

Facilitator

1. Open with Prayer
2. Welcome any newcomers
3. Read Esther 5 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
October 19, 2014
Title: Don't Be In Such a Hurry

When listening to the radio, have you ever had your station suddenly go silent? They call it dead air. Or maybe your TV channel goes blank and turns to snow, or you lose your cell phone connection. How long do you wait before looking for a new station or calling the cable or wireless company? How long do you wait when God goes silent? Do you wait for Him, or do you start stretching string between two tin cans? In Esther 5 we see three days of white space—dead air—when it seemed God was incommunicado. Esther could have barged in on the king and said, “What's up with the genocide?” or something like that. But God had a plan, and Esther waited for it.

Question: Pep began our study of Sunday's lesson by asking what was happening during the three days between Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Use your imagination to describe what it must have been like to be a Jew in Susa those three days. What would you be doing? What would you be feeling? What would you be saying? To your spouse? To your children? To your fellow Jews? **Facilitator:** Oy vey!

Question: In Esther 4:13-14, Mordecai's speech to Esther made it clear that she was to speak to the king, yet she commanded Mordecai and the Jews of Susa (Esther 4:15-16) to fast—not eat or drink—on her behalf. What would be the physical effect of not eating or drinking for three days? **Facilitator:** If no one brings it up, suggest that such a fast would make them weak, some to the point of suffering—even death if they were infants, sick or elderly. Perhaps exceptions were made, do you think?

Question: What was Esther up to, to let two opportunities to tell the king about Haman's plan pass without mention? Instead she arranged two private dinners (while she, herself, was fasting), giving Haman, of all people, personal access to royalty. **Facilitator:** Do you see a plan coming together?

Question: Esther is a beautiful young woman of about 20 years old in this story, and she was obviously endowed with wisdom beyond her years. Where did this wisdom come from? **Facilitator:** If someone says *'from God,'* that's true of course, but don't let them off that quick. Remember she was raised by Mordecai in the wisdom of the Jewish tradition, and God was at work through all the fasting and prayer.

Question: Esther did not refuse Mordecai's command, yet her command that Mordecai and the Jews of Susa fast amounted to three days of waiting on the Lord. They were

becoming physically weak at a time when they would need that strength to defend themselves. Who would be their defender, if they were defenseless in themselves?

Question: Pep brings us to Isaiah 40:31 to teach us about waiting on the Lord. Though this passage doesn't mention fasting, verses 28-30 say a great deal about weakness. What physical-spiritual dynamic is going on here? **Facilitator:** Suggest that physical weakness, even the hunger pangs from missing a meal or two, can act as a reminder of spiritual dependency on the Lord not just to act, but to act through us in His strength.

Question: Referring to Pep's outline, the four points in Isaiah 40:31 are (1) new strength, (2) better perspective, (3) supernatural energy, and (4) perseverance through trial. Read Psalm 18:28-42 and pick out examples of Pep's four points as David describes his supernatural performance in battle. Where does David say he gets his strength? Also, how is the power of God made perfect or complete? **Facilitator:** See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Meditation: What battles do you fight? Either in discussion or personal reflection, consider how fasting, praying and waiting on the Lord will give you victory in each one of those battles. Do you suppose the supernatural strength of Isaiah 40:31 and Psalm 18:28-42 can be yours, ... if you wait for it?

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