

THE WELL: BEYOND SUNDAY

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY



How to Use The Well

THIS WEEK'S PASSAGE

Esther 3:1-15

"Yet all this is worth nothing to me,
so long as I see Mordecai the Jew
sitting at the king's gate."
verse 13

THIS WEEK'S CORE THEME

Pride

Pride makes self the center,
causing us to depend on
recognition, control, and the
approval of others for our
satisfaction.

Q?

How does trusting God free us
from the need to control what
others think of us?

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

Haman had almost everything a person in Persia could want. He had wealth, influence, a large family, and a position of honor second only to the king. People bowed when he passed. He had even been invited to a private banquet with King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther. By every outward measure, Haman was successful. But one man would not bow.

Mordecai's refusal became an obsession for Haman. Esther 5 tells us that Haman went home and gathered his wife and friends so he could talk about his riches, his sons, his promotions, and the honor the king had given him. Then he made a remarkable confession: "Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

That is what pride does. It can take a life filled with blessings and convince us that none of them matter because one person did not give us the recognition, respect, or response we thought we deserved.

Haman's problem was bigger than anger. His pride had become the lens through which he saw everything. Mordecai's refusal to bow was not simply an irritation; Haman treated it as an attack on his identity. He was so offended that killing Mordecai was not enough. He wanted every Jew in the empire destroyed.

Earlier in the story, Haman had already used his influence with the king to create a decree calling for the destruction of the Jewish people. He cast lots to choose the day, manipulated the king with half-truths, and received the king's signet ring, giving his plan royal authority. Haman believed he was in control.

But while Haman was making plans, God was quietly at work. Mordecai had previously uncovered an assassination plot against the king. His act of loyalty had gone unrewarded, but it had been written in the royal records. What looked forgotten was actually being preserved for the exact moment God would use it.

That contrast is important. Haman is grasping for control, recognition, and revenge, while God is silently arranging events Haman cannot see. Pride tells us that life should revolve around us—our reputation, our comfort, our recognition, and our plans. When something threatens those things, pride can turn disappointment into bitterness and bitterness into destructive choices.

The question for us is not simply, "Am I as prideful as Haman?" A better question may be, "What has become so important to me that I cannot enjoy God's blessings without it?" Maybe it is someone's approval. Maybe it is recognition, success, control, or being proven right. Haman had almost everything, but pride made one thing become everything. Humility frees us to trust God, release our need to control the outcome, and receive what He has given us with gratitude.

Esther 3:1-15 (ESV) DIG INTO THE TEXT

1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him. 2 And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage. 3 Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" 4 And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. 7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. 9 If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries." 10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. 11 And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you." 12 Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring.

13 Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. 14 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. 15 The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

[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 Haman each time it appears.
- Underline what Mordecai refuses to do in verses 2–4.
- Highlight Haman's reaction in verses 5–6.
- Underline how Haman describes the Jewish people to the king in verse 8.
- Box the signet ring in verse 10.
- Highlight the commands in the decree in verse 13.
- Underline the response of Haman and the king in verse 15.
- Circle how the city of Susa responds at the end of verse 15.

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 did Mordecai's position at the king's gate tell us about his role and influence?
2. Why is it significant that Mordecai saved the king but was not immediately rewarded?
3. Why did Haman react so strongly when Mordecai refused to bow to him?
4. Why did Haman's anger toward one man grow into hatred toward an entire people?
5. What does Haman's statement in Esther 5:13 reveal about where he was looking for satisfaction and identity?

EXPLORE RESOURCES [Commentary on the text]

God's Hidden Hand and the Defeat of Pride

A Hero at the Gate

The strategic importance of Esther 2:19–23 lies in Mordecai's specific placement at the "king's gate." In the ancient Near East, the gate was the equivalent of a modern law court where elders and leading citizens settled disputes and transacted official business.

Mordecai was not an idle observer; he held a formal judicial position in the empire. This divine positioning placed him exactly where he needed to be to overhear a conspiracy. Two royal guards, Bigthan and Teresh, had become angry and plotted to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Mordecai uncovered the plot and informed Queen Esther, who reported it to the king in Mordecai's name. After an investigation, the conspirators were impaled on stakes, the standard Persian method of execution.

In a striking example of literary irony, Mordecai received no immediate reward or thanks for saving the king's life. However, his deed was recorded in the "book of the annals" in the king's presence. This "bureaucratic bungle" was actually God's sovereign delay; Mordecai's good deed was not lost, but rather "banked" in the official records for the precise moment it would be needed to save the entire Jewish nation.

Here we see God's grace operating in a secular, even hostile environment. God protected a pagan king through a "secret" believer, demonstrating that He maintains order in the world even through those who may not yet be openly honoring Him.

Note the timing: Mordecai saves the king, and yet, in a move that seems to ignore this loyalty, the king inexplicably promotes Haman instead of Mordecai. This highlights the theme that while human rulers are fickle, God's timing is intentional.

The Rise of an Enemy

The narrative shifts in Esther 3:1–6 as Haman is promoted to the highest office in the empire. This promotion creates a "collision course" between human pride and God's people. Haman was a man of immense vanity, but his rise was the beginning of his fall—a classic literary reversal where the antagonist's peak of power is the very place where his destruction begins. The king commanded all officials at the gate to bow to Haman, but Mordecai refused.

To understand this conflict, we must look at the historical tension. Haman was an "Agagite," while Mordecai was a "Benjamite." Whether "Agagite" refers to the ancient Amalekite enemies of Israel or a Persian province, the tension was visceral. Interestingly, the text suggests Mordecai's refusal was not necessarily a religious stand against "worship"—as bowing to leaders was common Persian practice—but rather a choice rooted in heritage and perhaps personal pride. Mordecai refused to bow to an "ancient enemy."

By contrasting Haman's "fury" with Mordecai's quiet "conviction," we see the true nature of pride. Haman's arrogance was so volatile that he felt it was beneath him to kill only Mordecai; he sought to destroy an entire nation simply because one man refused to show him the respect he felt he deserved.

Rolling the Dice of Fate

In Esther 3:7–15, Haman attempts to use "luck" to secure his victory by casting the "Pur" (the lot). We see the ultimate irony here: Haman cast the lot in the month of Nisan—the very month the Jews celebrated Passover, their great holiday of deliverance from slavery. While Haman thought he was using fate to find an "auspicious" day for death, God was managing the calendar to remind His people of His past faithfulness. The lot fell on a date nearly a year away, providing the Jews a crucial window of time.

Haman manipulated King Ahasuerus using half-truths and a staggering bribe of 10,000 talents of silver—roughly 750,000 pounds, or two-thirds of the empire's annual income. The king's "apathy" reached a chilling height; he handed over his signet ring without even asking for the name of the people Haman intended to slaughter. He effectively signed a death decree for a people he didn't even care to identify. Even when the king gave his authority away, God remained the one truly in charge. While the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was "bewildered." This suggests that the general population—the Gentiles—did not share Haman's anti-Semitism. The decree was the work of one man's pride, but God's grace was already overshadowing the king's indifference.

The Trap of Boasting and Bitterness

Esther 5:9–14 illustrates the extreme misery of a life built on pride. Haman is at his social peak, yet he is utterly miserable because of one person. After a private banquet with the king and queen, Haman bragged to his wife and friends about his "riches," his "ten sons," and his "promotions." However, he confessed, "All this gives me no satisfaction" as long as Mordecai sits at the gate.

As the theologian Warren Wiersbe notes, malice is like yeast; it starts small but eventually permeates and sours the whole of life. Haman's wealth and status were worthless to him because of a single wounded ego. His wife suggested building a 75-foot gallows (an impaling stake) to make Mordecai's execution a public spectacle. The exorbitant height was intended to show Haman was in control, but it actually highlighted his obsession with revenge. Haman sought identity in "riches, sons, and promotions"—things that can be taken away or ruined by a single grudge. Our security, however, is found in the "finished work" of God's provision.

While Haman was building a gallows, God was already preparing a rescue. The very instrument Haman built for Mordecai's death would soon become the site of his own judgment. The story of Esther reminds us that while human power is often fickle and rulers like Ahasuerus can be easily swayed, the King of Heaven is never caught off guard. Haman's pride made him feel invincible, but his "lucky" lot was cast under the eye of a Sovereign God who had already placed His people in the exact positions needed for salvation.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Mordecai's "forgotten" good deed at the gate and Esther's "secret" identity were not accidents of history. They were the groundwork for a deliverance that would preserve the messianic line. Even when God is not mentioned by name, His presence is felt in the perfect timing of every detail—from the month of the lot to the height of the stake.

Ultimately, we can rest in the knowledge that no human plot is bigger than God's grace. Like Mordecai, we are called to stand with conviction, trusting that our deeds are recorded in a book far more permanent than the annals of Persia. While the enemy may build gallows, our God is always busy building a way of escape.

KEY WORDS AND NOTES

Here are some important terms used in this passage:

- **Agagite:** A term identifying Haman, likely linking him to the ancient Amalekite King Agag, though some scholars believe it may refer to a Persian province named Agag.
- **Signet Ring:** The king's personal ring used to seal documents with clay, giving them the same absolute authority as the king's own signature.
- **Pur:** A Babylonian word for a "lot," similar to rolling dice, used by Haman to let "fate" or "chance" decide the date for the Jews' destruction.
- **Gallows:** In the Persian context, this refers to a tall wooden stake or post used for public execution by impaling the victim, rather than modern hanging.
- **Sovereign:** God's ultimate power and control over every event, ensuring His purposes are fulfilled even when His hand is invisible.
- **Citadel:** A strongly protected fortress within a city, like the one in Susa where the king lived and held court.
- **Annals:** Official royal records or "books of the days" where the king's history and the deeds of his subjects were meticulously written down.

APPLY THE TEXT

Main Message of This Passage

Because God is in control, we do not have to live for control, recognition, or revenge.

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



Haman had almost everything a person could want—money, power, a family, and an important position—but he could not enjoy any of it because one person would not give him the respect he wanted. Pride made Haman angry and unhappy. Parents can help children understand that our worth does not come from being the most important person, getting credit, or having everyone like us. God loves us because of His grace, and because He is in control, we do not have to fight to prove how important we are.

Discovery Session: Questions for Kids (Under Age 12)

MEMORY VERSE:

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

- James 4:6

3 SIMPLE QUESTIONS

- Why was Haman angry with Mordecai?

Parent's Note: Mordecai would not bow down and honor him. Help your child see that Haman wanted everyone to recognize how important he was.

- Why couldn't Haman enjoy all the good things he had?

Parent's Note: He was focused on the one person who would not honor him. Talk about how focusing on what we do not have can keep us from being thankful for what God has given us.

- What can we do when someone does not treat us the way we want?

Parent's Note: Trust God, forgive, and remember that our worth comes from God. Explain that we do not have to get even or prove ourselves because God sees us and cares for us.

Family Action Step

Thank God together for three things He has given your family. Then talk about one situation where someone in the family feels overlooked, mistreated, or disappointed. Pray together and ask God to help you trust Him rather than trying to control the situation or get even.