



FOCUS PASSAGE: ESTHER ESTHER 8:15-10

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

How do you usually respond when you see or hear difficult news on social media, TV, or from other people?



HEAR THE WORD

Pause for a moment of prayer before reading today's focus passage.

CONTEXT

As the new decree to overrule Haman's genocide was sent out to all the surrounding cities, the people of God moved from a state of mourning, fasting, and praying, to "joy, gladness and honour." (Es. 8:16)

The feast (or festival) of Purim (Es. 9:16-17) is still celebrated to this day by modern day Jews. Purim commemorates the lot ("pur" meaning "lot") that Haman had cast to determine their ruin and destruction and the resulting deliverance by God's intervention through Esther and Mordecai. The purpose for its repetition is to regularly remember this story of deliverance found in the book of Esther and to celebrate joy, life and rest.

SEEK THE WORD

Spend the next 5-10 minutes seeking to understand more about the passage. What are the key events, characters or themes that stand out? Which parts of the passage draw your attention? Express these in questions, observations, and reflective response.

ENGAGE THE WORD

Continue to reflect and discuss today's focus passage using the following questions. Feel free to address any questions or observations brought up in the previous section.

- Psalm 107 points to the importance of giving thanks to God for all he has done for us saying, "the redeemed of the LORD [to] tell their story" as they "ponder the loving deeds of the LORD" (Ps. 107:2,43). Why do you think it's important to ponder on "the loving deeds of the LORD"? Alternatively, what are the dangers of neglecting to do so?
- Exercise: Psalm 72 is known as a messianic Psalm and resembles the final chapters of the book of Esther. Both passages speak of a kingdom ruled by Jesus and the ultimate hope of a new heaven and earth. Can you spot the similarities in both passages?

LIVE THE WORD

Whenever we encounter the Word of God on our own time or with other believers, we are called to understand its message with not only our heads, but with our hearts.

- *In our postmodern context, our society is becoming increasingly hostile towards Christianity, but God does not call us to shy away from actively engaging with our society. How do you observe Esther and Mordecai as role models for leadership and political engagement?*
- *Stories and situations like the ones we've witnessed in the book of Esther invite us to remember and reflect on how God has provided for His people over the centuries. How can you give thanks today for the ways God has provided for you?*
- *Jesus calls his followers to live as salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13-16; John 17:16-17). Yet it is easy for us to adopt and live in the values and ways of our culture. What has Esther's story taught you about living in a culture without living in its wicked ways?*

BIG IDEA: God is in control over all nations and all situations. He protects those who are His and teaches them to trust in His sovereignty.

