

Connection Group Discussion Questions

For the week of February 1, 2015

Esther 8:1-8

NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

¹On 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.

²Then the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. So Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

³Then Esther spoke again to the king; she fell at his feet, weeping and pleading with him to avert the evil design of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. ⁴The king held out the golden sceptre to Esther, ⁵and Esther rose and stood before the king. She said, 'If it pleases the king, and if I have won his favor, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I have his approval, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote giving orders to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. ⁶For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming on my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?' ⁷Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to the Jew Mordecai, 'See, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he plotted to lay hands on the Jews. ⁸You 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.'

CEB (Common English Bible)

¹That same day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther what Haman the enemy of the Jews owned. Mordecai himself came before the king because Esther had told the king that he was family to her. ²The king took off his royal ring, the one he had removed from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. Esther put Mordecai in charge of what Haman had owned.

³Esther again spoke before the king. She bowed at his feet, wept, and begged him to treat her kindly. She wanted him to overturn the evil plot of Haman the Agagite—his secret plan directed against the Jews. ⁴The king held out the gold scepter to Esther, and she got up and stood before him. ⁵She said, "If the king wishes, and if I please him—that is, if the idea seems right to the king, and if he still sees me as a good person—

then have people write something to call back the order—the order that put into effect the plan of Haman, Hammedatha the Agagite’s son, that he wrote to destroy the Jews in all the royal provinces. ⁶ How can I bear to watch the terrible evil about to sweep over my people? And how can I bear to watch others destroy my own family?”

⁷ King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, “Look, I’ve given Esther everything Haman owned. And Haman himself my servants have impaled on the pole because he planned to attack the Jews. ⁸ So you yourselves write to the Jews whatever you like in the name of the king and seal the letters with the king’s royal ring. Anything written in the name of the king and sealed with the king’s royal ring can’t be called back.”

Connection Questions:

1. As an orphaned Jewish girl exalted to the highest positions of any woman in the world at that time, Esther must have been flooded with a variety of feelings. What could they have been?

2. Discuss how going from a low position to a position of authority could change how you view the world.

3. The contrast between good and evil is all throughout the book of Esther. It could have been easy for Esther to have spent her time in her new position to become self-indulgent. Instead she spends her time concerned about God and God’s people. Discuss how she did this and why.

4. Esther never forgets from where she came. What do you think happened in her early years that gave her the resources to stay focused on her faith with other temptations she encountered as she became queen?

5. Rick Warren says, “You can’t be a servant if you’re full of yourself. It’s only when we forget ourselves that we do the things that deserve to be remembered.” Discuss what you think he means.

6. Why do you think Esther kept her real identity as an orphaned Jewish girl a secret?

7. Servanthood is a constant theme throughout the biblical drama. Jesus tells the disciples that the greatest in the kingdom of God is servant of all. Do you think Esther was a servant? If so, how?

8. As Christians what are some ways in our daily lives that we can demonstrate the characteristics of servanthood?

9. Esther's story with God is for us, reminding us in little, ordinary, unspectacular ways the kingdom of God is being advanced. What does this statement mean to you?

10. All throughout the book of Esther, Queen Esther was able to stay focused on her story with God. How was she able to do this and what can it teach us about our own faith journeys?