

16. Looking back to how you answered question 10 what is the point of fasting?

17. Are there situations where you do, or would consider fasting and praying together? (See for example Acts 13.1-3 & 14.23)

Pray

Pray again for Christians facing persecution around the world and for the work of organisations like Barnabas Fund and Open Doors which draw attention to this and try to aid those facing hardship. (There is always information about Barnabas Fund available at the back of church.)

Pray for the many places around the world where hatred between different groups of people shows itself in war and long-term conflict. Pray for God's blessing on the peacemakers and that Christians caught up in such conflicts would be able to transform them by loving their neighbours and praying for those who persecute them (Mtt 5.44).

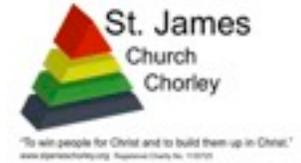
Giving thanks for the work of our Church please pray for the PCC who at their November meeting will be budgeting for the year ahead.

David Phillips
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Real Lives

Week 7 - Esther part 2

(Chapters 3 & 4)



Haman

Read Esther 3.1-4

It is possible that there was history between Haman and Mordecai's people. The Jewish historian Josephus claimed that the Agagites (v1) were Amalekites who crossed swords with King Saul (1 Sam 15). Saul, like Mordecai was an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin.

1. Was Mordecai just being awkward in refusing to bow down? What reason does he appear to give as to why he refused?

2. The ESV translation says "Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage". Confusingly "pay homage" is translated elsewhere as "bow down" such as Ex 18v7 where Moses does it in respect and two chapter later in Ex 20v5 where it is forbidden. What is the difference between those two things Exodus and how do they compare to what Mordecai refused to do?

3. The early Christian Polycarp is said to have been asked by soldiers who had arrested him "what harm is there in saying 'Caesar is Lord' and offering incense. What would you have answered?

Polycarp persistently refused and was burned at the stake in about 156AD.

4. Do you think there is any harm in titles such as “majesty” used of our Queen or “your worship” used of judges?

5. Mordecai, like Polycarp, was living in a pagan land. Do you think it is easier to draw boundaries when living in a country with a strong Christian influence such as our own, or one that is definitely antagonistic to Christians?

6. Did Haman have good reason to be angry? How might he have dealt with the matter without letting it become so personal?

7. Why do you think Haman decided not to go after Mordecai alone but all the Jews? (*Jews means “men of Judah” meaning the nation of Judah, the remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel.*)

Read Esther 3.7-end

8. What do we learn about the character and reign of Ahasuerus and particular his attitude to the justice or injustice of what Haman suggests?

9. How had Mordecai already shown himself loyal to the King at the end of chapter 2?

10. Mordecai would go on to serve the King in the same way that Daniel years earlier served a volatile King. Are there lessons here about how Christians should conduct themselves in a nation, or workplace, where there is wrongdoing or injustice?

Read Esther 4

11. In verses 1 to 3 of chapter 4 we see how Mordecai and others responded to the bad news. Why do you think it doesn't mention prayer? Was this because they had lost faith in God?

12. Mordecai and Esther had to communicate through an intermediary but did she understand that he was asking her to do and what was the risk involved in this?

13. Verses 12 to 17 are a key part of the book. What does Mordecai mean by what he says in verse 14 and why doesn't he mention God?

14. Have a look at chapter 2 verses 10 and 20, what do those verses show about Esther's character in her attitude to her guardian, Mordecai?

15. How is the situation different in the last verse of chapter 4 and what do we see this time of Mordecai's character?