

The Hidden Hand of God

A Family Study for Purim

by Sandra Niedrauer

Day 1:

The Importance of Obedience

Who were the Amalekites?

Read Exodus 17:8 and 14-16.

How did God begin to fulfill His word?

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-9

Discuss the following questions:

What did Saul do wrong?

Do you think Saul's disobedience frustrated God's purpose?

What consequences did Saul experience because he did not obey God's command?

Read 1 Sam. 15:22, 23 and 2 Sam. 1:5-10

Commentary: So Saul did not kill *all* the Amalekites, but spared Agag. Years later, a descendent of Amalekites was continuing the tradition of his ancestors in trying to destroy the Jewish people. His name was Haman. The Bible calls him an "Agagite," meaning that he was a direct descendent of King Agag himself.

Jewish tradition is that King Agag's son was conceived while the king was in Saul's custody (this explains why a son of Agag survived when all the other Amalekites were killed). Even when the prophet Samuel later killed Agag, the line of descendants was continued through the son that was born after King Agag died. Haman and his sons were the offspring of Saul's disobedience.

At the same time that Haman lived in Persia, there lived another man who was descended from the family of King Saul. His name was Mordechai. King Saul did not carry out God's instructions against the family of Agag, so God brought another from his family to do the job.

It is important to remember that God does not need us to accomplish His purposes. Remember Mordechai's statement to Esther? He said, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish." Esther 4:14, NASB.

If we obey God, He will use us. If we disobey Him, we will bear the consequences of our disobedience, but God's will always stands. He will simply give the job to someone else.

How about us? Have we demonstrated a willingness to obey God? Will we reap the blessings of obedience or the consequences of disobedience?

Activity: Play charades, acting out Bible stories where someone obeyed God (examples: Noah, Abraham, Gideon, or Moses). For more interest, also act out some Bible stories where someone *didn't* obey God, and suffered the consequences (examples: Jonah, Balaam, Saul, Moses at Meribah, or Pharaoh).



Day 2:

The Hidden Hand of God

What is one characteristic of the way God normally operates in our world?

Read Prov. 25:2

Why do you think God chooses to do things that way?

Do people usually recognize what God is doing, or that He is the one responsible for what they are experiencing?

Read Is. 26:11 and Is. 45:15, 16

Why do you think people do not easily recognize God's hand at work?

What should be the perspective of God's people when they cannot clearly see God's hand in their circumstances?

Read Deut. 29:29, Is. 55:8, 9, and Rom. 8:28, 29, John 20:29.

Discuss the following questions:

The book of Esther is the only book in the entire Bible that never once mentions the name of God. Why do you think that is?

Do you think Esther or Mordechai could see the hand of God in their circumstances or knew for sure what the outcome of the situation would be?

Commentary: We need to remember that even when we cannot see the hand of God working in our lives, He is *always* there, working for our good and for the fulfillment of His will.

This is why we eat "hidden" foods on Purim—the hamantashen, the kreplach, and the Purim challah all have something in the middle that doesn't easily show on the outside. It is to remind us of the hidden hand of God, working to bring about what He has already determined will be.

Do we recognize the hidden hand of God in everything that happens to us? How should that change our attitudes toward our circumstances?

Activity: Do the Treasure Hunt activity, found on page 20 of this issue.