

esther

it's tough being a woman

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esther

viewer guide  introduction

The Background of Esther in the Hebrew Bible and Tradition

The Book of Esther is also known as the _____.

Historical Background

Like the Book of Daniel, Esther is a _____ story.

The Uniqueness of the Book of Esther

1. The total _____ of any _____ to _____

Why study the Book of Esther?

- It's part of _____.
- Based on Psalm 138:2b God's name may not be _____, but _____.
- It offers tremendous _____.
- It extends a vital perspective on the _____.
Merriam Webster's definition of *providence*: "God conceived as the power _____."
Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary adds, "In so doing [in His providence] God attends not only to apparently momentous events and people but also to those that seem both _____ and _____. ... Indeed, so all encompassing is God's attention to events within creation that nothing ... _____ by _____."

Ephesians 1:11—Even when we’re blind to the evidence, God “_____ in conformity with the _____ of His will.”

Philippians 2:13—God “_____ to will and to act according to His good _____.”

2. The title bears a _____.

Throughout the next nine weeks we’ll consider different scenarios to underscore the concept captured in our study’s title.

Scenario #1

It’s tough being a woman _____.

3. The God-ordained emphasis on _____

According to *Word Biblical Commentary*, the inspired author of Esther “lays all the stress on the _____ to the divine-human _____” [combined or shared energy].

esther 2:1-7

viewer guide 👑 session one

Today's session introduces our protagonist and most vital supporting actor. We will use these important "first mentions" to help us draw character sketches of each based on what we know and what we also might imagine.

Part One

A Character Sketch of Mordecai

- **He was a** _____ (6:10; 8:7; 9:31; 10:3; 5:13).

"Its significance is indicated by the fact that this is the _____
_____ in the whole Old Testament that a _____
of the community of Israel is named and identified by a gentile."¹

- **He was an** _____.

Esther 2:6 "employs the root of the word for exile (*glh*) in four distinct constructions, lest the full measure of the Jewish plight be overlooked."²

View the repetition in the King James Version: "Who had been
_____ from Jerusalem with the _____ which
had been _____ with Jeconiah king of Judah whom
Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had _____."

- **He was a** _____ **to his** _____.

Part Two

A Character Sketch of Esther

- *She was named* _____.

This Jewish name comes from the word for “_____”
and means “_____.”³

- *She was* _____.

- *She was* _____ *by her male* _____.

- *She was* _____.

Scenario #2

It's tough being a woman in a _____
_____ is a _____.

- *She was also* _____ *as* _____.

This Persian name means “_____.”

Perhaps even more significantly, “the name Esther comes from the
verbal root in Hebrew *str*, meaning ‘to _____.’”⁴

esther 3:1-5

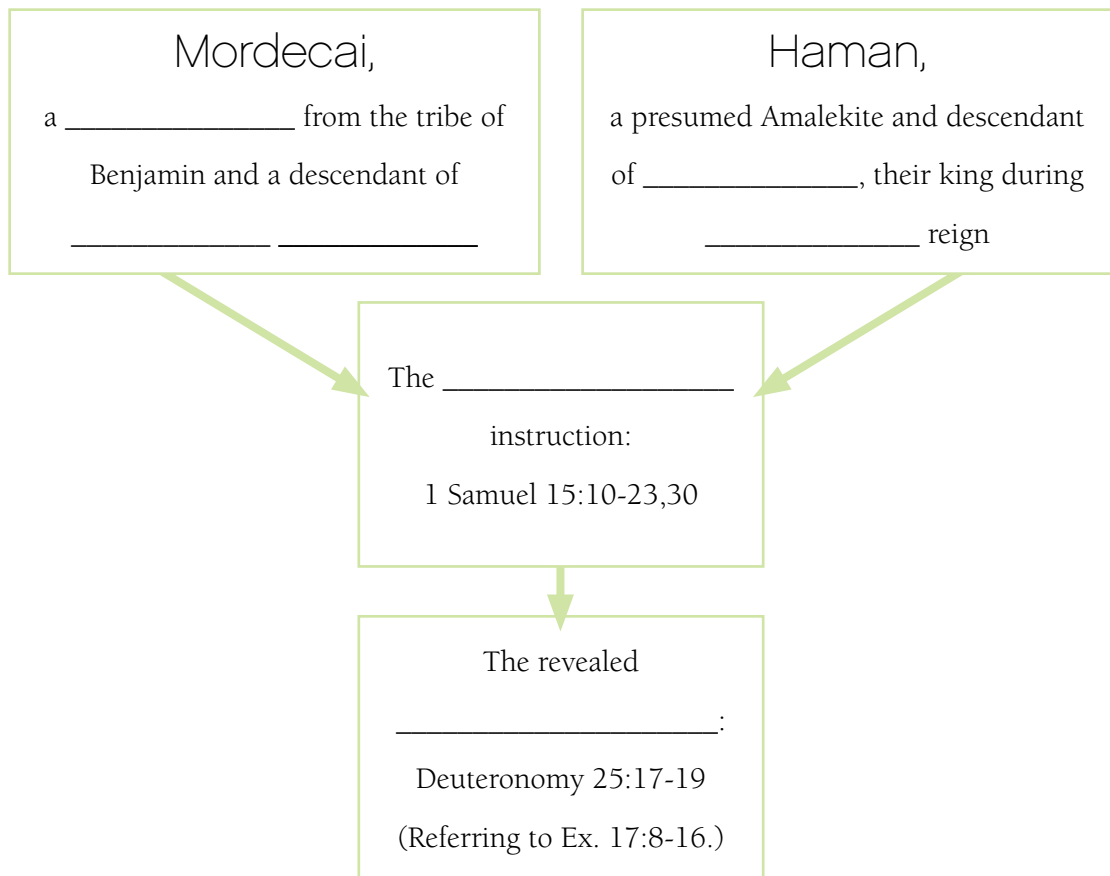
viewer guide 👑 session two

Scenario #3

It's tough being a woman _____.

1. _____ always has a _____.

Consider the history of these two rivals.



Exodus 17:16—“_____ will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.”

2. _____ *perceives a* _____ (2 Cor. 10:12).

3. _____ *catches like a* _____.

- The word *Agag* is believed to be related to an Assyrian term (*agagu*) that means “to be _____, vehement, _____.”⁵
- The name “Haman” sounds similar to the Hebrew word for _____ (Hebrew, *heman*).⁶ (Compare Prov. 22:24-25.)

Consider the following quote

“Surely as Christians we must recognize the ‘_____ _____’ not only in our world but _____.”⁷

4. _____ *is* _____ (Rom. 12:17-21).

esther 4:1-14

viewer guide 👑 session three

The Human Dilemma of Destiny

Many of the biblical figures who fulfilled their God-appointed destinies shared some of Esther's basic inner conflicts.

Consider the dilemma of destiny from a human perspective:

1. *The* _____ . Reflect on Esther 4:11b.

2. *The* _____ .

Scenario #4

It's tough being a woman _____

_____ .

3. The _____.

- Remember, destiny appoints _____ but affects _____.
- The _____ of a person's destiny always demands a revelation of the _____. Consider the wording "if you remain silent at this time." The Hebrew word translated *silent* in this verse can also be translated _____.

4. The _____.

(See verse 14.)

"The sentence contains a figure of speech known as *aposiopesis*—a sudden _____ of what was being said or written so that the mind is more impressed by what is _____, it being too wonderful, solemn or awful to verbalize. In English this figure is sometimes called the 'sudden _____.'"⁸

esther 4:11-17

viewer guide 👑 session four

Part One

Our protagonist made three shifts that moved her from self-preservation to brave determination.

1. Esther had a _____.

“She [Esther] had to _____ in order to do what God had created her and positioned her to do.”⁹

2. Esther _____.

Consider general fears, then our context’s specific fear:

- Facing any _____

And if _____, then _____.
[your answers here]

esther 4:II-17

Scenario #5

It's tough being a woman in the _____

_____.

- Facing fear of _____

Hebrews 2:14-15 from The Message: "By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who _____ through life, _____ _____."

Recall a quote we discussed in week 3 of our homework:

"Living perpetually in the shadow of immanent catastrophe, the Jew was threatened not only physically but psychologically. Walking in the _____ was as _____ as _____."¹⁰

3. Esther _____

she was offered.

esther 5:1-8

viewer guide  session five

Sometimes God _____ the issue of _____.
Amazingly, other times He seems to _____ it.

Reflect on the importance of knowing ...

1. When it's _____.

See verse 1. Compare Hosea 6:2.

2. When it's _____.

Ecclesiastes 3:1,7 say, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven ... a time to be _____ and a time to _____."

- Sometimes we need to be _____ even when man invites us to _____.

Consider the idiom, "Even up to half the kingdom."

(Compare Mark 6:17-28.)

- Sometimes the _____, but they don't _____ . See Job 34:2-4. (Compare 2 Cor. 6:1-2.)

3. When it's time to _____ for _____
_____ time.

- The time wasn't _____.

(Recall Mark 6:23.)

- The time wasn't _____.

Commentator Adele Berlin suggests the delay is “a clever move on Esther’s part to disarm Haman and make him think he was the center of attention. This plays to Haman’s _____.”¹¹ Similarly, J. Gordon McConville explains that the delay allowed time “for Haman’s misguided _____.”¹²

4. When the _____ is _____.

(See Isa. 40:31, KJV.)

Scenario #6

It's tough being a woman who can balance

_____ with _____.

esther 6:6-II

viewer guide 👑 session six

The sixth chapter is “the hinge of the story of Esther.”¹³ God appoints or allows circumstances (often crises) in our lives to redirect our paths. Today we explore the unexpected pivot point of Esther by giving a name to an important concept in the book: _____ also called _____ . Review Esther 6:6-11.

These reversals are part of a literary tapestry that will open our eyes to see ...

1. The beauty of the book’s _____ .

Am I willing to do the _____ to see the _____?

Two literary devices are employed magnificently in the Book of Esther. The first is called “_____.”

What in the world is it? In its tightest form, chiastic structure is _____ . In other words, it is a _____ of structures to emphasize an _____ .

What’s the best way to picture it?

- The “_____” that begins the word *chiastic* is the 22nd letter of the _____ .

It is written like this: _____. The letter itself represents the _____ literary structure of a chiasm (literally in Greek, a crossing).

What's the best example of it in the Book of Esther? Chiastic structure is deliciously illustrated in the repeated occurrences of _____.

2. The beauty of the book's _____.

Esther's best theology is in its _____. To offer a perfect example, we'll consider a second literary device called "_____."

What in the world is it?

- "Peripety: a _____ of events that _____ the expected or intended outcome" particularly in a literary work.¹⁴

Scenario #7

It's tough being a woman _____ responsible _____ "_____."

"A peripeteia swiftly turns a routine sequence of events into a _____."¹⁵

esther 7–8:2

viewer guide  session seven

Esther 7–8:2 shows the impact of the climactic events on all four major players.

Every _____ - _____ starts with _____.

1. *Esther* _____.

(See Esther 7:3 and 8:1.)

“Literally, ‘_____.’ The author probably intended to convey more than is being suggested by the translation ‘that he was _____ to her.’”¹⁶

2. *Haman* _____.

(See Esth. 7:10. Compare Ps. 7:15-16.)

3. *Xerxes* _____.

(See Esth. 8:1. Compare 2 Cor. 8:9.)

4. *Mordecai* _____.

(See Esth. 8:1-2.)

Now see the “Turn It Around!” page and fill in the appropriate blanks.*

*Editor’s Note: This form is available in the leader guide and online at www.lifeway.com/bethmoore.

Turn Around Scenario #7

It's tough being a woman who feels responsible for the "how."

"The _____ to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."
(2 Pet. 2:9, HCSB)

"For _____ we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." (Ps. 103:14)

Turn Around Scenario #6

It's tough being a woman who can balance passion with patience.

"Yet the LORD _____ to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who _____ for him." (Isa. 30:18)

"The Lord _____ ... blessed are all those who _____ for Him." (ESV)

"That same day," Esther 8:1

"Rather than love, than money, than _____ give me _____.

— Henry David Thoreau (*Walden*, 1854)

esther 9:1-4

viewer guide 👑 session eight

Today's chapter explicitly states the Book of Esther's most pronounced theme—the reversal of destiny. We will glance ahead to Esther 9:19-22 and then focus on verses 1-4. Esther 9:1 says, "but now the tables were turned." The Hebrew transliteration for "the tables were turned" is hapak which means "to overturn, to overthrow, to tumble."

Premise for Today's Session

God can't _____ that was _____
_____.

Seeing purpose in tough scenarios increases the trust required for a turnaround.

Turn Around Scenario #5

It's tough being a woman in the tight fist of fear.

- The Jews weren't just _____, they were _____.
(See Deut. 33:29; compare Neh. 4:10-14.)
- See Esther 9:2: "The Jews assembled in their cities." The power wasn't just _____. It was all of _____.
- Every time you're in a _____ of fear, remember you're in something much _____. Isaiah 49:16 says, "See, I have _____ on the _____."

Turn Around Scenario #4

It's tough being a woman thrown a giant-size weight.

- God always has the _____. Exchange the _____ for a _____ (1 Pet. 5:7; see Deut. 23:3-5).

“However, the LORD your God ... turned the _____ into a _____ for you, because the LORD your God _____ ” (Deut. 23:5).

Ahab—“Implies an ardent and _____ inclination of the mind and a _____ of _____ at the same time.”¹⁷

Consider the unique metaphor in Hosea 7:8

“Ephraim is a _____ not _____.”

Turn Around Scenario #3

It’s tough being a woman in a mean world.

- In a _____ world, New Testament believers are called to a _____.

“I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may _____, holding on to _____ and a _____. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith” (1 Tim. 1:18-19).

Consider the following excerpt from *The Queen and I*:

“When, because of your _____, your life too becomes perceptibly different; when your reactions are quite _____ to what the situation seems to call for and your activities can no longer be explained in terms of your _____; that is when your neighborhood will sit up and take notice. In the eyes of the world, it is not our _____ with Jesus Christ that counts; it is our _____!”¹⁸

esther 9:29–10:3

viewer guide 👑 session nine

As the inspired writer puts the finishing touches on the book, we will put the finishing touches on our approach to its overarching theme—reversals of destiny.

Interestingly, a book called by Esther's name and showcasing her beauty and courage begins and ends without her. So, who is the Book's real hero? Who is the truest protagonist?

Consider the following thoughts:

Neither Esther nor Mordecai had the power or position alone to deliver their people. It was only as they acted in _____ and _____ that they were able to lead God's people through the crisis of death and into deliverance. Neither of them _____ to the role; perhaps neither of them _____ it. It was thrust on them by a series of improbable circumstances largely beyond their control. Nevertheless, their _____ accomplished God's ancient promise, and the Jewish race was preserved until in the fullness of time, God entered history through this people as the _____. How marvelous are God's inscrutable ways!¹⁹

Recall Scenario #2

It's tough being a woman in a world where _____
_____.

Before we locate and record our “turn around” Scripture, consider some of the possible implications of Genesis 3:16. Two different Hebrew words are translated “man.” They are *adam* and *ish*.

When a distinction exists between the two, *ish* denotes “man as the _____ of woman and/or _____ in his _____.”²⁰ The word is first used in Genesis 2:24. In the KJV, *ish* is translated “husband” 69 times and “man” or “men” 1212 times.

Turn Around Scenario #2

It’s tough being a woman in a world where beauty is a treatment.

“He has made _____
 _____” (Eccl. 3:11).

In man’s realm, _____.

In God’s realm where we will spend forever, _____
 _____.

Turn Around Scenario #1

It’s tough being a woman in another woman’s shadow.

“He who dwells in the _____
 will rest in the _____” (Ps. 91:1).

On the “Turn It Around!” page, write concise descriptions of each scenario over the top of each corresponding box.