



**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?

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### **“Participating in God’s Plans”**

*Esther 8:1-10:3*

**Main Point:** God’s plans call for the participation of God’s people.

Applications of the truth that God’s plans call for the participation of God’s people:

#### **Participating in God’s plans demands on-going steps of faith (8:3-8).**

Esther and Mordecai had the king on their side, but the actions of Haman still had consequences that were continuing to threaten the Jewish people. Haman was dead, but his edict was still very much alive. As a result, Esther risked her life again in order to advance God’s plan through the Persian Empire. Once again, Esther found herself before the king, uninvited, and once again, Esther was welcomed into the king’s presence. Esther made her request known, and the king granted her what she needed to move forward with God’s plan to preserve His people. The plan was simple. Since Haman’s edict could not be revoked, Esther and Mordecai would have to issue a new edict to allow the Jewish people to defend themselves against any attackers on the day assigned for the annihilation of the Jews. In all of these actions, Esther continued to show a life that was willing to take steps of faith in order to accomplish God’s plans for His people.

1. Do you think it was easier or harder the second time around for Esther to once again take the risk of approaching the King? Why, or why not?
2. What might be some of the reasons why God uses steps of faith to accomplish His work through His people? How do steps of faith accomplish the work of God in His people?
3. Allow one of two people to share their testimony on taking steps of faith. Is anyone facing a step of faith right now? Discuss, and pray for one another.

#### **Participating in God’s plans often involves facing God’s enemies (8:9-9:16).**

God’s deliverance of His people didn’t exempt His people from participation in His plans for deliverance. In fact, God’s plan included the fact that his people were required to face their enemies and to defend themselves from the attacks of those who still sought to kill them and to plunder their goods. God’s people would have to battle for the deliverance that He provided them. The account was brutal, and the defeat of God’s enemies was clear. For the reader today, it’s important to recognize the differences between Haman’s edict and Esther’s and Mordecai’s edict. Unlike the original edict against the Jews, the second edict was defensive in nature, calling for the Jews to defend themselves against the attacks of their enemies. Additionally, unlike the first edict, although the second edict did allow for the plundering of the goods of those

defeated by the Jewish people, the Jews did not plunder their enemies. In God's sovereignty, He could have spared His people from the battle, but He didn't. Instead, He allowed them to face His enemies in order to experience His deliverance in their lives.

1. Discuss the differences between Haman's edict and the edict of Esther and Mordecai. How are these differences important?
2. What might be some of the reasons that God allowed His people to face the battles against their enemies in the Persian Kingdom?
3. What are battles that we face today as New Testament believers? How has God used battles against the enemy in your life to grow your faith?

### **Participating in God's plans should include celebrating God's victories (8:15-17 & 9:17-19).**

In chapter 8, God's people celebrated the initial victory and hope of the edict of Esther and Mordecai. Added to this was the change in status and position of the Jewish people within the Persian Kingdom. With the death of Haman and the promotion of Mordecai, the Jews were now in a favored position within the kingdom. The queen was even a Jew! As a result, there were many people who were identifying themselves as Jews, and there were many others who were now sympathetic to the position that the Jews were in because of Haman's edict. Before any final deliverance came, the Jews celebrated the first victory that God gave them. Then, once the battles were won and their enemies were defeated, the Jews celebrated again! On the day after the date of the edict, Haman hoped that there would not be any Jews alive; instead, there were more Jews than before and there was rejoicing and celebration among the Jews. It was right and good for the Jews to celebrate and to thank the Lord for His victory in their lives.

1. What do you know about Purim? Take time to look it up and to discuss.
2. What are some Christian holidays and traditions? How do these fulfill a similar purpose in the lives of God's people as Purim did/does in the lives of the Jewish people?
3. What are some victories of God within the lives of your small group? Take time to celebrate.

### **Participating in God's plans should lead to remembering God's salvation (9:20-32).**

Because of the significance of God's deliverance of His people while in exile in the Persian Kingdom, Mordecai established the day after the day of the "Lot" (Pur) as a day for annual celebration and remembrance for God's people. God demonstrated His faithfulness to His people in a miraculous way through Esther and Mordecai, and Mordecai recognized that what God accomplished was worth remembering. The celebration of Purim continues today among the Jewish people, but for the church, there's a much greater day of remembrance and a much greater salvation to remember! All of the book of Esther points to and provides a glimpse of God's ultimate plan of salvation for His people through Jesus Christ. Every Sunday — called the Lord's Day because it was the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ — is a special day of remembrance and celebration for the people of God. Every Sunday, as God's people gather, they gather to remember their salvation through Jesus; to celebrate God's victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ; to proclaim the gospel that has defeated the enemy; and to commit together to walk by faith in Christ in the days to come. Remembering God's salvation is still critical to the work of God through the people of God today.

1. Why is remembering important when it comes to the ongoing work of making disciples?
2. What are some of the ways that the story of Esther points forward to the gospel?
3. What are some of the ways that we rightly remember God's salvation?
4. Do you know someone who needs to be reminded of God's salvation? Share, and pray together for these individuals. Commit to one another to go and to tell them the Good News this week.