

Facilitator

1. Open with Prayer

2. Welcome any newcomers

3. Read Esther 3 and give a five-minute review of the sermon using Peppy's sermon notes.

Facilitator: Please don't feel you have to cover every question. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

### **CONNECT Group study questions, Esther 3**

**October 5, 2014**

**Title: The Rise of Hitler's Twin**

Here's a story I either heard or read, but I haven't verified. Nevertheless, it's a good story, especially since I made up some of it:

A man and his wife, who were missionaries, came to the end of their 50 years of ministry in a foreign land—like China, maybe—where they devoted their lives to translating the Bible into the native language and bringing many to faith in Christ. After quiet, tearful goodbyes in the tiny village they called home for so long, they traveled to the country's coastal port and booked passage on a freighter back to America. After a long and arduous journey, their ship finally approached New York harbor and they stood on the deck as it passed the Statue of Liberty. As the ship inched toward the pier and lowered its gangplank, hoards of cheering people waving flags to the music of a military band greeted them. Could it be that news of their arrival preceded them? The thought buoyed their spirits, until an announcement from the ship instructed them to remain aboard until President Teddy Roosevelt disembarked from the cruise ship on the other side of the pier and the crowds had dispersed. The President had just returned from a wild game safari in Africa.

**Question:** How do you suppose the reception for our missionary couple when they reached their eternal home compared to Roosevelt's on that pier in New York harbor?

**Question:** Read Matthew 20:1-16. It's a parable about works and rewards, obedience and grace, and God's sovereignty over a human concept of what's fair. Do you think it's fair that a person who comes to faith in Christ late in life receives the same full measure of God's grace as the man or woman who spends a lifetime in humble service to the Lord? If so, why? **Facilitator:** Let the discussion run its course, but then suggest that the reward is not for the work performed but for willingness to serve. Therefore, both the work and the pay at the end of the day are products of God's grace.

**Question:** From the information we have in chapters 2 and 3, we have to assume Mordecai's warning to the king about the plot against his life went unrewarded, while Haman was honored with a high position in the kingdom for doing nothing. Are there any principles that come to mind about how we receive both the good and bad in life? Can you cite Scripture to guide you toward having the right attitude in every situation? **Facilitator:** Let's see what the group members come up with, but if they bog down, suggest Matthew 5:44-46; 1 Samuel 16:7; and 1 Corinthians 13 for starters. Encourage a personal search of verses that show by contrast how human viewpoint differs from divine viewpoint.

**Question:** It can be tough, sometimes fatal, to stand alone, draw a line in the sand as Mordecai did, or to say as Joshua did, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Read Joshua 24:15 and apply its message to scenarios you could be faced with in the future. **Facilitator:** Encourage the group members to decide ahead of time how they will respond to specific situations of temptation and peer pressure in the event they arise.

**Question:** Read Proverbs 16:18. Why do you suppose pride is so dangerous? Haman's pride certainly was dangerous for the Jews of Persia and Hitler's for the Jews of countries the Nazis invaded. And pride brought

personal destruction to both Haman and Hitler. **Personal meditation:** Are there people in your life who could be hurt if you allowed pride to grow in your relationship with them? Could they be helped if you cultivated a humble spirit in your relationship with them? **Facilitator:** If time permits, encourage your group to discuss *how* to cultivate a humble spirit and then spend a few minutes praying for this specifically.