

THE **STORY** BEFORE THE **STORY**

Esther 4:12-17

BIG IDEA

“Wading into” God’s river to join God in what He is doing.

ICE BREAKER

Ben and his family were tubing last year in a river that looked like it was not even moving. It looked that way until we got into the river then we felt the current underneath. The book of Esther is a lot like a slow moving river. God’s presence and movement is hard to see and His name is not even mentioned in the entire book. But, just like a river we are to look for God’s hidden hand. God’s mighty hand of providence is undoubtedly moving.

1. Have you ever been on a river in a canoe, tube or kayak? Sometimes the current is exhilarating like white water rafting in West Virginia and other times you can’t even recognize the river is moving until you actually get into it and start floating in it. The truth is you will never be in a river that doesn’t have a current—even if there is little evidence of it. Take some time as a group to discuss the “current of God” in the book of Esther. When does the current of God seem to be most absent and when does it seem the clearest? (I don’t know about you but it’s super hard for me to see God’s current when there is suffering in my life.)

NEXT STEP

“Wade in”. Reach out and ask someone, “How have they felt the undercurrent of God’s movement in these uncertain times?” Put a toe in. Step in. See what God is doing in these times and join Him. We were born for such a time as this.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This question is a continuation of our “ice breaker question” listed above. What character qualities are on display for the four characters in our story when the “current of God” was pretty much invisible to all(see the “notes and quotes” section below for detailed description of the 4 characters)? What do you observe in each character when the level of suffering increases (or the threat of suffering)?

2. Let's reflect on our own lives. When God seems absent or when there is suffering in life what character qualities--both good and bad--tend to emerge for you?
3. Which of the four characters do you identify with the most: Esther, Mordecai, Haman or the king. Explain why you chose this person.
4. When things get uncomfortable for you how do you disengage?
5. This virus is a time to grow. Does God have something better for us than the "normal" we long for? Share your thoughts. Is he calling you to something beyond that? Explain your answer.

NOTES AND QUOTES

Esther and Mordecai are both Jewish and are in exile.

5 main characters--good versus evil.

- Xerxes the king is disengaged and he seems to be motivated by comfort for the first half of the story. The king is a pawn.
- Haman is driven by power which is an attempt to cover his deep insecurity. Jealousy and hatred are out of control. He is powerful but crooked. Haman is a lot like Satan-- he wants to be like God.
- Esther is unsure of her identity and she hides it. She starts off as a pawn--the orphan kid. She becomes the queen. She seems "wishy washy". She reluctantly begins to engage in large measures because she trusts Mordecai. Later her courage is on full display. She is motivated by faith.
- Mordecai saved the king's life before our story even begins. He is straight shooting and direct. He is motivated by mission because of his security. He sees the bigger picture and invites those around him to do the same.
- The fifth character is God Himself. The Hero.

Switch your phone from selfie to panoramic and join God's story.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Romans 12:16-19