

Esther - Lesson Three

In every person's life, God will appoint situations where we are faced with the choice to do what is RIGHT or to go with the flow. Whether you face a death sentence, like Esther, or the ridicule of being branded narrow-minded or fundamental, either way the character qualities are the same. It will take courage, commitment, and loyalty to choose what is right.



The Pencil Sketch

1. In your mind's eye, peruse through the events of chapters 1–3. Try to make a word sketch of the events so far.

Chapter 1 -

Chapter 2 -

Chapter 3 -

Read Esther 4-5

Chapters four and five are pivotal to the book of Esther. From this point her true colors begin to sparkle.

2. What stands out to you in these chapters?
 - a. What colors of character do you see shining through?

3. Have you ever been in a situation where to obey Christ meant enduring mocking, contempt, or risk?

Call to Action

Read Esther 4:1-11

The edict has been signed and delivered, and now the reaction!

4. What does the response of Mordecai and the Jews to this devastating news reveal about the Jews in Persia at this time?
 - a. If you will recall, in chapter 3 we read of Mordecai's refusal to bow down to Haman. Do you think Mordecai's actions somehow caused this crisis? Did he feel personally responsible?

5. This reaction was not merely a show of mourning or sadness, but a display of heart crushing grief. To better understand this custom, describe the situations in these passages that brought this about:

Genesis 37:32–35

2 Samuel 1:11–12

Joshua 7:6–9

Jonah 3:5–10

6. What did Mordecai want Esther to do (verse 8)?

- a. Why was Esther's initial response not very encouraging? (verse 11)
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7. Notice the different responses from Mordecai, from the Jews, and from Esther in the palace.
 - a. What made the difference?

 - b. How can the comforts and ease of life make us indifferent, uncaring, and nonchalant toward the suffering of other believers in the world?

 - c. Do you see this happening in the United States? If so, is there a current example?

 - d. How can we avoid this dangerous trap?



Call to Prayer

Esther 4:12-17

8. Heroes come in all shapes and sizes, in large arenas or to small audiences. How do you define heroism?

- c. What do you have to lose by revealing your true identity as a Christian? What would you gain?



Personally Tailored

Think of a situation God is calling you to that may need risk and courage to fulfill. What was your first reaction to this challenge? How has God strengthened you to do the right thing?

11. What do you think Esther has in mind when she asks everyone to fast?
(Hint: It's not a palace diet!)
12. How do the following verses bring out a measure of understanding about fasting:
- 2 Samuel 12:23
- 2 Chronicles 20:3–4
- Psalm 69:9–13
- Isaiah 58:4–10
- Matthew 6:16–18



Personally Tailored

It's so easy to read this story already knowing the end result, but being put in the actual situation can be freightening beyond measure. Keep in mind, marriage at this time never meant partnership. They didn't share their lives together; Esther would live in a separate room—possibly a separate building—from the king. Maybe you feel your marriage is moving in the same direction as Esther's: married to an unbeliever, living under his rules, moving in different directions, and trying to keep peace in the home. Esther's ONE solace and strength was fellowship with God—fasting and praying. Though she didn't see God working... He was working at every point! Take a moment to express your heart in prayer for your marriage, whether it is blessed or needy. If you are single, pray for your future spouse, pray for a prepared heart. Spend time thanking God for the unseen work He is doing.

13. God's silence never means God's absence; we see that in these chapters. What good comes from waiting on God and His timing? (Isaiah 40:31; 41:10–13)
 - a. Are you experiencing 'delays' in your life? Are you able to see God working in the midst of them?

*Write out at least two things you need to fast and pray for
(it could be a person, a situation, a personal struggle, etc.).
As a group, choose 1 day this week to fast and pray for the needs of your group.
Be sure to record the results as they come!*

John 14:13

Call to Feast

Read Esther 5:1-8

Esther and Haman are a lesson in contrasts. Beginning in chapter 5, we see two roads, two attitudes, and two results, which come about by the reasoning of each heart.

14. At the end of the third day, the fast is over and Esther is ready to take action. Upon seeing Queen Esther, how did the king react (verses 2–3)?
 - a. Do you think the situation would have been different had she not spent three days in spiritual preparation?
 - b. After finding favor in the eyes of the king, Esther makes her request. Why do you think she requested that the king and Haman come to a banquet instead of just making her ultimate request known?
 - c. How would you have responded?

Call to the Gallows

Read Esther 5:9-14

15. Describe Haman's mood as he left the banquet (verse 9).

- a. What caused his mood to suddenly change?
 - b. Why do you think Haman was so bothered by the sight of Mordecai?
16. Can you think of a time when you responded in bitterness, which led to anger toward someone you knew or even loved?
- a. What was the reasoning behind that bitterness?
 - b. How did it affect that relationship?
17. List four things Haman bragged about when he got home.

*"Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow,
and the parent from which all the other sins come."*

William Barclay

18. From what we read of Zeresh and her advice, how would you describe this woman behind the man Haman?

a. Can you hear her response to Haman as he complained about Mordecai: “Haman! Don’t let anyone stand in your way. We waited along time for this position and NO ONE is going to get in the way! If he won’t respect you...get rid of him!”

b. As you read this account, would you say Haman considered his wife:

A loud mouth to be ignored,
A continual drip that needed to be stopped, or
An asset...to listen to and heed.

c. Which of the above would those closest to you say about you?

d. How important are sound words spoken in love, especially in a marriage?

Haman’s heart blinded him. A wealthy man with abundance, and yet, his focus is set on destruction. Unwise in his judgments, he listens to the counsel of his friends and his wife.

19. As we close this chapter, there are three main couples in this Book, how would you assess each pair in the book:

King Ahasuerus and Queen Vashti

Mordecai and Esther

Haman and Zeresh

Esther knew the risk and danger of her venture, but with the courage given by God, she presented herself to the king. On the surface, she was poised and charming—inside she was shaking like a leaf! But her plan has only just begun...

