





SHE READS TRUTH

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ABOUT THE SHE READS TRUTH BIBLE

The CSB *She Reads Truth Bible* aims to live at the intersection of beauty, goodness, and Truth. Featuring devotionals by the She Reads Truth team, and Scripture reading plans that include supplemental passages for deeper understanding, this Bible invites every woman to count themselves among the She Reads Truth community of “Women in the Word of God every day.” The CSB *She Reads Truth Bible* also features 66 key verses, artfully lettered to aid in Scripture memorization.

FEATURES INCLUDE:

189 devotionals, 66 artist-designed key verses, 35 full-color timelines, 20 full-color maps, 11 full-color charts, reading plans for every book of the Bible, one-year Bible reading plan, detailed book introductions, key verse list, carefully curated topical index, Smyth-sewn binding, two colored ribbon markers, and wide margins for journaling and note-taking.

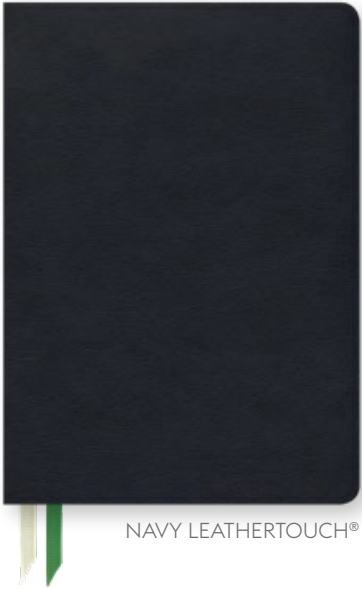
The CSB *She Reads Truth Bible* features the highly readable, highly reliable text of the Christian Standard Bible® (CSB). The CSB stays as literal as possible to the Bible’s original meaning without sacrificing clarity, making it easier to engage with Scripture’s life-transforming message and to share it with others.

SheReadsTruthBible.com

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AVAILABLE



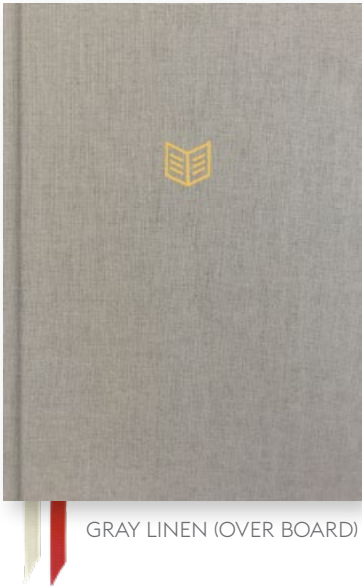
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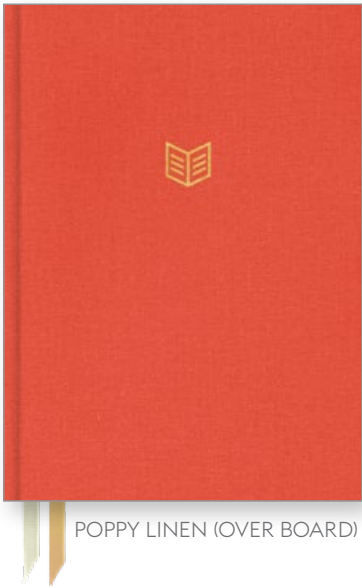
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BROWN GENUINE LEATHER



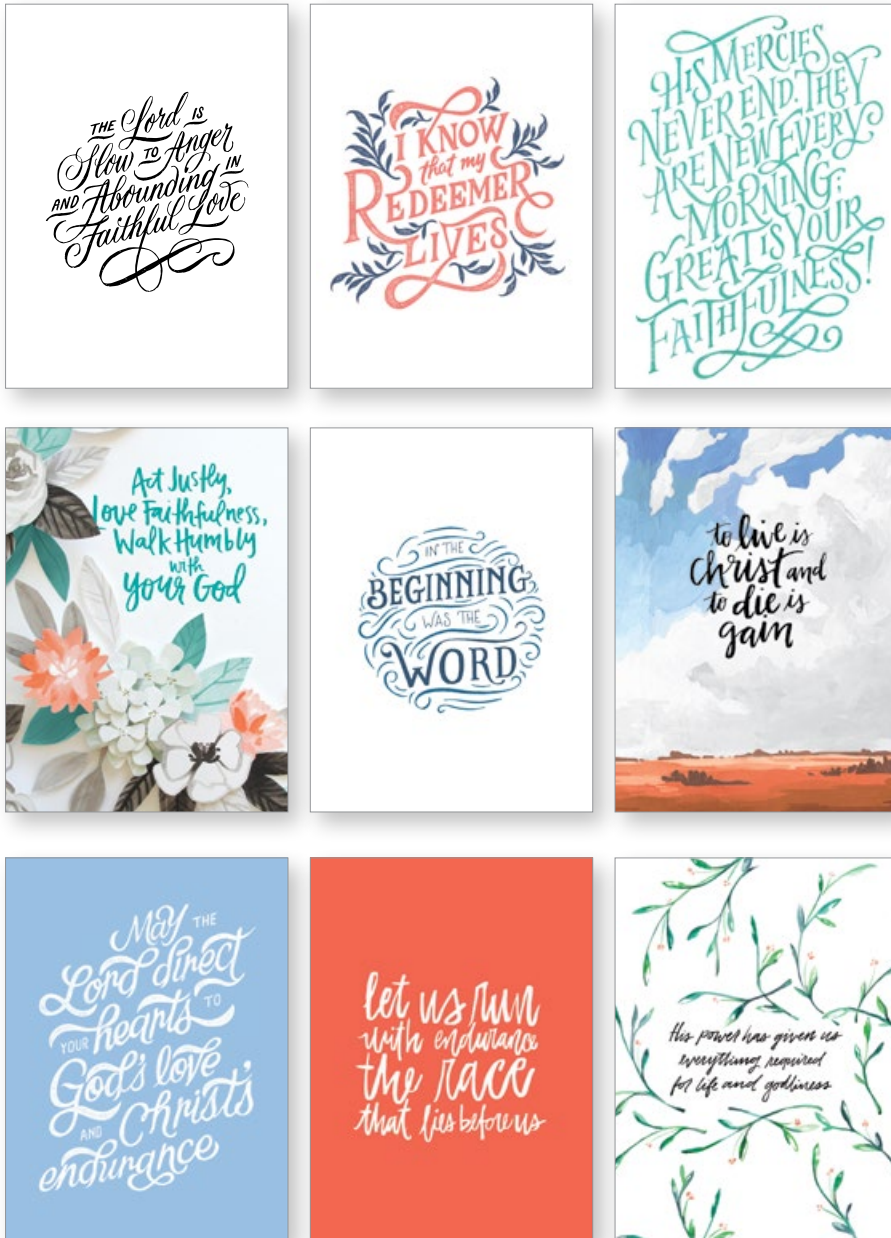
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POPPY LINEN (OVER BOARD)

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A SAMPLE OF KEY VERSE ART
INCLUDED IN THE SHE READS TRUTH BIBLE



ABOUT THE SHE READS TRUTH EDITORS



RAECHEL MYERS is always on the lookout for beauty, goodness, and truth in everyday life. Co-founder and CEO of She Reads Truth, Raechel leads the She Reads Truth community and staff out of her deep love of God's Word and the firm conviction that all of Scripture is good news. She is the co-author of *Open Your Bible: God's Word Is for You and for Now* and *She Reads Truth: Holding Tight to Permanent in a Word That's Passing Away*. Raechel lives south of Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband and their two children.



AMANDA BIBLE WILLIAMS likes words and books more than just about anything. Co-founder and Chief Content Officer of She Reads Truth, Amanda spends her days happily writing, editing, and explaining that her maiden name really is Bible. She is the co-author of the *Open Your Bible: God's Word Is for You and for Now* and *She Reads Truth: Holding Tight to Permanent in a Word That's Passing Away*. Amanda lives with her husband and their four children in a farmhouse in Franklin, Tennessee.

YOU'RE INVITED TO CONNECT WITH
THE SHE READS TRUTH COMMUNITY

In 2012, a handful of strangers began reading God's Word together every day, staying connected with the hashtag #SheReadsTruth. This hashtag gave way to a website, which gave way to an app, and the movement continues to grow. Today, hundreds of thousands of women gather online daily to open our Bibles together and find Jesus there.

Every day we read a new passage together—working our way through books of the Bible, topics that matter, and seasons of the Church calendar. We engage with God's Word and with each other. And we keep coming back, on the hard days and the good days, because God and His Word never change, regardless of our circumstances.

The She Reads Truth community seeks to be "Women in the Word of God every day," and the She Reads Truth Bible delivers the tools and insights we love. You're invited to connect with us further in several ways, including:

The website: SheReadsTruth.com offers devotionals provided by the She Reads Truth founders and contributors.

The app: Available for both iOS and Android, the She Reads Truth app conveniently provides beauty, goodness, and Truth on the go.

Social media: The #SheReadsTruth community is alive and well, actively sharing where they're reading Truth each day and what they're learning from God's Word.

She Reads Truth Study Books feature curated Bible reading plans that lead you through books of the Bible, biblical topics, and seasons of the Church calendar. Enjoy full Scripture readings right there in the book along with the type of charts, maps, and timelines found in the She Reads Truth Bible. Available at ShopSheReadsTruth.com.



For Such
A Time As
This

esther



If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father's family will be destroyed. Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this. **4:14**

ON THE TIMELINE The story of Esther is rooted in the historical account of King Ahasuerus, who ruled as king of Persia from 486–465 BC. Esther is made queen of Persia in approximately 479 BC, Haman's plot to destroy the Jews occurs in 474 BC, and the first celebration of Purim occurs in 473 BC. The events in Esther occur before the events of Nehemiah, but after the Decree of Cyrus had allowed the Jews in exile to return to Jerusalem. Most likely the book was written in the fourth century BC with Mordecai as its author.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND The book of Esther never mentions God by name, although His presence is implied in Mordecai's allusion to divine providence (Est 4:14). The book of Esther is tightly connected with specific historical events, yet it is also a piece of literature, a narrative with all of the literary features necessary to make a great story. Esther is also unique in that its purposes are not always explicitly stated but are derived from the story as a whole.

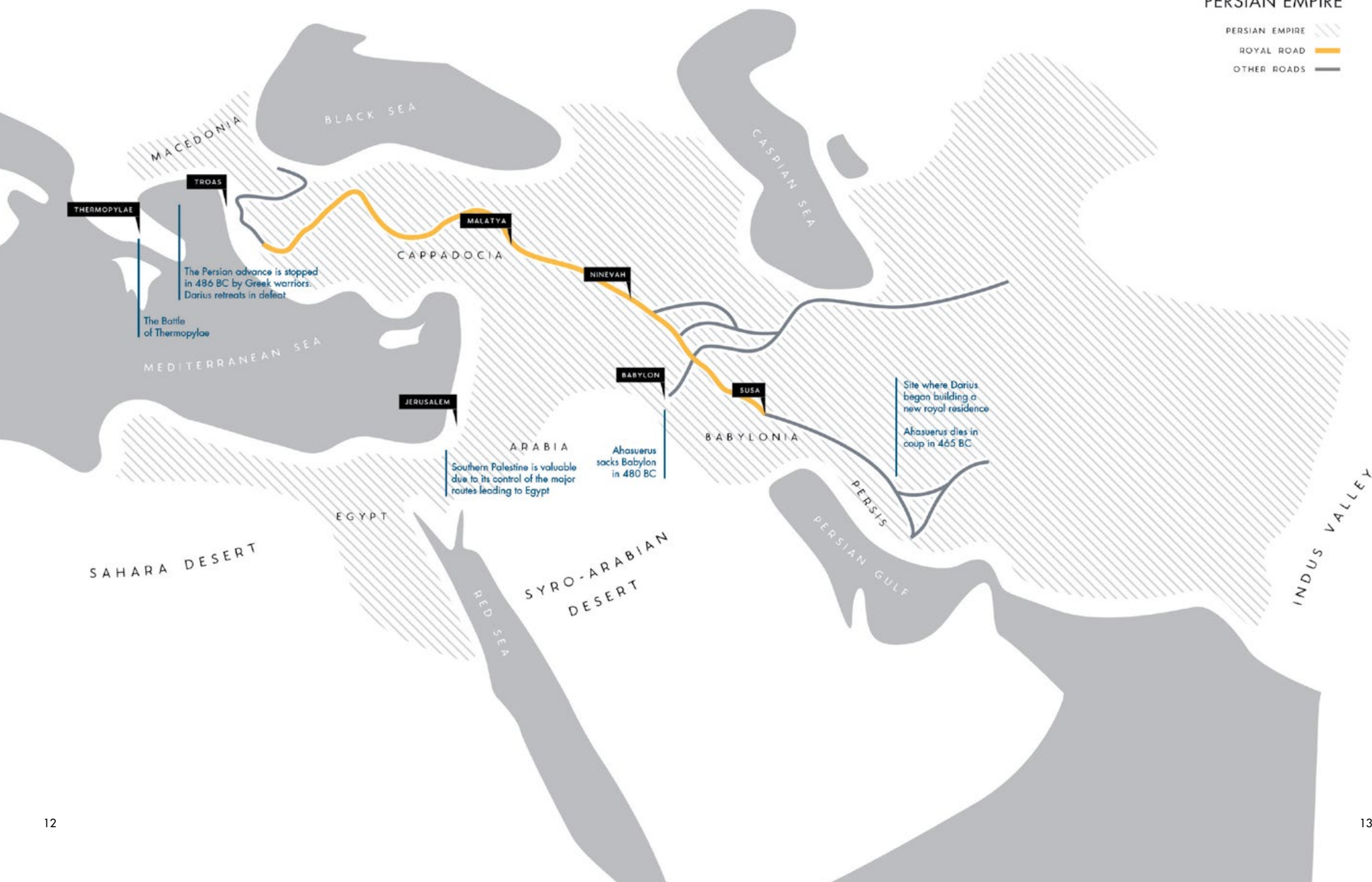
MESSAGE & PURPOSE For the Jewish people scattered around the Persian Empire, the book of Esther was a story that gave encouragement and hope. It provided a model of how Jewish people could not just survive, but thrive in a Gentile environment. It displayed the work of God, evident but unseen, in the unfolding story of deliverance and redemption—making an orphan girl the queen and using her courage and influence to save the Jews from annihilation.

GIVE THANKS FOR THE BOOK OF ESTHER:

Without ever mentioning God directly, the book of Esther underscores the providence of God. God's promise to give the Jews an eternal ruler remained in place, even in the face of threatened annihilation. Esther shows us that many Jews remained faithful to their God even in exile. Some scholars believe they kept their identity as God's people through the synagogues that developed as centers of the Jewish community wherever Jews were dispersed. The synagogues would later play a significant role as the gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire.

PERSIAN EMPIRE

PERSIAN EMPIRE
ROYAL ROAD
OTHER ROADS



READ AND UNDERSTAND ESTHER

The Bible is a complete work in which many stories combine to tell one story. As you read the book of Esther, consider reading the additional passages to discover how the whole of Scripture works together.

Week 1	GOING DEEPER
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 1	Psalms 32:7; Proverbs 27:15-16
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 2	Proverbs 31:10-31; John 10:27-29
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 3	Psalms 68:20; Proverbs 16:33
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 4	Isaiah 15:1-3; Romans 5:6-11
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 5	Proverbs 16:18; Mark 6:14-29
Week 2	GOING DEEPER
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 6	Proverbs 26:27; Isaiah 52:1-2
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 7	Psalms 91:2-3; Revelation 20:11-15
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 8	Romans 8:10-11; Colossians 3:1-4
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 9:1-22	Nehemiah 8:10; Luke 1:46-55
<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 9:23-10:3	Leviticus 16:29-31; Ephesians 1:3-14

VASHTI ANGERS THE KING

1 These events took place during the days of Ahasuerus, who ruled 127 provinces from India to Cush. ² In those days King Ahasuerus reigned from his royal throne in the fortress at Susa. ³ He held a feast in the third year of his reign for all his officials and staff, the army of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the officials from the provinces. ⁴ He displayed the glorious wealth of his kingdom and the magnificent splendor of his greatness for a total of 180 days.

⁵ At the end of this time, the king held a week-long banquet in the garden courtyard of the royal palace for all the people, from the greatest to the least, who were present in the fortress of Susa. ⁶ White and violet linen hangings were fastened with fine white and purple linen cords to silver rods on marble^A columns. Gold and silver couches were arranged on a mosaic pavement of red feldspar,^B marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.

⁷ Drinks were served in an array of gold goblets, each with a different design. Royal wine flowed freely, according to the king's bounty. ⁸ The drinking was according to royal decree: "There are no restrictions." The king had ordered every wine steward in his household to serve whatever each person wanted.

⁹ Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women of King Ahasuerus's palace.

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when the king was feeling good from the wine, Ahasuerus commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas — the seven eunuchs who personally served him — ¹¹ to bring Queen Vashti before him with her royal crown. He wanted to show off her beauty to the people and the officials, because she was very beautiful. ¹² But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command that was delivered by his eunuchs. The king became furious and his anger burned within him.

THE KING'S DECREE

¹³ The king consulted the wise men who understood the times,^C for it was his normal procedure to confer with experts in law and justice. ¹⁴ The most trusted ones^D were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marse-na, and Memucan. They were the seven officials of Persia and Media who had personal access to the king and occupied the highest positions in the kingdom. ¹⁵ The king asked, "According to the law, what should be done with Queen Vashti, since she refused to obey King Ahasuerus's command that was delivered by the eunuchs?"

¹⁶ Memucan said in the presence of the king and his officials, "Queen Vash-ti has wronged not only the king, but all the officials and the peoples who are in every one of King Ahasuerus's provinces. ¹⁷ For the queen's action will become public knowledge to all the women and cause them to despise their husbands and say, 'King Ahasuerus ordered Queen Vashti brought be-fore him, but she did not come.' ¹⁸ Before this day is over, the noble women of Persia and Media who hear about the queen's act will say the same thing to all the king's officials, resulting in more contempt and fury.

¹⁹ "If it meets the king's approval, he should personally issue a royal de-cree. Let it be recorded in the laws of Persia and Media, so that it cannot be revoked: Vashti is not to enter King Ahasuerus's presence, and her royal po-sition is to be given to another woman who is more worthy than she. ²⁰ The

^A1:6 Or *alabaster* ^B1:6 Or *of porphyry* ^C1:13 Or *understood propitious times*
^D1:14 Lit *Those near him*

THE AUTHOR AND THE LEAD

ESTHER 1; 2 PETER 1:19

Everyone has a strong response to this passage.

There are two main camps: Vashti the brave and Vashti the bad.

Vashti the brave: Some smart people think Ahasuerus (also called Xerxes) was a drunken voyeur who wanted to show off his gorgeous queen to his party guests. She refused. I call this the “Vashti, you go girl” response.

Vashti the bad: On the other hand, some scholars argue Ahasuerus was calling his queen to perform a normal state function: show up at the party. Ahasuerus was planning to go to war with Greece, and he needed Vashti to show up to underscore to all the visiting dignitaries that he was powerful and magnificent enough to be the guy who could defeat the Greeks. It was embarrassing when she refused him. Ahasuerus and his wise men make an example of her to keep other women from undercutting their husbands as well.

Whether we interpret Vashti’s actions as brave or bad, this story is about God and His providential care for His chosen people in exile. Vashti is a side note in the book of Esther, but **God is the main character of every story.**

The easy response to this passage is to fall into the same trap as Ahasuerus and think the story is about him, or Vashti, or even Esther. Our temptation is to draw an easy moral here: if Vashti did

right, it’s “stand up for your dignity,” and if she was wrong, it’s “submit to authority.”

But let’s push past those easy responses and consider wisdom rather than moralism. It’s hard to decipher what the people in this story are up to, and Scripture doesn’t give us a final verdict on Vashti’s actions. What we do know is Queen Vashti had to come and go so Queen Esther could take her place. God would use Esther to save Israel from genocide in the Babylonian exile.

God doesn’t necessarily call us to understand everything that’s happening in Vashti’s story, or even in our own story! But He does call us to be faithful in the everyday things. He calls us to wisdom. When we look at Vashti, we aren’t going to find it. We have to look to the main character in every story: God.

Wisdom is a lamp shining in a dark place (2Pt 1:19). It is looking to God for our guidance rather than to the ways or expectations of man. Wisdom isn’t knowing all the answers—it’s knowing what’s important, and walking in light of that.

We don’t get all the details about the stories we read, and we don’t even get all the details about the stories we’re in. We do, however, get the bullet points from the author and star Himself: Do justice. Love mercy. Walk humbly (Mc 6:8).

Don’t be afraid of what you don’t know. God knows. Walk in His wisdom.

decree the king issues will be heard throughout his vast kingdom, so all women will honor their husbands, from the greatest to the least.”

²¹ The king and his counselors approved the proposal, and he followed Memucan’s advice. ²² He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to each province in its own script and to each ethnic group in its own language, that every man should be master of his own house and speak in the language of his own people.

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW QUEEN

2 Some time later, when King Ahasuerus’s rage had cooled down, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what was decided against her. ² The king’s personal attendants suggested, “Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. ³ Let the king appoint commissioners in each province of his kingdom, so that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem at the fortress of Susa. Put them under the supervision of Hegai, the king’s eunuch, keeper of the women, and give them the required beauty treatments. ⁴ Then the young woman who pleases the king will become queen instead of Vashti.” This suggestion pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

⁵ In the fortress of Susa, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite. ⁶ He had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the other captives when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took King Jeconiah of Judah into exile. ⁷ Mordecai was the legal guardian of his cousin^A Hadassah (that is, Esther), because she had no father or mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was extremely good-looking. When her father and mother died, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter.

⁸ When the king’s command and edict became public knowledge and when many young women were gathered at the fortress of Susa under Hegai’s supervision, Esther was taken to the palace, into the supervision of Hegai, keeper of the women. ⁹ The young woman pleased him and gained his favor so that he accelerated the process of the beauty treatments and the special diet that she received. He assigned seven hand-picked female servants to her from the palace and transferred her and her servants to the harem’s best quarters.

¹⁰ Esther did not reveal her ethnicity or her family background, because Mordecai had ordered her not to make them known. ¹¹ Every day Mordecai took a walk in front of the harem’s courtyard to learn how Esther was doing and to see what was happening to her.

¹² During the year before each young woman’s turn to go to King Ahasuerus, the harem regulation required her to receive beauty treatments with oil of myrrh for six months and then with perfumes and cosmetics for another six months. ¹³ When the young woman would go to the king, she was given whatever she requested to take with her from the harem to the palace. ¹⁴ She would go in the evening, and in the morning she would return to a second harem under the supervision of the king’s eunuch Shaashgaz, keeper of the concubines. She never went to the king again, unless he desired her and summoned her by name.

^A2:7 Lit *uncle’s daughter*

ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN

¹⁵ Esther was the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai who had adopted her as his own daughter. When her turn came to go to the king, she did not ask for anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch, keeper of the women, suggested. Esther gained favor in the eyes of everyone who saw her.

¹⁶ She was taken to King Ahasuerus in the palace in the tenth month, the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the other women. She won more favor and approval from him than did any of the other virgins. He placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. ¹⁸ The king held a great banquet for all his officials and staff. It was Esther's banquet. He freed his provinces from tax payments and gave gifts worthy of the king's bounty.

MORDECAI SAVES THE KING

¹⁹ When the virgins were gathered a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the King's Gate. ²⁰ (Esther had not revealed her family background or her ethnicity, as Mordecai had directed. She obeyed Mordecai's orders, as she always had while he raised her.)

²¹ During those days while Mordecai was sitting at the King's Gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the entrance, became infuriated and planned to assassinate^a King Ahasuerus. ²² When Mordecai learned of the plot, he reported it to Queen Esther, and she told the king on Mordecai's behalf. ²³ When the report was investigated and verified, both men were hanged on the gallows. This event was recorded in the Historical Record in the king's presence.

HAMAN'S PLAN TO KILL THE JEWS

3 After all this took place, King Ahasuerus honored Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite. He promoted him in rank and gave him a higher position than all the other officials. ² The entire royal staff at the King's Gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, because the king had commanded this to be done for him. But Mordecai would not bow down or pay homage. ³ The members of the royal staff at the King's Gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" ⁴ When they had warned him day after day and he still would not listen to them, they told Haman in order to see if Mordecai's actions would be tolerated, since he had told them he was a Jew.

⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai was not bowing down or paying him homage, he was filled with rage. ⁶ And when he learned of Mordecai's ethnic identity, it seemed repugnant to Haman to do away with^b Mordecai alone. He planned to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout Ahasuerus's kingdom.

⁷ In the first month, the month of Nisan, in King Ahasuerus's twelfth year, the Pur — that is, the lot — was cast before Haman for each day in each month, and it fell on the twelfth month, the month Adar. ⁸ Then Haman informed King Ahasuerus, "There is one ethnic group, scattered throughout the peoples in every province of your kingdom, keeping themselves separate. Their laws are different from everyone else's and they do not obey

^a2:21 Lit and they sought to stretch out a hand against ^b3:6 Lit to stretch out a hand against

TAKING PART IN GOD'S WORK

ESTHER 4; LUKE 19:37-40

Rachel is a scourge to the devil in Vienna.

Every time I saw her she was flushed with excitement over a recent chance to share the gospel. Any encounter on the subway, any phone call, and every relationship irresistibly impelled her to tell people the good news. Although she was a gifted linguist with a degree from Cambridge, she carried Bible tracts in her pockets and she wasn't afraid to use them.

No amount of poor or sad or weird was enough to keep Rachel from befriending strangers and reaching out to them with hope and love. She is inspiring and a little overwhelming.

One afternoon Rachel invited me to a street music event she was staging on Kärntner Straße. She is a classical violinist and had gathered other string musicians to play a concert and share the gospel on that ancient, black stone street.

Feeling both shy and peckish, I got a gelato and went antique shopping instead.

I missed an opportunity. God didn't need me to help share His gospel; His gospel will go forth whether I stand up and speak His name or not. In fact, if I can't muster a good word about the Lord, the very stones will cry out in my place (Lk 19:40).

God invites us to join His work, not for His sake, but for ours. God invited Esther to join Him in saving the Jewish nation. If Esther had refused to go to the king, God still would have saved His people, but she would have missed an opportunity. As Esther's cousin Mordecai said:

"If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father's family will be destroyed. Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this."

ESTHER 4:14

Our refusal to take part in God's work doesn't thwart God. It limits our privilege to take part in what He is doing. God can even use unrepentant sinners to achieve His good purposes. Consider Pharaoh, Caiaphas the high priest, and Pontius Pilate (Ex 9:12; Jn 18:14; 19:5-16).

God's providence is comprehensive, wise, and holy. His timing and calling are no mistake, and He has placed us, like Esther, here, now, and for such a time as this.

We, like Esther, can have courage, comfort, and peace. From a human perspective, our lives and circumstances can seem totally out of control and scary. But we can rest in God's providence, knowing that He is working.

Look for God's invitation to join Him in His work. Have courage, comfort, and peace—you can join Him! You can get a gelato later.

the king's laws. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. ⁹If the king approves, let an order be drawn up authorizing their destruction, and I will pay 375 tons of silver to ^athe officials for deposit in the royal treasury."

¹⁰The king removed his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jewish people. ¹¹Then the king told Haman, "The money and people are given to you to do with as you see fit."

¹²The royal scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and the order was written exactly as Haman commanded. It was intended for the royal satraps, the governors of each of the provinces, and the officials of each ethnic group and written for each province in its own script and to each ethnic group in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet ring. ¹³Letters were sent by couriers to each of the royal provinces telling the officials to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jewish people — young and old, women and children — and plunder their possessions on a single day, the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month. ^b

¹⁴A copy of the text, issued as law throughout every province, was distributed to all the peoples so that they might get ready for that day. ¹⁵The couriers left, spurred on by royal command, and the law was issued in the fortress of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, while the city of Susa was in confusion.

MORDECAI APPEALS TO ESTHER

4 When Mordecai learned all that had occurred, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, went into the middle of the city, and cried loudly and bitterly. ²He went only as far as the King's Gate, since the law prohibited anyone wearing sackcloth from entering the King's Gate. ³There was great mourning among the Jewish people in every province where the king's command and edict came. They fasted, wept, and lamented, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

⁴Esther's female servants and her eunuchs came and reported the news to her, and the queen was overcome with fear. She sent clothes for Mordecai to wear so that he would take off his sackcloth, but he did not accept them. ⁵Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who attended her, and dispatched him to Mordecai to learn what he was doing and why. ^c⁶So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square in front of the King's Gate. ⁷Mordecai told him everything that had happened as well as the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay the royal treasury for the slaughter of the Jews.

⁸Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa ordering their destruction, so that Hathach might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and command her to approach the king, implore his favor, and plead with him personally for her people. ⁹Hathach came and repeated Mordecai's response to Esther.

¹⁰Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to tell Mordecai, ¹¹"All the royal officials and the people of the royal provinces know that one law

applies to every man or woman who approaches the king in the inner courtyard and who has not been summoned — the death penalty — unless the king extends the gold scepter, allowing that person to live. I have not been summoned to appear before the king for the last ^athirty days." ¹²Esther's response was reported to Mordecai.

¹³Mordecai told the messenger to reply to Esther, "Don't think that you will escape the fate of all the Jews because you are in the king's palace. ¹⁴If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father's family will be destroyed. Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this."

¹⁵Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶"Go and assemble all the Jews who can be found in Susa and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my female servants will also fast in the same way. After that, I will go to the king even if it is against the law. If I perish, I perish." ¹⁷So Mordecai went and did everything Esther had commanded him.

ESTHER APPROACHES THE KING

5 On the third day, Esther dressed in her royal clothing and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace facing it. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the royal courtroom, ^bfacing its entrance. ²As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, she gained favor in his eyes. The king extended the gold scepter in his hand toward Esther, and she approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

³"What is it, Queen Esther?" the king asked her. "Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be given to you."

⁴"If it pleases the king," Esther replied, "may the king and Haman come today to the banquet I have prepared for them."

⁵The king said, "Hurry, and get Haman so we can do as Esther has requested." So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

⁶While drinking the ^cwine, the king asked Esther, "Whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be done."

⁷Esther answered, "This is my petition and my request: ⁸If I have found favor in the eyes of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and perform my request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet I will prepare for them. Tomorrow I will do what the king has asked."

⁹That day Haman left full of joy and in good spirits. ^dBut when Haman saw Mordecai at the King's Gate, and Mordecai didn't rise or tremble in fear at his presence, Haman was filled with rage toward Mordecai. ¹⁰Yet Haman controlled himself and went home. He sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh to join him. ¹¹Then Haman described for them his glorious wealth and his many sons. He told them all how the king had honored him and promoted him in rank over the other officials and the royal staff. ¹²"What's more," Haman added, "Queen Esther invited no one but me to join the king at the banquet she had prepared. I am invited again tomorrow to join her with the king. ¹³Still, none of this satisfies me since I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate all the time."

^a3:9 Lit will weigh 10,000 silver talents on the hands of ^b3:13 LXX adds the text of Ahasuerus's letter here. ^c4:5 Lit what is this and why is this

^a4:11 Lit king these ^b5:1 Lit house ^c5:6 Lit During the banquet of ^d5:9 Lit left rejoicing and good of heart

¹⁴His wife Zeresh and all his friends told him, “Have them build a gallows seventy-five feet^a tall. Ask the king in the morning to hang Mordecai on it. Then go to the banquet with the king and enjoy yourself.” The advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows constructed.

MORDECAI HONORED BY THE KING

6 That night sleep escaped the king, so he ordered the book recording daily events to be brought and read to the king. ²They found the written report of how Mordecai had informed on Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs who guarded the entrance, when they planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. ³The king inquired, “What honor and special recognition have been given to Mordecai for this act?”

The king’s personal attendants replied, “Nothing has been done for him.”

⁴The king asked, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman was just entering the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had prepared for him.

⁵The king’s attendants answered him, “Haman is there, standing in the court.”

“Have him enter,” the king ordered. ⁶Haman entered, and the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king wants to honor?”

Haman thought to himself, “Who is it the king would want to honor more than me?” ⁷Haman told the king, “For the man the king wants to honor: ⁸Have them bring a royal garment that the king himself has worn and a horse the king himself has ridden, which has a royal crown on its head. ⁹Put the garment and the horse under the charge of one of the king’s most noble officials. Have them clothe the man the king wants to honor, parade him on the horse through the city square, and proclaim before him, “This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor.””

¹⁰The king told Haman, “Hurry, and do just as you proposed. Take a garment and a horse for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the King’s Gate. Do not leave out anything you have suggested.”

¹¹So Haman took the garment and the horse. He clothed Mordecai and paraded him through the city square, crying out before him, “This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor.”

¹²Then Mordecai returned to the King’s Gate, but Haman hurried off for home, mournful and with his head covered. ¹³Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “Since Mordecai is Jewish, and you have begun to fall before him, you won’t overcome him, because your downfall is certain.” ¹⁴While they were still speaking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and rushed Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared.

HAMAN IS EXECUTED

7 The king and Haman came to feast^b with Esther the queen. ²Once again, on the second day while drinking wine, the king asked Esther, “Queen Esther, whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you seek, even to half the kingdom, will be done.”

³Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor in your eyes, Your Majesty, and if the king is pleased, spare my life; this is my request. And spare my

^a5:14 Lit 50 cubits ^b7:1 Lit drink

THE GREATEST REVERSAL

ESTHER 7; PSALM 37:1-15; ROMANS 5:15-17

Nighttime was hard for me. I was in the third trimester of pregnancy, and every night I dreaded the heartburn and wakefulness.

When you’re awake at night, you start thinking. Everyone else is sleeping, so you’re definitely mad at all those people; and you’re really tired, so your emotional state isn’t great. I start thinking about all the loose ends in my life, and I worry that I won’t manage to tie them up. Sleepless nights are a real existential crisis for me.

Ahasuerus couldn’t sleep either.

I love that he went to the history books when he was restless. There is wisdom in looking back to our history to make sense of the present muddle. In the history books he read about good ol’ cousin Mordecai, and how he saved the king’s life. Ahasuerus had forgotten. (It seems like an important thing to have forgotten!) But when he remembered the truth, everything started to reverse and the unexpected happened.

God’s hand of providence was moving to set things right, to tie up the loose ends before the story even began. We can see how it’s all working out by looking at the reversals:

Vashti refuses to come when she is called, but then Esther shows up when she is not called.

The honor of the king goes to Mordecai instead of Haman.

Haman expects to be honored at a feast, but he is condemned instead.

The gallows intended for Mordecai are used for Haman.

All these reversals point us to the greatest reversal of all: Christ came to undo the fall. He took Adam’s disaster—our disaster—and in a most unexpected way, He turned death on its head and gave us life (Rm 5:17).

Isn’t this what the book of Esther is about? Like the rest of the Bible, the central character of the story is Christ. Here, in a book where the name of God is not even mentioned, God still reveals Himself. And are we surprised? This is, after all, a book about a kingdom troubled by deceit and the threat of death. It is remarkably like the story of all mankind. We should expect at such moments to see reflections of Christ’s promised work.

Do you find yourself up late at night like Ahasuerus, wondering how it will all work out in the end? Look back over the history of God’s providence: we can see Christ weaving all those threads of history according to His plan.

We don’t always get to see the loose ends wrapped into handsome knots, but that doesn’t mean things aren’t coming together. It means we are finite and we can’t see the whole picture. God doesn’t leave loose ends.

“Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for him.”

PSALM 37:7

people; this is my desire. ⁴For my people and I have been sold to destruction, death, and extermination. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept silent. Indeed, the trouble wouldn't be worth burdening the king."

⁵King Ahasuerus spoke up and asked Queen Esther, "Who is this, and where is the one who would devise such a scheme?"^a

⁶Esther answered, "The adversary and enemy is this evil Haman."

Haman stood terrified before the king and queen. ⁷The king arose in anger and went from where they were drinking wine to the palace garden. ⁸Haman remained to beg Queen Esther for his life because he realized the king was planning something terrible for him. ⁹Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, ^cHaman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Would he actually violate the queen while I am in the house?" As soon as the statement left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

⁹Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said: "There is a gallows seventy-five feet^d tall at Haman's house that he made for Mordecai, who gave the report that saved^e the king."

The king said, "Hang him on it."

¹⁰They hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's anger subsided.

ESTHER INTERVENES FOR THE JEWS

8 That same day King Ahasuerus awarded Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Mordecai entered the king's presence because Esther had revealed her relationship to Mordecai. ²The king removed his signet ring he had recovered from Haman and gave it to Mordecai, and Esther put him in charge of Haman's estate.

³Then Esther addressed the king again. She fell at his feet, wept, and begged him to revoke the evil of Haman the Agagite and his plot he had devised against the Jews. ⁴The king extended the gold scepter toward Esther, so she got up and stood before the king.

⁵She said, "If it pleases the king and I have found favor before him, if the matter seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let a royal edict be written. Let it revoke the documents the scheming Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. ⁶For how could I bear to see the disaster that would come on my people? How could I bear to see the destruction of my relatives?"

⁷King Ahasuerus said to Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he was hanged on the gallows because he attacked^f the Jews. ⁸Write in the king's name whatever pleases you concerning the Jews, and seal it with the royal signet ring. A document written in the king's name and sealed with the royal signet ring cannot be revoked."

⁹On the twenty-third day of the third month — that is, the month Sivan — the royal scribes were summoned. Everything was written exactly as Mordecai commanded for the Jews, to the satraps, the governors, and the

officials of the 127 provinces from India to Cush. The edict was written for each province in its own script, for each ethnic group in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

¹⁰Mordecai wrote in King Ahasuerus's name and sealed the edicts with the royal signet ring. He sent the documents by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses bred in the royal stables.

¹¹The king's edict gave the Jews in each and every city the right to assemble and defend themselves, to destroy, kill, and annihilate every ethnic and provincial army hostile to them, including women and children, and to take their possessions as spoils of war. ¹²This would take place on a single day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar.

¹³A copy of the text, issued as law throughout every province, was distributed to all the peoples so the Jews could be ready to avenge themselves against their enemies on that day. ¹⁴The couriers rode out in haste on their royal horses at the king's urgent command. The law was also issued in the fortress of Susa.

¹⁵Mordecai went from the king's presence clothed in royal purple and white, with a great gold crown and a purple robe of fine linen. The city of Susa shouted and rejoiced, ¹⁶and the Jews celebrated^a with gladness, joy, and honor. ¹⁷In every province and every city, wherever the king's command and his law reached, joy and rejoicing took place among the Jews. There was a celebration and a holiday. ⁸And many of the ethnic groups of the land professed themselves to be Jews because fear of the Jews had overcome them.

VICTORIES OF THE JEWS

9 The king's command and law went into effect on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. On the day when the Jews' enemies had hoped to overpower them, just the opposite happened. The Jews overpowered those who hated them. ²In each of King Ahasuerus's provinces the Jews assembled in their cities to attack those who intended to harm them. ^cNot a single person could withstand them; fear of them fell on every nationality.

³All the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the royal civil administrators^d aided the Jews because they feared Mordecai. ⁴For Mordecai exercised great power in the palace, and his fame spread throughout the provinces as he became more and more powerful.

⁵The Jews put all their enemies to the sword, killing and destroying them. They did what they pleased to those who hated them. ⁶In the fortress of Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, ⁷including Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ⁹Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. ¹⁰They killed these ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. However, they did not seize^e any plunder.

¹¹On that day the number of people killed in the fortress of Susa was reported to the king. ¹²The king said to Queen Esther, "In the fortress of Susa the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men, including Haman's

^a8:5 Lit who would fill his heart to do this ^b7:7 Lit the garden of the house, also in v. 8 ^c7:8 Or the house of wine ^d7:9 Lit 50 cubits ^e7:9 Lit who spoke good for ^f8:7 Lit stretched out his hand against

^a8:16 Lit had light ^b8:17 Lit good day ^c9:2 Lit cities to send out a hand against the seekers of their evil ^d9:3 Lit and those who do the king's work; Est 3:9 ^e9:10 Lit not put their hands on, also in vv. 15, 16

ten sons. What have they done in the rest of the royal provinces? Whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you seek will also be done.”

¹³ Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, may the Jews who are in Susa also have tomorrow to carry out today’s law, and may the bodies of Haman’s ten sons be hung on the gallows.” ¹⁴ The king gave the orders for this to be done, so a law was announced in Susa, and they hung the bodies of Haman’s ten sons. ¹⁵ The Jews in Susa assembled again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not seize any plunder.

¹⁶ The rest of the Jews in the royal provinces assembled, defended themselves, and gained relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand^A of those who hated them, but they did not seize any plunder. ¹⁷ They fought on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar and rested on the fourteenth, and it became a day of feasting and rejoicing.

¹⁸ But the Jews in Susa had assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth days of the month. They rested on the fifteenth day of the month, and it became a day of feasting and rejoicing. ¹⁹ This explains why the rural Jews who live in villages observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a time of rejoicing and feasting. It is a holiday when they send gifts to one another.

²⁰ Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews in all of King Ahasuerus’s provinces, both near and far. ²¹ He ordered them to celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar every year ²² because during those days the Jews gained relief from their enemies. That was the month when their sorrow was turned into rejoicing and their mourning into a holiday. They were to be days of feasting, rejoicing, and of sending gifts to one another and to the poor.

²³ So the Jews agreed to continue the practice they had begun, as Mordecai had written them to do. ²⁴ For Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them. He cast the Pur — that is, the lot — to crush and destroy them. ²⁵ But when the matter was brought before the king, he commanded by letter that the evil plan Haman had devised against the Jews return on his own head and that he should be hanged with his sons on the gallows. ²⁶ For this reason these days are called Purim, from the word Pur. Because of all the instructions in this letter as well as what they had witnessed and what had happened to them, ²⁷ the Jews bound themselves, their descendants, and all who joined with them to a commitment that they would not fail to celebrate these two days each and every year according to the written instructions and according to the time appointed. ²⁸ These days are remembered and celebrated by every generation, family, province, and city, so that these days of Purim will not lose their significance in Jewish life^B and their memory will not fade from their descendants.

²⁹ Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote this second letter with full authority to confirm the letter about Purim. ³⁰ He sent letters with assurances of peace and security^C to all the Jews who were in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, ³¹ in order to confirm these days of Purim at their proper time just as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the

^A9:16 Some LXX mss read 10,107; other LXX mss read 15,000 ^B9:28 LXX reads will be celebrated into all times ^C9:30 Or of peace and faithfulness

REMEMBERING OUR RESCUE

ESTHER 9:23–10:3; PSALM 78:1-8

When I helped my parents move into their home a few years ago, I ran across a box of my mom’s prayer journals. I spread them out on the floor, not to read them but to take in the sheer number of them. They were a legacy of faith, Ebenezer’s chronicling God’s faithfulness through time—days and years and seasons of prayer and praise to God from His precious daughter (1 Sm 7:12). I snuck a picture so I could remember.

As the book of Esther draws to a close, I’m struck by the care and determination with which Mordecai preserves the story—their story. The days of Purim would be observed from that time forward, on the same days each year, for all generations. The Lord delivered His people from their enemies; He turned their sorrow into gladness and their mourning into a holiday. And they vow, joyfully yet solemnly, to remember.

What a vivid picture of the restoration we experience in the gospel of Jesus. We were weeping and sorrowful, but now we’re throwing a party! Is this not the mix of reverence and joy with which we should view our salvation? We have been rescued from our enemy, even from ourselves. We have been preserved and restored in the midst of threats to our very souls.

In these last chapters of Esther, we learn that remembering involves more than whimsical, fleeting thoughts. **Remembering is a spiritual discipline that reorients our hearts and minds to the gospel of Jesus.**

Memories are powerful. Regularly and intentionally recalling the goodness of our God is an act of faithfulness that restores the fullness and joy of our salvation. They connect us to the legacy of God’s people. It is the legacy of Mordecai and Esther, Abraham and Mary and Paul—a legacy that, by God’s grace, will stretch far beyond us.

Remembering the past also gives us a new lens through which to view the future. How have you seen God’s faithfulness in your life in the past week? The last year? What about in the lives of the generations that came before you? Like the prayers and praise that fill the pages of my mom’s journals, remembering God’s faithfulness in the past gives us courage to believe in His faithfulness for the future.

Our sovereign God is active in our lives today like He was active in the story of Queen Esther. Let’s regularly remember and rejoice in God’s rescue of His people, for ourselves and those who come after us, “so that they might put their confidence in God” (Ps 78:7).

“We will not hide them from their children, but will tell a future generation the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed.”

PSALM 78:4

queen had established them and just as they had committed themselves and their descendants to the practices of fasting and lamentation.³² So Esther's command confirmed these customs of Purim, which were then written into the record.

MORDECAI'S FAME

10 King Ahasuerus imposed a tax throughout the land even to the farthest shores.^{^ 2} All of his powerful and magnificent accomplishments and the detailed account of Mordecai's great rank with which the king had honored him, have they not been written in the Book of the Historical Events of the Kings of Media and Persia?³ Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus. He was famous among the Jews and highly esteemed by many of his relatives. He continued to pursue prosperity for his people and to speak for the well-being of all his descendants.

^{^10:1} Or *imposed forced labor on the land and the coasts of the sea*