration important to the Jewish people?
- What can we learn from the establishment of Purim?

Read [Luke 22:14-20](#)

- What similarities do you see between the Last Supper and the celebration of Purim?
- What is most important to remember from the Last Supper?
- What are your most memorable moments from celebrating communion?

Pray Praise God, for he is worthy to be celebrated. Thank him for turning sorrow into joy and mourning into celebration. Ask him to find the places of sorrow in your life that need his healing hand. Seek his joy and celebrate his provision.

Practice Cultivate a thankful heart. View each mealtime as an opportunity for celebration and gratitude. Recall and tell stories about the faithfulness of God. Invite those at your table to share what they are thankful for. Embrace the Thanksgiving holiday and celebrate like it is Purim. Let your sorrow be turned into joy and your mourning into a day of celebration. ([Esther 9:22](#))

Engage Consider what the Bible teaches us about the importance of celebration: Read [Exodus 12](#), [Leviticus 23](#), [Joshua 24](#), [1 Kings 8:62-66](#), [2 Chronicles 35:1-19](#), [Matthew 1:18-25](#), [Luke 2:41-52](#), [Acts 2:1-13](#)

Prepare for next week's lesson: Read [Ezra 1](#) and [Nehemiah 2](#)



Week 12 Study Sheet

Stuck in Wintertime

Consider

Wintertime can feel like an inactive season of life. Bears hibernate. Birds migrate. Growth seems absent. However, wintertime holds a secret. Winter is a season where deep growth and restoration take place. Roots grow deeper, form stronger, and become more connected during this season. This preparation allows for great beauty in the springtime and sweet fruit in the summer. Springtime growth may be more visible, but it is reliant on winter's preparation. Think about this past year, did your soul experience winter? Were you stuck in winter or was your soul growing and searching for springtime?

Discover

Begin by reflecting on the words, phrases, or ideas the Holy Spirit focused your attention on last week.

Read [Ezra 1:1-7](#)

- What connection do you see between God's providence in Esther's story and this story of the Jew's return to their land?
- How does Esther's story influence the Jewish people as they return to the land?
- How do you imagine the Israelites felt as they started to pack up and return to the land?

Read [Nehemiah 2:1-10](#)

- What similarities do you see in the stories of Nehemiah and Esther?
- How would you describe Nehemiah's attitude toward the king?
- What guides the king's decision?
- How does this passage encourage you?

Pray

Thank God for wintertime. Ask him to show you how he has been present with you during this season. Praise him for moments of deep growth. Praise him that springtime is coming. Seek his path and guidance as you prepare for the next season of life.

Practice

Meditate on God's Word. Consider memorizing this Scripture to affirm God's power, promise, and provision. "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." [Isaiah 43:19 NIV](#)

Engage

Consider how God led his people from chaos to peace throughout the Bible: Read [Joshua 10:1-15](#), [Isaiah 7](#), [Isaiah 9:1-7](#), [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#), [Micah 5:1-5](#), [Haggai 1](#), [Zechariah 9:9-17](#), [2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2](#), [Galatians 3:26-4:7](#), [Revelation 22](#)