

the story

Pastor
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GOD'S STORY IS OUR STORY

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The Characters:

KING XERXES: *Powerful but erratic King of Persia. Loved to Party.*

“⁴ For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days,”

~ ESTHER 1:4-5a (NIV)

QUEEN VASHTI: *King Xerxes first wife. Banished because she dares to refuse the King.*

“¹² when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.”

~ ESTHER 1:12 (NIV)

“² Then the king's personal attendants proposed, 'Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. ³ Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful girls into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. ⁴ Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.' This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.”

~ ESTHER 2:2-4 (NIV)

ESTHER: *Orphaned Jewish Girl. Raised by Mordecai then becomes queen of Persia.*

“⁷ ...Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.” ~ ESTHER 2:7b (NIV)

MORDECAI: *Jewish official in Xerxes court. Foils plot against the King.
Challenges Esther to use her influence to save God's people.*

“² All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman... But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.”

~ ESTHER 3:2 (NIV)

HAMAN: *The Villain. Second in command to Xerxes. In anger and pride determines to exterminate all Jews.*

“⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. ⁶ Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews.”

~ ESTHER 3:5-6a (NIV)

Haman is a descendent of the _____ . (See 1 Samuel 15:1-11)

The Plot:

Haman's Scheme: _____ all the Jews.

Haman _____ and it lands on _____.

“¹² They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders... These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring. ¹³ Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.”

~ ESTHER 3:12b-13 (NIV)

Mordecai's Plea to Queen Esther:

“¹³ Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”

~ ESTHER 4:13b-14 (NIV)

Esther's Courage:

“¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.' ”

~ ESTHER 4:15-16 (NIV)

Esther's Request: Private Banquet with Xerxes and Haman.

“³ If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people.” ~ ESTHER 7:3b (NIV)

“⁴ For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated ... ⁵ King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, 'Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?' ⁶ Esther said, 'An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!' ”

~ ESTHER 7:4a, 5-6a (NIV)

“³³ We may throw the dice, but the Lord determines how they fall.” ~ PROVERBS 16:33 (NLT)

SO WHAT?

What is your _____?

What situation does God have you in _____?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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- 1 - Can you think of a time when God was working in your life “behind the scenes” even when you did not see it?
- 2 - Review the main characters of the story. Who are the heroes and who are the villains? What makes them heroic?
- 3 - Some of the most inspiring words in Esther come in 4:12-16. How would you describe Mordecai's statement to Esther in verse 14? Have you ever felt like you were in a “for such a time as this” situation?
- 4 - How would you describe Esther's response in verse 15-16? What do you think she was thinking and feeling as she spoke those words?
- 5 - The 13th of Adar was the day “the dice” originally chose for the destruction of the Jews. But that day later becomes a day God's people are allowed to defend themselves in a powerful way. Can you think of a situation that seemed terribly bad but eventually became something victorious?
- 6 - How would you explain the fact that God's name is not mentioned in the whole book? How can that be seen as encouraging to you?

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