



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?

“Sovereignty and Responsibility”

Esther 4:1-5:8

Main Point: God is sovereign, and you are responsible.

Revelations about God’s sovereignty and your responsibility:

God is sovereign (4:13-14).

While God’s name was not mentioned by Mordecai or Esther, the evidence of faith in God and an understanding of His character and promises was evident in the words of Mordecai and Esther in chapter 4. In Esther 4:14, Mordecai’s words are rich with revelation about the person and work of God in relationship to His people. For starters, Mordecai knew that regardless of what Esther did, God would not allow His people to be completely annihilated. Implied in Mordecai’s pronouncement was an understanding of God’s future promises for His people as well as a faith in God’s ability to fulfill those promises despite how dire the current situation looked. However, Mordecai also knew that God worked in and through the lives of His people in the present. As a result, Mordecai posed an important question to Esther, asking her to consider whether God had placed her where she was for “such a time as this.” All of the words of Mordecai revealed at least three important aspects of God’s sovereignty, including

- *God preserves His people and fulfills His promises (14);*
- *God provides opportunities to participate in His plans (14); and*
- *God places you where you can participate in His plans (14).*

1. Mordecai implied that Esther perhaps thought that she was secure in the king’s palace, but why was this a false security? What kind of things in your life bring a false sense of security? Why?
2. Mordecai stated that deliverance would come from somewhere else if Esther failed to act. How could he state this confidently? What does it teach you about God’s sovereignty?
3. Discuss how God was providing Esther an opportunity to participate in His plans. How has God done this in your life? What opportunities is He giving you right now to participate in His work?
4. Discuss how God had put Esther in a place where she could participate in His plans. What work is He doing where He’s placed you (family, school, work, community, etc.)?
5. As a small group, identify one opportunity that God’s given your group to participate together in His plans in the work of Jesus. How are you going to take advantage of that opportunity?
6. What are some future promises of God that give us confidence in Him and His work today? Take time to pray, thanking God for how He saves us and how He fulfills His promises.

You are responsible (4:14-16)

Also revealed in the words of Mordecai was a clear understanding that God's sovereignty does not void the responsibility of His people. In Esther 4:14, Mordecai called Esther out for thinking that she could somehow protect herself while leaving her people to be murdered. Mordecai's words reminded Esther that God didn't need her to accomplish His plans, but if she failed to be faithful in the opportunity He had given her, her disobedience would come at a cost. Esther's response displayed a clear understanding and acceptance of the words of Mordecai. As fasting is normally connected to prayer in Scripture, the assumption is that Esther was calling on the Jewish people to fast before the Lord, praying for His intervention and His grace in Esther's life as she prepared to go before the king. While Esther was responsible to participate in God's plans for her life, she had to depend completely on God for His grace and work through her life. Ultimately, however, Esther not only had to pray but also to act on her plan to come before the king. Esther 4:16 displays the reality that she completely understood the risk that she was taking in faith.

- *Failing to participate in God's plans doesn't stop God's plans (14).*
 - *Failing to participate in God's plans does come at a cost (14).*
 - *Participating in God's plans requires dependence on God (16).*
 - *Participating in God's plans often demands taking risks in faith (16).*
1. Are you fulfilling your responsibilities to the Lord? If not, why not? If so, how is He blessing that obedience in your life?
 2. Because of God's promises, Mordecai was certain that God would bring deliverance even if Esther failed to help. Does this basic truth still stand today? If so, how? What are some of God's plans for the future? Is our church participating in those plans? Why, or why not?
 3. Do you believe that there is a cost for failing to participate in God's plans when He calls and gives the opportunity to participate? What are other examples of this in Scripture? What might be some current examples of this in the church today?
 4. Why did Esther call for a fast before she approached the king? How does this show dependency on God? How did this help her spiritually prepare for what was coming?
 5. Do you ever fast and pray? If not, why not? If so, why? What are some biblical examples of fasting?
 6. Is God calling you to do something right now in your life that requires taking risk in faith? Share, and pray for each other for discernment and for faith to take steps of faith — even if they require risk — which are clearly obedient to and in-line with God's work and His call in your life.