

THE WELL: BEYOND SUNDAY

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY



How to Use The Well

THIS WEEK'S PASSAGE

Esther 1:1-2:23

the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight

THIS WEEK'S CORE THEME

Patience

God often works through seasons of waiting, and faithfulness means trusting His timing even when we cannot see what He is doing.

Q?

How can patience show that we trust God's timing?

The Well is designed to help you slow down, study God's Word for yourself, and put what you learn into practice. It follows a simple progression: observe what the passage says, think more deeply about what it means, use the provided resources to help you understand it, and then consider how God wants you to respond.

There is no single right way to complete the study. You can work through it in one sitting, spread it across several days, or simply move at a pace that works for you. The goal is not to complete every page or question perfectly, but to spend meaningful time in Scripture and respond to what God is showing you. The final section helps you think in terms of what the passage calls you to Do, Know, and Become. Remember, these actions do not earn God's favor or make you a better Christian by themselves; they are a response to His grace and a way to live out what He is already doing in you.

A Few Ways to Use It

One Sitting — 30-40 minutes

Read the passage, complete the observation and interpretation questions, look through the commentary and resources, and finish with the application section.

Five Days

- Day 1 — Read: Read the entire passage slowly. Mark anything that stands out.
- Day 2 — Observe: Complete Dig Into the Text.
- Day 3 — Interpret: Answer the Dig Deeper questions.
- Day 4 — Explore: Read the commentary and key-word sections.
- Day 5 — Apply: Write the main message for your life and consider what God is calling you to Do, Know, and Become.

Or Make It Your Own

Spend more time on a section that interests you. Skip a question and come back to it later. Read the passage several times. Discuss the questions with your family, a friend, or your group. Do the work, but do not feel like you have to do everything the same way every week. The purpose is not to complete a worksheet—it is to know God through His Word and allow His truth to shape your life.

Article on the Passage

When God Seems Silent, He is Still at Work

Esther opens in a world ruled by a king who seems to have everything.

Ahasuerus commands the Persian Empire, surrounds himself with wealth, and holds a celebration to display his power. For months, nobles and officials see the riches of his kingdom. Yet the story quickly reveals how limited human power really is.

Ahasuerus can command 127 provinces, but he cannot control his own household. When Queen Vashti refuses his order, his pride and anger lead to a decree removing her from the throne.

What looks like palace drama becomes part of a much larger story. The empty throne creates an opening for Esther, a young Jewish orphan being raised by her cousin Mordecai. Esther is taken into the king's harem, a pagan system far from God's design. Her circumstances are difficult, and she has little control over what happens next. Still, she finds favor with those around her. She listens to Hegai's counsel, follows Mordecai's direction to keep her Jewish identity hidden, and patiently goes through a year of preparation before appearing before the king.

Then comes the turning point. Esther 2:17 tells us that the king loved Esther more than the other women, placed the royal crown on her head, and made her queen.

Her life has moved from orphan to queen, but the reader should see more than a remarkable change in circumstances. God's name is never mentioned in Esther, yet His providence is everywhere. Behind royal decrees, political decisions, human weakness, and unexpected events, God is quietly placing Esther exactly where she will need to be. This is one of the great lessons of Esther. God does not need ideal circumstances to accomplish His purposes. Ahasuerus may sit on the throne of Persia, but God remains the true King over history. He can work through flawed people, broken systems, painful situations, and decisions that seem outside our control.

There are seasons when God's work is obvious, and there are seasons when He seems silent. Esther reminds us that silence does not mean absence. Long before the danger to the Jewish people becomes clear, God has already begun preparing the answer. We may not understand what He is doing today, but we can trust His sovereign care. The God who worked quietly in Esther's life is still faithful to accomplish His purposes.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Esther 1:1-2:18 (ESV)

Read the whole passage but study 2:12-18 below

12 Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women— 13 when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. 14 In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name. 15 When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her. 16 And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, 17 the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.

[Observation]

This is a step by step Bible study . This first part is just to observe the text, nothing more. Follow the steps below to help you observe the passage.

- Circle the name “ King Ahasuerus” in verse 12
- Highlight verse 17
- Underline the name Esther in verse 15
- Underline the name Mordecai in verse 15
- Circle the name “Esther's feast” in verse 18

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

Is there anything you do not understand in this passage?

What is the main theme of this passage?

DIG DEEPER [Interpretation]

Answer the questions to help you understand the passage more deeply.

1. What does this passage teach me about God's invisible work even when His people are not following Him perfectly?
2. What does Esther's decision to ask for only what Hegai recommended reveal about her character?
3. Why is Esther's rise from an orphaned Jewish woman to queen significant to the larger story?
4. What does this passage teach us about God's ability to work through imperfect or ungodly circumstances?
5. What does Esther 2:12–18 teach us about the relationship between human choices and God's providential plan?

EXPLORE RESOURCES

[Commentary on the text]

The Hidden Hand of God's Grace

The story of Esther begins in the heart of the Persian

Empire, where King Ahasuerus holds a massive celebration to showcase his staggering wealth and power. During this display of pride, a royal conflict leads to the removal of Queen Vashti, which creates an unexpected opening for a young Jewish woman named Esther. While God's name is never explicitly mentioned in these pages, the focus remains on His "hidden hand" working behind the scenes. This passage shows that even when human choices are messy, flawed, or sinful, God is able to weave them into His perfect plan to care for His people.

The Great Display of Human Power

The opening of the Book of Esther is intentionally grand, showing us the sheer scale of the Persian Empire at its peak. Strategically, this scene establishes Susa as the center of world power. King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes) was not merely throwing a party; he was hosting a massive assembly of military and political leaders to prepare for a war against Greece. He used his incredible wealth to inspire awe and secure the loyalty of his nobles before the coming conflict.

Verses 1:1–9: The narrative begins in the third year of Ahasuerus' reign. For 180 days, the king displayed his treasures and majesty, culminating in a seven-day banquet in the palace gardens. This "paradise" featured white and blue linen, marble pillars, and silver rings.

Guests reclined on gold and silver couches and drank from unique golden cups. F. B. Huey, Jr. notes the staggering vastness of this empire, observing that it stretched from India (the Indus River region) all the way to Ethiopia (the Upper Nile region), encompassing an impressive 127 provinces. This display was the ultimate expression of human pride and the desire for control. While Ahasuerus wanted to show he was the master of the world, the text reminds us that even the most powerful human king is temporary.

There is a sharp contrast between the loud display of human power and the steady work of God's grace. Ahasuerus needed 180 days of gold and marble to prove he was in charge, yet he was still under God's ultimate authority. This teaches us that human glory is hollow compared to the quiet, sovereign plans of the Creator. This celebration of pride soon leads to a crisis. The king, who believed he could rule 127 provinces, is about to discover he cannot even rule his own household.

A Conflict in the Palace

The refusal of Queen Vashti was more than a family argument; it was a strategic crisis. In the eyes of the Persian court, it was a legal emergency that threatened the authority of every leader in the empire.

Verses 1:10–22: On the final day of the feast, while "high in spirits from wine," Ahasuerus ordered his seven eunuchs to bring Queen Vashti before the men to display her beauty. When she refused, the king's ego was publicly wounded. He consulted seven wise men, including Memucan, who argued that if the Queen were not punished, every woman in the empire would follow her example of "wrongdoing." Warren Wiersbe highlights the tragic irony of the King's character, explaining that Ahasuerus could master an empire but could not master his own temper. To fix this blow to his pride, Ahasuerus issued an unchangeable decree: Vashti was removed from her position and replaced by someone "more worthy."

The irony is profound. A man who commands the world's most powerful army must issue a global law just to force his wife to listen. This shows the limits of human power. While Ahasuerus used his laws to punish and exclude, God's grace was already using this legal mess to set the stage for His people's protection. With the throne empty, the king's anger eventually turned to loneliness, leading to a new plan that would bring a hidden hero into the palace.

A New Plan and a Secret Identity

As the King's wrath subsided, his attendants suggested a search for a new queen. This shift in the story moves us from the grand halls of power to a humble home in Susa where we meet Mordecai and Esther.

Verses 2:1–11: Between the removal of Vashti and the search for a new queen, four years passed. During this time, Ahasuerus suffered a humiliating military defeat in Greece. Returning home in defeat, he sought comfort and solace in his harem. It is at this specific moment that we meet Mordecai, a Benjamite. His lineage is traced back to Kish, a family name that connects him to the family of Israel's first king, Saul.

Mordecai was the guardian of his orphaned cousin, Hadassah, also known as Esther. Joyce G. Baldwin points out the beautiful significance of the name Esther ("star") and notes the use of the Hebrew word *hesed*, which refers to the favor or grace Esther found in the eyes of others. While *hesed* is usually a word for God's covenant love, here it is used in a "secular" way, showing how God's grace often moves through the kindness shown by unbelievers. Esther was "taken" into the harem, and at Mordecai's instruction, she kept her Jewish identity a secret. God works through people even in difficult and imperfect situations. Esther found herself in a pagan harem—a system that was inhumane and devalued women—yet God's grace was present. This shows us that our circumstances do not limit God's ability to use us. His grace is what qualifies us for His service. Before Esther could meet the king, she had to undergo a long process of preparation that would test her character and patience.

The Coronation of the New Queen

The transition from an orphan to a queen involved a difficult time of preparation within the harem system. For Esther, this was the final step toward a divine appointment.

Verses 2:12–18: The beauty treatments lasted twelve months: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes. When her turn came to see the king in the seventh year of his reign, Esther showed remarkable humility. She asked for nothing except what Hegai, the king's official, advised. Ahasuerus was attracted to her more than any of the others and placed the royal crown on her head. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck explain that Esther's rise to queen was a way God protected His people even before they knew they were in danger. The king celebrated her coronation with a great banquet and a national holiday, marking a moment of joy for the empire.

Esther's position was not just a result of her beauty, but a gift of grace. Her willingness to listen to Hegai set her apart. God used the messy, worldly systems of the Persian court to place the right person in the right position at exactly the right time. The narrative concludes with Esther on the throne. The "hidden hand" of God had perfectly placed her to be a deliverer, proving that He is always working, even when we cannot see Him.

KEY WORDS AND NOTES

Here are some important terms used in this passage:

- **Citadel:** A protected, high fortress or palace within a city; in this case, the central acropolis of Susa where the king lived.
- **Satrapies:** The largest administrative regions of the Persian Empire. While the number of satrapies changed over time, they were the major divisions of the kingdom.
- **Provinces:** The 127 smaller political subdivisions located within the larger satrapies.
- **Eunuchs:** Specially trained men who served the king and managed the harem; they often held important administrative roles in the government.
- **Harem:** A separate part of the palace where the king's wives and young women lived under the care of royal officials.
- **Decree:** An official law or order. In Persia, a royal decree was considered unchangeable once it was written into the laws of the Persians and Medes.
- **Jew:** A name used for people from the nation of Israel living in exile, derived from the name of the tribe of Judah.
- **Myrrh:** A fragrant oil or gum used for beauty treatments and perfumes.

APPLY THE TEXT

Main Message of This Passage

Patience trusts that God is working while we wait.

Main Message for Your Life

(rewrite the main message above to personally apply to your own life)

For each question, identify a clear response the passage calls me to Do, Know, Become. Remember, **these actions do not earn God's favor or make you a better Christian by themselves**; they are a response to His grace and a way to live out what He is already doing in you. (See examples below- Topics to Focus On)

1. What does this passage want me to DO?

(What does God want me to do in response to this truth? ex. Practices that help me grow spiritually)

2. What does this passage want me to KNOW?

(What truth do I need to know, believe or remember?)

3. What does this passage want me to BECOME?

(How is God shaping me to become more like Christ?)

Topics to Focus On

Use these topics to help recognize what a passage teaches you to DO, KNOW, and BECOME. This list is not all inclusive, but just some examples.

Do (Practices): Prayer, Quiet Time, Reading God's Word, Sharing your Faith, Studying the Bible, Consistent Community, Silence and Solitude, Serving, Fasting, Calling, Missions

Know (Truths): Man's Fallen State, Grace Through Faith, Salvation, The Local Church, Baptism, who is God?, Abiding with Jesus, Exchanged Life, Spiritual Rest, Being a Cheerful Giver, The Great Commission, Discipleship, Commands of Christ.

Become (Character): the Fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control.

KIDS AND FAMILY

PARENT CONNECTION



Esther 2 reminds families that God is often at work before we can see what He is doing. Esther waited through a long season of preparation, listened to wise counsel, and responded with humility. Parents can help children learn that patience is not simply waiting without complaining; it is trusting God while we wait. We do not obey, make wise choices, or practice patience to earn God's love or become "better Christians" through our own effort. We respond faithfully because God has already shown us grace. Esther could not see what was coming, but God was placing her exactly where she would later be needed.

Discovery Session: Questions for Kids (Under Age 12)

MEMORY VERSE:

the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:17

3 SIMPLE QUESTIONS

- Why did Esther have to wait before meeting the king?

Parent's Note: Esther went through a long time of preparation before she met the king. Help your child see that waiting can be hard, but God can still be working while we wait.

- How was God working even though Esther could not see His whole plan?

Parent's Note: Esther did not know what would happen later, but God was already placing her where she needed to be. Remind your child that we do not have to understand everything to trust God.

- What can you do when you have to wait for something?

Parent's Note: Encourage practical answers such as praying, being patient, staying thankful, and continuing to do what is right while waiting.

Family Action Step

Help your child think of a situation they do not understand or are waiting on. Pray about it together, and remind them that even when we cannot see what God is doing, we can trust that He is still present and at work.