

2. Read Esther 4 and mark the following words: Sackcloth, ashes, wailing, weeping, fasting. By paying close attention to those words, what do you learn from them in this passage?

3. What does the Word of God say about fasting from the following passages? In what context do we find God's people fasting?
 - A) Judges 20:26

 - B) Jonah 3: 4-10 (Jonah is a reluctant prophet sent by God to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh.)

 - C) Nehemiah 9:1-3

4. In one or two sentences, summarize the paragraphs in Esther chapter 4. This helps in finding out the theme of the paragraph.
 - 4:1-3

 - 4:4-8

 - 4:9-12

 - 4:13-17

Interpretation: (Using your paragraph summaries and observations determine the subject, theme, and purpose of this chapter.)

Subject: (What is the author's general topic?)

Theme: (What specifically about the subject is being discussed?)

Purpose: (This is the purpose the Holy Spirit had in mind when He inspired the passage. Ask yourself, why is this in the Bible?)

***To help you determine the subject, theme, and purpose of this text, **ask questions of the text.** Below are some examples to help you start:

5. Upon hearing of Mordecai's loud and bitter wailing by the king's gate, why do you think Esther became distressed? (See verse 4, Nehemiah 2:1-2)

6. What did Esther ask Mordecai to do for her? How does Esther's request show that she has not lost all of her Jewish roots or that, perhaps, she never did? (See 1 Samuel 1:7-11, 2 Samuel 12:16-17, Ezra 8:23)

7. Would you say that there is a turning point in this chapter for both Mordecai (4:14, Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-16) and Esther (verses 15-17)? Explain.

8. Esther became the mediator between the king and her people. What does mediator mean? Who does this point us to? (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:11-15)

9. One comforting theme of the book of Esther is the providence of God. How do you see this in chapter 4? Give specific examples from the text.

Application:

10. How does Esther's response of "If I perish, I perish" show both courage and submission? What areas in your life need wisdom and courage from God as you serve Him and His people?
11. Esther's willingness to sacrifice herself on behalf of her people points us to the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. As believers, we no longer face the decree of death because of our sins—Jesus took on death for us. Read Jesus' words to the multitude that was following Him in Mark 8:34-38.
- a) Do you see any parallels to the book of Esther?
 - b) Does this bring to mind anything that you might apply to your own life?
 - c) Where has God providentially placed you right now?
 - d) Are there areas in your life He might be requiring you to sacrifice and step out in faith for the good of others? What are they?
12. What lessons do you learn from Esther and Mordecai about being an active part of God's providential care for His people?