

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Introducing Esther

Dave Cover | Esther 1:1-7

Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To be reminded of God's hidden providence when he feels absent.

Icebreaker: If it's your first time back together, what was a highlight of your break? If you've already had a time to catch up...when was the first time you lived away from home?

Discussion:

Transition: Esther is an account of what happened among the Jewish people who were living in exile in the Persian Empire away from the Promised Land. Peter calls Christians exiles (1 Peter 1:1) and encourages us to live as exiles as well (1 Peter 2:11).

1. What are some ways life feels like we are in exile?

Transition: One of troubling aspects Dave noticed that people point out in reading Esther is that there is no mention of God, no prayer to him, no miracles or signs. Where is God? When life feels like exile, that is the very question we may ask.

2. If we feel like we are in exile and God seems absent, how might that change the way we feel or go about our life?

Transition: Another troubling aspect that people have reading Esther that Dave mentioned is the fact that the "heroes" in the book seem so morally flawed which is very different than how Daniel and his friends are presented in the book of Daniel.

3. What's challenging and/or comforting about the fact that God doesn't just work through righteous people but also through morally flawed ones?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Read:

Esther 1:1-7

¹This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: ²At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, ³and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

⁴For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. ⁵When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. ⁶The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. ⁷Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality.

Esther 2:16

¹⁶She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Comment: Dave mentioned that we know from the Greek historian Herodotus that it was in the third year of Xerxes' reign that he was rallying nobles and lords to invade Greece with a very opulent banquet. After that invasion failed dramatically, Xerxes had returned home in the seventh year of his reign. He was emotionally troubled, unable to sleep well, tinged with self-doubt, finding comfort in alcohol and women. It was in the seventh year that Esther is brought into the royal house.

4. What do we learn about Xerxes from the passage and the historical context that sets the stage for the events in Esther?
5. How does seeing God's hidden providence change the way we think about morally flawed heroes, about the hard aspects of life in exile, and about the hard circumstances people go through around us?
6. How is Jesus' life, death, and resurrection a sign and a reminder that he is telling his redemptive story even when we don't see it?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Sharing and Prayer:

Have everyone share an answer to these two questions and have the person on their left pray for them:

1. Where in your life right now do you need to be reminded of God's hidden providence?
2. Is there someone whose life is unravelling that God has put you by in order to be a light to them?

Announcements:

- **Night to Shine:** Friday evening, February 10

The Crossing hosts a prom-like dinner and dance for people with special needs for ages 14 and older. It's a really powerful experience loving and serving at this event. The event is still looking for 50 buddies and volunteers.



- **Discovery Class:** Starting Sunday, January 29th in the third service

If you haven't been through The Crossing's 6-week class unpacking some of the core convictions of The Crossing, consider signing up on our website under events. This class is required if you would like to become a member.