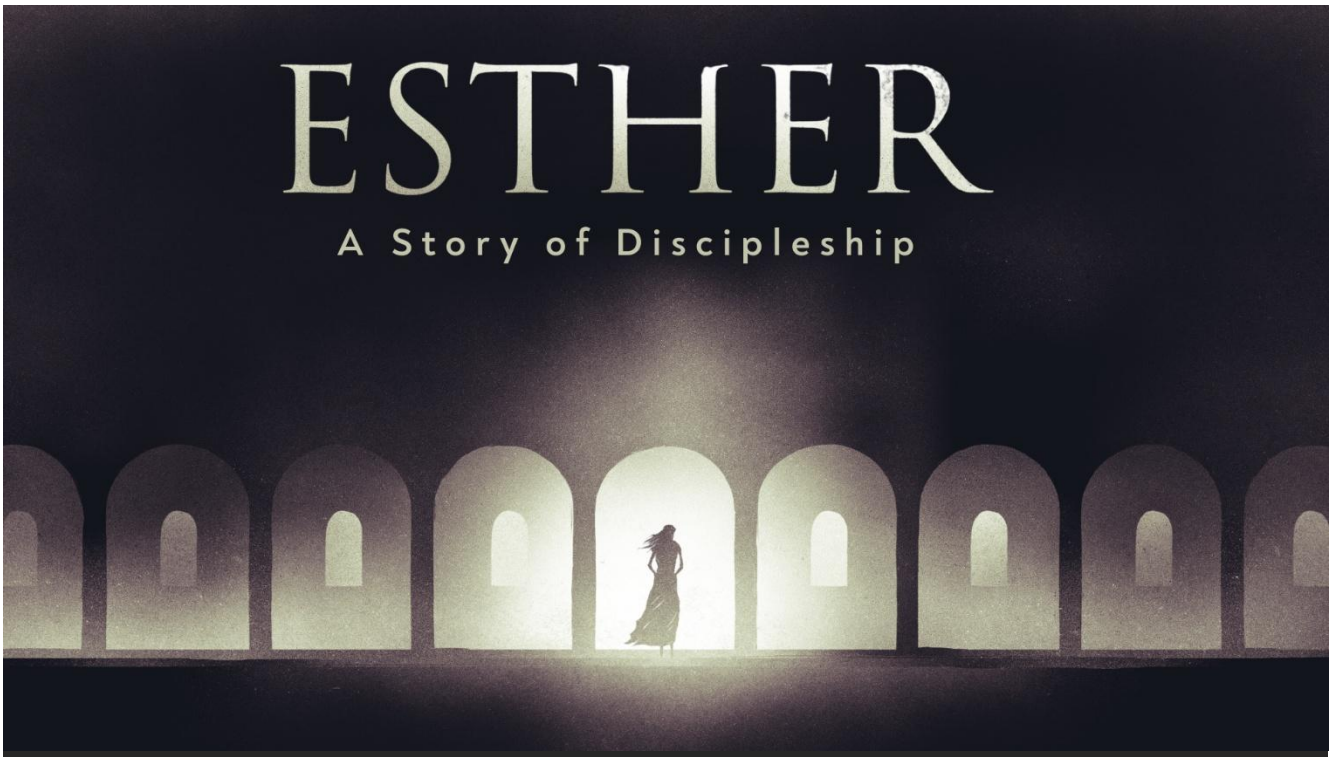
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TERM 4 2026



A 5-week Small Group Study through the book of Esther

Sermon-based Small Group Studies are designed to be explored with your Small Group after hearing the Sunday sermon.

To access the sermon again, please head to the church website www.devonportcoc.com.au or YouTube channel.
Email: reception@devonportcoc.com.au

Introduction and Background

The book of Esther is one of the most fascinating and unexpected stories in the Old Testament. Set among the Jewish people living in exile in the Persian Empire, the story follows Esther, a young Jewish woman who unexpectedly becomes queen, and her cousin Mordecai, who raises her and challenges her to act when her people face destruction. What makes Esther particularly intriguing is that **God is never directly mentioned in the book**.

Yet, as the story unfolds, we see a remarkable pattern of circumstances, decisions, relationships and seemingly ordinary events coming together to preserve God's people. Esther reminds us that God can be at work even when His presence isn't obvious, and that our ordinary lives can become part of something far greater than we can see. For us, Esther provides a powerful picture of **discipleship in everyday life**.

Mordecai invests in Esther, Esther learns to trust and act courageously, and eventually she uses her position and influence for the sake of others. The story challenges us to ask not simply, *What is God doing?* but also, *What is God asking me to do? Where has God placed me? Who has He placed around me? Where might I need to stand firm, speak up, step out or use my influence?* As we journey through Esther, we will discover that discipleship is not just about what happens inside the church. It is about becoming people who recognise God's activity, respond faithfully and use the opportunities God gives us to make a difference in the lives of others.

Perhaps, like Esther, we are where we are for such a time as this.

God is at work even when he seems hidden

Esther 1-2

Big idea *God is working even when we can't see Him.*

Icebreaker Questions

1. Have you ever looked back on your life and realised that something you thought was insignificant at the time was actually important?

2. Who is someone who influences your life without realising how much they influence you?

3. When you hear the phrase *"God is at work",* what comes to mind?

From the Scriptures

1. Read Esther 2:5–11 and 15–20. What do we learn about Esther's character? What circumstances brought Esther into the palace, and what role does Mordecai play in her life?

2. What is striking about God's presence in the book of Esther? What does the narrative nevertheless suggest about God's providence?

3. Read Esther 2:10 and 2:20. Why is Esther's Jewish identity significant to the story? Why do you think Mordecai instructed her to keep her nationality secret, and how does this become important later?

Life Application Questions

1. Think of an area of tension, struggle or discouragement in your life. Where might God be working even though you can't currently see what He is doing?

2. Who has God placed around you who might need your encouragement, wisdom or influence?

3. How can you become more attentive to God's activity in the ordinary circumstances of your week? Where might God be trying to get your attention in the mundane routine of life?

Discipleship Practice

Pay attention. Each day this week, ask:

"God, where are You already at work around me today?"

For prayer

Pray about the areas of your life that cause tension, struggle or discouragement (Q1 above).

When Faithfulness and Discipleship Costs Something

Esther 3

Big idea *Discipleship means deciding whom we will ultimately bow to.*

Icebreaker Questions

1. Have you ever had to stand your ground when everyone else was doing something different?

2. Who is someone you don't know but you admire because they have stood firm under pressure?

From the Scriptures

1. Read Esther 3:1-6. Why does Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman? What does the text tell us about Mordecai's response, and what does it not tell us?

2. How does Haman respond to Mordecai's refusal?
   Why do you think the conflict move from being a personal disagreement to a threat against the entire Jewish people?

3. Read Esther 3:8–15. What does the edict reveal about the seriousness of the situation, and the power Haman was given? What does it tell us about the character of King Xerxes?

Life Application Questions

1. What pressures can subtly compete with your allegiance to Jesus today?

2. Are there situations where you're tempted to compromise your convictions simply to fit in or avoid discomfort?

3. What would faithful discipleship look like in your workplace, school, friendship group or community this week?

Discipleship Practice

Identify your "bow." Ask yourself,

"What am I tempted to give ultimate allegiance to other than God?"

For Prayer

Is there someone in your world who actively harasses people of faith or deliberately undermines Christian principals? Pray for that person, and for God to be at work, even if you can't see it.

For Such a Time as This

Esther 4

Big idea *Discipleship moves us from comfort to calling*

Icebreaker Questions

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought, "Someone needs to do something" — and then realised that person might be you?

2. What is something you've done that required courage?

3. What usually stops people from stepping into difficult situations?

From the Scriptures

1. Read Esther 4:4-16. What changes in Esther during chapter 4? Compare her responses to Mordecai in verses 4, 11 and 16.

2. What evidence do you see of growing courage and responsibility in Esther?

3. What does Mordecai mean by his statement in verse 14, *"Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"*
   What does this tell us about God's providence, and our choices and responsibilities?

4. Why is fasting important in verses 15–17?
   Why do you think Esther asks the Jewish people to join with her?

Life Application Questions

1. Where has God already given you influence or opportunity that you may be overlooking?

2. What might it look like for you to move from "someone should do something" to "perhaps God wants me to do something"?

3. Who could you invite to pray with you when you're facing a difficult decision or opportunity?

Discipleship Practice

Pray the Esther prayer: "God, why might You have placed me here, with these people, in this season?"

Then listen.

Courageous Influence

Esther 5-7

Big Idea *Godly influence is exercised with wisdom, courage and dependence.*

Ice Breaker Questions

1. Think of someone whose influence you respect. What makes their influence effective?

2. Have you ever had to choose the right moment to have a difficult conversation?

From the Scriptures

1. Read silently through Esther chapters 5-7. Why do you think Esther does not reveal Haman's plot at the first banquet (Esther 5:7-8)? What do you notice about her timing and approach?

2. How can you see God at work in these chapters?

3. Read Esther 5:9–14. What role does Haman's pride play in the story and how does his desire for recognition affect his behaviour?

4. How does the story turn in Esther 6?
   Why is the king's inability to sleep significant? What does this tell us about the providence of God?

Life Application Questions

1. Where might you need courage to use your voice for someone else rather than yourself?

2. How can you combine courage with wisdom rather than confusing courage with simply being outspoken?

3. Who has God placed within your sphere of influence that you could advocate for, encourage or protect?

Discipleship Practice

Use your influence for someone else. Do one intentional thing this week that benefits another person without seeking recognition for yourself.

Passing It On

Esther 8-10

Big Idea *God's faithfulness becomes part of our story — and our story can shape those who come after us.*

Ice Breaker Questions

1. Do you have any family traditions to celebrate special events or occasions?

2. What is one lesson about faith you hope the next generation learns from your life?

From the Scriptures

1. Skim through Esther chapters 8-9. How does the situation of God's people change in these chapters?

2. Read Esther 8:1-11. Why is the first edict still significant, even though Haman has been eliminated?

3. Read Esther 9:20–28. Why is Purim established?
   What purpose does remembering and celebrating this deliverance serve?

4. Read Esther 9:3-4. What do chapters 9–10 tell us about Mordecai's leadership?
   How has his character developed from the man we encountered at the beginning of the story?

Life Application Questions

1. What personal story of God's faithfulness do you need to remember and pass on?

2. Who are you currently discipling, mentoring or intentionally investing in?

3. If someone watched your life for the next five years, what would they learn about following Jesus?

Discipleship Practice

Pass it on. Share one story of God's faithfulness with someone younger in faith or someone you are discipling.


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