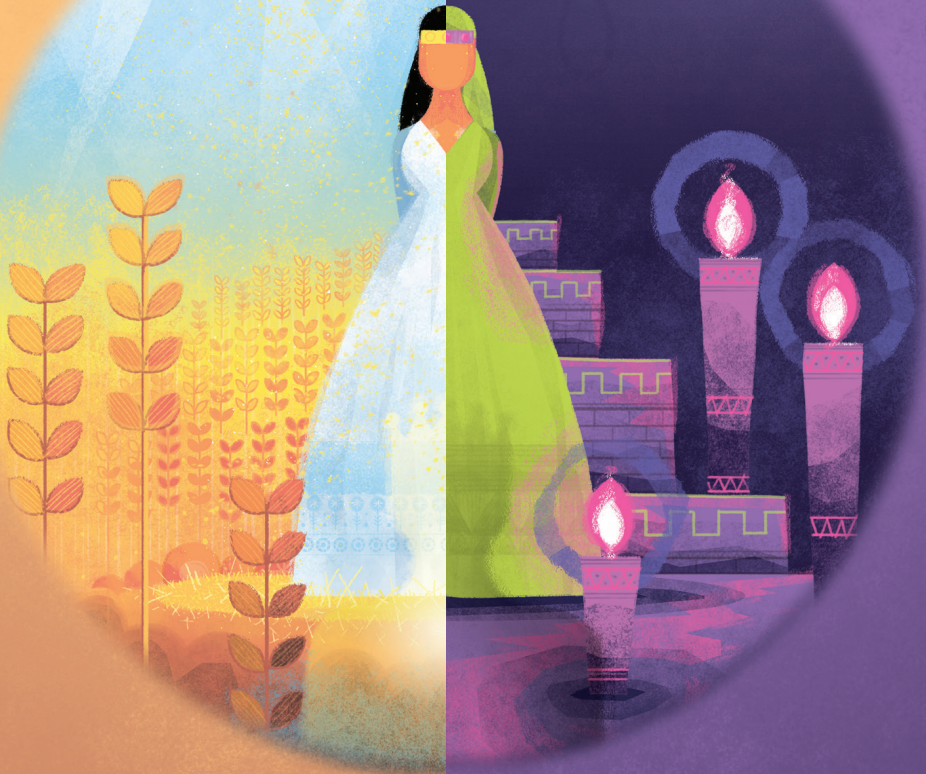


the UNSEEN GOD

ruth

esther



RUTH & ESTHER THE UNSEEN GOD

TERM 3 PASSAGE

Week 1	God's People, God's Place, God's Blessing	
Week 2	Ruth 1	God's Kindness
Week 3	Ruth 2	God's Love
Week 4	Ruth 3	God's Provision
Week 5	Ruth 4	God's Redeemer
Week 6	Esther 1:1-2:20	A New Queen
Week 7	Esther 2:21-4:17	The Plot Against God's People
Week 8	Esther 5-7	The Man the King Delights to Honour
Week 9	Esther 8-10	Rescue and Triumph (Part 1)
Week 10	Esther 8-10	Rescue and Triumph (Part 2)

We want to encourage each other to be on mission to our non-Christian friends, family and contacts.

Who are you on mission to?

Make a list and start praying for them (and yourself).

Pray for three friends, once a week, for one minute (3-1-1).

List the names of your family and friends here:

TERM 3 – 2021

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK:

1. Personal reading

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

2. Growth Groups

- Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.
- Let your group know who you are on mission to.

3. Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.



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READ THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS:

Something you might like to use to extend your daily Bible reading.

The Bible is truly an extraordinary book, unique among all other books. It consists of 66 individual books, written by 40 different authors, in three different languages across 1,500 years of history. Yet for all of this diversity it contains a unified message that focuses on the coming of Jesus and the amazing salvation He offers through His death and resurrection!

The Bible contains words written by men in all the richness of literary types making it fun, challenging and enjoyable to dig into. Yet, at the same time, the Bible is also the very words of God given to us by His Spirit (1 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). These are not just words spoken in times past, but words that are alive for us to read today (Hebrews 4:12-13). The God of the universe actually addresses us today clearly in the pages of the Bible – amazing!

Jesus says the entire Bible points us to Him, that He is the focal point of it all. Listen to what He says, “He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44). Or, again Jesus says, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39-40).

Knowing this is helpful in motivating us to read the Bible regularly, to keep building a bigger understanding of God’s purposes and how they are being fulfilled in Jesus. To help with this, the Daily Reading Notes now include an extra challenge: to read the whole Bible in two years. It’s totally optional, are you up for it?

There is a list of around 15 chapters of additional reading for each week of the term that will help you achieve this challenge. These readings can be done on whatever days work best and in whatever order you prefer to read them. At the end of each term you have a chance to catch up before the next term’s suggested readings begin again. You can also track your readings across the two years right here. Enjoy!

YEAR 1: TERM 1

- | | | |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Week 1 | Genesis 1-5; Psalms 1-4; Genesis 5-10; Matthew 1-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Week 2 | Genesis 11-15; Psalms 5-7; Genesis 16-20; Matthew 3-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Week 3 | Genesis 21-25; Psalms 8-10; Genesis 26-30; Matthew 5-6 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Week 4 | Genesis 31-35; Psalms 11-16; Genesis 36-40; Matthew 7-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- Week 5 Genesis 41-45; Psalms 17-19; Genesis 46-50; Matthew 10-11
- Week 6 Exodus 1-5; Psalms 20-24; Exodus 6-10; Matthew 12-13
- Week 7 Exodus 11-15, Psalms 25-27; Exodus 16-20; Matthew 14-15
- Week 8 Exodus 21-25; Psalms 28-31; Exodus 26-30; Matthew 16-17
- Week 9 Exodus 31-35; Psalms 32-34; Exodus 36-40; Matthew 18-19
- Week 10 Leviticus 1-5; Psalms 35-37; Leviticus 6-10; Matthew 20-21

YEAR 1: TERM 2

- Week 1 Leviticus 11-15; Psalms 38-41; Leviticus 16-20; Matthew 22-24
- Week 2 Leviticus 21-27; Numbers 1-3; Proverbs 1-3; Matthew 25-26
- Week 3 Numbers 4-13; Proverbs 4-6; Matthew 27-28
- Week 4 Numbers 14-23; Proverbs 7-9; Acts 1-2
- Week 5 Numbers 24-33; Psalms 42-44; Acts 3-4
- Week 6 Numbers 34-36; Psalms 45-48; Acts 5-6
- Week 7 Deuteronomy 1-7; Psalms 49-51; Acts 7-8
- Week 8 Deuteronomy 8-17; Psalms 52-54; Acts 9-10
- Week 9 Deuteronomy 18-27; Psalms 55-57; Acts 11-12
- Week 10 Deuteronomy 28-34; Joshua 1-3; Psalms 58-61; Acts 13-14

YEAR 1: TERM 3

- Week 1 Joshua 4-13; Psalms 62-65; Acts 15-16
- Week 2 Joshua 14-23; Psalms 66-68; Acts 17-18
- Week 3 Joshua 24; Judges 1-9; Psalms 69-71; Acts 19-20
- Week 4 Judges 10-19; Psalms 72; Proverbs 10-11; Acts 21-22
- Week 5 Judges 20-21; Ruth 1-4; 1 Samuel 1-4; Proverbs 12-14; Acts 23-24
- Week 6 1 Samuel 5-14; Proverbs 15-17; Acts 25-26
- Week 7 1 Samuel 15-24; Proverbs 18-20; Acts 27-28
- Week 8 1 Samuel 25-31; 2 Samuel 1-3; Proverbs 21-22; Mark 1-2
- Week 9 2 Samuel 4-13; Psalms 73-75; Mark 3-4
- Week 10 2 Samuel 14-24; Psalms 76-77; Mark 5-6

READ THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS

YEAR 1: TERM 4

- Week 1 1 Kings 1-5; Psalms 78-80; 1 Kings 6-10; Mark 7-8
- Week 2 1 Kings 11-15; Psalms 81-83; 1 Kings 16-20; Mark 9-10
- Week 3 1 Kings 21-22; 2 Kings 1-8; Psalms 84-86; Mark 11-12
- Week 4 2 Kings 9-13; Psalms 87-89; 2 Kings 14-18; Mark 13-14
- Week 5 2 Kings 19-25; 1 Chronicles 1-3; Psalms 90-93; Mark 15-16
- Week 6 1 Chronicles 4-8; Psalms 94-96; 1 Chronicles 9-13; Romans 1-2
- Week 7 1 Chronicles 14-18; Psalms 97-101; 1 Chronicles 19-23; Romans 3-4
- Week 8 1 Chronicles 24-29; Psalms 102-104; Romans 5-6
- Week 9 2 Chronicles 1-5; Psalms 105-106; 2 Chronicles 6-10; Romans 7-8
- Week 10 2 Chronicles 11-15; Proverbs 23-25; 2 Chronicles 16-20; Romans 9-10

YEAR 2: TERM 1

- Week 1 2 Chronicles 21-25; Proverbs 26-28; 2 Chronicles 26-30; Romans 11-12
- Week 2 2 Chronicles 31-36; Ezra 1-4; Proverbs 29-31; Romans 13-14
- Week 3 Ezra 5-10; Nehemiah 1-4; Psalms 107-109; Romans 15-16
- Week 4 Nehemiah 5-13; Psalms 110-113; 1 Corinthians 1-2
- Week 5 Esther 1-10; Psalms 114-117; 1 Corinthians 3-4
- Week 6 Job 1-5; Psalms 118; Job 6-10; 1 Corinthians 5-6
- Week 7 Job 11-15; Psalms 119:1-48; Job 16-20; 1 Corinthians 7-8
- Week 8 Job 21-25; Psalms 119:49-96; Job 26-30; 1 Corinthians 9-10
- Week 9 Job 31-35; Psalms 119:97-144; Job 36-40; 1 Corinthians 11-12
- Week 10 Job 41-42; Ecclesiastes 1-8; Psalms 119:145-176; 1 Corinthians 13-14

YEAR 2: TERM 2

- Week 1 Ecclesiastes 9-12; Song of Songs 1-5; Psalms 120-122; 1 Cor 15-16
- Week 2 Songs of Songs 6-8; Isaiah 1-7; Psalms 123-125; Luke 1-2
- Week 3 Isaiah 8-12; Psalms 126-130; Isaiah 13-17; Luke 3-4
- Week 4 Isaiah 18-22; Psalms 131-135; Isaiah 23-27; Luke 5-6
- Week 5 Isaiah 28-32; Psalms 136-138; Isaiah 33-37; Luke 7-8

- Week 6 Isaiah 38-42; Psalms 139-142; Isaiah 43-47; Luke 9-10
- Week 7 Isaiah 48-52; Psalms 143-145; Isaiah 53-57; Luke 11-12
- Week 8 Isaiah 58-62; Psalms 146-147; Isaiah 63-66; Luke 13-14
- Week 9 Jeremiah 1-5; Psalms 148-150; Jeremiah 6-10; Luke 15-16
- Week 10 Jeremiah 11-15; Luke 17-21; Jeremiah 16-20

YEAR 2: TERM 3

- Week 1 Jeremiah 21-25; Luke 21-24; Jeremiah 26-30; 2 Corinthians 1
- Week 2 Jeremiah 31-35; 2 Corinthians 2-7; Jeremiah 36-40
- Week 3 Jeremiah 41-45; 2 Corinthians 8-13; Jeremiah 46-50
- Week 4 Jeremiah 51-52; Lamentations 1-5; Galatians 1-6
- Week 5 Ezekiel 1-5; Ephesians 1-6; Ezekiel 6-10
- Week 6 Ezekiel 11-15; Philippians 1-4; Ezekiel 16-20
- Week 7 Ezekiel 21-25; Colossians 1-4; Ezekiel 26-30
- Week 8 Ezekiel 31-35; 1 Thessalonians 1-5; Ezekiel 36-40; 2 Thessalonians 1-3
- Week 9 Ezekiel 41-48; 1 Timothy 1-6; 2 Timothy 1-4
- Week 10 Daniel 1-10; Titus 1-3, Philemon

YEAR 2: TERM 4

- Week 1 Daniel 11-12; Hosea 1-8; Hebrews 1-7
- Week 2 Hosea 9-14; Joel 1-3; Hebrews 8-13
- Week 3 Amos 1-9; James 1-5; 1 Peter 1-5
- Week 4 Obadiah; Jonah 1-4; 2 Peter 1-3; 1 John; 2 John; 3 John
- Week 5 Micah 1-7; Nahum 1-3; Jude; Revelation 1-5
- Week 6 Habakkuk 1-3; Revelation 6-19:10
- Week 7 Zephaniah 1-3; Revelation 19:11-22:21
- Week 8 Haggai 1-2; John 1-12
- Week 9 Zechariah 1-14; John 13-17
- Week 10 Malachi 1-4; John 18-21

INTRODUCTION: RUTH & ESTHER

OVERVIEW

Where is God today? If I can't see Him, is He really there? What if things aren't going well—does He take any notice? Is He involved in the details of my life?

These are age-old questions; questions that people in the Bible wrestled with millennia ago, and questions that many of us still wrestle with today. So, what would God say to these questions? The books of Ruth and Esther address these questions wonderfully, showing us a God who cares for His people. Even when He cannot be *seen*, He is there. And He works for the good of His people – even through the storms of life.

RUTH

Ruth is a true heart-warming story, set in the cruel and harsh “days when the judges ruled” (1:1). This was a time in Israel's history when sin and chaos ruled: “Israel had no king; [and] everyone did as they saw fit” (Judges 21:25).

In this tumultuous time, we are introduced to one seemingly inconsequential family. They too were living according to the times - doing as they saw fit. Judgment comes to their household and we are thrown into the hopeless situation of the woman, Naomi, who has lost her husband and her sons, and is left vulnerable in a foreign land, devoid of a future.

As Naomi ventures back to her homeland, the reader, along with Naomi, questions God's goodness in her circumstances. Throughout the story, Naomi is met time and time again with impressive displays of human kindness and provision, yet God remains silent and hidden in it all. But, we are made to reflect on these events from the characters' understanding of God: He is the one who is owed the credit for these human acts of kindness. The conclusion of the story brings a surprising twist, leaving no doubt of God's active hand in showing kindness to Naomi, and, through her, kindness to all of His people, extending even to Christians today.

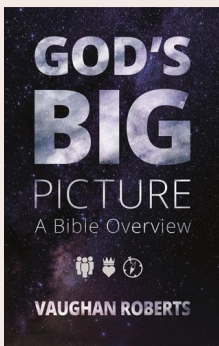
ESTHER

From Ruth, we fast forward many centuries in Israel's history, into the book of Esther, an incredible story of reversal. Because of their sin, God's people had been exiled from the promised land. Now a small minority in the world's largest Empire (the pagan nation of Persia), the Israelites now face a new threat: total annihilation at the hand of the Empire's villainous prime minister, Haman, and the self-invested King Xerxes (3:13).

But God is always at work for His people—raising up the lowly, bringing down the proud. The young, orphaned Israelite girl, Esther, becomes the Queen of Persia. And, although God’s name is never even mentioned in the book, the Unseen God is clearly seen by His actions: God authored Esther’s rise to power, and is there every step of the way bringing about the salvation of His people.

RUTH AND ESTHER FOR TODAY

The books of Ruth and Esther do two big things for us today. First, they remind us of the astonishing way in which God loves, protects, and provides for His people in Christ. Our God is for us and so works for our good in all circumstances (Romans 8:28). This is true even when we can’t easily see His hand at work. Second, Ruth and Esther remind us that God prevails in the end. In a world that is increasingly hostile to Christianity, in the end, nothing can prevail against the Unseen God, and the redemption He has brought about in Jesus Christ.



Book recommendation:

***God's Big Picture* by Vaughan Roberts**

The entire Bible is about Jesus Christ. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Himself opened the eyes of His disciples to see this (Luke 24:25-27). Sixty-six books, forty (human) authors, written over nearly 2,000 years, in many different genres, all pointing to Jesus. But how? How does Ruth and Esther point us to Jesus? How do all the different books fit together? In

this short and easy-to-read book, Vaughan Roberts traces the storyline of the Bible, helping us to understand how it all works together to speak the wonderful message about salvation in Jesus.

WEEK 1

Before we dive into Ruth and Esther, we will spend the week doing a brief survey across scripture. We will see how God has related to His people throughout history. This will help us to understand two important things: 1. God's covenant relationship with His Old Testament people, Israel; and 2. The context of the books of Ruth and Esther.

DAY 1

Today, we look at what is known as the 'Abrahamic Covenant.' A covenant is a promised agreement between two parties. This covenant is between God and Abram, whom God later names "Abraham" (Genesis 17:5), the father of many nations.

Read Genesis 12:1-3

1. What are the three kinds of things God promises to Abram in these verses?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
2. God promises much to Abram. From these verses, what does He require in exchange? How does this remind you of the Gospel, the free gift of salvation in Jesus? (Compare with Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1-5.)
3. From the verses following, how does Abram express his trust in God? (See Hebrews 11:8). What can we learn about the Gospel from Abram?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for the promises He makes to us in the Gospel. Pray that you would trust His promises.

DAY 2

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Joshua 4-13; Psalms 62-65;
Acts 15-16

Today, we look at the end of Moses' speech to the Israelites right before they enter the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. In this speech, he has restated and expanded on what is known as the 'Mosaic Covenant'. The Mosaic Covenant was between God and Israel, given through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20).

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-6, 9-11 and 15-19

1. What stands out to you from these verses?
2. How does the Mosaic Covenant remind you of the Abrahamic Covenant? (You may need to refer to your notes from yesterday.)
3. In what ways does the Mosaic Covenant differ from the Abrahamic Covenant?
4. Which of these covenants most clearly foreshadows the Gospel, and why? Why is this good news? (See Galatians 3:15-18)

Prayer: Give thanks to God for His Gospel of Grace! Pray that you might never rely on works to be justified, but faith alone.

WEEK 1

DAY 3

Today, we look towards the end of the book of Joshua. Here we read about Israel's victory in battle with the nations who were disobedient to God. Through these victories, Israel had received the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Read Joshua 21:43-45

1. Take note of some of the repeated words in these verses.
 - a. What do they teach us about God's sovereignty?

 - b. What do they teach us about God's character? (Compare with Numbers 23:19)

2. Consider all of the promises that God has made in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Spend a moment making a list of some of them.
 - a. As you look at your list, how do these verses in Joshua make you feel? (See 2 Corinthians 1:20)

Prayer: Praise God for His glorious promises in the Gospel and His faithfulness to His promises in Christ!

DAY 4

Today we read about the lowest point in Israel's history in the Old Testament: The remnant (the small, remaining group) of God's people—the southern kingdom of Judah—are taken into exile by the Babylonians.

Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-23

1. Looking at verses 15-16, how would you describe the spiritual state of God's people at this point?

2. Recall God's promises from Deuteronomy 28 (see Day 2). How are these promises fulfilled here?

3. What hope is held out for God's people in verses 22-23? Keeping Deuteronomy 28 in mind, why is this hope so surprising?
 - a. What does this teach us about God?

Prayer: Repent and pray for forgiveness for the times that you have forgotten God and rebelled against Him this week. Give thanks to God for His mercy and His Grace in the Gospel!

WEEK 1

DAY 5

Today, we zoom forward and read one of the last pages in our Bibles, which speaks about the end of history and the future hope for all God's people.

Read Revelation 21:1-7

1. What stands out to you from the imagery in these verses?

2. Recall the promises God made to Abram in Genesis 12 (see Day 1).
 - a. Who are the *people* of God in this passage?
(Compare to Ephesians 5:31-32)

 - b. What do we learn about the final *place* God promises His people?

 - c. What does it look like to be *blessed* by God?

3. In summary, how do these verses *fulfil* and *exceed* God's promises to Abraham?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for the future hope that He gives us in Christ's victory over sin and death! Pray that God would help sustain you in this hope until you die, or until Jesus returns.

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

the UNSEEN GOD

ruth



THE UNSEEN GOD: RUTH

Week 2	Ruth 1	God's Kindness
Week 3	Ruth 2	God's Love
Week 4	Ruth 3	God's Provision
Week 5	Ruth 4	God's Redeemer

WEEK 2: RUTH 1

DAY 1

Today we start the book of Ruth. It may be helpful to re-read the overview of Ruth on page 8. You may also like to read the entire book before you begin; it is a short and engaging story!

Read Ruth 1:1-2

- 1) The phrase, "in the days when the judges ruled" (1:1) is less like a timestamp and more of a theological comment on the times.
 - a) What does Judges 21:25 tell us about this time in Israel's history?

 - b) How might that explain the reason for famine in the promised land? (See Deuteronomy 28:15-18)*

2. Elimelek's actions seem reasonable at first. On second thoughts, why might they not be? (See Deuteronomy 23:3-6.) How do Elimelek's decisions relate to the days of the judges?***

3. How would you theologically describe our time in Australia's history? Have there been times you've been tempted, like Elimelek, to look for greener pastures outside of God's rule? Think about the times when you behaved more like a 21st Century Aussie and less like a follower of Jesus.

* Bethlehem means house of bread, the author uses tragic irony to emphasise, "something's not right here!"

*** Elimelek means my God is King, the author uses tragic irony to contrast his name with his actions.

Prayer: Pray for Australia; ask that God would be merciful to many Australians and save them! Ask God for forgiveness for the times you have doubted Him and looked to other things/places/people for satisfaction. Pray you would always find satisfaction in Jesus (See John 6:35).

GOD'S KINDNESS

DAY 2

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Joshua 14-23; Psalms 66-68;
Acts 17-18

Read Ruth 1:3-5

1. What are the ways we see God's judgment in these verses? What reasons might there be for His judgment? (See 1:1-2; Deuteronomy 7:3)
2. Put yourself in Naomi's shoes... how must she be feeling? What is it about her situation that makes her vulnerable? (See 1:12-13)
3. If these verses were an opening scene in a Hollywood movie, how would Naomi's predicament shape our expectations of a resolution?

Prayer: Pray for those who are particularly vulnerable in our society, our lives, and in our church. Pray that they would find comfort in God.

WEEK 2: RUTH 1

DAY 3

Read Ruth 1:6-22

1. Compare Elimelek's decision (1:1) with Naomi's decision (1:6). Why might her decision have been a hard one to make? What does this reveal about Naomi's character?
2. Compare Orpah's and Ruth's responses after Naomi's speech in verses 11-13. Why might Ruth's decision have been a hard one to make?
3. Have there been moments in your life when you've felt at a crossroads with God – whether to turn to Him or away from Him? What comfort does the Gospel give to those who turn to God? (See Acts 3:19)

Prayer: The Christian life is a life of daily repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47, 1 John 1:8-10). Confess your sins to God. Ask that you would always turn to Him in repentance. Can you think of people who have turned away from God? Pray that they would return to Him and receive life.

GOD'S KINDNESS

DAY 4

Read Ruth 1:1-22

1. We have considered the devastating events of Naomi's life. How does she interpret these events? (See verses 13, 20-21.) Do you think Naomi is angry with God? Why or why not?
2. Have there been times in your life when you've drawn similar conclusions to Naomi from your own circumstances? What was your response toward God?
3. Ruth 4:13 says, "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer." How does the story's conclusion challenge Naomi's understanding here?
4. How does the Gospel speak into moments where we doubt whether God is for us or against us? (See Romans 5:8, 8:28-31)

Prayer: If you are in the middle of a crisis with God, repent of the times you have doubted Him in a way that is sinful, and ask Him for help, including help to trust Him. If you are reflecting back on a time where you found it hard to trust God, give thanks to God for where you are now and how He has brought you here.

WEEK 2: RUTH 1

DAY 5

Read Ruth 1:1-22

1. Ruth 'goes for an Oscar' in verses 16-17. What stands out to you from what she says? What does it reveal about her character?
2. Read Ruth 4:13-17a... "Naomi has a son!" What do these verses suggest about Ruth's presence in Naomi's life?
3. Looking back over chapter 1, which moments reveal God's sovereign kindness to Naomi? Knowing Naomi's family history, what do these moments reveal about God's character?
4. Are there times in your life where hindsight revealed to you that God was always working, even when you doubted?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for His sovereign kindness to you in the Gospel, and in the everyday moments of life.

GOD'S KINDNESS

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 3: RUTH 2

DAY 1

Read Ruth 2:1-23

1. What stands out to you in this chapter?

2. Which character provides for Naomi?
 - a. Who do the characters attribute Naomi's provision to? (See verses 10, 12, 19, 20)

 - b. What can we learn from their example?

3. Look back at Day 2, Question 3 from last week. Has Naomi's predicament been resolved in this chapter? Why, or why not?

Prayer: Think of the people that have lovingly cared for and provided for you. Give thanks to God for them.

GOD'S LOVE

DAY 2

Read Ruth 2:1-9

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Joshua 24; Judges 1-9; Psalms 69-71;
Acts 19-20

1. What characteristics of Ruth stand out to you?
2. Read Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19.
 - a. How do these passages help us understand who Ruth and Naomi rely on for provision?
 - b. What part does Boaz play?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for His concern for the vulnerable. Pray that you might work hard, like Ruth, to provide for others. Pray that God would use you to love and care for others.

WEEK 3: RUTH 2

DAY 3

Read Ruth 2:8-13

1. What do these verses say about why Boaz shows special kindness to Ruth?
2. Read Leviticus 25:25, and 47-49. The concept of a 'guardian-redeemer' is established in God's law here as well as in other places. How do these verses help us understand:
 - a. Boaz's actions?
 - b. God's sovereignty over chance happenings? (See 2:3, 20)
3. Can you recall similar experiences of God's sovereignty in your life?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for His sovereign love and care for His people. Pray that you would have a deep trust in God's sovereign and loving care for you.

GOD'S LOVE

DAY 4

Read Ruth 2:14-23

1. "He's a law-abiding citizen"— what kind of characteristics do you associate with a person described this way?

2. Read Mark 12:28-31
 - a. What does Jesus' response to the teacher of the law teach us about the heart of God's law?

 - b. What evidence can you find in today's passage that Boaz understands the heart of God's law?

3. From the notes so far this week, what have you learned about the way God shows His love to His people?

Prayer: Thank God for His good law. Pray that God would use you to show His love and care for others.

WEEK 3: RUTH 2

DAY 5

Read Ruth 2:1-23

1. Reading over this chapter again, what stands out to you that didn't the first time?
2. "This chapter is a demonstration of God's loving provision for the vulnerable..."
 - a. Why might someone find that hard to believe?
 - b. How would you defend the statement?
3. God commands Christians to do good to all, especially those in God's family (see Galatians 6:10). Can you think of people in your life who show God's kindness in their actions? Can you think of particular times and opportunities where you have failed to do good to others?

Prayer: Thank God for His loving care and concern for the vulnerable. Pray for the vulnerable, especially those in our church family. Repent of those times where you have failed to do good to others. Pray that God would provide opportunities and use you to love and care for those most vulnerable around you.

GOD'S LOVE

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 4: RUTH 3

DAY 1

Read Ruth 3:1-6

1. Notice that Naomi's attention turns toward Ruth and her needs (3:1). What does this suggest about the change in Naomi's circumstances from chapter 1?
2. Naomi hashes a plan for Ruth to carry out. What kind of risks does Naomi's plan expose Ruth to (see 3:14)? Why do you think Ruth goes along with it?
3. What kind of risks does following Jesus expose you to? What is it about Jesus that makes you willing to take that risk?

Prayer: Thank God for His Word, which shows us the trustworthiness of Jesus. Pray that God would strengthen you to always trust and follow Jesus, no matter the cost.

GOD'S PROVISION

DAY 2

Read Ruth 3:1-11

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Judges 10-19; Psalms 72;
Proverbs 10-11; Acts 21-22

1. Naomi's plan seems to suggest Ruth should manipulate Boaz. How does Ruth deviate from the plan? What does this reveal about her character? (See verses 9-10)

2. Ruth has undergone a massive public image change from "the Moabite" (2:6) to "a woman of noble character" (3:11*). How?
 - a. What can we learn about true greatness from Ruth's life?

 - b. What moments of Ruth's life remind you of Jesus?

* Proverbs 31:10 and Ruth 3:11 are the only two occurrences of the phrase "Excellent Women" in the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible places the book of Ruth right after the book of Proverbs (not Judges as in our English Bibles). Is the author of Ruth drawing attention to the flawlessness of Ruth's character and crediting her the status of the 'Proverbs 31' woman?

Prayer: Thank God for the perfect obedience of Jesus, and that God has made Jesus' righteousness our own through the Gospel! Pray that you might grow in a godly character like Ruth's, through kindness to others in quiet, humble and hardworking obedience to God.

WEEK 4: RUTH 3

DAY 3

Read Ruth 3:1-18

1. The original language of Naomi's plan is intentionally ambiguous and is meant to sound suspect.
 - a. What could Boaz's reaction have been in this situation?

 - b. What does Boaz's behaviour here and elsewhere reveal about his character? (See 2:1.) Make a list of his character traits that stand out to you.

2. Reflect on how Jesus' character also fits that list. What other character traits could you add to the list when you reflect on Jesus' character in the Gospels?

3. What can we learn about entrusting ourselves to Jesus from Ruth's example?

Prayer: Thank God for revealing Jesus to you and calling you to put your trust in Him. Pray that you might grow in godly character like Boaz, through kindness, generosity, trustworthiness, and a willingness to protect the vulnerable.

GOD'S PROVISION

DAY 4

Read Ruth 3:1-18

1. Look back at Naomi's prayer for Boaz in verses 2:19c and 20a. How do we see her prayer answered in this chapter?
2. Look back at Boaz's prayer for Ruth in 2:12 and compare it with 3:9. How do we see Boaz's prayer answered in this chapter?
3. What do these two examples teach us about the way God may choose to answer prayer?
4. Compare 3:1 with 3:17. What can we learn about the way God works through human plans?

Prayer: Take a moment to pray for those in need in your life. Pray that God would be their provision. Pray also that God would use your efforts to answer this prayer. Write these prayers down somewhere so that you can look back on them in time and give thanks to God for any answers to them.

WEEK 4: RUTH 3

DAY 5

Read Ruth 3:1-18

1. Briefly look back over chapters 1 and 2. How have we seen the hidden providence and kindness of God in those chapters?

2. Chapter 3 is full of human plans, actions and kindness. Compare 3:1 to 3:17 and 4:13, 16-17. From these comparisons:
 - a. What can we learn about God's sovereignty?

 - b. What can we learn about God's kindness to His people?

3. How do we see God's sovereignty over human plans in the Gospel? (See Acts 2:23)

4. How do we see God's sovereign kindness to His people in the Gospel? (See Romans 8:28-32)

Prayer: Give thanks to God for His sovereignty over all things, even human plans and actions. Give thanks to God for His sovereign kindness to you in Jesus. Pray you would have assurance through trusting God in His sovereignty.

GOD'S PROVISION

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 5: RUTH 4

DAY 1

Read Ruth 4:1-10

1. Compare Boaz with the unnamed guardian-redeemer.
 - a. What does the unnamed man's change of heart reveal about his initial willingness to redeem Naomi? What does this reveal about his character?

 - b. In contrast, what does Boaz's willingness to redeem Naomi further reveal about his character?

2. In what ways does Boaz's redemption of Naomi come at personal cost to himself? How does this remind you of Jesus' redemption of you? (See Mark 10:45 and Philippians 2:3-8)

Prayer: Thank the Father for sending His Son to save. Thank God for Jesus' obedience, which meant that you could be redeemed. Pray that you might have the same attitude as Jesus, in humility and costly service of others. Pray that, by His Spirit, God might enable you to be obedient to Him even in the hardest circumstances.

GOD'S REDEEMER

DAY 2

Read Ruth 4:11-17

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Judges 20-21; Ruth 1-4; 1 Samuel 1-4;
Proverbs 12-14; Acts 23-24

1. "The book of Ruth is all about Ruth and Boaz." How do these verses challenge this understanding? What is the significance of understanding this book differently?
2. How has God worked through each of the characters to redeem and restore "Mara" back to "Naomi"? (See 1:5, 13, 20-21.) What evidence have we seen, throughout this book, of Naomi's acknowledgement of God in the provision she has received?
3. What role has Naomi played in this chapter? How does this remind you of the Gospel? (Compare to Ephesians 2:8-9)

Prayer: Acknowledge God's work in your life by giving thanks to Him for His care and provision. Give thanks to God for His Gospel of Grace alone!

WEEK 5: RUTH 4

DAY 3

Read Ruth 4:16-22

1. What stands out to you about the way this book ends?

2. Many people have wrestled with how these verses fit in the book of Ruth. Look again at Judges 21:25 and Ruth 1:1. How does the conclusion to the book relate to its opening?

3. What does the beginning and ending of Ruth teach us about:
 - a. God's sovereignty over history?

 - b. God's kindness to Israel?

 - c. God's kindness to you? (Compare with Matthew 1:1)

Prayer: Thank God for His sovereignty over all things. Thank God for His grace toward sinners. Thank God for saving sinners in giving us a king in Jesus Christ. Pray that God would be merciful to many, and that He would turn many more sinners to Jesus in repentance and faith.

GOD'S REDEEMER

DAY 4

Read Ruth 4:1-22

1. Look back over the entire chapter... how has the book of Ruth been a story of unseen redemption? Make a list of all the moments where God has been working behind the scenes.
2. There have been two *explicit* actions of God, which the author has drawn our attention to in the book of Ruth. See if you can find them.*
 - a. What do these details add to the story as a whole?
 - b. What do these details teach us about humanity's reliance on God? (See Psalm 127)
3. Can you think of areas of your life where you tend to rely on yourself and forget God? Can you think of areas of your life where you presume on God's Grace?

*Hint: 1:6, 4:13

Prayer: Pray that God would help you be humble and mindful of your reliance on Him. Give thanks to God for all that He has graciously given you in the Gospel and in life. Remind yourself daily of your reliance on God by inviting your heavenly Father to work in the details of your life through prayer (See Philippians 4:6-7).

WEEK 5: RUTH 4

DAY 5

Read Ruth 1:1-5 and 4:13-22

1. Ruth is often interpreted as a love story between Ruth and Boaz, or between Ruth and Naomi. What are some other ways you could frame this book as a love story? (See if you can come up with more than one.)
2. Which character in the book of Ruth best represents the Christian today? How could you use the book of Ruth to teach the glories of the Gospel? (Compare with Luke 15:11-31.)
3. How often do you think of the Gospel as a real love story? How might thinking of the Gospel in this way help you in:
 - a. Your personal relationship with God the Father?
 - b. Your personal evangelism?

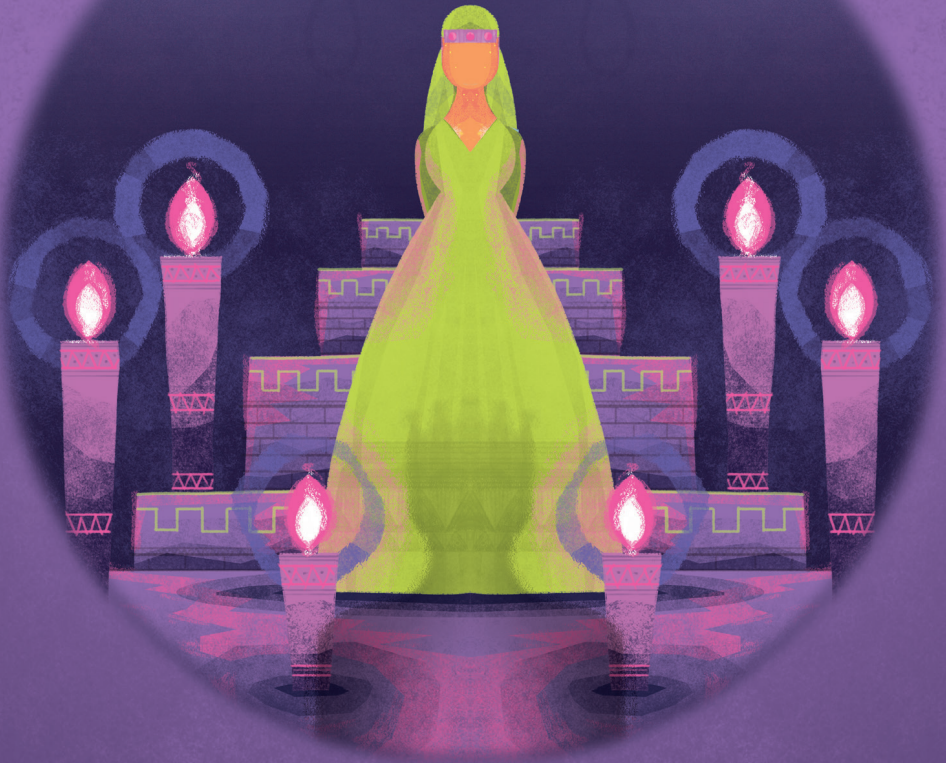
Prayer: Thank God that in His sovereign love, even in Naomi's day, He was working to save you in Jesus. Pray that God would help you rely solely on Jesus, your guardian-redeemer, for salvation. Pray for your friends and family, that they would come to know God as Father in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

GOD'S REDEEMER

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

the UNSEEN GOD

esther



THE UNSEEN GOD: ESTHER

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Week 6 | Esther 1:1-2:20 | A New Queen |
| Week 7 | Esther 2:21-4:17 | The Plot Against
God's People |
| Week 8 | Esther 5-7 | The Man the King Delights
to Honour |
| Week 9 | Esther 8-10 | Rescue and Triumph
(Part 1) |
| Week 10 | Esther 8-10 | Rescue and Triumph
(Part 2) |

WEEK 6: ESTHER 1:1-2:20

DAY 1

Today we start the book of Esther. It may be helpful to re-read the overview of the book on pages 8-9 .

Read Esther 1:1-12

1. King Xerxes throws a very, very big party (verses 4-5). From verses 6-8, what details about the party stand out to you the most?
2. What message do you think Xerxes wants to send about his kingship and kingdom?
3. Consider Xerxes' treatment of his wife, Queen Vashti (verses 10-12). For Xerxes, Vashti appears to be nothing more than another possession to display. What does his party and his treatment of his wife reveal about his character?
4. The Persians knew their leader as the 'king of kings' (e.g. Ezra 7:12), a title which the Bible ascribes to the ultimate king, the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g. Revelation. 17:14). From what you know of Jesus, how is He a far greater king than Xerxes?

Prayer: Give thanks for our gracious and humble king, Jesus. Although He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor! (2 Corinthians 8:9).

A NEW QUEEN

DAY 2

Read Esther 1:1-8

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Samuel 5-14; Proverbs 15-17;
Acts 25-26

1. Think of modern examples of the rich and powerful (e.g. movie stars) showing off their wealth and power. What similarities do you see in the way Xerxes behaves?
2. When someone makes a display like this, what does it say about what is important to them? (i.e. what they value, what they believe in...)?
3. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urges us, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20). The Apostle Paul also says, "what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).
 - a. What are some of the perishable 'treasures' which we (much like King Xerxes and Hollywood celebrities) are tempted to find meaning and significance in?
 - b. What could it look like for you to 'store up for yourselves treasures in heaven' rather than possessions here on earth?

Prayer: Pray that God would give you a Kingdom-mindedness, which values the unseen and the eternal. Give thanks that we look forward to a Kingdom that will never pass away.

WEEK 6: ESTHER 1:1-2:20

DAY 3

Read Esther 1:10-22

1. After Vashti's refusal to obey, Xerxes and his nobles resolve to send out an edict (an official order, 1:19-20). What were they trying to achieve (1:22)?
2. If Xerxes was trying to show and maintain his own authority, how might this edict actually achieve the exact opposite? What does it expose about him to his entire empire?
3. What model has Jesus given Christian men for how they ought to love their wives? (If you have time, read Ephesians 5:25-28.)
4. In what ways is this radically different from the example of Xerxes?

Prayer: Give thanks for Jesus' model of self-sacrificial love. Pray that the married men of our church would lead and love their wives as Christ does for His church.

A NEW QUEEN

DAY 4

Read Esther 2:1-20

1. Chapter 2 introduces us to two new characters: Mordecai, and his younger cousin, Esther. What do we learn about them from verses 5-7?
2. What made Xerxes choose Esther to be his new Queen? (See verses 15-18)
3. Esther becomes Queen. Xerxes throws her a banquet. Esther is obedient to Mordecai, and is probably obedient to Xerxes too. How does this resolve the 'problem' raised in chapter 1? (See 1:12)

This is the end of the first 'episode' in the book of Esther. But it's an uncomfortable end! The Persian King Xerxes has found a new wife in Esther, but she is one of God's people! She's now married to a pagan and hiding her true identity as an Israelite. We are right to be concerned for her spiritual wellbeing, and maybe for physical wellbeing too. Yet, as we read on, we will realise that God is quietly at work to bring about good for His people.

Prayer: Give thanks to God for working even through the complexity and mess of our lives to bring about good.

WEEK 6: ESTHER 1:1-2:20

DAY 5

Today we will consider the following question: 'What does Esther 1-2 teach us about God and us?' (In other words, 'What is the *theological* significance of Esther 1-2?') 1 Corinthians will help us answer this question.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

1. This passage outlines the usual way God has worked throughout history. Looking at verses 26-29:
 - a. Who does God choose to save?

 - b. What reasons are given for God choosing these people particularly?

2. Remember the main characters from Esther 1-2: King Xerxes, Queen Vashti, Esther, and Mordecai. Out of these characters, who are the 'powerful', and who are the 'weak'? Place each on this scale:

Weak ————— Powerful

3. Just like God chose the young, orphaned minority girl, Esther, to become Queen, God chooses the 'lowly' for salvation in Christ. How does remembering this fact help you to be humble and give all credit to God?

Prayer: Praise God for His infinite wisdom in choosing the lowly. Ask Him that you would boast in Him alone, forever.

A NEW QUEEN

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 7: ESTHER 2:21-4:17

In this week's passage, a terrible plot is hatched against God's people. This plot will be the big issue dealt with in the rest of the book.

DAY 1

Read Esther 2:21-3:6

1. In 2:21-23, Mordecai is the hero who saves the King's life! What comes as a surprise, then, in 3:1?
2. Haman is clearly a nasty piece of work (3:6). But he gets honoured by the king. Mordecai, on the other hand, refuses to honour Haman. In verse 4, what hint are we given for why Mordecai won't honour Haman?
3. There was a long history of enmity between God's Old Testament people, the Jews, and Haman's people, the Amalekites. How does this help explain Haman's extreme response to Mordecai's refusal to bow (3:5-6)? (If you have time to dig a little deeper, you could read Exodus 17:8-16 and 1 Samuel 15 to see some of this history.)
4. God always takes personally what happens to His people, and we will see His powerful hand at work to protect them as the story continues. In what ways have you seen God stick by you and protect you?

Prayer: Praise God that He cares for us and will always work for our good.

THE PLOT AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE

DAY 2

Today's passage tells of Haman's horrible plan to kill God's people.

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Samuel 15-24; Proverbs 18-20;
Acts 27-28

Read Esther 3:7-15

1. In verse 7, a dice is rolled to choose the date that all the Jews would be killed.
 - a. In what month is the dice rolled?
 - b. What month is chosen for Haman's plan?
2. Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." By God's design, Haman's plan would not take place for another 11 months. Why might God have done this?
3. Imagine being a Jew and reading this edict (verse 13). How would they be feeling? In what ways would it cause them to look to God for help?
4. God is our helper, our strength, and our comfort. What things are happening in your life that you need to ask God for help with, and trust Him with whatever the result may be?

Prayer: Ask God to provide for your needs and thank Him that He is good and trustworthy.

WEEK 7: ESTHER 2:21-4:17

DAY 3

Read Esther 4:1-8

1. How does Mordecai and the rest of the Jews respond to the king's edict? (See verses 1-3)
2. Mordecai and the Jews must have felt utterly powerless and are grieving in a very obvious way. However, *fasting* usually comes alongside *prayer* (e.g. Jonah 3:5-8). But there is no mention of prayer here. Given the seriousness of the situation, why should Mordecai immediately have turned to prayer?
3. In verses 5-6, Esther is unaware of the edict. As the Queen, she lives in the palace and is far removed from the trouble of God's people. In what way does her ignorance of the edict highlight the spiritual danger she is in?
4. Today's passage reminds us of two important parts of the Christian life: relying on God in prayer, and being connected to God's people. How can you prioritise both this week?

Prayer: Thank God for His church. Pray for our church particularly that we would prioritise gathering together every Sunday, to help each other follow Jesus.

THE PLOT AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE

DAY 4

Read Esther 4:9-17

1. Today's reading has a back-and-forth conversation between Mordecai and Esther, through Esther's servant, Hathak. What does Mordecai want Esther to do and what is Esther's response? (See verses 8-11)
2. For Esther to approach King Xerxes, not only would she be risking her life, but she would be revealing her Jewish identity. At this point, it seems like Esther's game plan is to avoid talking to Xerxes, hide her identity and survive the massacre.
 - a. What *warning* does Mordecai give Esther? (See verses 13-14)
 - b. What *encouragement* does Mordecai give Esther?
3. "And if I perish, I perish." These are powerful words. But it is likely that this is a statement of courage and bravery mixed with fear and despair. Compare these words to those of Jesus: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). How is Jesus a greater 'type' of Esther?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for the Lord Jesus, who courageously came into the world to suffer and die—giving His life as a ransom for many.

WEEK 7: ESTHER 2:21-4:17

DAY 5

Read Esther 4:12-17

1. In his response to Esther (verses 13-14), Mordecai seems strangely confident about a couple of things. List the things he is confident would happen.
2. What might Mordecai believe about God that he could be so certain of the Jews being saved?
3. "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time?" Although God is not mentioned by name here, how is this an expression of trust in God?

Prayer: Like Mordecai, we too can be confident that our God saves us. In Philippians 1:6, Paul says that he is "confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Thank God that we can trust Him to rescue us from our greatest enemies—sin, Satan and death.

THE PLOT AGAINST GOD'S PEOPLE

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 8: ESTHER 5-7

DAY 1

Read Esther 5:1-8

1. Chapter 4 left us on a real cliffhanger moment: Esther is about to approach King Xerxes unannounced, not knowing if he will accept her, or put her to death for it. In 5:1-2, what makes us breathe a big sigh of relief?
2. In verse 3, we might have expected Esther to ask the king to undo Haman's edict. But she doesn't ... yet. Looking at verses 4-8, what tactics does Esther use to 'butter up' the king before making her request? See how many you can list.
3. It seems Esther allowed three days for fasting (i.e. going without food to ask God for help) *and* for developing this cunning plan (4:16, 5:1). How is this event (5:1-8) an example of both God's complete control *and* our real responsibility to act? How is this an encouragement for you to both pray *and* act? (To dig a little deeper, read Philippians 2:12-13.)

Prayer: Thank God that He is the Powerful One who works within and through us to bring about His purposes. Ask Him to help you to love and obey Him today.

THE MAN THE KING DELIGHTS TO HONOUR

DAY 2

Read Esther 5:9-14

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

1 Samuel 25-31; 2 Samuel 1-3;
Proverbs 21-22; Mark 1-2

1. Read through today's passage again, taking note of what things please and delight Haman, and what things displease and upset him.

HAPPY HAMAN

SAD HAMAN

2. What picture do we get of Haman? What words would you use to describe his character?
3. Proverbs 16:5 says, "The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Since this is true, what end can we predict for Haman (and, ultimately, for all the proud in heart)?

Prayer: Give thanks to God that He "opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble" (James 4:6). Pray for a soft and humble heart that would trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin and pride all your days.

WEEK 8: ESTHER 5-7

DAY 3

Read Esther 2:21-3:1 and 6:1-10

1. “All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king” (2:23). When we first read chapter 2, this seemed like a random detail for the author to include: Mordecai saves the king, and it was written down that this happened. Why bother to include that it was written down?! But with 6:1 in mind, why was it important that this happened?
2. Likewise... in 6:1, we read that the king was having a hard time sleeping one night. But with the rest of chapter 6 in mind, how did the king’s sleeplessness prove to be important?
3. Even seemingly insignificant events (like the fact that the king couldn’t sleep one night!) end up screaming loudly of the absolute power of God. Because the king couldn’t sleep that night, Mordecai escapes impalement, and all the Jews would end up being saved from slaughter! Hindsight is 20/20. What seemingly random things did God use to help bring you to salvation in Christ?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for using the things in our lives to bring us to faith in Jesus. Pray that He would use the circumstances in the lives of others to save them.

THE MAN THE KING DELIGHTS TO HONOUR

DAY 4

Read Esther 6

1. What do you find funny in chapter 6?

2. There is something delicious in the irony of Haman having to honour the man he intended to impale! But it is also a lesson in justice because it would have been a terrible thing for Mordecai to be impaled and for Haman to continue being honoured. What does this event teach us about God and what He cares about?

3. What has just happened for Mordecai is a foretaste of what will come for both him and the rest of God's people in Esther.
 - a. How does it also remind of you the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

 - b. How does it also remind you what is to happen for Christians in the end?

Prayer: Ask God to give you courage to keep walking with Christ, knowing that He will honour His people in end, even if now we are dishonoured in the eyes of the world.

WEEK 8: ESTHER 5-7

DAY 5

Read Esther 7

1. Once again, there is a dark humour to this chapter. Given what we know of Haman as a person, and what he planned for Mordecai, why is it so satisfying that he meets his end in this way?
2. What does Esther call Haman in 7:6?
3. We may not typically have enemies like Haman today, who try to kill us for following Jesus. However, other Christians in more hostile parts of the world may have more similar experiences. How is the defeat of Haman a reminder and encouragement for us of the ultimate end of the enemies of Christians today (e.g. sin, Satan, death, the hostile world)?

Prayer: Ask God to hasten the coming of Jesus, who will bring the Kingdom and finally defeat His enemies for good.

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 9: ESTHER 8-10

DAY 1

The end of the story has almost come. Esther's boldness has paid off, and Haman, the "enemy of the Jews", has been punished for his wickedness. But the king's edict for the destruction of the Jews is still in place...

Read Esther 8:1-10

1. How did King Xerxes reward Esther and Mordecai for their actions? (See 8:1-2)
2. The king's signet ring is mentioned four times in this passage (verses 2, 8, 10). Re-read these verses. What is the significance of the signet ring?
3. Xerxes could not undo his former edict; the Jews would still be attacked. How does Xerxes seek to resolve this? (See verses 8-10)
4. Back in Genesis 12, God made some very big promises to Abraham and his descendants, and God is faithful to His promises. Knowing this, how does the following promise give us confidence that the Jews would prevail?

"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you"
(Genesis 12:3)

Prayer: Although the Jews seemed to be in an uncertain position, God is always faithful; God would be faithful to His promise to bless His people and curse their enemies. Ask God to give you confidence in His faithfulness, and to know deeply the security you have before Him in Christ.

RESCUE AND TRIUMPH (PART 1)

DAY 2

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

2 Samuel 4-13; Psalms 73-75;
Mark 3-4

Read Esther 8:11-14

1. Below are the words of Haman's edict, and Mordecai's (NIV). With a pen, underline the similarities in the two edicts. Also take note of the differences. What are the big differences between the two edicts?

Haman's Edict (3:13-14)	Mordecai's Edict (9:11-13)
<p>¹³ Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews— young and old, women and children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.</p> <p>¹⁴ A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.</p>	<p>¹¹ The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies.</p> <p>¹² The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.</p> <p>¹³ A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.</p>

2. Mordecai's edict ensured the Jews could defend themselves against their attackers (9:11). But it was also about fulfilling a promise God had made many centuries earlier, to bring judgement upon the Amalekites for their evil against His people (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Haman was himself a descendant of the Amalekites. But reading about war in the Bible can seem confronting for us. It is important to remember the context God's people were in: They were foreigners in a pagan nation which had unjustly declared war on them (3:13). How, then, is Mordecai's edict good news for the Jews?

Prayer: Today, be reminded of Jesus' victory over your enemies—sin, Satan and death. Jesus won this victory not with a sword in His hand, but with nails *through* His hands and feet, and a spear in His side. Praise God for Jesus' sacrificial victory on the cross.

WEEK 9: ESTHER 8-10

DAY 3

Read Esther 8:15-17

1. Compare 4:1-3 with 8:15-17, highlighting anything that is similar.

Response to Haman's Edict (4:1-3)	Response to Mordecai's Edict (8:15-17)
<p>¹ When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. ² But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. ³ In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.</p>	<p>¹⁵ When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. ¹⁶ For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. ¹⁷ In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.</p>

2. 'Reversal' is a key idea in 8:15-17. How are things reversed for Mordecai and the Jews?
3. Another great reversal takes place when someone starts to trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Just like the Jews celebrated when they were saved from their enemies, we ought to celebrate since we have been saved from the wages of our sin. How is God stirring you to be thankful today?

Prayer: Pray in light of your response to question 3.

RESCUE AND TRIUMPH (PART 1)

DAY 4

Read Esther 9:1-19

1. What details of today's passage immediately stand out to you?
2. Despite the great number of Persians killed in this war, there are a few hints that the Jews were not unjust or cruel in their actions. What hints do we find in verses 6, 10, and 15-17?
3. Some Christians today find it is strange that there is fighting like this found in the Bible. Again, how does remembering the context the Jews were in help you to understand why this fighting had to occur?

Prayer: Few of us have lived in war-torn parts of the world. Give thanks to God for saving His people that day, and that He has kept so many of us from war. Pray for peace in our nation and also globally.

WEEK 9: ESTHER 8-10

DAY 5

Esther 8 and 9 have confronted us with war. Today, we will read from Romans to help us think more about conflict and how Christians ought to respond.

Read Romans 12:14-13:5

1. In 12:17-19, Paul tells the churches in Rome to be peaceful, and not to take revenge. What reason does he give for this in verse 19?
2. Although God is the Judge and we are not, there is still a place for punishing wrong-doing in the world (13:1-5). How are Christians to relate to the governing authorities?
3. Today, Christians in Australia are in a different context to God's people in Persia in Esther's day. Christians are not a national group (like Israel were); we are a spiritual group. But we do live in nations, under governing authorities. If Australia were to go to war to fight against a terrible injustice, how should Christians think about this? How does Romans 13 help us think about this?

Prayer: Praise God for the freedom we enjoy as a nation, bought by the sacrifice of many, especially in World War I and II. Pray for ongoing peace, but even more so for the ongoing spread of the gospel, which brings humanity in to peace with God.

RESCUE AND TRIUMPH (PART 1)

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 10: ESTHER 8-10

DAY 1

Read Esther 9:20-32

1. This is Mordecai's second letter that he sends out. What instructions does he give the Jews? (See verses 20-22)
2. Why was the festival called 'Purim'? (See verses 24-26)
3. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD" (Proverbs 16:33). God is *still* not mentioned by name, even as Mordecai establishes a festival that was to be celebrated every year. Even still, what should the festival's name, 'Purim', remind everyone about God?
4. The main celebrations we have today are Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and New Year. What attitude and mindset should we bring to these celebrations as Christians?

Prayer: Pray that God, our Creator and Saviour, would be front and centre in all your thoughts, always, and that this might shape you into a person of joyful thanksgiving.

RESCUE AND TRIUMPH (PART 2)

DAY 2

Read Esther 10:1-3

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

2 Samuel 14-24; Psalms 76-77;
Mark 5-6

1. The final verses in the book of Esther are bittersweet with good news and bad news.
 - a. What *bad* news are we given in verse 1?

 - b. Despite Xerxes still being in power, what is the *good* news for God's people? (See verse 2)

2. Look again at verses 2-3. What different words are used to describe the lives and actions of Xerxes and Mordecai?

3. How is this 'mixed-feelings' ending a reminder that God's people needed a far greater liberation than what they experienced in Esther?

Prayer: Praise God for the salvation He won for us in Christ. Pray that Jesus would return soon to put an end to all injustice and oppression, and pray for more people to be saved before then.

WEEK 10: ESTHER 8-10

DAY 3

Read Esther 10:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-20

1. Throughout the Old Testament, God raised up different people to foreshadow the coming of the ultimate Saviour and King, Jesus.
 - a. Looking at our two readings (and just from your general knowledge), make a list of everything that is similar about Mordecai and Jesus.

 - b. What is different about them?

2. Although there are many differences, one of the key ones is the way in which Mordecai and Jesus brought about salvation. Mordecai's enemies were impaled upon wooden poles (Esther 9:13). Looking at Colossians 1:19, what is striking about the way Jesus brought salvation?

Prayer: Pray with Colossians 1:15-20 open before you, praising God for the things it says about Jesus.

RESCUE AND TRIUMPH (PART 2)

DAY 4

Over the next two days we will read Colossians 2:13-17. It is particularly relevant in light of the book of Esther: it considers both salvation from our enemies (verse 15), *and* how to think about religious festivals (verses 16-17).

Read Colossians 2:13-17

1. From verses 13-14, make a list of the things we needed saving from.
2. Verse 15 brings the spiritual realm into view. How did God defeat the evil spiritual powers?
3. God's rescue of His people in Esther's day was truly wonderful. Even so, in what way is this a much 'bigger' salvation?
4. Keeping Colossians 2 in mind, what are you thankful for today?

Prayer: Thank God for the salvation you have in Jesus—the forgiveness of sins and eternal freedom from any condemnation.

WEEK 10: ESTHER 8-10

DAY 5

Read Colossians 2:13-17

1. Verse 16 starts with the word 'therefore'. This means that verses 16-17 necessarily 'flow out' of the salvation God won for us through Christ (verses 13-15).
 - a. What instruction does Paul give in verse 16?

 - b. How does verse 14 explain why no one can *judge* us according to any festival?

2. What does verse 17 teach us about Old Testament religious festivals?

3. Remember the Festival of Purim (Esther 9)? How might it function as a 'shadow' that points us to Christ?

Prayer: Like the Jews did in the festival of Purim, give joyful thanks for the rescue you have enjoyed by God.

RESCUE AND TRIUMPH (PART 2)

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

