



MEANT TO BE

THE STORY OF ESTHER

A
RbC Small Group
Guide

Meant To Be — The Journey of Esther

The vision of Rockbridge Church is “real people experiencing real life in the real world.” Esther is a story that helps us learn to live out our vision as God meant us to be. We should have a fun and fulfilling journey through Esther. Here’s some useful background information . . .

- * Long before Esther’s time, the land of Judah and Israel had been conquered, and the people (later called Jews) had been dispersed throughout the Near East by the Assyrians and Babylonians. Later the Persians absorbed nearly all these lands and people into their empire, which reached its greatest extent during the time of Esther.
- * The story of Esther takes place between the events recorded in Ezra 6 and 7. Many Jews had returned to Palestine from their exile, to reclaim the land, rebuild the temple, and restore the sacrificial system.
- * The Persian monarch in the story is Xerxes (485-465 BC), also known as Ahasuerus.
- * The events in the book of Esther extend over a decade, and take place mainly in the royal city of Susa. Susa is located in present day Khuzestan Province, Iran.
- * God’s hand of providence and protection on behalf of His people is evident throughout the book, even though His name does not appear once!
- * Christ in Esther — Esther, like Christ, puts herself in the place of death for her people. Esther also portrays Christ’s work of an Advocate on our behalf.

RbC Small Groups Meant to Be — The Journey of Esther

Our small group study and discussion guide will follow a weekly format designed around 4 headings: the Text, the Theme, the Teaching, and the Take-away.

The Text — each week you will read sections of Esther. Here are some ways to guide you through each section:



Observation — What is the story line? Who are the main characters? What’s going on?



Instruction — What do you learn from the text? What does it say, and what does it mean?



Questions — What questions does the text raise in your mind? What answers is God giving you?



Tension — Some things are difficult to understand. They don’t make sense to us (Isaiah 55:8-9). Are there tensions in the text?



Digging Deeper — Think about other Scriptures, ones that shed light on, and expand your understanding of the text.



Worldview — Are there things in the text that shape your foundational beliefs about God, ultimate reality, your identity and purpose and destiny?

Distinctly Shaped Who You Are Meant (by God) To Be

1. **The Text** — Read Esther 1 and 2



2. **The Theme** — Distinctly Shaped: Who You Are Meant To Be

Each one of us is distinctly created in the image of God. We are beautifully and wonderfully made. But sin mars God's image, and changes us into someone God never meant us to be. Through the cross, Jesus redeems us, and begins the lifelong process of restoring us to be who God meant us to be.

- a) What do you depend on (apart from God) for your image and identity?
- b) See Ephesians 1:3-14; Ephesians 2:1-10 and Colossians 1:21-23. What has God done so that you can be who He meant you to be? Who and what does God say you are?
- c) In what ways, through and in Jesus, are you learning to experience who you are as God meant you to be?

3. **The Teaching** — Sunday @ RbC

What did you hear in Sunday's message that was challenging, helpful and compelling to you?

4. **The Take Away** — So What?

What 2-3 things did God give you in this section that will shape and change your life in a specific and fulfilling way?

Uniquely Positioned Where You Are Meant (by God) To Be

1. **The Text** — Read Esther 3:1-4:14



2. **The Theme** — Uniquely Positioned: Where You Are Meant To Be

You don't have to be a queen in a palace to have a place of influence. Each one of us is uniquely positioned by God in the time and place we find ourselves in. We are where we are on purpose. We are meant to serve God's purposes and to make a difference where we are.

- a) In what ways does knowing you are uniquely positioned by God change how you view your place and circumstances?
- b) Describe your circle of influence.
- c) In what ways is your place in the middle of God's harvest unique only to you?
- d) What communities has God placed you in? (a team, a campus, a neighborhood, a church, a factory, etc.)
- e) In what ways will you let God repurpose your place to serve His purposes?

3. **The Teaching** — Sunday @ RbC

What did you hear in Sunday's message that was challenging, helpful and compelling to you?

4. **The Take Away** — So What?

What 2-3 things did God give you in this section that will shape and change your life in a specific and fulfilling way?

Collectively Compelled How You Are Meant (by God) To Be

1. **The Text** — Read Esther 4:15-5:14



2. **The Theme** — Collectively Compelled: How You Are Meant To Be

Consider Esther's commitment to God's (and her) people. Like Esther, you are integrally and distinctly a member of God's people, the church. You are a unique member of Christ's body. You are a distinct person in God's family. You are part of something bigger than yourself — something eternal!

- a) How is Esther's commitment to her people inspiring to you?
- b) In what ways is RbC helping you get God's vision for the local church?
- c) In what ways are you committing yourself to, and participating in, the church?
- d) Read Ephesians 2:11-22. God meant you to be part of something really big and really compelling — His church! Trust God to know what He is doing, and get involved in the vision and mission of RbC. It's how you are meant to be!!

3. **The Teaching** — Sunday @ RbC

What did you hear in Sunday's message that was challenging, helpful and compelling to you?

4. **The Take Away** — So What?

What 2-3 things did God give you in this section that will shape and change your life in a specific and fulfilling way?

Divinely Timed When You Are Meant (by God) To Be

1. **The Text** — Read Esther 6



2. **The Theme** — Divinely Timed: When You Are Meant To Be

Wow! God's timing is amazing! God's timing often takes us by surprise! And God's timing is good and acceptable and perfect! The story of Esther should teach you this: that you are perfectly timed in God's surprising sovereignty. Yes you! Part of embracing the vision of "real people experiencing real life in the real world" is embracing the "now" and your place in it. You live *when* you were meant (by God) to be.

- a) How have you seen divine, surprising timing at work in the story of Esther?
- b) Read 1 Chronicles 12:32? How does it describe people who embraced the time they were in?
- c) Whose time do you tend to live in?
- d) You are divinely timed — perfectly timed in God's surprising sovereignty. In what ways does that change how you see and live your life?

3. **The Teaching** — Sunday @ RbC

What did you hear in Sunday's message that was challenging, helpful and compelling to you?

4. **The Take Away** — So What?

What 2-3 things did God give you in this section that will shape and change your life in a specific and fulfilling way?

Ordinarily Called

Why You Are Meant (by God) To Be

1. The Text — Read Esther 7



2. The Theme — Ordinarily Called: Why You Are Meant To Be -

Esther seems to have a special calling from God on her life. But not really. Before all this happens, Esther's whole journey we read about in the book of Esther, God had His profound but ordinary call on her life. Her call is the same as ours. The call is by God, and to God and for God. It is to everyone, in everything, all the time. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as ministry, or motherhood, or sports or education or law).

By God, to God and for God! Everyone, everywhere and in everything! The same call to us all. Calling is the truth that God calls us to Himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a profound passion and devotion and direction. We are ordinarily called — the same calling. When lived out, His ordinary call makes for an extraordinary life!

Our identity and gifts and destiny do not lie primarily in our parents' wishes, our boss's plans, our peer group's pressures, our generation's prospects, or our society's demands. God's calling keeps insisting that we are entirely His, at all costs, and forever His so that secondary things remain so, and first things are always first.

- a) Calling begins with the gospel. How did the gospel come to you, and how did you receive it?
- b) What does it mean to you that you are called by God, and to God, and for God?
- c) The calling of God is to everyone, everywhere, in everything. In what ways does this profoundly integrate your entire life, and engage your heart and mind and emotions and actions, all your abilities and resources, from this moment, to the last step you take and the last breath you breathe?

3. The Teaching — Sunday @ RbC

What did you hear in Sunday's message that was challenging, helpful and compelling to you?

4. The Take Away — So What?

What 2-3 things did God give you in this section that will shape and change your life in a specific and fulfilling way?

Authentically Shared Because You Are Meant (by God) To Be in Christ

1. **The Text** — Read Esther 8-10



2. **The Theme** — Authentically Shared: You are a “meant to be” miracle story of God’s redemption in real life.

Who God says you are is the most important thing you can know about yourself. When we know who we are in Christ, who God meant us to be, we are satisfied and God is glorified.

The book of Esther ends with happiness and joy, gladness and honor. Our lives are meant to be filled with the same characteristics. And we are happy and satisfied when we listen to God tell us what He meant us to be.

Review the themes of Esther — Who you are meant to be, where you are meant to be, how you are meant to be, when you are meant to be, and why you are meant to be.

In what ways has the study of Esther, and in particular the themes of Esther, helped you live as a “meant-by-God-to-be” real person experiencing real life in the real world?

3. **The Teaching** — Sunday @ RbC

What did you hear in Sunday’s message that was challenging, helpful and compelling to you?

4. **The Take Away** — So What?

What 2-3 things did God give you in this section that will shape and change your life in a specific and fulfilling way?