

Read Esther 1

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him. Esth

1:12 Sometimes in our marriage, my wife has to set me straight. She says there have been times when we get around other people and I don't treat her as well as I should. I am kind of a jokester, and apparently some of the jokes and jabs that I give don't make her feel very special or appreciated. As someone who married way out of his league, that always hurts me to think I treat this special treasure of a wife in a way that is less than she deserves. I had to apologize and ask her to help me care more about my relationship with her than with others.

King Ahaserus had a similar problem; he didn't treat his wife as he should. He had been showing off everything in his palace to his party guests, and his wife just became something else to show off. She didn't want to be called as the queen by some of his servants. She wanted to be called as a wife by her husband. Wives you need to help us as husbands to realize when we're being morons and not treating you as you deserve. We might get our feelings hurt, but pray that the Holy Spirit confirms to us the truth of your words. **If you are a husband, it's all right to treat your wife like a queen, unless you go the route of Ahaserus. You didn't marry her as a mother, or as a cook, or as anything other than your wife. Those may be her roles, but that's not who she is. Husbands...let us ask forgiveness of our wives and our Lord for how we take our wives for granted. Wives, please forgive us when we ask.**

Read Esther 2

Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised . And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. Esth 2:15 I have now lived near minor league baseball teams for a while, and I notice that sometimes they have very good players that have the ability to play at the major league level, but never get called up. The biggest problem for many of these players is that they don't listen. They already know that they are very talented, but as a result they aren't very coachable. No matter how good you are, if a manager is concerned you might not listen then he probably doesn't want you. If someone pays you a million dollars, they expect you to listen.

Esther certainly wasn't part of the culture of the kingdom she was living in. She was a Jew, but she was being selected as a candidate for queen. She really wasn't sure what to do, so she did the best thing she could...she listened. The king had a servant to help take care of these ladies, and Esther was asking questions, and listening to answers and advice. She didn't pretend that just because she was a potential queen that she would become so. And it becomes clear that God's will was for her to become the new queen. **Are you listening to those around you? Do you sometimes assume you already know how to do most things, and miss the wise counsel of others? Make**

sure that you are taking time to listen. People respect someone who listens more than they talk.

Read Esther 3

When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage. Esth 3:5 Rage isn't a word I hear a lot. We might admit to becoming angry at times, but rarely would we admit to rage. The word here in verse 5 refers to "burning anger", and I would have to admit that I have suffered from that sinful affliction in my life a time or two. The line between anger and rage is a thin one, and we have to prevent an escalation of sin into rage. Abraham Lincoln, one of my favorite presidents, had a way of moving past his anger. When he needed to write a letter to someone that had severely irritated him, he always wrote two letters. The first was deliberately insulting and often said what he felt. Then he would rip up that letter and write a second one that was more tactful and discreet. He didn't allow his anger to rule him.

Haman sure could have used someone to teach him this lesson. Mordecai would not bow to Haman who was clearly a man in charge. Mordecai claimed that because he was a Jew, that he would not bow to Haman. The assumption is that Mordecai will only bow in the presence of the Lord, and not for any man. Instead of respecting Mordecai for his convictions, Haman enters into a rage that extends beyond the man himself and soon consumes Haman with a hatred for an entire race! **Do you have areas in your life that have turned into anger and then to rage? Perhaps you feel slighted by someone. Maybe someone has done you a terrible injustice. No matter the issue, when you become consumed by rage, the person that suffers is going to be you. Ask God to release you of your anger, and then make a decision to do so. God helps the willing. Don't ask God to powerfully eliminate sin from your life if you don't plan on being a part of that solution.**

Read Esther 4

"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. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" Esth 4:14 When I was in high school I joined the FFA because when you enter livestock shows, there is more money available to the winners. My brother was in for this reason and so was I, until our advisor came to me and asked me to enter a speaking competition. I had never done public speaking and didn't think it was my thing. He said the winner of the competition in our local chapter got a \$100 savings bond, and as of that moment, I was the only participant. So I entered, and won since I was the only one giving the speech. However, this led to more speaking contests and victories, and I firmly believe that God wanted me to do that because as one called into the ministry, public speaking is a huge part of what I do. I would have never realized that God was preparing to use public speaking as a major tool in my life, but now looking back I can see His fingerprints all over the situation.

Esther became queen, but it wasn't for any grand purpose. When the king says you're a finalist for queen, you don't just say no. Now she has received disturbing news from her uncle that all the Jews, including her, are on the chopping block. She hesitates to do anything because her life could be in danger by coming before the king without being summoned. Mordecai assures her that either way death is on her doorstep, and that perhaps this is why she is now queen. While this book doesn't mention God by name, His attributes are clearly seen throughout. Plans and purposes are God's thing. He doesn't operate in the random. **Do you see how your current position is something God wants to use? Ministry isn't the only "job" that God leads people towards. Wherever you work, that's where God wants to use you. Maybe you're limited in what you can say, but you're not limited in the life you can live in front of others. What about amongst your neighbors? God has placed you in your home for a reason. Are you missing the mission field next door? Realize that your life is not just a bunch of random jumbles, but as a believer that God is working to fulfill a purpose in your life, if you'll let him.**

Read Esther 5

"Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Esth 5:13 A research study on the "Golden Rule" was done by the Institute for Child Behavior Research. The study found that the happiest people are "those who help others." People in the study were asked to name ten people they knew very well and to describe them as happy or unhappy. Later they went back through that same list and asked the people to describe their ten friends as selfish or unselfish. As you might have guessed, the unselfish people just happened to also be the happy people. The institute director wrote this conclusion: those "whose activities are devoted to bringing themselves happiness...are far less likely to be happy than those whose efforts are devoted to making others happy."

Haman had a real problem. Things seemed to be going his way, but he couldn't be happy as long as things were going well for Mordecai. As a result, Haman designs a way to have Mordecai killed before he has to go to his next feast. Haman assumed the food would taste better and the banquet would be more enjoyable if Mordecai were dead. **Have you ever known someone who needed others to be miserable in order for them to be happy? Our condition shouldn't depend on the state of those around us. Perhaps you know someone who seems to dwell in misery more than happiness. Be happy for them, very openly, and help them to see the blessings that exist in their lives. Today, ask that God would give you something that Haman lacked...satisfaction. Ask God to allow you to be content with what you have, so that you will not be dependent on the ups and downs of others to give you satisfaction.**

Read Esther 6

So Haman came in and the king said to him, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?" Esth 6:6 John Sedgwick was a general for the Union Army during the Civil War. During the battle of Spotsylvania Court House, his officers and staff were constantly ducking as they walked around. Sedgwick became annoyed because he felt his staff was acting cowardly. They responded that the Confederates had sharpshooters about 1000 feet out. Sedgwick replied, "I'm ashamed of you, dodging that way. They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist...", and he fell down dead with a bullet hole under his left eye.

Haman begins to be undone by his own unwise plans, but also by his pride. As he comes in to approve Mordecai's death, the king has just decided that Mordecai deserves to be honored. So when the king is talking to Haman about honoring someone, Haman assumes the honors will be for himself and comes up with the most lavish ceremony he could think of. Then to watch his enemy receive the prize must have been devastating for him. **Do you struggle with pride? Let me help you figure it out: do you have a hard time confessing sin? Do you often believe everyone around you is not quite as bright as you are? Are you willing to take the credit every time it is given? Then you have struggles with pride. God is not getting the glory out of your life, because you're trying to squeeze all the glory out for yourself. Ask God to forgive you today and to help you realize that anything you are capable of doing is because of God's work in your life.**

Read Esther 7

Then Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; Esth 7:3 There has been a neat transition with my kids. Like most kids, they enjoy snack time as a highlight in their day. My youngest daughter will often ask for a snack, as will my son. But my middle daughter started a new habit a few months ago. She will come and ask me for a snack, and if I say yes, she will go and ask her brother and sister if they want a snack too. She could have just had her snack and walked by her siblings showing off her prize, but instead she is willing that her request would benefit all of them. I hope she's that unselfish when there's only one piece of cake left, and Daddy really wants it!

Esther obviously was finding favor with this king. He accepted her when she came without his request. He offered her up to half of his kingdom when she wanted to make a request. Even if all the Jews were killed, it's unlikely that the king would have allowed Esther to perish as well. She could have been overtaken by fear and greed: a fear that the king wouldn't reverse his previous edict, and a greed to accept up to half of his kingdom.

But instead, she uses her request as originally decided on and asks for her life to be a petition for her people to be spared. And ultimately, Haman is hung on the very gallows that anger provoked him to build for Mordecai. **What about your requests? Do you consider your needs, wants, and comforts before those of others? Do you put your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors before yourself? God is not unwilling that we should have personal requests. He is unwilling that we should only have personal requests. Pray for others before you pray for yourself. Look to fulfill the needs of others over your own. God desires selflessness over selfishness in our daily lives.**

Read Esther 8

In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday . And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them. Esth 8:17 I recently heard someone say that they don't like it when a pastor mentions Hell during the invitation time. He thought it was using emotions to try to get a person to make a decision, by scaring them and mentioning Hell. Jesus mentioned Hell more than He ever mentioned Heaven. Was Jesus playing on people's emotions? A professor once said, "Do I try to scare people regarding Hell? You bet I do! It's a scary place and people should be told what will happen if they choose to reject Jesus." I don't want to scare someone into making a decision for Jesus, but I want them to understand the eternal consequences if they don't.

So the plot to destroy the Jews has now been fully reversed. Not only have the Jews been spared, but the king has authorized them to take up arms against anyone who threatens them again. And the Jewish people are excited. They are safe, plus they know that they have the king's favor in the future. It says that many became Jews because the dread of the Jews had fallen on them. The word dread can also mean awe, because outsiders had seen something dramatic and God-powered protect this people. Jews allowed outsiders to come into the fold (remember Rahab?), but they actually went through a process of baptism and acceptance into God's people. So did these people make an emotional decision? To an extent, but the emotions were driven by the reality of who the Jews were. **Do you tell people the whole story of Jesus when you witness? Do you talk to them about their sin, and not just about Heaven? Do you just talk about Heaven, or do you make it clear that our sin separates us from God and will send us to Hell? Don't confuse truth with manipulation. People need to understand the consequences sometimes in order for them to see the benefits. Tell people the whole gospel story. Accepting Jesus is emotional and life changing.**

Read Esther 9

The Jews who were in Susa assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. Esth 9:15 If you've watched TV, you've heard the classic actor question, "What's my motivation?", which means they want to know what is motivating the character to say and do certain things in the script. In "A Knight's Tale", Rufus Sewell

plays the evil knight trying to defeat Heath Ledger's character. There is a scene where Heath is in jail for pretending to be a knight, and Sewell's character comes in to gloat. Sewell does some great acting with his eyes, looking so unsure about how he measures up to Heath, even as his words are saying that Heath is a loser. Sewell said in the DVD commentary, that his motivation for the scene was that it was a chance for Sewell's character to get some measure of victory against the noble character portrayed by Ledger.

The Jews have received permission to defend themselves by an order of the king, and they go on the offensive instead of waiting for their enemies to attack. But, as the Jews gain numerous victories, they do not take any plunder. They defeat their enemies in several cities, and each time the wealth of their enemies remains untouched. That's because the motivation of the Jews wasn't to gain wealth, but to gain safety. Once that had been secured, there was no reason to go any further. **What is your motivation in life? Are you motivated by a desire to honor and please God? Do you go where He says go and leave where he says leave? What is your motivation in your marriage, job, and service in your church? Many Christians would claim Jesus as their main motivation, but it doesn't come out in their lives.**

Read Esther 10

For Mordecai the Jew was second *only* to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation. Esth 10:3 Army companies have two leaders at the top: a company commander and the company first sergeant. The commander makes the decisions, and the first sergeant hands those down to the men and makes the decisions work at the troop level. If you talked to most soldiers, they have more to say about their first sergeant than they do their commanding officer. It doesn't mean their commander is no good, but that second-in-command guy is the one they often go to first and look for leadership from. When Easy company of the 501st was stuck in Bastogne during a WWII winter, they had a very poor company commander. The reason that they held their position despite low food, ammo and other necessities, was due to the leadership that was provided by their company first sergeant.

Here we see another second-in-command coming from the Jews and helping to rule a country that is not his. Many months ago, we came across Joseph when he was elevated to second in command over Egypt, and the Pharaoh really gave Joseph complete power. We see the same position given to Mordecai as they are ruled by the Persians. What would possess a foreign king to give so much power to a man that is from another country? Apparently, the integrity that was shown in these men was greater than anything either this king or Pharaoh had ever seen from one of their own countrymen. What a testimony of living your life for God! When people get to know us, there should be such an example of integrity before them, that they immediately are willing to trust us. **Does your life stand out from the lost people around you? Many Christians love to flaunt their liberty to participate in worldly ventures, such as drinking, only to find that their "liberty" is causing others to take a low view of what it is to be a Christian. Today, ask God to help you examine your walk before others. Ask Him to show you**

where you need to be more distinct from the world, in order that Jesus Christ might be shown before unbelievers around you.