

# INVISIBLE

## A STUDY ON ESTHER

### MISSION MOMENTS

KEY SCRIPTURE | Esther 3–4

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024

### DISCUSSION GUIDE

We are in the second week of, *Invisible*, a message series on the book of Esther. In Esther 3 and 4, Esther is in a difficult spot, but she is going to find out that she is exactly where God wants her to be. She has been made queen of Persia for a specific “mission moment” for God to save His people. Just like Esther, God has put us in a particular place for a purpose. We, as the people of God, share a big mission to make disciples, but we each have smaller “mission moments” that God gives us along the way. From the book of Esther, we learn how we can recognize when we are in a mission moment:

1. A mission moment often begins with a problem (3:1–6)
2. A mission moment is usually close at hand (4:1–2)
3. A mission moment often suits your skill set (4:14)
4. A mission moment will most often take great courage (4:15–16)

Mordecai told Esther that even if she stays silent, relief and deliverance for the Jewish people will come from another place. But he encouraged her to be faithful and to fulfill her purpose in this moment! The bigger mission is made of smaller moments.

### QUESTIONS

Icebreaker: What is the most courageous thing you have ever done?

1. Read Esther 3:1–6. Identify the problem that created the mission moment in this passage.
2. Read Deuteronomy 25:17–19 and 1 Samuel 15:22–23. How does this history in the Old Testament help us understand why Mordecai refused to bow to Haman?—See Notes
3. It's easy to complain and grumble when we're facing problems. How can you begin to see the problems you face as a mission moment?—See Notes
4. Mordecai's refusal to bow resulted in Haman ordering all the Jews to be killed. Read Esther 4:1–2. What was Mordecai's response to this news? What does Esther do?—See Digging Deeper
5. What did Mordecai suggest about why Esther was placed in her royal position (Esther 4:14)? How does this resonate with your own life?
6. Read Esther 4:15–16. What is Esther's response to Mordecai? How does this compare to her initial response in 4:11?
7. How is God calling you to respond to this message today?

## NOTES

\*Esther 3:1–6 background:

Commentators explain that “sometime later” represents a 5–year gap between chapters 2 and 3. Remember, we had a 4–year gap between chapters 1 and 2, and now we have a 5 year gap between chapters 2 and 3. We’re now introduced to a new character named Haman AND we’re told about his PROMOTION—although no reason for the promotion is mentioned. The author places the promotion of Haman just where the original readers would have expected a report of Mordecai’s reward as someone who saved the life of the king. Haman’s introduction forms an unexpected twist when placed side by side with Mordecai’s unrewarded loyalty.

Regardless, Haman is now the most powerful official in the empire (think prime minister) and we’re also told about the background of Haman which is very important!

- Haman is an AGAGITE. Jewish tradition considers him to have been a descendant of the Amalekite king AGAG, who, 600 years earlier, had been an enemy of king Saul and the nation of Israel...Mordecai's people!!!
- The Amalekites have been LONG TIME enemies of the Jews.
- Saul failed to destroy the Amalekites completely as God had ordered and consequently the kingdom was taken from him.
- The Amalekites were a nomadic people of the southern desert region who frequently raided Israel from the beginning of its history. This PAGAN nation had the dubious distinction of being the first people of the world to attack and try to destroy God's newly formed covenant nation.

Most likely, Mordecai refused to bow to Haman because he was an Agagite, and therefore an enemy.

## DIGGING DEEPER

\*There is a glimmer of hope in chapter 3 that is easy to miss.

“Haman casts the lot in the first month, Nisan, the month the Jews celebrate Passover... The edict of death is sent out on the thirteenth day of the first month, which ironically is the very eve of Passover (Ex. 12:18; Lev. 23:5; Num. 28:16) ... Passover commemorates the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the event that constituted the founding of God's covenant people as a nation. It celebrates the existence of the Jews as a people and their special relationship to God. The joy of this holiday is turned to sorrow in Persia when the decree is delivered on Passover.”

—Karen Jobes, *The NIV Application Commentary: Esther*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 122.

Though it brought sorrow in that moment, the fact that this edict is connected to Passover foreshadows the deliverance God will bring for His people through Esther.