

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides **(March 6th – 12th)**

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. If you could spend an afternoon with one character from the Bible (not Jesus), who would it be? What would you talk with them about?

Bible Study Questions

1. If you have been reading in Esther, what have you been learning? What do you notice about God? Who do you identify with? What questions do you have?
2. Esther is the only book in the Bible in which God is not mentioned, yet you see him at work throughout the story. Pastor Michael suggested that it is to make the point that God is at work, even when he is silent.
 - How is this an encouragement to you?
 - What do you believe is the best way to respond when the world seems out of control and God seems absent?
 - When was a time in which you went through a crises and wondered where God was, only to look back and to see him at work?
3. Read Esther 4 (context, Esther is queen and Haman has issued an edict for all of the Jews to be killed)
 - How do you think that you would have responded in Esther's position?
 - God had placed Esther in an unique context for influence. Think about your context? Who are you uniquely positioned to influence? What about our church?
4. Esther develops a sense of God given purpose about her position. How do we develop that same sense of God given purpose in our lives?

March 6th
Esther: The Absent God

The book of Esther is the last book of history that we find in the Old Testament. It takes place during the book of Ezra in the land of Persia. It is a book that produced much conflict. Many Jewish leaders have lauded it as one of the greatest books of the Old Testament while other leaders such as Martin Luther have wished that it had never been written.

I. The Book of Esther

- **Notable in that God is not mentioned:** This is the reason why Martin Luther struggled with the book. It is the only book in the Bible in which this happens. Most scholars though believe that this was intentional on the part of the author.
- **God silently moves behind the scenes:** Even though God is not mentioned, God's fingerprints are everywhere. A key verse is in Esther 4:14 in which Mordecai tells Esther, *"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 your royal position for such a time as this."* It is God who orchestrates Esther being in a position of authority and who will bring deliverance to the people. As the story unfolds, God enacts one "coincidence" after another.
- **The book reveals God to be the deliverer of his people:** Throughout the story, God acts to deliver his people. It is notable that the story takes place in the foreign land of Persia. Some wondered if God's power could stretch that far. Yet even in that distant land, God was working to deliver his people from evil.

II. The book reminds us that...

- **God's silence does not diminish his presence:** Many scholars believe that the author intentionally does not mention God to remind us that God is active even when we don't see him. There are many times in life in which God doesn't send a special word or write an answer in the sky, but still is present through the situation. Our job is to trust and obey.
- **God is committed to the deliverance of his people:** The story reminds us that God is always deliverance his people. It is who he is.

Conclusion

It is easy to view this as God doing an act of deliverance for Israel. But there is more to it than that. From the beginning of the Bible, we have a promise that God would act to deliver humanity from the power

of sin. God saved the Jews from being massacred, so that from that nation could come Jesus, who would deliver us all from sin.