

Gather

The Fingerprints of God

A BIBLE STUDY FOR WELL-WATERED WOMEN



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03. Letter from Gretchen

WEEK ONE

06. Week One Intro: Study with Gospel Glasses
07. Week One Day One: Why Study Esther? Part One
09. Week One Day Two: Why Study Esther? Part Two
12. Week One Day Three: Laying the Foundation
14. Week One Day Four: Unearthing Clues, Part One
16. Week One Day Five: Unearthing Clues, Part Two
17. Week One Recap

WEEK TWO

19. Week Two Intro: A King, Queen, and an Unlikely Scene
20. Week Two Day One: Everlasting Glory
23. Week Two Day Two: A Garden Feast
26. Week Two Day Three: The No-Show Party Throw
29. Week Two Day Four: A Temporary Prescription for a Lonely Heart
32. Week Two Day Five: A Righteous Man and God's Greater Plan
35. Week Two Recap

WEEK THREE

37. Week Three Intro: Grace, Favor, and God's Faithfulness
that Doesn't Waver
38. Week Three Day One: A Star Shines Through the Darkness
42. Week Three Day Two: A Hidden Gem in the Harem
45. Week Three Day Three: Interrupted by God
48. Week Three Day Four: Standing Against Bowing
51. Week Three Day Five: The King's Authority
54. Week Three Recap

WEEK FOUR

- 56. Week Four Intro: The Rise of the Righteous and Fall of the Foolish
- 57. Week Four Day One: For Such a Time as This
- 60. Week Four Day Two: Esther's Wish
- 63. Week Four Day Three: The Downside of Unwise Counsel
- 66. Week Four Day Four: The Exciting Boring Book
- 69. Week Four Day Five: Audacious Courage
- 72. Week Four Recap

WEEK FIVE

- 74. Week Five Intro: God's Will in Man's Ways
- 75. Week Five Day One: A Weed in the Garden
- 78. Week Five Day Two: Revoking and Redeeming
- 80. Week Five Day Three: Darkness Turns to Light
- 82. Week Five Day Four: God's Glorious Reversal
- 84. Week Five Day Five: One More Wish
- 87. Week Five Recap

WEEK SIX

- 89. Week Six Intro: A Feast for Generations
- 90. Week Six Day One: From Mourning to Celebration
- 92. Week Six Day Two: Jesus: The True and Better Esther
- 94. Week Six Day Three: Mordecai: The Honor of Humility
- 96. Week Six Day Four: Why Does This Matter?
- 99. Week Six Day Five: God's Fingerprints on the Cross
- 101. Week Six Recap

SISTER,

It wouldn't surprise me if at this very moment you are walking through a situation in which you cannot see the hand of God at work. Perhaps you are suffering from chronic illness. Or maybe you've been hurt deeply and you feel broken, unable to grasp the hope of healing. Or perhaps you are walking through a season of uncertainty, transition, and confusion, and you are wondering where God is in the midst of the scattered puzzle pieces of your life. It seems in the ebb and flow of life that we are always waiting for something from God, whether it be healing, redemption, answers, restoration, or a resurrection of some sort. If a resounding "yes" echoed in your heart as you identified with one (or many) of the circumstances I listed above, know that you are in the right place, and even more importantly, that you are not alone.

I'll even dare to say that **you're in the exact place God wants you to be**. I know that's hard to read when you can't see His hand at work or feel His presence in the waiting, but hear me out. The Bible contains numerous examples of God's people walking through situations similar to yours. They desperately cried out to God for help in their distress, just like you and I do. Sometimes, it seemed that God remained silent, and other times He spoke loudly, quickly, and clearly. However, despite whether they heard the voice of God answer or continued to wait in their wondering, God **was** there with His people—fighting for them, pursuing them, and keeping the world in motion. **Your world is no exception.**

The book of Esther is extremely unique when compared to the other 65 God-breathed books of the Bible because it never mentions the name of God. When I first heard this I was confused and taken aback. *Really?* God would divinely inspire a book of the Bible that doesn't mention His very holy, sacred, and powerful name? The answer to that question, I soon learned, is *yes*. The book of Esther is marvelously woven with **one thread** holding it together, and that thread is **sovereignty**.

The sovereignty of God, referring to His ability to know, see, and control all things at once, is evident in the tiny details of the book of Esther. As we uncover His “fingerprints” together in the following weeks, we will see there is ample evidence of His work behind the scenes. **Though God is not mentioned, He is there.**

That is why the name of this study is called *Esther: The Fingerprints of God*. Like a detective, you are embarking on a journey through this historical book of the Bible, uncovering the fingerprints of God that are layered throughout the text. As you investigate, my prayer is that you'll not only uncover and more fully understand the sovereignty of God in the book of Esther, but also in your own life. **When you can't see God at work in your present circumstances, you can know that He is with you.** Hindsight is always 20/20, and we have the privilege of reading the book of Esther in hindsight.

*Though God is
not mentioned,
He is there.*

BEFORE WE BEGIN, LET ME PRAY FOR YOU:

Father, I recognize that you are mysterious in all your ways. There are a million aspects of your character that we will never fully understand this side of heaven. And yet there are also thousands of aspects of your character you have revealed to us now to hold tightly when the world is shifting beneath our feet. Help us uncover your fingerprints in Scripture and in our own lives, and leave us with the reverberating impact of awe and wonder to shape our vision of you. Speak in the questions, the searching, and the digging deep. May your sovereignty shape our faith. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

PUTTING ON MY DETECTIVE GLASSES WITH YOU,

Gretchen



SHARE WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING!

We'd love to see what God is teaching you as you study the book of Esther. Tag us @wellwateredwomen and use #wwwesther as you share.



The Heart of
man plans His
way, but the Lord
establishes His
steps

proverbs 16:9

A KING, A QUEEN, AND AN UNLIKELY SCENE

The book of Esther is a peculiar one. Written as a historical narrative retelling part of Israel's history in light of God's amazing grace, this unlikely story unravels with God's providential fingerprints over every circumstance. The first chapter sets the stage. Pay attention to the details listed, for all of Scripture has a specific purpose and is breathed out by God. The writer of this book included descriptions, scenes, and snapshots of the storyline with purpose and careful attention to detail. Likewise, the author did not include specific details that you will likely want to know more about. Ask God to bridge the gaps as you study, and to illuminate His Word. Be more concerned with what God has revealed in the Word than what He has not revealed. Trust Him with the entire story as you look for His fingerprints throughout, starting in the very beginning.

*Trust Him with
the entire story.*

EVERLASTING GLORY

SCRIPTURE: ESTHER 1:1-4

Before you begin your study each day, take time to pause, pray, and prepare your heart and mind to receive God's unfailing Word. Praise God for who He is. Confess your need for Him and ask Him to ignite in your heart an insatiable hunger for His Word and His ways. As always, rely on Scripture more than any word of man. I'll start us out in prayer today:

Father, you are exceedingly greater than we could ever grasp with our finite minds. Your goodness chases after us every day (Psalm 23:6). Your faithfulness is our foundation when the earth starts to tremble beneath our feet. Your lovingkindness holds us together and extends a comforting arm of embrace during our lowest moments. There is none like you, none who can compare to you. Today we come to you, confessing our desperate need for you as we read Your Word. Not a moment goes by in which we do not need your hope, wisdom, and salvation. As we study the book of Esther, change us from the inside out. Open our eyes to behold wondrous things out of your law (Psalm 119:18). We love you, Lord, more than anything in this life. In Jesus' Name, Amen (so be it).

In the unfolding of history, during the period of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we find the events of the book of Esther. It is not a stand-alone book, but rather a record of a significant part of Israel's history. Today, as we set the stage for the story and historical narrative that is about to unfold, we will travel back in time and slip our feet into the Israelites' shoes in order to better understand how the original reader would have felt. Brace yourself, because events will escalate quickly and change rapidly, just as the events of our very own lives often do.

"NOW IN THE DAYS OF..."

The book of Esther commences with these notable words in its first verse, declaring the setting and scene of the story of Esther. It is imperative to note and understand why these details were shared from the get-go. "In those days" (v. 2) is the author's attempt to give context to this historical book.

Read verses 1–2. Write down everything you learn about the context of the book of Esther.

The first person we are introduced to in the book of Esther is Ahasuerus, King of Susa. Ahasuerus is a Hebrew translation of his Persian name, Xerxes I (depending on which version of the text you are reading, your Bible might say Xerxes).

Ahasuerus, as we will soon learn, was a man of pomp and splendor, exhibited in his prideful ego. He controlled a vast amount of land and people and flaunted his power to the world around him. In regards to worldly riches, Ahasuerus “had it all.” According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the grandeur of the Persian empire surpassed that of King Solomon’s, and the treasures of Solomon’s palace were lavish to say the least. (Read a full description of Solomon’s palace in 1 Kings 7.)⁹ Ahasuerus’s power, pomp, and prestige are highlighted in the first chapter of Esther, and will be key to understanding how the story unfolds.

Read verses 3–4. What do you learn about the setting of this book? What can you also ascertain about Ahasuerus’s character from verse 4?

Ahasuerus was king of Persia from 486–464 B.C. The book of Esther was likely written around mid–late 5th century B.C. In the third year of his 21-year reign, Ahasuerus held an extravagant, lavish feast to honor ... himself. You can almost smell the pride wafting from his ego in verse 4 and following. The king held a feast for all of his officials, servants, nobles, governors, and armies of Persia and Media to display “the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days” (v. 4). In other words, he wanted all the people to stop what they were doing and gawk in awe at his earthly greatness. Not just for one day, but for an extended 180 days. That amounts to almost half of an entire year!

Look up the words glory, splendor, and pomp in the dictionary and write the definitions.

GLORY

SPLENDOR

POMP

The Hebrew word for “glory” in this passage is *kabowd*, referring to honor, abundance, splendor, reputation, and dignity.¹⁰ The “glory,” or *kabowd*, of King Ahasuerus was a temporary glory. All earthly abundance comes to an end. All earthly honor can be tainted in the blink of an eye. All earthly pride can be humbled and brought low. However, the glory of Almighty God has no end. It causes men to stand in awe for all of eternity, and compels us to bow low in holy reverence and fear.

The following verses reveal glorious truths about the kabowd of our Heavenly Father who is sovereign over every circumstance of our lives. Read the following verses and write down what you learn about the glory of God.

a study for
Well-Watered
WOMEN CO.

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