



Preparing for Small Group: Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
- (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
- (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
- (4) What does God want me to know?
- (5) What does God want me to do?

“Pride and Prejudice”

Esther 2:19-3:15

Main Point: Pride usually leads to destructive prejudice and anger.

Lessons related to the destructive results of pride:

Pride often leads to prejudice that disregards consequence (3:1-6).

While Mordecai had been recognized in the royal record for helping to foil the assassination attempt on King Ahasuerus, the king had failed to properly recognize and reward Mordecai for his faithful service in protecting the king's life. With this omission glaring, the next thing that's recorded in the book of Esther is that the king promoted Haman to the position of second in command in his kingdom. While this was several years after the foiled assassination plot, the placement of this event in the story seemed to add injury to insult in relationship to the fact that Mordecai didn't get what he rightly deserved. Regardless, what happened next pointed to pride in the heart of Mordecai. Mordecai failed to obey the king's order to give honor to Haman. Bowing to honor Haman in obedience to the king would not have violated Mordecai's obedience to God, but Mordecai's prideful prejudice kept him from doing so. The consequences of Mordecai's actions were clear to everyone around him — as is often the case — but Mordecai's pride apparently kept him from seeing or caring about the consequences of his actions. His pride was only outdone by Haman's prideful prejudice that desired to not only destroy Mordecai but also to destroy all of the Jews.

1. God put Mordecai in a unique position to discover the assassination plot against the king, and Mordecai and Esther acted with integrity in bringing the information to the king. However, the king didn't reward Mordecai as was customary. How do you imagine Mordecai felt about this oversight? What feelings would this situation have stirred up in you? Why?
2. What are some possible reasons that Mordecai refused to honor Haman? Ultimately, who does the text say that Mordecai was disobeying? How does Mordecai's action reveal pride?
3. What is prejudice? How is prejudice connected to pride? How is prejudice seen in Mordecai's and Haman's lives?
4. Have you or do you struggle with prejudice? Discuss, and pray for God to conquer pride that leads to prejudice in your heart.

Pride often leads to anger that disregards the value of life (3:7-11).

In Haman's pride, his anger against Mordecai fueled his prejudice of the Jewish people and led to actions that showed Haman's complete disregard for the value of human life. Haman

carefully crafted his request to the king in order to avoid identifying the Jews by name and to give himself the latitude to eliminate the Jews — women, children, and all — out of his anger against Mordecai. Haman was led by his pride to value the lives of the Jewish people as worthless, all because of his selfish, prideful desire to destroy Mordecai. What an incredible example of the destructive nature of pride! When people value the honor, recognition, respect, etc. that they think they deserve as more significant than others, then they will always end up devaluing the lives of those who threaten their honor, recognition, respect, etc. Pride often leads to anger that disregards the value of life.

1. How is prideful prejudice and anger seen in the actions of both Mordecai and Haman? In both cases, how do their prideful actions show a devaluing of human life?
2. How could Haman make the jump from being angry at Mordecai to wanting every Jew to be killed? This seems extreme! Is this really possible? Discuss examples from history from this event to today that confirm this dangerous escalation in pride.
3. Have you ever been so angry at someone that you disregarded the value of life even if just in your heart and mind for a moment. Share, and then share passages that remind us of God's design for the opposite of this in the life of a follower of Jesus.

Pride often leads to hearts that disregard the hurt caused by pride (3:12-15).

The depravity of Haman's heart was displayed in a stunning way in the disregard that Haman had for the hurt that his plan had caused. After issuing an edict that called for the annihilation and plundering of the Jewish people in the Persian Empire, Haman sat down to drink and to party with the king! While the people around him in the city of Susa were thrown into confusion and the Jews were struck with panic over the death sentence that they had received, Haman hit the bottle and celebrated his victory over Mordecai! Pride in the heart of Haman led to a prejudice against the Jews that was fueled by anger against Mordecai, and all of that found its expression in a plan that completely devalued human life and completely disregarded the hurt caused by pride.

1. Read these verses. What strikes you the most about Haman's plans? If you were a Jew, what might have been going through your mind? If you were not a Jew in the kingdom, what might have been your reaction to the edict?
2. How is it possible for Haman and the king to simply sit down and start drinking after an edict like this had been issued?
3. What does this situation reveal about the consistency of human law and kingdoms in comparison to God's law and kingdom?
4. Has pride in your heart caused hurt to anyone in your life? Discuss, and make plans to ask for forgiveness and to begin to make amends where possible in the weeks to come.