

## ESTHER

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers the book of **Esther**.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

### LDS Study Focus

LDS study material follows the theme, “*Thou Art Come ... for Such a Time as This.*”

*Many events in the book of Esther might seem like luck or coincidence. How else do you explain how an orphaned Jewish girl became the queen of Persia at just the right time to save her people from being slaughtered? What are the chances that Esther’s cousin Mordecai would just happen to overhear a plot to assassinate the king? Were these coincidences, or were they part of a divine plan? Elder Ronald A. Rasband noted: “What may appear to be a random chance is, in fact, overseen by a loving Father in Heaven. ... The Lord is in the small details of our lives” (“[By Divine Design](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 56). We may not always recognize the Lord’s influence in these “small details.” But we learn from Esther’s experience that He can guide our path and prepare us “for such a time” ([Esther 4:14](#)) when we can be instruments in His hands to fulfill His purposes.*

The July 2022 *Liahona* also contains an article about Esther titled, “[An Instrument in the Hands of the Lord](#).” The article emphasizes that we, like Esther, “must be ready and worthy when faced with the opportunities He [God] presents.”

### Biblical Focus

Believers today live in a world opposed to God and his plans. Since the fall, sin has infected the world with hostility toward God. Yet, as we reflect on history, God has always worked to protect and preserve his people.

Until the final day, when Christ returns to restore the earth, we faithfully wait and serve God in every trying circumstance, praying for the courage to glorify him in all that we do. Where is God when he seems absent? He is working to protect and preserve “his” story. Just because we can’t see the hand of God doesn’t mean his hand isn’t at work.

God raises up unlikely instruments, which he uses to protect and propel his plan for the ages.

## ***ESTHER***

### **An Introduction to the Situation (Esther 1:1–22)**

Sometimes God changes the course of history through significant miraculous events, and at other times it's through less visible means. In the book of Esther, we see God's hand at work, quietly guiding and influencing circumstances to protect and bless his people. The book is unique in that there is no mention of God's name, yet his presence and influence are undeniable.

The book of Esther, while not once mentioning God's name, nevertheless gives clear evidence of God's providential rule in world history. It shows that everything God does is in the interest of his gracious will and purpose. During Esther's time, God's people, the people of Israel, were scattered throughout the Persian empire. That empire stretched from Greece in the west to India in the east. Ethiopia was on its southern boundary, and Assyria was on its northern border. A sizable number of Jews lived in the Persian capital of Susa.

At this time, Persia was ruled by Xerxes I (Ahasuerus, 485–465 B.C.), an egotistical, temperamental, and ruthless king. Historical stories include extreme and rash behavior that lacked common sense.

The story takes place shortly after the captivity of Judah has come to an end. Some Israelites have already returned to the Promised Land, and more would follow soon. God kept his promise to preserve a remnant of his chosen people and bring them back to the land where the Messiah would be born.

### **Esther's Weakness (Esther 2:1–18, 4:9–12)**

Esther was a beautiful Jewish orphan. In many ways, the faith and actions of this young woman are relatable since her weaknesses are more apparent.

First, notice she was compelled to hide her Jewish heritage while in the palace. As a result, she would not have been able to worship God or follow his rules for clean eating (Esther 2:10). The initial conversation between Esther and Mordecai reveals her reluctance to risk her life for her people. However understandable it is, it is undeniable that Esther was a sinner who did not fully trust the Lord.

The point is not to pick on Esther for her failures but to know that *God uses sinners!* This observation is in direct contrast to the LDS focus on being **WORTHY** to serve God. What makes us worthy to serve God is not based on our inward or outward morality but on the faith that God grants and grows in us.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- **Why do you think Esther hid her nationality? Do you think this was wrong?** Was she hiding her "faith" or just her "race?" (Jewish race and religion were closely connected at this time).
- **What tempts us to hide our faith? Is there ever a time when we would not come out and announce who we are?**

**Sharing Personally:**

*Sometimes, like Esther, I am afraid to reveal my identity as a believer. Science thinks Christianity is a joke. Society turns moral living into bigotry. Other religions scoff at grace-based theology. "What will happen to me if they know what I truly believe?"*

*But God didn't abandon Esther because she hid her faith, nor does he leave me. Despite my fears and weakness, God forgives me and still uses me to serve him. From him, I receive courage and confidence to proclaim his name.*

### **A Hopeless Situation (Esther 3:1–15)**

It is not clear why Mordecai refused to bow to Haman. It may have been an act of faith, or it may have been a battle of egos. However, the entire nation was doomed to destruction because of one man. Furthermore, the laws of the Medes and Persians were unchangeable, leaving God's people with little hope for salvation.

#### **Conversation Starter:**

- **God's salvation story repeatedly occurs throughout the pages of Scripture. So how does this story remind us of his redemption plan for the whole world?**

### **For Such a Time as This ([Esther 4:12–17](#))**

Notice Mordecai's speech to Esther begins with "*who knows?*" Mordecai and Esther did not know God's will or the outcome. Had God been working behind the scenes to put Esther in a position to rescue the Jews? Was it all coincidence, or was it God's providence?

Mordecai's words present to Esther an opportunity to serve and a threat. If she did not help her people, God would find another way. The salvation of God's people did not depend on a sinful girl. It depended on God. When she stated, "If I perish, I perish," Esther realized that her only option was to obediently act in faith and hope that the God she trusted would deliver.

Mordecai's speech humbles us all, reminding us that God wants us to serve him. However, he does not *need* us to help him.

#### **Conversation Starters:**

- **How does Satan use uncertainty to destroy faith? Conversely, how does God use uncertainty to build and bolster confidence?**
- **Which is more important: a "strong faith" or "faith in a strong God"?**

**(This will be an excellent question to ask LDS members. Please help them to focus on the object of faith, Jesus, rather than on themselves subjectively.)**

#### **Sharing Personally**

*When I consider the actions and choices of Esther and Mordecai, it doesn't seem like they had a strong faith. After all, in the first few chapters, Esther hid her identity as a Jew. Did she and Mordecai not trust God to do what was best in the situation?*

*But God used the circumstances to force them to trust in him or perish. Despite their weakness, God was strong. God delivered.*

*So, which is more important: having a strong faith or having faith in a strong God?*

## **Hidden God ([Esther 1–10](#))**

Like Esther, most of us do not experience dramatic miracles, hear God's voice, or receive prophecies to guide our actions. Although the writer never mentions God's name in the book of Esther, his presence is evident.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- **Review the story and name all the coincidences, large and small, that you think were the guiding hands of God.**
- **Have you experienced coincidences in your life that you believe were from God?**
- **What other ways do you see God hidden in our world?**
- **Does the moral ambiguity of Esther and Mordecai bother you? There is a lot of drinking, extramarital sex, murder, and violations of God's commands given to his people.**
- **Is it ever right to hide one's faith as both Mordecai and Esther did? Why or why not?**