

## cell outlines | week three

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**ESTHER BIBLE STUDY WEEK THREE**

# The Persian Times

**Promotion at the Palace**

Palace officials are delighted to announce the appointment of Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite as the empire's second-in-command. The King saw fit to promote Haman to the role of Prime Minister due to his faithful and dedicated service over the last few years. Speaking from his luxury home in the capital Susa, Haman said, 'I am delighted with this honour. Of course, the King and I have long been close and I have always served him to the best of my ability, so I do not feel that this promotion is undeserved. I feel that I am well equipped to carry out the duties that the role of Prime Minister entails and aim to make this splendid country a better place to live for all.'

Whispers around the palace suggest that perhaps all is not as it seems. There is some concern that the King has been duped by Haman, who is really only out to serve his own interests. Only time will tell.

**Annihilation of the Jews**

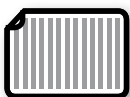
Chaos and confusion reign in the streets of the capital as the Jews in Susa still struggle to come to terms with the most recent royal edict. In scenes being replicated across the empire, Jews are distraught at the news that they will face certain, murderous death in less than twelve months' time. Not one Jew is to be spared; man and women, old and young, children and babies are all to be destroyed in a radical attempt at ethnic cleansing of the Persian Empire. Whilst the edict seems to have come from the King himself, rumours suggest that Prime Minister Haman is behind the planned annihilation as a personal vendetta against the Jews, even offering money to the King to ensure the decree was sanctioned. Across the land these normally peaceful people are wailing in grief, tearing their clothes in horror, and pleading with their God to save them through prayer and fasting. Those that can are trying to flee the country, but it is said that guards on the borders are killing Jews on the spot if found escaping.

**Mordecai Honoured**

The Persian Times recently reported how an unknown Jew, Mordecai, son of Kish, saved the King's life by uncovering a plot against him. Now regarded as a national hero, Mordecai had finally received the reward and honour he deserves. Yesterday Mordecai was given a royal

robe previously worn by the King, placed on one of the King's magnificent horses, and led triumphantly through the street by the Prime Minister himself. Thousands of people lined the streets to cheer and wave, delighted to see in person the man who saved our mighty King from certain death.

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cell outlines | week three (continued...)

## SPEAK OUT

### You Will Need

Bibles  
 Pen / Paper  
 Local / national newspapers  
 Scissors and glue  
 Starfish shaped cards  
 Details of a current Salvation Army campaign

### WELCOME

Icebreaker Activity: Arrange the chairs in a circle and have each person stand behind one chair. Every time a player can answer 'yes' to a statement he/she may move to the chair on their left. If they must answer 'no', they stay where they are. They must line up behind the people who are already standing at that chair. The first person back to their original chair wins.

Try statements like these:

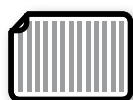
- You are wearing green socks.
- You have tomatoes in your garden.
- You have one sister.
- You have a blue vehicle.
- You were born in another country.
- Your birthday is in August.
- You are left-handed.
- You have had an operation in hospital.

(Make up some of your own that you know will be relevant to your group.)

### For older groups

**Would You Rather:** Prepare a number of 'Would you rather' statements (see examples below) on separate cards. Have each person in turn take a card and answer the statement, giving reasons for their choice if they can! Alternatively, for a more 'on your feet' activity, you could read the statement out to the whole group and designate one side of the room as one answer and one for the other. Group members move to the side of the room according to their preference.

- Would you rather find true love or win the lottery?
- Would you rather be bald or completely hairy?
- Would you rather tell your best friend a lie or your parents the truth?
- Would you rather be too hot or too cold?
- Would you rather walk on the moon or visit the bottom of the ocean?
- Would you rather have supernatural hearing abilities or be able to see great distances?
- Would you rather be a cat or a dog?



## cell outlines | week three (continued...)

**Feedback from last time:** Ask who remembered to show their inner beauty to others. What did they do and how was it received?!

## WORD

Read the above articles from The Persian Times.

## 1. One Person Can Make a Difference

Read Esther ch 4 and discuss the following questions:

- Do you think the King would have agreed to the order if had known that Queen Esther was a Jew?
- What stopped Esther from rushing straight to the King to tell him what had happened?
- How do Mordecai's arguments in verses 12-14 persuade Esther to go to the King?
- What character qualities does Esther show in her response to Mordecai's second message?
- How did Esther ask Mordecai and the Jews to support her?
- What do you know about fasting and why is it important?
- Think of a present context in which God has placed you to do his will. What risks do you face in doing the right thing in this context?
- What character qualities must you exhibit in order to do the right thing?

*In an overpopulated world, it's easy to underestimate the significance of one. There are so many people who have so many gifts and skills who are already doing so many things that are important, who needs me? What can I as one individual contribute to the overwhelming needs of our world? But the truth is, you are you – the only you in all the world.*

(Charles Swindoll)

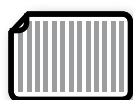
*I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do everything  
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.*

(Edward Everett Hale)

History is full of accounts of single individuals who have made a difference. Esther was one of them. Although she first reacts by thinking about the risks she personally faces in going to the King and is probably afraid, nervous and uncertain when she receives Mordecai's first message, she had the character, determination and courage to go through with what God asked of her. God places us in situations where he can use us, and in those situations we are faced with the choice of doing what God calls us to do or doing our own thing. At times it may be frightening to speak out in the situations that God places us in. At times it may demand our time, money or reputation. We must have courage and character to stand up and be counted to speak out in the situations that God places us in. We could be the one person who can make a difference in someone else's life.

Esther was strengthened and empowered by her time of prayer and fasting and the prayers of her people. We all need prayers and support of our family and friends in order to fulfil God's call.

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celloutlines | week three (continued...)

## 2. Justice In Our World

### Newspaper Montage

Collect local and international newspapers and bring in enough for each person to have one. Ask them look through the papers, finding and cutting out stories of injustice. Have two large pieces of paper ready where they can stick their stories – one for local and one for global. Then take some time to read the stories, or have an individual describe what they have read. Identify the injustice in each story and ask how is justice brought to the victims of each story or what would justice look like in this situation.

### Use the following questions in a time of group discussion:

If you were preparing to be a politician or local councillor, which contemporary issues would you want to take a stand on?

- What issues of injustice do you feel God has laid on your heart or are a great burden to you?
- Think about areas of the world that are suffering atrocities today. What would your prayers be for them?

### Read Matthew 25:34-46 and discuss the following questions:

- Who is Jesus talking about when he uses the phrase 'the least of these'?
- Who are the least of these in our communities?
- Who is experiencing oppression right in front of us?
- Where is there a need for justice in our schools/colleges/workplaces?
- How would Jesus be responding to them?
- What is he asking us to do about it?

### APPLICATION

From all the above discussions, brainstorm some concrete ways that the group members can get involved in the fight against injustice. The emphasis here must be on realistic ideas that they can actually do at home in the next months. Examples could be: praying (and fasting) for situations where they see people are being oppressed; helping out at a group for marginalised people; purchasing Fairtrade products; writing letters to their MPs about issues that concern them.

NB Remind the group to stay safe and tell their parents/guardians what they wish to get involved in.

As an extra activity you could choose a current project or campaign that The Salvation Army or your local corps is involved in. Perhaps use the ID Embrace campaign ([http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/www\\_uki.nsf/vw-dynamic-index/71E190F970B5241E8025705300487176?OpenDocument](http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/www_uki.nsf/vw-dynamic-index/71E190F970B5241E8025705300487176?OpenDocument)). Bring details of the chosen campaign to the group and explain why it is important. Give the young people information about how they can get involved. Spend some time praying for the project and the people / places in need that it is reaching.

## cell outlines | week three (continued...)

## PRAYER

Read the following story.

**The Story of the Starfish**

A father and his son were walking along a deserted beach after a particularly high tide had washed up thousands of starfish on to the sand.

The boy started picking them up and throwing them back into the water one by one.

The father quizzed his son saying, 'You can't possibly save them all – there are millions, you can't possibly make a difference.'

The boy smiled, bent down and picked up another starfish and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, 'Made a difference to that one.' (There are other versions of this story.)

Have available large starfish-shaped pieces of card or paper. Ask each individual to write or draw at least one name / situation in which they feel God has called them to make a difference. Take the group into a large space (outside may work best) and one by one ask each person to shout out the name / situation on their starfish in prayer and then fling it away 'back into the sea'. Gather the group in a huddle and pray loudly, all at the same time, for the issues of injustice you have discussed and your role in making a difference in our world.

