

INDUCTIVE STUDY ON ESTHER

Procedure:

1. **Historical Background:** worth 4 of 20 total points
Give me at least 300 words of historical background describing the geographical location of the story, and the time period (especially in reference to the exile), and tell me why these things are important to understanding the book. You may, and probably should, use outside sources for this section and may reference them in the text, e.g. (*Title*, Author, p.##). Now, to move to a deeper level, see if you can place this book in its “theological” background. That is, see if you can draw any conclusions about the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the promises of Abraham or perhaps draw some connections between this book and Deuteronomy. These are fairly deep questions and I wouldn’t be surprised if you have trouble thinking of an immediate answer. Think of it as a chance to actually think. At least give me some of your thoughts on paper, even if they seem disconnected or unfinished to you.

2. **Observation & Listing:** worth 8 of 20 total points
As you read through Esther keep track of 1) ***Providential happenings***, 2) ***Ironic twists***, and 3) ***Characteristics of the characters***. Every time you see one of these things, briefly list it along with its verse reference. Just be as complete as possible. A brief description and example of each of the three categories follows:
 - a. ***Providential happenings***
These are times that an unbeliever might call a convenient coincidence or luck but in which a believer can see the hand of God. In the New Testament Matthew cites the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem as a result of God’s hand, though many people didn’t even take notice. As opposed to *miracles* where the laws of nature are broken (walking on water or raising the dead), *providence* is where God is at work “behind the scenes.” In the book of Esther God’s name is not mentioned but he is clearly at work providentially. One clear example happens when the King can’t sleep. He asks for the historical records to be read to him so he can fall asleep and he just “happens” to read about Mordecai’s heroic deed. That’s providence! And should be listed like:
 1. The King just “happens” to read about Mordecai’s deed when he can’t sleep (6:1-2).

 - b. ***Ironic twists***
These are those interesting and unexpected “U-turns” which a story sometimes takes. The name of the feast “Purim” is a good example. The name “purim” means “lots” as in “dice” which were cast. They were originally cast in order to determine the day in which the Jews would be slaughtered. As it turned out, that day became a time of slaughter of the *enemies* of the Jews and a day of celebration for them. What had been intended as very bad turned out to be very good. That’s an ironic twist! Lot’s of ‘em happen in Esther and should be listed like:
 1. The name of the feast “Purim” originally referred to a day of destruction but then turned into a day of celebration (9:20-26).

 - c. ***Characteristics of the characters***
Some people feel very strongly about the character of the main characters of the story. (I

guess I'm one of them). Maybe you feel strongly too. What I'd like you to do is to keep a listing of the character of the main characters (Esther, Mordecai, Haman, the King), perhaps in two lists: things you *could emulate* and things you *wouldn't want to emulate*. For example, you might decide that Esther is courageous and you would want to emulate that. Or you might notice that she doesn't tell others about her Jewishness and decide it is a result of her obedience to Mordecai (positive trait) or you might decide that it was wrong to hide her Jewishness no matter what Mordecai thought (negative trait). Whatever you decide, keep a list of the character of the characters, and always include a verse reference so we know where you got it from!

3. Annotated Outline: worth 8 of 20 total points

a. After you've completed your lists, hopefully, you'll have a better understanding of the book and will be ready to outline it (as we have every book in class). I'd like to see an outline that is at least three levels deep

- I. Level one
 - A. Level Two
 - 1. Level Three Or
- 1A Level one
 - 1B Level two
 - 1C level three

and give a short paragraph describing each section. Make certain that *verse references* appear by each point of the outline so I know which passages you're talking about.

Example of *verse references*:

1A	The job of the queen opens up	1:1-22
1B	The prelude to the poor decision: the king is smashed	1:1-8
2B	The Queen refuses the King's request	1:9-15
3B	The King looks for plan "B"	1:16-22

If you need an example, just look at the book of Ruth in your. The only problem with Ruth is that it is such a short book the outline only goes 2 levels deep instead of 3. You won't need to go 3 levels (1A, 1B, 1C) deep in *every* part of the outline, but you will in several.

Otherwise, do it like the outline for Ruth and trace the story of the book as it develops in the paragraphs that you write under each outlined point. Remember that in each of the outlines I've given you, I have told what the story *means* not just what the details of the story *are*.

Try to give some insights in your outline to help another reader understand what God is teaching as he tells the story! Don't simply describe content, but describe what the content *means* in your outline.

b. Try to keep the length between 3 and 6 pages for the outline: no less than 3 full pages and no more than 6 full pages. Single space the paragraphs and double space between paragraphs, just like this page! Also, it will help your outline tremendously if you only have 3 or 4 main points (1A, 2A etc.). Above all, and I really mean this, have fun with this assignment. This book is one of God's special treasures: if you dig hard enough you'll find them and if you listen carefully enough, you'll hear them. **Don't worry about what others have written; try to be original.** Don't look in other commentaries and don't look on our class web site (I've temporarily taken Esther off in order to encourage you to think for yourself 😊). Remember to always be asking yourself the question, "What does this book tell me about God?"

4. Final product

Give me 300 words of historical, geographical and theological background, 3 separate “listings” (providential happenings, ironic twists and character of the characters) and 3-6 pages for the outline. Just submit it in Word.docx format in Moodle by the date listed in the syllabus.