

THE WELL: BEYOND SUNDAY

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY



How to Use The Well

THIS WEEK'S PASSAGE

Esther 4:1-17

"And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" -Esther 4:14

THIS WEEK'S CORE THEME

Providence

Providence is God faithfully working behind the scenes to accomplish His purposes and keep His promises.

Q?

When safety and calling conflict,
which will you choose?

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.

1 Article on the Passage

When Comfort Meets Calling

Under King Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes, Haman's decree created an empire-wide crisis for the Jewish people. The order was not limited to one city or region. It targeted Jews throughout 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. Esther 4 becomes the turning point in the story, where national grief begins to move toward courageous action. The chapter opens with Mordecai mourning publicly. He tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth and ashes, and wails loudly in the city. His actions stood in sharp contrast to the Persian royal court, which was designed to shield the king from sorrow and suffering. No one wearing sackcloth was even permitted through the king's gate.

When Esther heard about Mordecai's condition, she was deeply distressed. Her first response was to send him new clothes, but Mordecai refused them. His grief was not a personal problem that could be solved by changing his appearance. An entire people had been sentenced to death. By refusing the clothes, Mordecai forced Esther to look beyond the surface and understand the true crisis.

Because Esther was isolated inside the palace, Hathach became the link between her and Mordecai. He carried information back and forth between two very different worlds. Mordecai gave him a copy of the decree and explained the exact amount of silver Haman had offered the royal treasury. He then instructed Esther to go before the king and plead for her people.

That request placed Esther in an extremely dangerous position. Persian law declared that anyone who entered the king's inner court without being summoned could be put to death unless the king extended his golden scepter. Esther had not been summoned for thirty days. Going before the king would not simply risk her position; it could cost her life.

Mordecai's response moves the passage from political danger to spiritual responsibility. He warned Esther that her place in the palace would not ultimately protect her. Then he expressed confidence that "relief and deliverance" would come for the Jewish people from another place.

This statement points to one of the central truths of Esther: God is at work even when He is not mentioned by name. Mordecai believed God would remain faithful to His people and His promises. Esther was important, but God's plan did not depend entirely on her. Then came the question that defines the chapter: "Who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" Esther's position was not simply a matter of personal success or comfort. Mordecai challenged her to see it as a divine opportunity and responsibility.

Esther's response shows how deeply she had changed. She called the Jews of Susa to join her in a three-day fast. Rather than depending on her position or influence, she recognized her need for God.

Her final declaration, "If I perish, I perish," was not hopeless resignation. It was trustful submission. Esther could not control the king, the law, or the outcome, but she could choose to trust God and move forward.

Esther 4 reminds us that God's providence and human responsibility work together. We do not have to carry the weight of producing the outcome. God remains sovereign. Our calling is to trust Him, recognize where He has placed us, and faithfully take the next step.

2 DIG INTO THE TEXT

Esther 4:1–17 (ESV)

1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. 2 He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. 3 And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 When Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. 6 Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, 7 and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8 Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. 9 And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days." 12 And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" 15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." 17 Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

[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.

1. Circle the physical manifestations of Mordecai's grief in verse 1 (e.g., torn clothes, sackcloth, ashes).
2. Underline the specific locations mentioned: the "city," the "king's gate," and the "city square."
3. Identify the three-fold reaction of the Jews in the provinces in verse 3.
4. Highlight every mention of Hathach; note his role as the "living link" between the two protagonists.
5. Underline the "one law" regarding the king's presence in verse 11.
6. Circle the specific timeframe mentioned at the end of verse 11.
7. Underline the duration of the fast Esther requests in verse 16.

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?

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

1. Why did Mordecai refuse Esther's gift of clothing (v. 4)? What does his refusal suggest about his goal in wailing at the gate?
2. Consider the legal risk Esther faced. Why would the "thirty days" detail (v. 11) lead her to conclude she may have lost the king's favor?
3. Examine the phrase "relief and deliverance will arise from another place" (v. 14). What does this imply about Mordecai's confidence in God's covenantal promises to Israel?
4. The author excludes the name of God but describes a fast (v. 16). Since fasting and prayer were customary concurrent practices, what does this imply about where the characters' faith was directed?
5. Is "If I perish, I perish" a statement of fatalistic despair or a declaration of trustful submission? How does this distinguish Esther's resolve from simple resignation?

After the decree to destroy the Jewish people was announced, Mordecai responded with visible and public grief. He tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and wailed loudly in the city. His mourning was impossible to ignore. The Persian court was designed to be an “artificial paradise,” shielding the king from sorrow and suffering, but Mordecai’s grief brought the crisis directly to the palace gates.

When Esther heard about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed and sent him new clothes. Her concern was sincere, but new clothes could not solve a life-and-death problem. Through Hathach, the messenger who moved between Mordecai and Esther, she began to understand the seriousness of the situation. Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree and told him the exact amount of silver Haman had promised the royal treasury. Hathach became the link between the suffering outside the palace and Esther’s protected life within it.

Once Esther understood what was happening, she faced a terrifying reality. Persian law stated that anyone who entered the king’s inner court without being summoned could be put to death unless the king extended his golden scepter. Esther had not been called into the king’s presence for thirty days. Her hesitation was not simply fear or unwillingness. The danger was real, and her position as queen did not guarantee her safety.

Mordecai then challenged Esther to see her circumstances through the lens of God’s providence. He warned her that remaining in the palace would not necessarily protect her, and he declared that “relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place.”

Even though God is never directly named in the book of Esther, Mordecai’s words reveal a confidence that God would remain faithful to His people. Then Mordecai asked the question that has come to define Esther’s story: “Who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?” Her position was not simply for her comfort or security. God had placed her in a unique position where she could be used for His purposes.

Esther’s response marked a major change. She called the Jews of Susa to fast for three days, recognizing that she could not face this situation in her own strength. Then she declared, “If I perish, I perish.” These were not words of hopelessness. They were words of trustful submission. Esther could not control the king, the law, or the outcome. She could only surrender herself to God and take the next step.

This is an important picture of faith. God does not ask us to control every result or produce every outcome. He invites us to trust Him, recognize where He has placed us, and allow His strength to work through us. Esther moved from self-protection to courageous surrender because she recognized that her life and her future were ultimately in God’s hands.

Here are some important terms used in this passage:

- Sackcloth (v. 1): A symbol of deep grief in "Oriental fashion." It was considered ceremonially unclean and was strictly forbidden in the presence of Persian kings, who demanded an environment sheltered from the realities of suffering.
- Hathach (v. 5): His name is preserved because he acted as the vital communication link—the "living link." He illustrates how God uses "small hinges" (anonymous servants) to move "great doors" (the fate of nations).
- The Exact Amount (v. 7): Refers to the 10,000 talents of silver Haman offered. This specific detail highlights Mordecai's high-level government access and the staggering scale of the bribe.
- Golden Scepter (v. 11): A historical Persian custom confirmed by the historian Herodotus (3.118); uninvited guests were executed unless the king extended this scepter as a gesture of mercy.
- Another Place (v. 14): The Hebrew word is maqom. In Jewish thought, this is often a veiled reference to the omnipresent God, used to acknowledge His power while maintaining the author's theme of divine "hiddenness."
- Writhed in Anguish (v. 4): The Hebrew tithalhal literally means to writhe in pain. This indicates that Esther's distress was visceral and genuine, not merely a social concern.
- If I Perish (v. 16): This phrase indicates "trustful submission." Like Paul or Jonah, Esther chooses to finish her course regardless of the personal cost, moving from fear to a courageous resolve to do God's will.

Main Message of This Passage

God's providence places us in specific roles and locations to act with courage on behalf of others, regardless of personal risk. We must recognize that our current influence is a divine stewardship for "such a time as this."

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 you 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

God often uses "unlikely heroes" to save His people. Even though Esther was a queen, she was scared! God also uses "helpers" like Hathach, who stayed busy carrying messages to make sure the right things happened. God has a plan for your life, and He can use you to be a helper or a hero right where you are.

Discovery Session: Questions for Kids (Under Age 12)

MEMORY VERSE:

And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:14b

3 SIMPLE QUESTIONS

- Why was Mordecai wearing itchy, sad clothes (sackcloth)?

Parent's Note: to show he was very sad about a bad law that hurt his people.

- How did Esther show that she was brave?

Parent's Note: She decided to talk to the king even though it was dangerous.

- Does God have a "special time" and a "special plan" for you?

Parent's Note: Yes, because He made you for a reason and puts you in the right place to help others.

Family Action Step

Is there someone at school or in your neighborhood who is being treated unfairly? This week, say something kind to them or stand up for them. Together, ask three questions: What am I afraid of?
What do I know about God? What is the next right step I can take?