



Encouragement in Discouraging Times

Studies from the Book of Esther

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Christian Support for Students & Staff

Esther Chapters 9 and 10 God Takes Care of His People

‘Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you’ Isaiah 43:4

Read chapters 9 and 10

*What turned the impossible situation around?
Why were the people afraid of the Jews?*

When we read this story in the Bible, we are almost not surprised to see that there is a happy ending for the Jews. Of course God would look out for them – they are His people.

We are God’s people today – you are God’s child.

Spend a few minutes thanking God for your status as one of His people, and pray in faith that He will turn your college situation around for His glory (perhaps in ways that you might not expect).

Encouragement in Discouraging Times

Festive often hears from individual members of staff, lone chaplains or isolated students. They want to make Jesus known at their college, but the task seems at best daunting and often closer to impossible.

These people are facing discouraging times.

This resource is designed to encourage you in times like this using the Old Testament book of Esther.

The book is divided into five studies, so you can do one each morning for your quiet time in a working week. If that doesn’t suit, you could do one once a week for 5 weeks, or meet with a friend and work through them together.

It is not a comprehensive study of Esther – we have just drawn out the applications that we hope will most benefit you in your situation in a college.

We at Festive pray that it will help you not to give up, and to keep trusting in our invisible God.

Esther Chapters 1 and 2 Trusting an Invisible God

‘So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.’ 2 Corinthians 4:18

Read chapters 1 and 2

A great deal happens in these first two chapters:

The Queen is sacked!
Esther is among the women who could potentially replace her.
Of all those women, Esther is chosen to be Queen.
Mordecai manages to intercept an assassination!

There is no mention of God in these chapters, or in fact anywhere else in the book of Esther.

What clues are there here that God is at work?

It’s clearly implicit that it is no accident that Esther finds herself in this influential position, and that God is sovereign over the events that happen.

Do you find it easy to think of your position in your college?
Your job, however ordinary it may seem to you, is as God ordained as Esther’s royal status.

Spend a few moments letting this sink in, and asking God to use you in the situation in which He has put you, and thanking Him for His plans and purposes. He knows about and cares about YOUR situation!

Esther Chapters 7 and 8 You are Not Alone

‘He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”’ 1 Kings 19:10

Read chapters 7 and 8

I bet you could have heard a pin drop in 7:3-4! The fate of all the Jews in the land was dependent on what Esther had to say.

The weight of responsibility (not to mention the fear of the king’s capricious anger!) must have been terrible on her shoulders.

Yet both times that she bravely addresses the king (7:3-4 and 8:3-6) lead to fruit beyond what she could possibly have imagined.

God used one person to fulfil His purposes, against all the odds.

*Can you think of other times in the Bible when we learn of God working with weak things and unlikely odds?
(e.g. 1 Kings 19, Judges 6, 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5 to name a few!)*

Spend a few minutes letting that sink in – that God often uses apparently lone people to do mighty things, and ask Him to do the same with you in your situation.

Esther Chapters 3 and 4
Trusting God in Impossible Circumstances

‘Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”’ Matthew 19:26

Read chapters 3 and 4

Esther 3:8-11
What is Haman’s plan?

How does the king respond?

Esther 4:1-3
*How do Mordecai and the other Jews respond to the news?**

Sometimes making Jesus known in your college can feel like an impossible task, especially if there are very few of you.

Even in these dire circumstances, what hope to Mordecai and Esther derive from 4:14?

Once again, this is a reminder that the circumstances of our lives are no accident.

Spend a few moments presenting your impossible situation to God, perhaps offering yourself to be an instrument in His turning things around.

*In Old Testament times, putting on sack-cloth and ashes was always something that accompanied fervent praying.

Esther Chapters 5 and 6 God Prepares the Ground

‘The farmer sows the word’ Mark 4:14

Read chapters 5 and 6

List some of the reasons why it would have been hard for Esther to seek an audience with the king.

In spite of this, list some of the qualities of Esther’s character that we see shown here.

What was the king’s response?

Esther 5:14-15

Evil oversteps the mark.

Esther 6: 1-3

How can God’s sovereignty be seen in these verses.

How is God preparing the ground for the future in all of these events? How can we see the beginnings of God’s answer to Esther and Mordecai’s prayers? (Don’t worry too much if it’s not clear just yet, all will be revealed in the next chapters!)

Spend a few moments thanking God that He is sovereign, and for why that is a good thing for YOUR situation.