

Foundations Devotional

• FOR THE WEEK OF FEB 7 - FEB 13 •

MONDAY // ESTHER 5-7

Esther decided to intervene for her people. The stakes were high. Even the queen could be put to death for entering the king's presence without an invitation. So Esther prepared through fasting and praying. The Jewish people did the same. After three days, Esther entered the king's court, inviting the king and Haman to a banquet. Her patience gave time for God to work out the details of His plan for salvation. Time and again in Scripture, we are reminded that God orchestrates even the seemingly insignificant moments of our lives to bring Him glory. Whereas Haman was expecting to be honored by his enemy Mordecai, it was Mordecai who would be publicly honored by Haman. Throughout, we are reminded of God's sovereign control over the details of our lives. As you reflect on the picture of God in these chapters, remember that God is in control of your life, which means you can trust Him wholeheartedly.

TUESDAY // ESTHER 8-10

Esther exposed Haman's plot which led Ahasuerus to have him executed. But the edict to kill the Jews remained in effect. Under Persian law, Ahasuerus could not revoke it. Instead, the king issued a second edict authorizing Jews to arm and defend themselves, unleashing two days of violence as the two sides fought openly. The Jews overcame their opposition, and afterward, Mordecai ordered a celebration of these victories, which led to the establishment of the annual Festival of Purim. Because of the faithfulness of Esther and Mordecai, the Jewish people were protected, and God received the glory for everything He had done. Although the name of God is never explicitly mentioned in Esther, the book emphasizes the providence of God, the power of prayer and fasting, and the persuasive potential of courageous men and women of faith. God used Mordecai and Esther in a mighty way to preserve His covenant people—and with them, His ultimate plan of deliverance that would come nearly five centuries later in Jesus Christ. As their story reminds us, God receives glory when His people live in faithful obedience to Him.

WEDNESDAY // NEHEMIAH 1-2

The Book of Nehemiah picks up where Ezra left off in the historical records of the restoration of Jerusalem. Under Ezra's spiritual leadership, the Jews began to renew their allegiance to the Lord. Just 13 years later, Artaxerxes allowed another Jewish leader, Nehemiah, to return to the city. Nehemiah appeared with an ambitious goal: to rebuild the city's wall. Nearly a century had passed since the first Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem. In that time they had constructed the temple and various other, mostly private, structures. Yet even so, the defensive wall that surrounded the city remained to be rebuilt. The true problem wasn't a broken-down city. The true problem was a broken-down people who had a disconnected relationship with God. Nehemiah was called to rebuild a city and a community of people in shambles. Because of the exile, Jerusalem was in need of both physical and spiritual renewal. The same is true of our broken world. There are hurting and helpless people all around us—people who need the hope of Christ. When we let this reality sink in, like Nehemiah, we are compelled to step up and make a difference.

THURSDAY // NEHEMIAH 3-4

The work to which God called Nehemiah would not be easy. And he could not do it alone. One reason the work progressed so quickly was that everyone took part, from rulers and temple personnel to merchants and families. Even people from the villages distant from Jerusalem helped. More intimidating than the physical obstacles was the human opposition. Not everyone was thrilled with Nehemiah's plan. In the Persian government, lines of authority were not always clear, and some officials feared that a stronger Jerusalem would diminish their prestige. For others, the development awakened ancient rivalries with the Jews. These enemies would seek to undermine Nehemiah with false accusations. Many people living in the vicinity were determined to spoil Nehemiah's plans. When we commit to faithfully serving God, He gives us big, God-sized goals that are only accomplished when we depend on Him. Oftentimes, the bigger the goal, the bigger the challenges we face. No matter the source of our opposition, God gives us the strength to persevere and complete our tasks, as Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem demonstrated for us.

FRIDAY // NEHEMIAH 5-6

During the building program, Nehemiah learned of social injustice among the Jewish population. The number of workers needed to rebuild Jerusalem's wall was immense. The danger of attack required an equal number of men for military service. The economic strain created by pulling so many able-bodied workers from the regular labor force gave way to corruption. Some Jews took advantage of other Jews to increase their profits. Nehemiah knew that the wall would not be completed unless the needs of the people were met. But more importantly, he knew that the rebuilding of the "spiritual city" would never be completed unless he faced the issues at hand. Despite external opposition and internal problems, the people continued to build the wall. Finally, the work was finished. It had taken only 52 days. From the beginning, Nehemiah had put the matter of rebuilding Jerusalem's wall in God's hands. God's people had determined that the best answer to their opposition was to keep working and to fulfill God's will. As they did so, neighboring nations saw God's power at work in them. When God's people accomplish God's work in God's strength, God gets the glory.

WEEKEND // FINISH UP ANY YOU DIDN'T DO