



## First Baptist Church At The Villages

INSPIRING FAITHFULNESS • ESTHER • ESTHER 2-4 •

FOR USE BY GROUPS 08/19 - 08/24/2019

### Main Point

God places us in the right place at the right time for the right purpose, even when it makes us uncomfortable.

### Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Describe the most physically comfortable situation for you. Are you at the beach? In the mountains? Watching television? Exercising?**

**Now describe what might be the most physically uncomfortable situation for you. What would the circumstances have to be for you to intentionally choose to be in that situation?**

**Is there ever any value in placing yourself in an uncomfortable situation? What kind of value might that be (physical, spiritual, emotional, etc.)?**

**Do you think God intentionally places us in uncomfortable situations? Does that idea contradict the truth that God loves us? Why or why not?**

Much of our lives is spent making ourselves feel comfortable. We try and assure our comfort in our homes, with our bank accounts, and in our relationships. With comfort comes a feeling of ease and tranquility. But being uncomfortable is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, God often places us in the right place at the right time for the right purpose, even when it makes us uncomfortable. He does so both for our good and for the sake of His kingdom.

### Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Esther 2:5-7; 2:15-17; and 3:5-7.

**What uncomfortable situation did Esther find herself in?**

**What were some of Esther's options in responding to this situation?**

**Can you generalize those options? What are some of the potential ways we might respond when we find ourselves in a difficult situation?**

**What about that response changes when we believe in the providence of God?**

Esther was a true rags to riches story. She had gone from the orphan girl to the queen, and now all she had gained hung in the balance. Mordecai was determined to motivate his adopted daughter not to shrink back from the discomfort, but instead, to see her position as an opportunity for good.

| Ask a volunteer to read Esther 4:10-16.

**What danger did Esther face in acting on behalf of her people?**

**Look closely at Mordecai's argument. What must he have believed about God in order to say the things he did?**

**How is what we believe about God revealed in the way we react to uncomfortable situations?**

Mordecai's words show that he believed in a God who was very intentional. He places people exactly where He wants them to be, even if that lands a person in a tough or even dangerous situation.

**Read James 1:2-4. How might putting us in situations like this be for our benefit?**

**Have you ever experienced something like this? How has God used an uncomfortable situation to help you grow in spiritual maturity?**

Uncomfortable situations are great opportunities for God to change us. He uses these circumstances to develop perseverance, patience, faith, and other characteristics in us. But God doesn't only put us in such situations to change us. He also places us there to use us for the sake of His kingdom.

**Can you think of an example of a time when God used you in an uncomfortable situation?**

**What happened as a result?**

God is in the business of putting us in uncomfortable situations. It might be that we are in such a situation to mold our character; it might also be that we are there, as Esther was, to be used by God in a great way. In order to see the good in these uncomfortable situations, we must change our perspectives. We must trust that there is divine purpose in where we are at any given moment, because perhaps we are there "for such a time as this."

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What might your frustration at a current life situation reveal about what you believe about God?**

**What are some practical ways you can practice an attitude of thankfulness and contentment in the midst of pain or discomfort?**

**What is one way you think God might be using a difficult circumstance to mold your character?**

**What is one opportunity you can pray about for you to extend God's kingdom in your circumstances?**

## Pray

Pray to close your group, thanking God for His sovereignty. Ask Him for the vision to see our present circumstances as opportunities to be seized rather than obstacles to be avoided. Thank Him for His abiding presence with you in Jesus Christ, no matter what happens.

## Commentary

### | Esther Background

The events described in the Book of Esther cover a 10-year period during the reign of Xerxes I. He is known by his Hebrew name, Ahasuerus, in this book. Under Ahasuerus' father, Darius I, the Persian Empire reached its zenith. However, Darius's invasion of Greece was stopped at Marathon in 490 B.C. A decade later, Ahasuerus was determined to avenge his father's defeat and conquer the Greeks. He assembled the largest military force the world had ever seen.

Ahasuerus gave a banquet for his government officials. It lasted 180 days! During the last week people in the capital city, Susa, were invited to a special banquet. Queen Vashti hosted the women at a different location in the palace. Ahasuerus became drunk and summoned Vashti to appear before him and his guests wearing only her royal crown.

Vashti refused, so Ahasuerus issued a royal decree announcing she would be replaced as queen. Before implementing the decree, however, the king apparently decided military matters had priority and sailed for Greece. Ahasuerus' army, as expected, wiped out a small Greek force at Thermopylae and marched south into Greece. Athens, the heart of Greek culture, then fell to this Persian steamroller.

The citizens of Athens fled to the island of Salamis. A small fleet of 380 Greek ships stood between the refugees on Salamis and the 1,200 ships of Ahasuerus' navy. Nevertheless, the Greeks won one of history's

most decisive victories. Ahasuerus watched as his navy was defeated. His hope of conquest was shattered. Within the year, his army suffered a reverse too, and he was forced to withdraw from Europe.

Ahasuerus retired to Susa and sought comfort in his harem. While brooding over his defeat, he remembered the incident with Vashti several years earlier. To replace her, Ahasuerus conducted a kingdom- wide search for a new queen. He chose a Jewish girl named Esther.

With the support and encouragement of her trustworthy cousin, Mordecai, Esther gathered a courage she didn't know she had and risked her life. In the process of saving her people, she exposed and defeated a tyrant. To the delight of the Jews, their lives were spared; and a new season that celebrated God's greatness, Purim, was originated.