

Facilitator

1. Open with Prayer

2. Welcome any newcomers

3. Read Esther 1:1-22 and give a five-minute review of the sermon using Peppy's sermon notes.

Facilitator: Please don't feel you have to cover every question. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

CONNECT Group study questions, Esther 1:1-22

September 7, 2014

Title: The Temptation of Fame, Fortune and Power

Time to re-CONNECT, group. Many—maybe most—of you have stayed in touch over the summer. Still, summertime has a way of disconnecting all of us with vacations, the kids out of school, and any number of other distractions. Perhaps this would be a good time to catch up by sharing something memorable from the last three months. Suggestion: Try to take stock of ways our study in James may have changed you or challenged you.

Now get ready for a completely different kind of Bible study. James was a sermon-by-letter to Jewish Christians; Esther is a story about Jews held captive in a foreign land. Barnes and Noble would probably shelve it under Historical Romance. But take heart, guys, this is not some chick book. There's plenty of action, suspense, intrigue, and fight to keep us all engaged.

Question: Who is the unnamed character—the main character, in fact—in the Book of Esther? Support your answer from the story. **Clue:** Esther 4:14

Question: The king—try to say Ahasuerus quickly three times and see why we'll just call him king—threw a six-month party. What was he trying to accomplish? Have you ever been to a party with an agenda—maybe to sell you something, or to recruit you to join a campaign? Share your experiences. Was it all it was cracked up to be?

Question: The king's party had plenty of wine to keep the guests well lubricated, but the story makes a point that no one was compelled to drink. Do you suppose there was club soda and grape juice on hand for the non-drinkers? Do you sense the peer pressure? With no clear scriptural prohibition against drinking alcohol, we're left with principles from scripture to guide us. What principles guide your decision about whether to drink an alcoholic beverage at a party? At home? In

public? Refer to the passages Peppy gave us: Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 6:10; and Romans 14:13. **Facilitator:** You could ask four in the group to each take a verse and then discuss the principle and how it guides their decision.

Question: Peppy points out a “triple offense” in Queen Vashti’s refusal to strip for the crowd of inebriated revelers. She probably based her decision on principle. Disobeying the king was not an I-don’t-feel-like-it decision. What biblical principles would guide a woman faced with challenging the authority of a man, a wife faced with disobeying the orders of her husband, or a citizen faced with defying his government?

Question: Modesty might have been a guiding principle in Vashti’s decision. It should be a guiding principle for every Christian, male and female. Mark Timmons, our education minister, pulled a few passages to help us know God’s mind on the matter of modesty. Read 1 Peter 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:9-10; Titus 2:4-5; and Isaiah 3:16-23 with principle in mind, not just do-this and don’t-do-that.

Are we sending messages of pride, vanity, seduction, and deception in how we look, dress and act? As our culture changes, what we do and how we act also changes. But men and women who base their actions on principles of modesty in dress, demeanor, speech, and lifestyle cut a straight path through the extremes of society and turn the attention of the world to their Lord and not to themselves.

Question: The Book of Esther records an important event in the history of the Jewish people. Why is it so important to Jews? Why is it important to all Christians from both a Jewish and gentile heritage? **Facilitator:** The story of Esther is a demonstration of God’s sovereignty. God maneuvered the evil plans of Satan and the chaotic actions of men to accomplish His own purpose: By saving the Jewish nation from annihilation, He brought the blessing of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to the world.