

Esther

This three week series focusing on the book of Esther reveals God's providential hand working behind the scenes in a story of banquets and bureaucracy, plot twists and conspiracy. Esther calls us to trust that God is overcoming evil and rescuing the world - through us - for His purposes; even when it's hard to see Him.

Week 1: When God Feels Away (Drew Ritchie – July 14)

1. How does Esther's situation reflect times in our own lives when we face challenges or injustices we didn't cause? Can you share an experience where you felt like Esther?
2. Reflect on the idea that we experience sin in 3 ways: **done by us**, **to us**, and **around us**. How does this perspective help you understand your own suffering and the suffering of others? Follow up: **Read Galatians 6:7-8**. *"We can be casualties of sin without being guilty of sin."* How does this idea challenge or comfort you in your own life experiences?
3. *King Xerxes' decision to find a new queen was influenced by his advisors.* What do the actions and character of King Xerxes reveal about leadership and influence? Follow up: How have you seen the influence of others impact your life, positively or negatively?
4. *The book of Esther doesn't mention God explicitly.* How do you see God's presence in Esther's story despite His apparent absence? Follow up: Drew asked us to reflect on this question, *When our eyes tell us that God is away, will our hearts trust that He is at work?* How do you trust in God's plan when you feel like He is absent in your life? What are some practical ways to remind yourself of God's presence when you are facing difficult situations?
5. *Esther didn't choose her circumstances.* Can you relate to a time when you found yourself in a difficult situation you didn't choose? How did you handle it? Follow up: What specific aspects of Esther's story resonate with you and give you hope in difficult circumstances?
6. *Mordecai cared for Esther and sought to protect her.* How important is community support in times of trial? How has your faith community supported you in tough times? Follow up: What next step can you take to make sure you are regularly in community with other followers of Jesus who are striving to **be with Jesus**, **become like Jesus**, and **do what Jesus did**?
7. Reflect on **Romans 8:28** and **Genesis 50:20**. How do these verses relate to the story of Esther and to your own life? How can they help you trust that God is working for good even when you can't see it? Follow up: Share a personal example of a time when God worked behind the scenes in your life. What did you learn about God and yourself during that time?

