

SMALL GROUP: ESTHER

CATCH UP

This section is designed for each person to share their experiences from last weeks' application. This should be an encouraging time and not a time to shame someone for not doing their assignment - simply let a couple of people share how their project went. Be sure to encourage the group to talk about their struggles, oppositions, and defeats as well as their successes.

WARM UP

Share with the group the most influential person in your life. Share these three things about them:

- What's the greatest lesson they've taught you?
- Do you personally know them? If so, how long have they been speaking into your life?
- Describe a time when they helped you through a difficult time in your life.

READ UP

- Esther 2:1-18 (*Read Esther 3-8 for additional reading*)

Esther was a Jewish orphan who was being taken care of by her cousin, Mordecai. Xerxes, the king of 127 provinces at that time, was seeking a new queen. Esther was selected as one of the women brought to the palace for the king to choose from and why wouldn't she be - she was described as being "lovely in form and feature". From the moment she got to the palace, she was considered the favorite and given the best of everything. Over time she won the king's heart and became the queen.

Can you imagine the whirlwind of Esther's life? Her heritage as a Jew was kept secret. She was being pursued solely on her looks. She was put through a rigorous set of beauty regiments and royal rules to learn. She was taken from her family and paraded in front of the king to try to win his favor. What seemed like a huge social injustice actually was being a great deliverance for God's people. Esther would have never imagined the role she would play in God's plan.

Even with all the attention and influence, Esther didn't let it become an issue for herself. She remembered her family and her heritage. More importantly, she remembered the most important role she was to play - that of God's servant.

Esther had grown up as nothing in her society (both a woman and an orphan). It was this attitude of a servant that propelled her to great influence and admiration among the people. It was also this attitude of serving that gave her a voice with the king that was greatly needed to rescue the Jews.

During her reign as queen Esther was given the choice to play it safe and save herself or risk everything and save her people. She knew confronting the king on behalf of her people would most likely mean death. She was obviously afraid and unsure. But she was reminded by her cousin, Mordecai, that she had been placed in this position of influence "for such a time as this." This statement has been an encouragement for God's people for centuries. It reminds us that God's timing in the events of our lives is perfect.

Esther used her time as queen to serve God and be used by Him for great things.

TALK UP

1. Where in your life do you have opportunities to have influence with others? How do you see God using you in those areas?
2. It was important in Esther's life to keep her influence and power in a proper perspective. Why is that proper perspective so important?
3. What or who do you have in your life to help you keep a proper perspective about your influence?

ACT UP

Think of one person from church, friends, and family that have influenced you in your life. Take times this week to call or write a note, thanking them for how they've influenced you personally.

PRAY UP

Ask God to help each of you discover the bigger picture of your life and the circumstances you find yourself in right now.

GATHER UP

Before everyone leaves, make sure you confirm next weeks' meeting day and time – and confirm those who can make it.