

### Note from Kathy

*Even though God is not specifically mentioned in the book of Esther, we see his providential hand throughout. God is the sovereign power of all creation. His plans cannot be thwarted by the actions of men. Do not miss the plans, purposes, and power of God as you read this book. Keep your eyes open today for his hand of grace in your life.*

#### Esther 1:3

"...<sup>3</sup>and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials..."

#### Esther 2:16

"She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign."

#### Esther 3:7

"In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the pur..."

## Observation

1. Esther 3 begins with the words "after these events." What events is the author referencing?
2. Scripture does not say why King Xerxes honored Haman, the Agagite, but it does say he elevated him. What position was he given?
3. After his promotion everyone would kneel when Haman walked by. According to the text why did they do this? What did this action show?
4. Mordecai would not bow. What was Haman's reaction to this?
5. Haman chose to deal with more than just being snubbed by Mordecai. When he found out that Mordecai was a Jew, what did he want to do?
6. Esther 1:3 stated it was the \_\_\_\_\_ year of King Xerxes reign; Esther 2:16 stated it was the \_\_\_\_\_ year of King Xerxes reign, and in Esther 3:7 it is now the \_\_\_\_\_ year of King Xerxes reign. We will use these dates in a later lesson to do a timeline for the events of the book of Esther.
7. In the presence of the king and his officials, Haman ordered a lot to be cast to choose a specific date for the plan he had devised. He merely referred to the Jews as "a certain people." What did he say about them to the king?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.

8. Partial truth is often merely deception. Haman left out the fact that he was referring to the Jews. Were the facts Haman did share accurate or inaccurate?
9. What did Haman offer as a solution to this problem?
10. It has been said that money talks. What enticement does Haman offer? What do you believe was his purpose for such an extravagant offer?

**Proverbs 25:2**

*"It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out."*

11. Does King Xerxes carry out any kind of investigation or check up on the facts that have been presented to him? \_\_\_\_\_  
According to Proverbs 25:2, it is very important for kings (or anyone in a leadership position) to make the effort to discover the truth.
12. What is the king's response to Haman's enticement in verse 11?
13. What is the purpose of a signet ring? What had King Xerxes actually given to Haman at this point?
14. The secretaries were called. What were they instructed to do?
15. What was done with each of these sealed letters? What was the full gruesome scope of this order?
16. Because these orders came with the king's seal, how were they viewed by the couriers who carried them to each province?
17. What was the reaction of the people when these orders were read?

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# Application

1. Mordecai would not bow to Haman. Mordecai was a Benjamite, and Haman was an Agagite. Many generations prior to this King Saul, also a Benjamite, and the first king of Israel, was told by God to eliminate the Agagites; but he did not fully obey. Do you believe partial obedience to God may carry consequences that will effect generations to come?
2. Considering your answer to the last question, is there anything God has instructed you to do that needs to be carried out carefully and completely?
3. To bow one's knee would be a posture that displayed humility and honor for the one before whom you're bowing. From what you have read, was this man Haman worthy of this honor?
4. Anger can be a very dangerous emotion. In Esther 1, we saw the king enraged. In Esther 2, we saw what happened to two of the king's men who allowed danger to fester. Now, in Esther 3, Haman was enraged. There may be times when we will get upset about something, but what we do with anger is our choice. Think of the last time you got angry; how did you handle it?
5. The king gave no thought to checking Haman's facts regarding the "certain group of people" that needed to be destroyed. He simply believed all Haman told him and gave him his signet ring. According to Proverbs 18:17, what should the king have done?
6. Can you think of a time when you manipulated in order to get others onboard with your ideas?
7. Each of the public notices sent out were written in the language of the province to which it was headed. What does this tell you about the number of nationalities that lived in Persia at that time? Do you suppose other nationalities worried that they might be next?



## Proverbs 18:17

*"The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."*

8. Are you concerned when you hear of a group of people being persecuted?

When we see injustice we must not sit by quietly. We must be willing to speak up in defense of those about to be mistreated, because one day it very well may be us.

Martin Niëmoller was a prominent Protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. He is perhaps best remembered for this statement:

*"First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—  
Because I was not a Socialist.  
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—  
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—  
Because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me—  
And there was no one left to speak for me."*

### Proverbs 31:1-9

Listen, my son!  
Listen, son of my womb!  
Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers!  
<sup>3</sup>Do not spend your strength on women, your vigor on those who ruin kings. <sup>4</sup>It is not for kings, Lemuel—it is not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, <sup>5</sup>lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.  
<sup>6</sup>Let beer be for those who are perishing, wine for those who are in anguish! <sup>7</sup>Let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.  
<sup>8</sup>Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.  
<sup>9</sup>Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

9. This chapter ends with King Xerxes and Haman sitting down with one purpose in mind: to drink. This king has allowed wine and drink to become his go-to source of relaxation. Proverbs 31:1-9 speaks as a word of warning. This chapter was written by King Lemuel, an unknown king, his name means "devoted to God." Some speculate that it was King Solomon, no one knows for sure. But the words of wisdom are good for all kings and leaders who desire to rule and lead well. Underline the reason given for not drinking too much wine in Proverbs 31:1-9.

*The Life Application Bible* comments on these verses saying, "Leaders have better things to do than anesthetize themselves with alcohol." They have been placed in a position of authority to protect the rights of all who depend on them. They should not allow their judgment to be clouded by wine or strong drink. Do you think King Xerxes could have used this advice? Do you think King Xerxes would have listened to this advice?

10. In Proverbs 31 we read that King Lemuel was dedicated to God. Believers are also to live their lives set apart for God's service. Would you say your actions display your devotion?
11. These two men callously go about their business with no thought to the thousands and thousands of people who were just ordered to be killed. The people of Susa were confused by this decree. What questions do you think they were asking each other?

Do you suppose many of them were friends with these Jewish people? Have you ever been perplexed or confused by another person's extreme hatred?

Who are some other examples of this type of extreme hatred for God's people?

12. Who is relying on you to lead well? Can drinking cloud our judgment? It is often easy to read the *Bible* and see very quickly how the lack of character, the lack of self-control, can lead people away from God's best. With just the facts you have seen so far, has the Lord spoken to you about your leadership?

Examine your priorities, the way you deal with others and your decision-making process in light of all you have seen thus far. Are there areas that God is speaking to you about making some changes? This may be one of the most important questions on the study guide, because it will enable us to go from seeing truth to implementing it in our life. If we are not changed by the word of God we leave ourselves open to potential hardening of our heart. James 1 reminds us to be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves.

### James 1:21-25

*"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in the mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does."*

13. Flip back to the study guide for Esther chapter 2, Application question #3, and fill in the chart for Key People of Esther with qualities, traits, or facts you have discovered about Haman. Continue completing this chart over the next few weeks.
14. Proverbs tells us of six things that set a person in opposition to the Lord. All of these sins separate us from God, because he abhors each of them. Read Proverbs 6:16-19 below, and, in your own words, briefly explain the underlined portions.

There are six things that the LORD hates,

Seven that are an abomination to him:

Haughty eyes,

A lying tongue,

And hands that shed innocent blood,

A heart that devises wicked plans,

Feet that make haste to run to evil,

A false witness who breathes out lies,

And one who sows discord among brothers.

15. Below, list a few of the sins mentioned in Proverbs 6:16-19 that you read about in the first three chapters of Esther. An example is provided.

Sin	Person	Sin Described
Haughty eyes	King Xerxes	Esther 1:1-8 His banquet to display his vast wealth to the nobles and officials and princes