

**FINDING GOD  
IN THE MESSINESS  
OF LIFE**

Studies in Esther

**~Jan. 28-Feb. 3, 2007~**  
**“Against All Odds”**  
Esther 8-10



Life Groups

**Welcome back** to UPC's continuing study of the story of Esther entitled "Finding God in the Messiness of Life." Each week this discussion guide will help you reflect upon the Sunday sermon and apply its content to your life. If you miss a sermon, you can always listen to it online at [www.upc-orlando.com](http://www.upc-orlando.com).

**LISTEN**

*Record your insights and observations from this week's sermon:*

## SHARE

- a) Tell about a time in the past when God protected you from harm.

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- b) Purim is Judaism's most dramatic, fun-filled holiday. It will be celebrated on March 4-5 of this year (the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> days of Adar on the Jewish calendar). If you don't know much about Purim, read about it here: <http://www.aish.com/holidays/purim/>. Summarize what you learn. What reactions do you have to this Jewish holiday? What could we in the Christian church do to enjoy more times of celebration with one another?

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## REFLECT

- a) What specific things take place in Esther 8-10 to vindicate Mordecai and the Jewish remnant in Persia?

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- b) Many Bible stories, like the story of Esther, contain irony. Irony is a literary technique in which an outcome is contrary to what was, or might have been, expected. (A good example would be the story Jesus told about the vineyard workers in Matthew 20:1-16.) What elements of irony do you find in Esther 8-10?

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- c) How does the story of Esther illustrate the gospel?

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d) At the beginning of her story, what did Esther need to learn? Now that you've come to the end of her story, do you think she's made progress? Why or why not?

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e) King Xerxes' edict (Esther 8:11-14) permitted the Jews in his empire to arm themselves and attack anyone who might try to harm them. Over 75,000 Persians lost their lives in the conflict, including the sons of Haman (9:5-17). Esther 9:5 even says that the Jews "did what they pleased to those who hated them." Someone might object that God was unjust to allow the deaths of so many people. How might you respond to that objection?

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**APPLY**

a) Among other things, the book of Esther is about God's love for and protection of His people. Read Psalm 91. This psalm contains wonderful promises of God's protection for those who trust in Him. However, we all know that harm does befall Christians. So reconcile God's promise that "no harm will befall you" (verse 10) with the reality that Christians get sick, get hurt and even killed every day throughout the world.

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b) If God's truly does protect His people, how should you then live? Be concrete.

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c) Vindication is another major theme of the book of Esther. In light of the fact that one day God will make all things right, and vindicate those who are mistreated in this life, how should your life be different? Is there a situation right now in your life tempting you to take matters into your own hands and seek vengeance? What have you learned from Esther that can help you trust God with that situation?

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