

AN EVENING WITH ESTHER

The events of Esther took place in Ancient Persia in the 1st Century B.C. At that time, the Persian Empire dominated the ancient world.

The story of Esther occurred during the reign of King Ahasuerus (also known by the Greek name, Xerxes). He reigned in Persia from 486 to 465 B.C., when he was assassinated. He ruled from the Capital City of Susa. Esther's story begins in the early years of his monarchy.

In the third year of King Xerxes reign, the King is planning a war against Greece (which was ultimately doomed to failure). He throws an 180 day party for the military leaders, princes and nobles in order to gain popularity for his war plans. During the party, he displayed his enormous wealth and power.

During this time in Jewish history, many Jews who had been exiled have returned to Jerusalem and are rebuilding the temple and the city walls. The Jews in Jerusalem felt that those who remained in Persia had disobeyed God. It is believed that many who stayed in Persia remained because they were enjoying prosperity and material comfort. They had been absorbed into Persian society.

The book of Esther takes place between the 6th & 7th chapters of Ezra.

Queen Vashti was a Persian Princess by birth. Her name means beautiful woman. Nothing is known about her after she was dethroned.

Esther's name in Persian means a star or one with good fortune. Her Hebrew name, Hadassah, means myrtle. The myrtle is an evergreen shrub in the Middle East. It has fragrant leaves and beautiful delicate white flowers. Esther was an orphaned Jewish girl living in Persia.

An interesting item to note about the Book of Esther is that it is the only book of the Bible in which God's name is not mentioned. However, God's hand is surely seen.

Esther - Act 1 (Esther 1:1-22)

Narrator: Once upon a time, there was a king named Xerxes, who ruled in Persia. His throne was in the City of Susa. After he had been King for 3 years, he wanted to enlarge his kingdom to include Greece. So, in order to impress those he was recruiting to go to war with him, he decided to give a big banquet, and invited all the military leaders, princes and nobles. For 180 days, he showed them his great wealth. Then he gave a final banquet lasting 7 days in the garden of his palace and invited all the people from the least to the greatest who lived in Susa. There was great splendor in his garden - hangings of white and blue linen which were fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement. Wine was served in goblets of gold - every goblet was designed to be different - the royal wine was abundant - and the King ordered that every man should drink as much as he desired. Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in another section of the royal palace. On day 7 of the banquet, the King was feeling real good from all the wine he had been drinking, and he said

King Xerxes: I order that the Queen come before me and all my company to display her beauty wearing only her royal crown.

Narrator: The Queen refused.

King Xerxes: How dare she refuse me!! I will consult my wise men about how to handle this stubborn woman.

Narrator: The wise men advised the King that if he did not punish the Queen, all the women of the kingdom would disobey their husbands.

King Xerxes: I issue a royal decree to be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Queen Vashti shall never again enter my presence. She is no longer Queen. Another Queen shall replace her. Women must respect their husbands, and especially me, the King.

1. Why do you think Queen Vashti defied the King's command?
2. What alternatives did she have?
3. What were the risks?
4. What would or could have happened if she had obeyed the King?

Esther - Act 2 - (Esther 2:1-15)

Narrator: Several years later, after the Greek wars, (which the King lost by the way) the King was feeling very sad. He missed Queen Vashti. His wise men proposed that there be a beauty contest and that the winner would be the new Queen.

King Xerxes: Splendid idea!! I can review each girl personally and the best one will be Queen. The others can be added to my harem. After all, no harem is ever big enough for a king like me.

Narrator: As it turned out, there lived in the City of Susa, a Jewish man by the name of Mordecai, from the tribe of Benjamin. He had an orphan cousin, named Esther, whom he had raised from a little girl. Esther was beautiful in both face and body.

Mordecai: Esther, I have heard about a beauty contest that the King is having to select a new Queen. You should participate in the contest. You must go. It is a great opportunity for you.

Esther: As you wish, Mordecai.

Mordecai: You must promise me one thing. Do not reveal to anyone that you are a Jew.

Esther: I will obey you Mordecai as I have always done.

Narrator: Esther was taken to the King's palace. Hegai, who was in charge of the harem, was pleased with Esther. He immediately provided to her all the best beauty treatments and special food. He assigned seven special maids to her and moved her and her maids to the best place in the harem. She lived in the lap of luxury. After twelve months, Esther's turn came to go to the King for one night. The rule was that anything that she wanted to take with her, she could choose - the finest gowns, jewels, etc. You know, it was kind of like going to Neiman Marcus, or Limited, or Old Navy, and being told you could have anything in the store and as much as you want. All the girls before Esther had selected jewels, gowns, and other expensive items. When Esther's turn came, she said to Hegai (who was in charge of the harem)

Esther: I will take nothing with me other than what you suggest.

5. Was Mordecai's direction to keep Esther's Jewish blood a secret wrong?
6. Should she have obeyed her Uncle?
7. Have you ever kept secret that you are a Christian?

8. What are Esther's characteristics?

Esther 2:9 - Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women.

Esther 2:10 - Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.

Esther 2:12-15 - Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.¹³ Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.¹⁴ In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.¹⁵ Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.

Esther 2:16-17 - So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

9. How does one develop inner beauty?

10. Describe inner beauty.

11. Does it have something to do with physical beauty?

1 Peter 3:3-4 - Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

12. How does inner beauty affect your life? How does outer beauty affect your life?

Isaiah 3:16-26 - Moreover the LORD says: "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, And walk with outstretched necks And wanton eyes, Walking and mincing as they go, Making a jingling with their feet, Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab The crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, And the LORD will uncover their secret parts." In that day the Lord will take away the finery: The jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents; The pendants, the bracelets, and the veils; The headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; The perfume boxes, the charms, and the rings; The nose jewels, the festal apparel, and the mantles; The outer garments, the purses, and the mirrors; The fine linen, the turbans, and the robes. And so it shall be: Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; Instead of a sash, a rope; Instead of well-set hair, baldness; Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; And branding instead of beauty. Your men shall fall by the sword, And your mighty in the war. Her gates shall lament and mourn, And she being desolate shall sit on the ground.

13. Is it wrong to wear makeup, fix your hair, wear jewelry, etc?

14. Should you try to be physically pleasing/attractive to God, yourself & others?

15. What should your attitude be toward outer beauty? How should you dress?

16. What does it mean to be female?

17. Could it be accepting yourself for who you are?

18. Who are you?

Psalm 139:13-16 - For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.

Isaiah 45:9-11 - "Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'? Woe to him who says to his father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to the woman, 'What have you brought forth?' " Thus says the LORD, The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons; And concerning the work of My hands, you command Me.

Isaiah 43:7 - Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

Isaiah 43:21 - This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:22 - in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

John 15:16 - You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Act 3 - (Esther 2:16-18)

Narrator: Esther was then taken to spend the night with the King. After her night with the King, he said

King Xertes: You are the most beautiful of all the women I have seen. You shall wear the royal crown and be my Queen.

Narrator: The King gave a great banquet to celebrate and proclaimed a holiday.

19. So, Esther went in and slept with the King - a non-believer to whom she was not married. (The only of the woman fit to be Queen was her beauty and her performance in his bed.) He chose her to become Queen, but what could have happened to her? Was Esther a victim?

Each girl in turn would go into the King. Once she spent the night with the King, she would become a concubine. The King might never call her to him again. He might not even remember her name. She could never be with anyone else or marry anyone else. She might never have children. She would live in the royal palace with many luxuries which she could indulge in to the full- beauty treatments, clothing, jewelry, the best food in the Kingdom, etc. That would be her life.

- Captive to the sexual whims of a capricious, cruel, sensual King
- Degradation of women - women made to be companion and helpmate, instead victim of man's passion - all a result of sin.

20. To those who weren't picked to be Queen, was it worth it for one night with the King?

21. And for Esther, who became Queen, was her life much better? Was she in any better position than Queen Vashti had been?

(SHE WAS JUST A MATERIAL POSSESSION - SOMEONE THE KING UTILIZED WHENEVER HE FELT THE NEED TO DO SO)

22. What would have happened to Esther if she had said - "I worship the one true God and before Him I cannot sleep with a man outside of marriage, nor can I marry a man who worships other gods. I mean no disrespect, O King, but before my God, I cannot do this."?

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

23. Was it wrong for Esther to be married to the King, an unbeliever?

Act 4 (Esther 2:19-4:17)

Narrator: Meanwhile, Mordecai got a new job, sitting at the king's gate. While he was working, he overheard two of the king's officers conspiring to assassinate King Xerxes. Mordecai went to Esther.

Mordecai: There is a plot to assassinate the King. His two head officers plan to carry out this plot at midnight.

Esther: I will report it to the King.

Narrator: And she did, giving all the credit to Mordecai. The two officers were sentenced to death on the gallows. All of this was reported in the King's special journal. Then, the King elevated **Haman**, an Amalekite, to be his 2nd in command. All the officials at the King's gate knelt down and paid honor to **Haman**, however not Mordecai.

Mordecai: I will not kneel down or pay you honor. I am a Jew.

Narrator: **Haman** was furious. He wanted to kill Mordecai. But then, he came up with a better idea.

Haman: Not only will I arrange Mordecai's death, but all of the Jewish people. I have a great plan. I am a genius.

Narrator: So, **Haman** went to the King.

Haman: Dear King, Honorable King - it is so sad that there are certain people in our kingdom who do

not obey your laws. They should not be tolerated. If it please your majesty, issue a decree to destroy them. I will personally contribute to the King's royal treasury the sum of ten thousand talents of silver to cover expenses. If there is any excess, it shall remain in your royal treasury to be used as you, your majesty, shall so choose.

King Xerxes: Sounds like a wonderful idea. **Haman**, you are amazing! Handle it all. I leave it all in your very capable hands.

Narrator: An edict was then issued to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews including their women and children on a certain day, twelve months hence. **Haman** had cast lots (known as a pur) to determine the special day for the killing. **Haman** was a superstitious man. The King and **Haman** then sat down to drink. However, the City of Susa was in turmoil. Soon, Mordecai learned of the death edict.

Mordecai: I tear my clothes. I put on sackcloth and ashes. I cry and cry. I stand at the king's gate crying, weeping, wailing. Woe is me!!! Woe is me!!! Woe is me!!!

Esther: What is happening? Why is Mordecai crying?

Narrator: Esther sent a servant to find out the problem. He returned with a copy of the death edict for Esther to read. He also sent a message asking Esther to plead for their lives with the King.

Esther: I cannot approach the King. He has not requested to see me in the last 30 days. If I go to the inner court without being summoned, the King will have me put to death. That is the law. The only exception is if the King were to extend his gold scepter to me. I will die.

Mordecai: Do you think you will escape? You are also a Jew. Someone will find out. If you don't do anything, there will be deliverance from some other source, but you will still perish because you did nothing. But who knows, you may have come to this royal position for such a time as this?

Esther: Go, gather together all the Jews in the City, and tell them to fast for me for three days and nights. I and my maids will do the same. At the end of three days, I will go to the king, despite the law. And if I perish, I perish.

Act 4 shows Two Conflicting World Views -
Here God contrasts Righteous Mordecai with Wicked Haman -
God also shows us the difference one person can make -

Haman - atheist, plans to annihilate God's people, control of own destiny, self-interested, obsessed with pride and the praise of men, petty-minded, full of self, anger/retribution.

Mordecai - believed human responsibility is to respond to God, saw a pattern of events for which God is responsible, understood that God rules history and nothing by chance, God uses human agents to affect events, God will deliver His people, faith in God's control of destiny, seeks welfare of others, seeks peace

Mordecai was a descent of Kish, the father of Saul - a Benjamite.

Haman was a descendant of Agag, a bitter enemy of Saul. Agag was the Amelekite King whom Samuel finally killed. Saul did not kill the Amelikite's family as God had commanded. If he had, there would have been no Haman. (Long-term results of disobedience - God had commanded Saul to wipe out the Amelekites). The Amelekites had remained bitter enemies of the Jews.

GENERATIONS WILL REAP WHAT WE SOW!!

Psalm 1 - Righteous v. Wicked

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in

the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (NIV)

The contrasts of two people:

1. The one who bathes himself in God's Word and lives her life accordingly
2. The one who does not follow God's Word or way, but instead dwells upon evil and walks among those who live godless lives

We may go either of two ways: We make a Decision to determine our Direction - God's Way or Man's Way.

God's way leads to life. Man's way leads to death.

DECISION determines DIRECTION determines DESTINY.

We choose either life or death.

Matt. 7:13-14 - Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (NIV)

Prov. 16:25 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. (NIV)

25. What are three things that the "blessed" woman does not do according to Verse 1 of Psalm 1?

- a) does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, that is, does not order her life after their counsel
- b) does not stand in the way of sinners, that is, to situate herself among sinners, and
- c) does not sit in the seat of mockers, that is, to dwell in close fellowship with those who mock God and His way.

Note the natural progression of sin - walking, standing, sitting -

Imagine a person walking by, then around those who sin

Then she moves in and stands among them, learning their ways and imitating them

Finally, she sits down and begins living and thinking as they do

26. Why do you think people walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners and sit in the seat of mockers? What is it that motivates a person to sin and to get close to those who are "good" at it?

27. What does it mean to "delight" in Scripture and to "meditate on it day and night"?

28. What three blessings come to the woman who roots her life in Scripture according to verse 3 of Psalm 1?

- a) She is like a tree planted by streams of water, ie the inner longings of her life are continually met; she is refreshed no matter what happens around her, no matter the troubles, pains, etc and even when she walks through the valley of the shadow of death
- b) Which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither - even when wind, rain, hail, snow, frost, drought and heat occur, because she is rooted in God's Word and fed by a never-ending stream of grace, she will be a blessing to God, herself and others - reflecting the fruits of the Spirit in her life.
- c) Whatever she does prospers - this is a testimony to God's ability to make everything good - by bearing fruit for God, she will get into a life cycle that is rich, rewarding and produces obedience, joy and peace (Rom 8:28)

29. In what ways are the wicked like chaff?

When grain is threshed, the worthless part (the seed covering and other debris) separates from the valuable grain. Later, in an ancient process known as winnowing, the grain and chaff are thrown into the air. The wind blows away the chaff because it is light, but the heavier grain falls back to earth. Chaff is useless. A sinner lives a useless, shallow life. This is all there is to life - misery in this life and the next life as well.

30. When determining right from wrong, does a person's culture dictate what is right or wrong?

31. How much do you let your culture decide what is right for you?

32. Does right or wrong change from day to day or from generation to generation?

Now - we've looked at the difference between the righteous and the wicked - Let's look at the situation between the King and Haman.

The King was easily influenced by Haman. Both by flattery and money. The King is walking in the counsel of the wicked Haman, and ultimately sitting down to toast the massacre of the Jewish people.

Esther hears of the King's Edict, which cannot be changed. She is extremely concerned, particularly as the King hasn't sent for her in 30 days. Her status is questionable with the King.

The King protected himself by not allowing anyone into his presence unsummoned. If anyone approached and the King didn't want the person in his presence, the King could order the person killed on

the spot.

Esther knows the King is changeable in his moods and often even in his actions - easily angered. (Example: An older king, named Pythius of Lydia, joined with him in war and asked to have the oldest of his 5 sons remain, not go to war and care for him. King Xerxes became enraged and ordered the eldest son cut in two and had one half of the son placed on either side of the path as the army marched between to war. He stated that he granted King Pythius's request and left the eldest son at home.)

King Xerxes mistreated the poor, the helpless and women. He had no compassion for his subjects. He was obsessed with wine, wealth and entertainment. All that mattered to him was his own selfish agenda and status.

So, Esther realizes by approaching the King when He hadn't asked for her, she risks her life. She chooses to risk all - "If I perish, I perish"

33. How willing are we to risk our lives for others?

34. How willing are we even to be inconvenienced for the sake of others?

Mark 8:34 - ... If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

35. What would it mean for your life to become that kind of disciple?

36. Do you feel insignificant - that what you do really doesn't matter?

Examples of one person making a difference: Esther, Joseph, Moses

Modern Day Examples:

1. Air Fla crash by 14th street bridge - man who died in icy water letting others go before him
2. Columbine shooting - Christian girl who died and impact she had
3. Train wreck - 2 girls killed - parents on tv - testimony for Christ

Each of us makes a difference - we have been chosen by God for a purpose - to love and serve those within our sphere of influence.

Act 5 (Esther 5:1-10:3)

Narrator: On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace.

The king was sitting on his royal throne. When he saw Queen Esther and her beauty, he thought, how could I have neglected my Esther and stayed away from her these 30 days? He was pleased to see her and held out the gold scepter. She approached and touched the tip. Now, the King knew that Esther would not have done such a risky thing unless it was important, so he said

King Xerxes: What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.

Esther: If it pleases the King, let the king, together with **Haman**, come today to a banquet I have prepared.

King Xerxes: Bring **Haman** at once so that we may do what the Queen asks.

Narrator: So, the King and **Haman** went to the banquet. After dinner, as they were sipping their wine, the King said

King Xerxes: Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.

Esther: My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and **Haman** come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare. Then I will answer the king's question.

Narrator: **Haman** left the banquet, feeling oh so happy. But, when **Haman** saw Mordecai who, once again,

did not bow before him, **Haman** was filled with rage. **Haman** went home and said to his friends and wife,

Haman: I have vast wealth and many sons. The king has honored me and elevated me above all others except himself. I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me again tomorrow. BUT, I am unhappy, as long as that Jew, Mordecai continues to sit at the King's gate.

Narrator: **Haman's** wife and friends then advised him to build a gallows and ask the king the next morning to have Mordecai hanged on it and then go to dinner and be happy.

Haman: I shall do it. Let's build a gallows for Mordecai. I shall stay up all night, if necessary, to see that it is completed by morning.

Narrator: That night, the king also had trouble sleeping. So, he ordered that the journal of his reign be read to him. He thought it would put him to sleep. However, as they were reading to him, they came to the section that described how Mordecai had revealed the plot to assassinate the King.

King Xerxes: What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?

Narrator: He was told that nothing had been done for Mordecai. So, first thing in the morning, when the King saw **Haman**, before **Haman** could issue his request that Mordecai should die on the gallows, the King said to **Haman**,

King Xerxes: What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?

Narrator: **Haman** thought the King was speaking about him, and **Haman** said

Haman: Bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man and lead him through the city streets on the horse, proclaiming "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor".

King Xerxes: Wonderful! Wonderful! Go, get the robe and horse and Mordecai the Jew and take him through the streets, honoring him as you have suggested.

Narrator: So **Haman** was forced to honor his enemy. Afterwards, **Haman** rushed home in sadness and grief and told his wife and friends what had happened. They predicted that this was his downfall. Then, **Haman** had to leave for Esther's banquet. After they finished eating and were sipping their wine, the king said

King Xerxes: Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.

Esther: If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life --- and spare my people - this is my request.

King Xerxes: Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?

Esther: The adversary and enemy is this vile **Haman**.

Narrator: The king got up in rage and went out to the palace garden. But **Haman**, terrified, stayed

behind

Haman: Oh please, please Queen, I do not want to die.
Save me Queen Esther. Save me.

Narrator: The king returned and found **Haman** falling on
Esther and the King exclaimed

King Xerxes: Will **Haman** even molest the Queen while she
is with me in this house? Hang **Haman** on the
gallows that is outside.

Narrator: **Haman** was hanged. The King gave Queen
Esther the estate of **Haman** and gave **Haman's**
signet ring to Mordecai and made him 2nd in
command, in place of **Haman**. The King allowed
Esther and Mordecai to write a new edict
granting the Jews the right to protect
themselves - to destroy, kill and annihilate
anyone who attacked them or their women or
children. Thus, the Jews were saved because of
Queen Esther's bravery and wisdom.

Act 5 proves that God is in control.

Life is not a random experience of one incident after another, a
matter of chance, but in the hands of the Omnipotent One, our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ, it is a journey of purpose in which we
each fulfill a role that God has intended for us from before we
were born.

**The Book of Esther teaches us that we should have a strategy, using
God's wisdom and leading, that circumstances should not determine
our emotions and actions, and that God intervenes for our benefit.**

I. Having a Strategy - Wisdom (Think Before You Leap)

A. Prayer

Esther fasted and requested others to do so. It gave
them a chance to calm their emotions, gain perspective and place
their problem in the hands of God. The people were pretty upset.
There was a death sentence on their heads. They fasted and waited
upon God.

Is. 40:31 - but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, the will walk and not faint.

- 1) Gain a new strength - need when road is rocky
- 2) Get a better perspective - eagle's eye view of our circumstances
- 3) Store up extra energy - which we can draw upon as needed
- 4) Deepen our determination and perseverance - wards off weariness.

These three days of fasting were a silent yet powerful interlude in Queen Esther's life. Also, God prepares, not only our hearts but the hearts of those who oppose us - - during prayer and fasting.

Fasting does not twist the arm of God to get Him to do what we like. It helps us to seek Him as our highest priority. Seeking God should be more important to us than our daily needs. We can then hear God's "still, small voice" and know what He wants us to do.

B. Patience

Esther invites the King and Haman to a banquet she has prepared. She makes no brash demands, issued no statements of defiance, and threw no fits of hysteria. Her beauty, calm and sincere respect continued to attract the King. She acted with self-control. She doesn't panic. Her confidence is not her own. Her waiting produced inner strength.

C. Planning

37. Why two banquets? Why not share her concerns with the King immediately? Esther was being sensitive to God's timing - careful not to rush but take everything "in His time". Just as Esther gives herself time before she asks the King to protect the Jews, we must wait and not jump ahead of God's plan.

II. Circumstances should not determine emotions and attitudes.

After the first banquet, Haman should have been happy, but he wasn't. Despite his vast wealth, many sons, being honored by the invitation to the banquet, he couldn't enjoy the blessings of his life because he kept focused on his displeasures over Mordecai not bowing down to him. He allowed circumstances and peoples responses to determine his emotions and attitudes.

We should base our emotions and attitudes upon God's love for us. It never changes.

(Side information: The gallows Haman built for Mordecai was not a platform with a rope to go around his neck. It was a large stake upon which the victim would be impaled. It was a gruesome and torturous death that left the victim on the edge of death for hours as the weight of their body forced them to slide further down the stake.)

III. Coincidence or Divine Intervention

The construction of the Book of Esther is incredible. (Repetition, irony, contrast and humor)

The King, on this particular night, is preoccupied with how to honor someone who has done a good deed and has gone without recognition for five years. His intentions on this night were to honor. Haman's intentions were to destroy. He has also spent the night awake; however, he has occupied himself by building gallows on which to execute Mordecai. It is ironic that the very person both men are thinking about is Mordecai. Adding to the irony is the fact that Haman enters the court to approach the King about executing Mordecai, but he has no idea that he will leave the court to honor his adversary in front of the whole city.

38. Was this all a coincidence? What are the chances that Mordecai's good deed would have been read to the King that night?

39. Have you ever experienced things that others would call chance or coincidence, but you saw as Divine Intervention?

Mordecai was never rewarded for saving the King from assassination.

But God remembered. When no one seems to notice, God does. When nothing seems just, it is. God's timing is not our timing. Even when God seems distant or absent, He is still there and He cares. God's unseen hand is at work.

If we live our lives by the way things appear, we are living by sight rather than by faith.

The periods of God's silence are just as significant as the times He speaks. It gives our faith a chance to be fine-tuned.

God is omnipotent. He intervenes in history and in the hearts of men "in His time."

The King's heart changed from one that gave the Jews into Haman's hands to one that gave Haman's estate into the hands of two Jews.

Prov. 21:1 - The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he

directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

Although the King's edict could not be changed or revoked, the King allowed Esther and Mordecai to draft a separate edict to give the Jews the right to defend themselves. This edict did not annul the first edict - but it ultimately had the same effect. So the Jews were empowered by the Second Edict to fight their enemies.

As Christians, our enemy is the devil. God gives us power to fight the enemy -

Col 4:2 - Prayer

Eph 6:11 - Armor of God

Rom 15:13 - Power of the Holy Spirit

Gal 2:9 - Fellowship of Believers

Titus 2:3-4 - Godly counsel

No matter how difficult the situation - remember:

Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world (I Jn 4:4)

If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31)

God is in control.

God wins in the end. (Rev. 21:4)

The Book of Esther shows that God brings justice in His time and in His way. Sometimes the justice comes in the way we have expected, and at other times we are surprised by God's ways. But one thing remains certain. It is that God is faithful. He will provide and care for His people. From an overwhelming opposition to the smallest concern, God continues to be faithful to us. God provides not only for Esther and Mordecai, but for all of His people. Because He has been faithful, the people respond with rejoicing and celebrating. Our response to God should be no different.

To: My Daughters

From: God

Subject: Good Morning

I am God.

Today I will be handling all of your problems.

Please remember that I do not need your help.

If the devil happens to deliver a situation to you that you cannot handle, DO NOT attempt to resolve it. Kindly put it in the SFJTD (something for Jesus to do) Box. It will be addressed in My time, not yours. Once the matter is placed into the box, do not hold on to it or attempt to remove it. Holding on or removal will delay the resolution of your problem. If it is a situation that you think you are capable of handling, please consult me in prayer to be sure that it is the proper resolution.

Because I do not sleep nor do I slumber, there is no need for you to lose any sleep. Rest my child. If you need to contact me, I am only a prayer away.

