

Ruth

Esther

Lesson 1	Introduction to Ruth	January 3rd Sunday	Grantham
Lesson 2	Ruth 1	January 6th Wednesday	Grantham
Lesson 3	Ruth 2	January 10th Sunday	Reynolds
Lesson 4	Ruth 3	January 13th Wednesday	Reynolds
Lesson 5	Ruth 4	January 17th Sunday	Reynolds
Lesson 6	Lessons in Ruth	January 20th Wednesday	Grantham
Lesson 7	Introduction to Esther	January 24th Sunday	Grantham
Lesson 8	Esther 1-2	January 27th Wednesday	Grantham
Lesson 9	Esther 3-4	January 31st Sunday	Grantham
Lesson 10	Esther 5	February 3rd Wednesday	Reynolds
Lesson 11	Esther 6-7	February 7th Sunday	Reynolds
Lesson 12	Esther 8-10	February 10th Wednesday	Reynolds
Lesson 13	Lessons in Esther	February 14th Sunday	Grantham

Lesson 1

Introduction to Ruth

Themes

Kindness	Redemption
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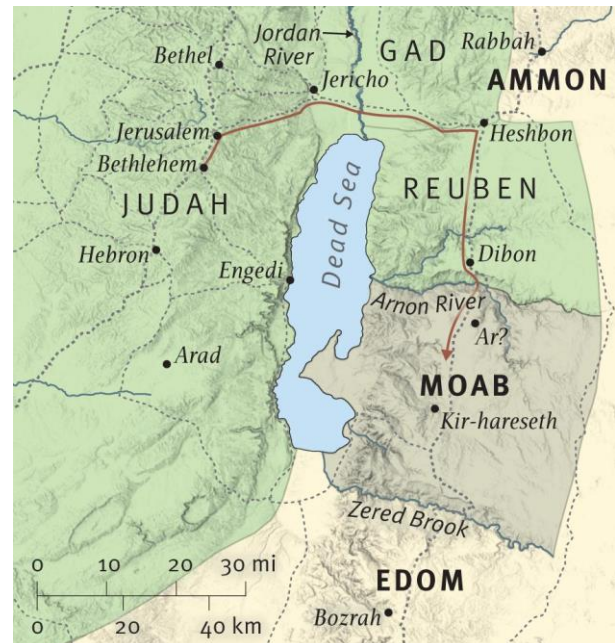
Goals

1. Increase the kindness we show others, especially in difficult circumstances
2. Learn to emphasize the lasting effects of God's Word

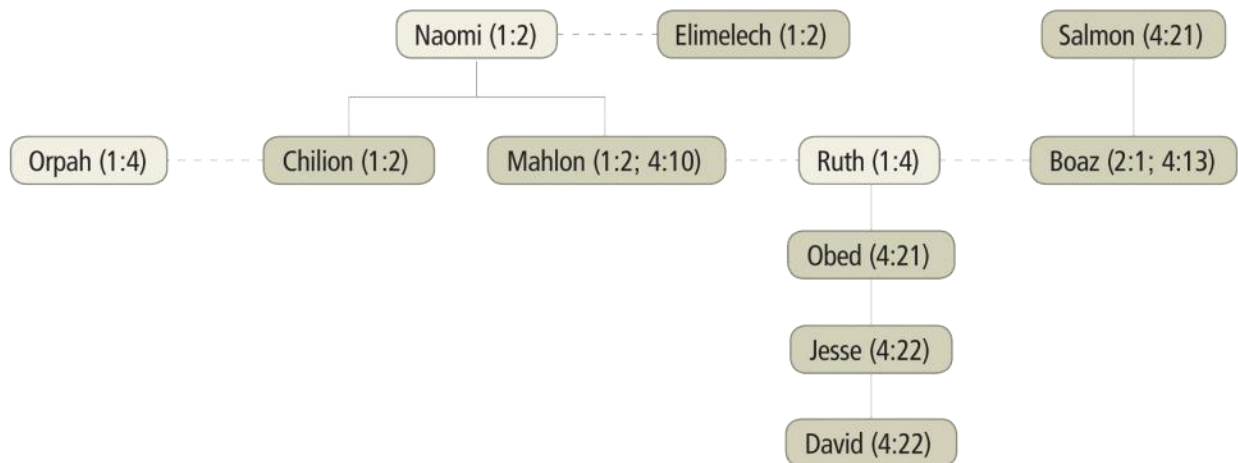
Objectives for lesson 1

- ' Establish historical setting of Ruth
- ' Introduce principle characters and themes
- ' Discuss some possible purposes for the book (why was it written?)

In the period of the judges, Elimelech, Naomi, and their sons leave Bethlehem because of a famine to sojourn in Moab (see map). Naomi's husband, Elimelech, dies there. Mahlon and Chilion, the sons, marry Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. Ten years later the sons die too, leaving no children. Naomi is bereft of family (1:1-5). Learning that the famine in Israel is over, she decides to return to Bethlehem; Orpah stays behind, but Ruth accompanies Naomi (1:6-22). At harvest time, Ruth goes to glean in a field that happens to belong to Elimelech's relative, Boaz (2:1-23). Naomi knows he is an eligible kinsman-redeemer. Following Naomi's daring plan, in a midnight encounter at the threshing floor Ruth boldly asks him, as a redeemer, to marry her (3:1-18). After a closer kinsman refuses to take Ruth, Boaz redeems all the property of the deceased and marries Ruth (4:1-12). They have a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of King David (4:13-22).



Ruth's words in the book (as compared with Naomi's or Boaz's) are surprisingly few; the story, however, hangs on them. Ruth expresses her lifelong commitment to Naomi, "May the Lord do so to me ... if anything but death parts me from you" (1:17), which takes her from Moab to Judah. She resolves to provide for Naomi ("Let me go ... and glean," 2:2), which brings her from Bethlehem to Boaz's field. She invites Boaz to "spread your wings over your servant" (3:9), which leads her from childless widowhood to marriage and motherhood (4:13).



This book highlights how God's people experience his sovereignty, wisdom, and covenant kindness. These often come disguised in hard circumstances and are mediated through the kindness of others.

In the lessons to come we'll look at this book through the lens of our themes of kindness and redemption, as well as the overarching idea that God's Word provides a path in this world that only He could design.

Lesson 2

Ruth, Chapter 1

Themes

Kindness	Redemption
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Goals

1. Increase the kindness we show others, especially in difficult circumstances
2. Learn to emphasize the lasting effects of God's Word

Objectives for lesson 2

- ' Compare and contrast the decisions of Orpah and Ruth
- ' List three lessons derived from Ruth's oath to Naomi and God
- ' List multiple similarities between Naomi's position in God's plan and our own

Naomi Widowed

(1-5)

Do you think the deaths of Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion were a judgment on their leaving the land of Judah?

Were Mahlon and Chilion's marriages to Orpah and Ruth (Moabites) forbidden by the Law of Moses?

Ruth's Loyalty to Naomi

(6-18)

Was Orpah wrong to return to Moab?

What lessons do we learn from Ruth's great oath given in verses 16 - 18?

Naomi and Ruth Return

(19-22)

In Class

Can you identify with Naomi's feelings illustrated in these verses? Why is it difficult to trust in God during our times of suffering?

Naomi's thoughts of what she believed God had done to her were incorrect; but she knew of none other to whom she could fasten the responsibility. She had not yet learned the great lesson that Christ brought to mankind at a later time; that the saints of God frequently suffer, but are sustained by the knowledge that if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.

In the events of Ruth, God was in the process of founding the family among the children of Israel who would eventually bring about the birth of the Holy Messiah to the redemption of all who would receive him. This family came from a blending of both Jews and Gentiles, Ruth the Moabitess appearing here as one of its mothers, and her husband Boaz also having come of the Gentile Rahab, the harlot of Jericho. God's plan of redemption was being seen to in the events of Ruth.

Lesson 3

Ruth, Chapter 2

Themes

Kindness	Redemption
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Goals

1. Increase the kindness we show others, especially in difficult circumstances
2. Learn to emphasize the lasting effects of God's Word

Objectives for lesson 3

- ' Identify character traits of Ruth
- ' Identify character traits of Boaz
- ' List at least three lessons learned from the laws of redemption

Ruth Meets Boaz

(1-23)

Ruth asks _____(2) and _____(6-7) for permission to glean in the fields. Why do you think she asked for permission from each of them?

That she even *knew* it were possible to glean in someone's field shows her understanding of the Law of Moses. What did the law stipulate? (Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 24:19)

From verses 8 to 16, we are given insight to the character and kindness of Boaz. List at least five things that Boaz does for Ruth in these verses:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

In Class

Who was Boaz's mother (Matt 1:5)? _____ How do you think she may have influenced his view of the world and of Ruth's situation?

In Class

Naomi calling Boaz "one of our redeemers" in verse 20, and her subsequent plan seen in the following chapter show a combination of two legal institutions (which the Law of Moses did not require), namely, property redemption by a near kinsman (Lev 25:23-25) and the "levirate" marriage (Deut 25:5-6).

- What was the immediate purpose of property redemption (Lev 25:23a)?
- What was the immediate purpose of levirate marriage (Deut 25:6b)?
- What long-term lessons would the people learn from these laws?
- Did Boaz understand these lessons?

Lesson 4

Ruth, Chapter 3

Themes

Kindness	Redemption
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Goals

1. Increase the kindness we show others, especially in difficult circumstances
2. Learn to emphasize the lasting effects of God's Word

Objectives for lesson 4

- ' List examples of our themes found in this chapter
- ' Identify a literary connection completed in this chapter
- ' Memorize the NT book and chapter that embodies the lessons learned in Ruth

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

(1-18)

In Class

In the first five verses we read of Naomi's plan for Ruth and Boaz. What can we learn about each of the following in this passage?

1. Kindness
2. Redemption
3. Character of God's people
4. Relationship between Jew and Gentile

Connecting the Text

In chapter 1, Naomi prays, "The LORD grant that you may find _____, each of you in the house of her husband!"
(Ruth 1:9a, ESV)

→ In chapter 3, Naomi says to Ruth, "My daughter, should I not seek _____ for you, that it may be well with you?"
(Ruth 3:1, ESV)

In chapter 2, Boaz prays, "The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose _____ you have come to take refuge!"
(Ruth 2:12, ESV)

→ In chapter 3, Ruth requests, "Spread your _____ over your servant, for you are a redeemer."
(Ruth 3:9b, ESV)



This word can also mean:

- _____ NASB
- _____ KJV
- _____ NIV



Which is also used in Ezekiel 16:8 to describe a _____ between God and Israel.

In Class

In the following passage, Paul encourages those at Philippi to embody some of the same qualities found in Christ. Consider the passage, then list examples of those qualities found in Ruth. e.g. "...any comfort from love" (Phil 2:1) → Comfort given to Naomi in her return to Judah by Ruth's companionship

¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:1-11 (ESV)

Lesson 5

Ruth, Chapter 4

Themes

Kindness	Redemption
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Goals

1. Increase the kindness we show others, especially in difficult circumstances
2. Learn to emphasize the lasting effects of God's Word

Objectives for lesson 5

- ' Identify at least one quality of God seen in Boaz
- ' Identify one lesson learned from the witnesses to Boaz's redemption
- ' List the 'foreigners' found in the genealogy of David

Boaz Redeems Ruth

(1-12)

Why do you think the author omits the name of "the redeemer" (vs 1, 3, 6, 8)?

Why do you think the redeemer changes his mind from "I will redeem it" in vs 4, to "I cannot redeem it for myself," in vs 6?

Since Boaz is a creature of God, made in His image...what do we learn about God through Boaz's redemption of Ruth?

What can we learn from the reaction of “all the people who were at the gate and the elders” to Boaz’s redemption?

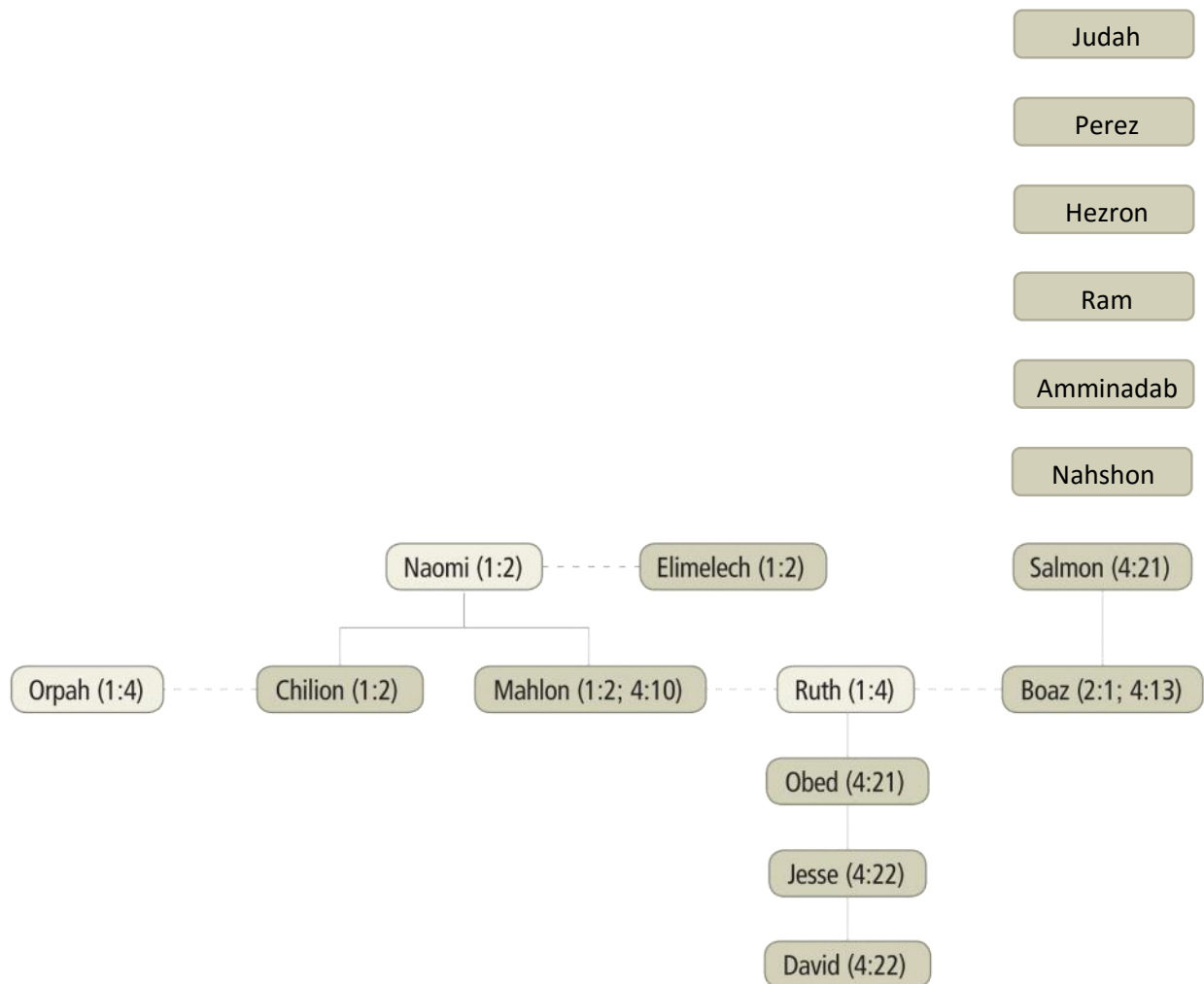
Why would the elders bless Boaz and Ruth to have a house like Perez, of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38)?

Ruth and Boaz Marry (13-17)

In Class

What do you see in these verses that stand out to you?

The Genealogy of David (18-22)



Lesson 6

Lessons in Ruth

Themes

Kindness	Redemption
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Goals

1. Increase the kindness we show others, especially in difficult circumstances
2. Learn to emphasize the lasting effects of God's Word

In Class Activity #1

Skim the entire book of Ruth and list every act of kindness you can find. For each, list one or more reasons that act of kindness might have been difficult to perform (i.e. What difficult circumstances were the characters going through? What obstacles did/would they overcome? What excuses could they have used instead? Etc.)

Act of Kindness	Difficulty / Obstacle / Excuse

In Class Activity #2

For the following situations, identify the immediate effect, then the lasting effect:

	Immediate	Lasting
There was a famine in the land of Judah (1:1)	Family moves to a foreign land...many physical consequences and discomforts	A relationship is formed between Jew and gentile that ultimately produces the Messiah, as well as future examples to the 1 st century church
Elimelech and both of his sons, Mahlon and Chilion, die (1:3-5)		
Orpah decides not to follow Naomi (1:15)		
Ruth decides to follow Naomi (1:16-18)		
With no redeemer, Ruth and Naomi must support themselves (Chapter 2)		
Boaz expends time, labor, and resources for a foreign laborer in his fields (2:8-16)		
A daring plan is conceived to procure a redeemer for their family (3:1-5)		
Boaz deals with the closer relative to Naomi (4:1-12)		
Ruth commits herself to the welfare of others (Entire book)		

Lesson 7

Introduction to Esther

Themes

Providence	Responsibility	Absurdity
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Goals

1. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile..." *Jer 29:7*
2. Improve on our recognition of God vs our recognition of evil

Objectives for lesson 7

- ' Establish historical setting of Esther
- ' Introduce principle characters and themes
- ' Introduce Purim and show Esther's role in its observance



c. 479 B.C.

Long before Esther's time, the people of Israel and Judah (later called Jews) had been dispersed throughout the Near East by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Eventually the Persians absorbed nearly all of these lands into their empire, which reached its greatest extent during the time of Esther. Thus Haman's plot to exterminate all Jews throughout the Persian Empire would have annihilated virtually all of the Jewish people, and Esther's daring actions saved them from complete destruction.

In history, this book is set in the time following the Babylonian exile when Persia was the ruling power. It's set in Susa, the Persian capital, during the reign of King Ahasuerus, better known by his Greek name, Xerxes I (486-464). Some Jews had returned to Jerusalem (see Ezra, Nehemiah). Others, like Esther and Mordecai were still in exile and were looked down on as a minority group. Their situation was similar to that of Daniel and his friends around a century earlier.

One literary feature of the book worth noting is the developing character of Esther. She does not display admirable qualities right from the start, but rather develops them as the narration progresses.

She starts in the harem, then becomes queen in 478 B.C. Five years later she saves the Jews from massacre. This was forty years before the Temple was rebuilt and thirty years before the wall was finished, but her influence could still be felt in those generations as the work of both Ezra and Nehemiah benefitted from her.

Esther, like many other stories in the OT shows the reader how God's people continued until the time of Christ. And like the NT, it teaches us how to live in this world with courage and integrity, carrying out responsibilities to the best of our ability, trusting in God's providence to protect and provide.

Chronology in Esther

Reference	Event	Month	Day	Year of Ahasuerus's Reign	Year
1:3	Ahasuerus holds his banquets			3	483 B.C.
2:16	Esther goes to Ahasuerus	10		7	479
3:7	Haman casts his lots	1		12	474
3:12	Haman issues his decree	1	13	12	474
3:13	Date planned for annihilation of the Jews	12	13	13	473
8:9	Mordecai issues his decree	3	23	13	473
8:12; 9:1	Day upon which Jews could defend themselves from attack	12	13	13	473
9:6-10, 20-22	Ten sons of Haman executed; Feast of Purim celebrated	12	14, 15	13	473

Lesson 8

Esther, Chapters 1-2

Themes

Providence	Responsibility	Absurdity
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Goals

1. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile..." *Jer 29:7*
2. Improve on our recognition of God vs our recognition of evil

Objectives for lesson 8

- ' List at least three historical facts that help frame the story of Esther 1-2
- ' Identify a verse or summary phrase to describe 2:1-18
- ' List some possible reasons why Mordecai might *not* have revealed the plot against Ahasuerus

The King's Banquets

(1:1-9)

- The festival lasted 180 days, capped by a 7-day feast.
- Ahasuerus is also known as Xerxes I
- There are two other Ahasuerus' in the bible:
 - The father of Darius (Daniel 9:1)
 - Xerxes II (Ezra 4:6)
- Susa was one of four Persian capitals: Susa, Babylon, Ecbatana, and Persepolis
- The "third year of his reign" was 483 B.C., since Xerxes came to power in 486

What do you think the purpose of this great feast was?

Queen Vashti's Refusal

(1:10-22)

Why do you think Vashti disobeyed?

What is inferred about the status of women in Persian culture from this passage?

Esther Chosen Queen

(2:1-18)

What nationality were they? (5)

How were Esther and Mordecai related biologically? (7)

How did they come to Susa? (6)

What did she look like? (7)

What was Esther's Hebrew name? (7)

What was the nature of their relationship? (7)

In Class

From verses 1-18, the writer describes the process implemented by Ahasuerus to replace Vashti as Queen of Persia. Identify a verse or a group of verses that you feel best encapsulates the nature of this process. Explain.

Mordecai Discovers a Plot

(2:19-23)

In Class

Upon discovering the plot against Ahasuerus, Mordecai had a choice to either tell someone what he knew, or keep the information to himself. With the benefit of objectivity, perspective, and knowing how the decision played out...we know that Mordecai made the right decision by revealing the plot to Esther. *Perhaps* this decision was not as easy as the narrative makes it seem, though.

What are some possible reasons why Mordecai might *not* have revealed the plot to Esther?

Why was his decision the correct one?

Lesson 9

Esther, Chapters 3-4

Themes

Providence	Responsibility	Absurdity
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Goals

1. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile..." *Jer 29:7*
2. Improve on our recognition of God vs our recognition of evil

Objectives for lesson 9

- ' Give historical background of Haman
- ' List three absurd events in chapter 3 as well as *why* they're absurd
- ' Identify a verse from the end of chapter 4 that points to some of our themes

Haman Plots Against the Jews (Chapter 3)

In this chapter we're introduced to Haman the _____ (1).

From whom does this name come from (1 Sam 15)?

What nation did this king command (1 Sam 15)?

What had God declared would happen to this nation (Ex 17:8-16)?

In Class

Find the Absurdity in this Chapter

- List the things we read of in this chapter that seem absurd

- What about each of the things you listed makes them absurd?

Esther Agrees to Help the Jews

(Chapter 4)

What was the purpose of “sackcloth and ashes” (vs 1)?
(cf. Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 1:11; Job 1:20; Isa 15:1-3; Jonah 3:6)

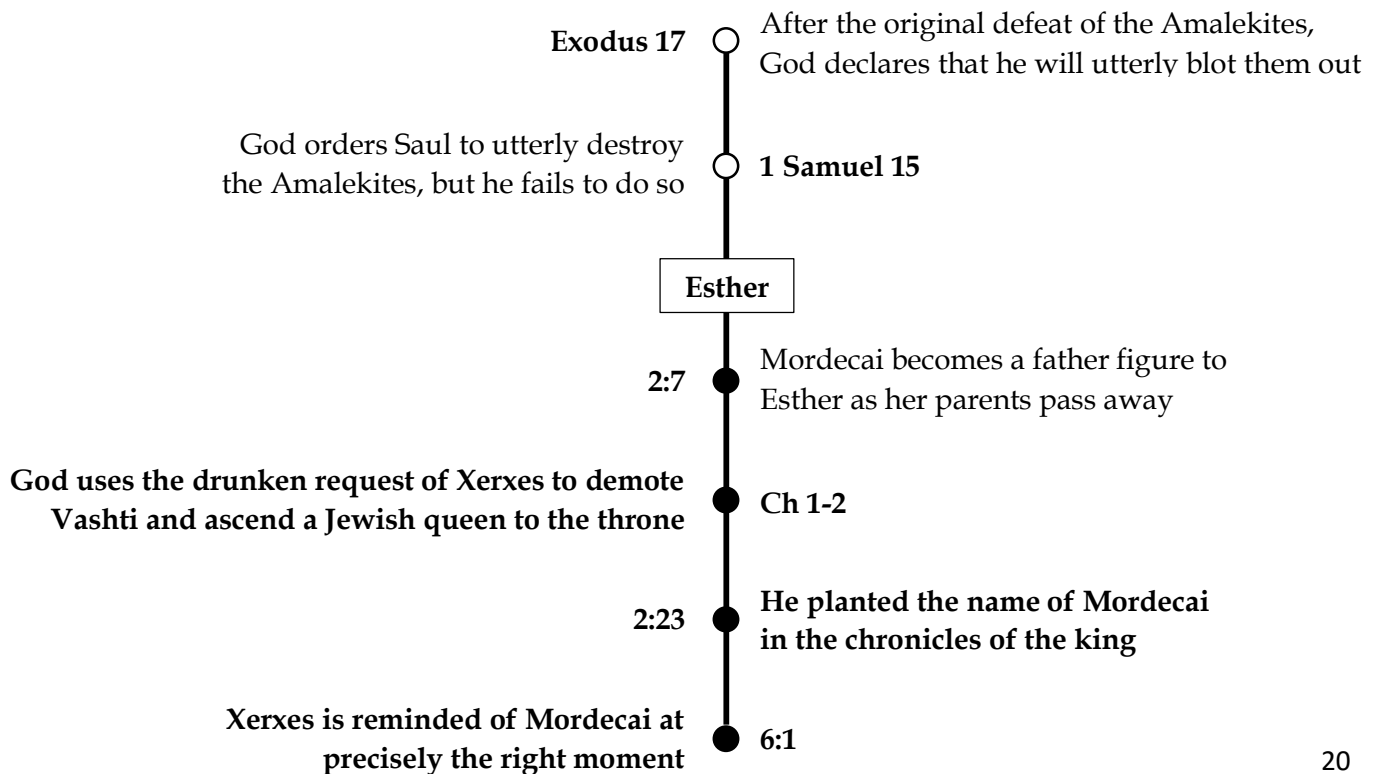
In Class

Read verses 12-16 and choose a verse that stands out to you the most.

Why does it stand out to you?

What lessons can we learn from your verse?

By this point of the story we’re beginning to see a very clear pattern of God’s providence, and its connection with our responsibility. His purposes have been set long ago and are achieved *through* the free-will choices of men. Consider:



Lesson 10

Esther, Chapter 5

Themes

Providence	Responsibility	Absurdity
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Goals

1. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile..." *Jer 29:7*
2. Improve on our recognition of God vs our recognition of evil

Objectives for lesson 10

- ' Identify possible providence and/or wisdom in Esther's delayed petition
- ' List at least three examples of Haman's absurdity
- ' Identify at least one similarity we have with Haman, and how to address it

Esther Prepares a Banquet

(1-8)

What emotions do you think Esther was feeling while standing in the court waiting on the king?

What effect would Ahasuerus's words and actions from verses 2-3 have had on Esther?

A similar oath to the one made in verse 3 is made by Herod the tetrarch many years later. What was the result of that similar oath (Matt 14:1-12)?

In Class

Why do you think Esther does not immediately make her petition when asked? Why does she delay it until a second banquet the following day?

Haman Plans to Hang Mordecai

(9-14)

List everything that you find absurd from verses 9-14:

In Class

Consider the following quotes concerning Haman:

“He was a coarse, undisciplined man, little better than a savage; and yet he was the chief minister of the greatest monarch in the world at that time. *Wordly prominence and power are no proof of goodness or greatness of soul.*”

“Haman’s unhappiness because of Mordecai’s refusal to honor him is true to the type; *for it is lesser men who magnify and exaggerate slights; the great are able to overlook them.*”

List some situations where we often mistakenly equate worldly prominence and power with someone’s success as a human:

e.g. Person driving a luxury vehicle (compared to your jalopy) must be intelligent and hard working

What characteristic are you showing about yourself when you “magnify and exaggerate slights”?

List some of the “slights” that bother you the most:

List the most effective ways you can think of for measuring the “goodness or greatness of soul”:

How would you define “overlook[ing]” a slight? Are there times you should address it, rather than overlook it? What elements would factor into your decision?

Lesson 11

Esther, Chapters 6-7

Themes

Providence	Responsibility	Absurdity
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Goals

1. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile..." *Jer 29:7*
2. Improve on our recognition of God vs our recognition of evil

Objectives for lesson 11

- ' List at least two examples of God's providence in chapter 6
- ' Identify one way we can improve our communication with non-Christians
- ' Identify a similarity between Esther's decision and God's power over us

The King Honors Mordecai (6:1-13)

Why do you think Ahasuerus couldn't sleep?

What compelled him to have the "book of memorable deeds" read?

Do you think Haman's suggestion for how to honor "whom the king delights" reveals anything about himself? If so, what?

Do you think Ahasuerus knew what he was doing by having Haman honor Mordecai, or do you think this was irony? Explain your answer.

Why do Haman's wife and friends suddenly change from instigating his plan, to declaring his ultimate defeat?

Esther Reveals Haman's Plot

(6:14 - 7:6)

In Class

List the ways *how* Esther presents her petition to the king. Describe how each element contributed to the ultimate acceptance of her petition:

Haman is Hanged

(7:7-10)

In Class

Should Esther have interceded on Haman's behalf? List some reasons why she should or should not have:

In the end, Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, but there was still a very real danger of the wholesale slaughter of the Jews. The decree had gone forth to all of the kingdom, and being a law of the Medes and Persians, could not be altered. There was still work to be done.

Lesson 12

Esther, Chapters 8-10

Themes

Providence	Responsibility	Absurdity
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Goals

1. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile..." *Jer 29:7*
2. Improve on our recognition of God vs our recognition of evil

Objectives for lesson 12

- ' Memorize key dates referenced in chapter 8
- ' Identify the proper Christian perspective of civil law
- ' List the three key elements of Purim

Esther Saves the Jews (Chapter 8)

Who supplants Haman in wealth and prosperity?

What did Esther request of the king (5)?

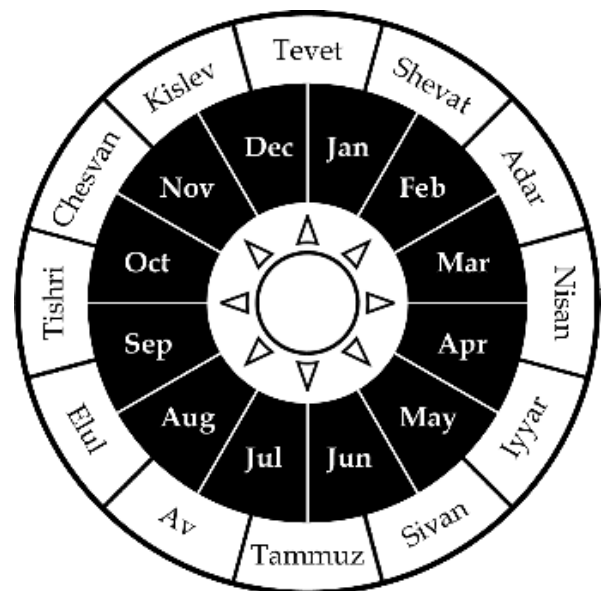
How does Ahasuerus grant her request?

When was the first edict written (3:12)?

When was the second edict written (8:9)?

When were both edicts to be executed (3:13; 8:12)?

How much time did that give the Jews to prepare?



The Jews Destroy Their Enemies

(9:1-19)

In Class

The end of verse 10 says, "...but they laid no hand on the plunder." This is the first of three occurrences of this phrase, and suggests that a conscious choice was made *not* to exercise the extent of their rights.

Why do you think this is mentioned at all?

List some things that are legal for American citizens, but are sinful for Christians:

Pick one item from your list...how would you explain your choice to abstain from said activity to a non-Christian?

The Feast of Purim Inaugurated

(9:20-32)

"...keep the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year...make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor."

Esther 9:21-22 (ESV)

Therefore, Purim is celebrated among Jews by:

Exchanging reciprocal gifts of food and drink

Donating charity to the poor

Eating a celebratory meal

Public recitation of the Scroll of Esther

Reciting additions to the daily prayers and the grace after meals

*mishloach manot
mattanot la-eyyonim
se'udat Purim
krait ha-megillah
al hanissim*

Other customs include drinking wine or any other alcoholic beverage, wearing of masks and costumes, and public celebration.

The Greatness of Mordecai

(Chapter 10)

"For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people."

Esther 10:3 (ESV)

Lesson 13

Lessons in Esther

Themes

Providence	Responsibility	Absurdity
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Goals

1. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile..." Jer 29:7
2. Improve on our recognition of God vs our recognition of evil

In Class Activity #1

There are two primary passages in the book of Esther that exemplify Jeremiah's exhortation to "seek the welfare of the city where [God has] sent you into exile":

"²¹ In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ²² And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. ²³ When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king."

Esther 3:21-23 (ESV)

"³ For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people."

Esther 10:3 (ESV)

How could Mordecai have chosen/acted differently in each of these situations?

From your answers above, be prepared to present a rational argument defending that choice. Show their reasonableness as best you can.

What are some difficult circumstances we face today that test our ability to serve God faithfully while also attending to the welfare of the world we live in?

If you, as a Christian, were elected President of the United States, what policies would you work to enact that would seek the welfare of the people you are leading?

In Class Activity #2

Skim through the text and/or previous lessons and list as many acts of God and as many acts of evil that you can find from the book of Esther:

God	Evil

Write down any observations you can make from each list:

For the following two locations, list as many stereotypical characteristics of them as you can:

A Bar	Church

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