

XERXES: Bring Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown so I may display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she is lovely to look at.

VASHTI: (*haughty*) No. I will not come.

XERXES: (*upset*) According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti? She has not obeyed my command that the eunuchs have taken to her.

MEMUCAN: Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes.

TARSHISH: For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, (*using a falsetto voice to mimic a woman's*) 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.'

MERES: This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way.

CARSHENA: There will be no end of disrespect and discord. Husbands will be dissed all day long!

MEMUCAN: Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes.

TARSHISH: Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she.

MERES: Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout his entire vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands.

CARSHENA: From the least to the greatest. Especially my wife!

XERXES: Fine. I will do as you have proposed. Send dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, that every man should be ruler over his own household.

ZETHAR: (*Voice of a Yonker's street corner newspaper seller*) Hear ye! Hear Ye! Wives respect your husband's!

BIZTHA: Every man should be ruler over his own household.

SCENE 2

NARRATOR: Time passed. Xerxes missed having a queen so he decided to select a new one.

ZETHAR: (*Voice of a Yonker's street corner newspaper seller*)
Hear ye! Hear Ye! King Xerxes has ordered a search be made for beautiful young potential brides.

CARCAS: The king has appointed commissioners to bring all these beautiful girls to Susa.

BIZTHA: The girls will be placed under the care of Hegai.

HARBONA: Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.

NARRATOR 1: Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew, Mordecai, (*Narrator 2 holds up "our Hero" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to clap*) who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

NARRATOR 2: He had a cousin named Hadassah, (*Narrator 1 holds up "Our Heroine" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to say "Awwwwwww"*) whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother.

NARRATOR 3: This orphan, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

MAID 1: When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai, who was in charge of the harem.

MAID 2: Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai's care.

HEGAI: Esther, I like you the best of all the potential brides. (*Narrator 1 holds up "Our Heroine" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to say "Awwwwwww"*) I will get your beauty treatments and special food started immediately. I'm assigning you seven personal maids selected from the king's palace and I'm moving you into the best rooms.

MAID 1: Mordecai checked on Esther every day.

MORDECAI: So how is my cousin Esther?

HEGAI: The same as I have told you every day not for a year. She is doing great!

ESTHER: (*Aside to audience*) Little does Hegai or anyone know my Jewish background. I haven't told a soul as Mordecai instructed me. I will follow Mordecai's instructions just as I did when he was bringing me up.

SCENE 3

MAID 1: You have completed twelve months of beauty treatments.

MAID 2: Six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics.

HEGAI: Now it is your turn to meet the king. I will miss you because after tonight you'll be assigned new rooms under the care of Shaashgaz. Anything you want will be given to you to take to the king's palace.

MAID 1: Choose wisely. You will not see the king again unless he is pleased with you and summons you by name.

MAID 1: Don't take a tuba.

MAID 2: The king hates tuba music. Don't wear orange.

MAID 1: Vashti wore orange. You don't want to remind the King of Vashti.

MAID 2: And the king doesn't like snakes.

ESTHER: I will take only what you suggest, Hegai.

HEGAI: Let me whisper a secret in your ear, then.

MAID 1: Esther followed Hegai's advice and was a hit with King Xerxes. *(Narrator 1 holds up "Our Heroine" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to says "Awwwwwww")*

XERXES: I am attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women. She has won my favor and approval more than any of the others.

MAID 2: So King Xerxes set a royal crown on her head and make her queen.

XERXES: We'll have a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all my nobles and officials. In fact I proclaim today a holiday. Distribute gifts with my royal liberality.

SCENE 4

NARRATOR 1: Time passed. Not everyone liked the King.

BIGTHANA: I hate guarding this doorway.

TERESH: That's nothing, I hate guarding this doorway AND the king.

BIGTHANA: I say, let's kill the king

TERESH: I agree.

MORDECAI: *(to Esther)* I just found out about the plot to kill the king

ESTHER: I will report it to the king, giving credit to you, Mordecai. It will be recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

NARRATOR 2: So the plot was stopped. *(Narrator 2 holds up "our Hero" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to clap)*

NARRATOR 3: Bigthana and Teresh were executed. Then King Xerxes promoted Haman, *(Narrator 3 holds up "Boo Hiss" sign and Narrators 1 and 2 lead audience to boo and hiss)* not knowing what kind of man he was.

XERXES: Haman, I am giving you a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king's gate will kneel and pay you honor.

ZETHAR: *(Voice of a Yonker's street corner newspaper seller)* Hear ye! Hear Ye! King Xerxes has given Haman a seat of higher honor than all the other nobles.

CARCAS: When you see Haman, bow.

BIZTHA: Pay honor to Haman

HAMAN: *(haughty and proud)* Did you all hear that! Everybody bow when you see me coming. *(Narrator 3 holds up "Boo Hiss" sign and Narrators 1 and 2 lead audiences to boo and hiss)*

MORDECAI: I will not bow

HARBONA: Why do you disobey the king's command?

CARCAS: You're going to be in big trouble, Mordecai

FRIEND: Hey, Haman, Mordecai the Jew won't bow when you walk by.

HAMAN: That is terrible. I won't stand for it.

FRIEND: What are you going to do about it?

HAMAN: Get mad for one thing. So he's a Jew. I have a better idea than killing only Mordecai. *(rubbing his hands with a gleeful evil laugh)* I'll destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom. *(Narrator 3 holds up "Boo Hiss" sign and Narrators 1 and 2 lead audience to boo and hiss)*

SCENE 5

NARRATOR 2: In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the pur ...

NARRATOR 3: Which means they rolled the dice....

NARRATOR 1: to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

HAMAN: King Xerxes, There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws;

FRIEND: The Jews, mighty King Xerxes

HAMAN: It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them.

FRIEND: Get rid of all Jews once and for all.

HAMAN: I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.

XERXES: Take my signet ring to sign the decree, keep the money and do with the people as you please.

ZETHAR: (*Voice of a Yonker's street corner newspaper seller*)

Here Ye! HEAR YE! This order is to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews.

MORDECAI: That means me!

CARCAS: Young and old, women and little children.

MORDECAI: That means Esther.

BIZTHA: On the thirteenth day of the month of Adar.

HARBONA: And you may plunder their goods.

MORDECAI: That means they will take all our stuff after we are dead.

MAID 1: The city of Susa was bewildered. Why was King Xerxes suddenly deciding to kill all the Jews?

MORDECAI: (*wailing loudly and bitterly*) Woe is me and woe for my people

MAID 2: Esther, your cousin Mordecai is in great distress.

MAID 1: He's wearing scratchy sackcloth

MAID 2: And has put ashes on his head.

ESTHER: Give him these clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth.

MAID 1: He won't accept them.

ESTHER: Hathach, find out what's troubling Mordecai and why.

HATHACH: Mordecai told me everything. Haman (*Narrator 3 holds up "Boo Hiss" sign and Narrators 1 and 2 lead audience to boo and hiss*) wants to annihilate the Jews. Haman even offered to pay ten thousand talents of silver into the treasury to have this done.

ESTHER: Ten thousand talents! That's a fortune in silver!

HATHACH: Here is a copy of the text of the edict for the annihilation of the Jews, which has been published in Susa

ESTHER: Thank you for explaining things to me.

HATHACH: Mordecai urges you to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for your people.

ESTHER: All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. T

MAID 1: The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life.

ESTHER: But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.

MAID 1: That is a long time. King Xerxes could be mad at you.

MAID 2: Maybe he never wants to see you again. If you go without being called you could wind up dead.

MORDECAI: Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?

ESTHER: Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. *(melodramatically, with hand to forehead)* And if I perish, I perish. *(Narrator 1 holds up "Our Heroine" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to says "Awwwwwww")*

NARRATOR 3: So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

SCENE 6

NARRATOR 1: Esther went, without being called, to see the 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 for him.

XERXES: *(happy)* Bring Haman at once, so that we may do what Esther asks.

MAID 1: So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

XERXES: *(happy)* Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.

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 for them. Then I will answer the king's question.

XERXES: *(intrigued)* A secret. I love secrets. It will be done as you have asked, my queen.

SCENE 7

NARRATOR 3: Haman went home to brag. *(Narrator 3 holds up "Boo Hiss" sign and Narrators 1 and 2 lead audience to boo and hiss)*

HAMAN: *(bragging)* Friends and Zeresh, my wife, I have vast wealth and many sons.

ZERESH: (*proudly*) And the king has honored you and elevated you above the other nobles and officials.

HAMAN: (*bragging*) And that's not all, I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. (*angrily*) But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate.

FRIEND: Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it.

ZERESH: Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy

SCENE 8

NARRATOR 1: That night the king could not sleep

XERXES: Bring me the book of the chronicles and read to me from it.

MEMUCAN: (*Reading*) Mordecai exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

XERXES: What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?

TARSHISH: Nothing has been done for him.

XERXES: Who is in the court?

MERES: Haman has just entered the outer court.

XERXES: Bring him in. (*To Haman*) Haman, what should be done for the man the king delights to honor?

HAMAN: (*Aside*) Who is there that the king would rather honor than me? (*to the king*) For the man the king delights to honor, have them 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 the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"

XERXES: Go at once. Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew. Do not neglect anything you have recommended. (*Narrator 2 holds up "our Hero" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to clap*)

SCENE 9

NARRATOR 2: Haman could hardly stand it, but he had to honor Mordecai and do for Mordecai what he thought was going to be done for himself.

HAMAN: (*Depressed and mad*) This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor! (*Narrator 2 holds up “our Hero” sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to clap*)

HAMAN: Wife! Friends. I’ve terrible news. I had to honor... (*distastefully*) Mordecai the Jew!

ZERESH: (*getting hysterical*) Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!

ZETHAR: (*Voice of a Yonker’s street corner newspaper seller*) Hear ye! Hear ye!

HAMAN: (*cutting him off*) You don’t need to yell. I’m right here.

ZETHAR: Haman, it is time to come to Queen Esther’s banquet.

NARRATOR 2: So Haman joined Queen Esther and King Xerxes at the second banquet.

XERXES: Queen Esther, (*Narrator 1 holds up “Our Heroine” sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to says “Awwwwwww”*) 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—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.

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

ESTHER:
The adversary and enemy is this (*Narrator 3 holds up “Boo Hiss” sign and Narrators 1 and 2 lead audience to boo and hiss*) vile Haman.

NARRATOR 3:
Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

NARRATOR 2:
The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden.

NARRATOR 1:
But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

HAMAN:
Esther, please, save my life!

NARRATOR 1:
Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining.

XERXES:

You vile fellow! Will you even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?

HARBONA:

A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.

ESTHER

Mordecai, who is my cousin.

XERXES:

(to Harbona) Hang him on it. Esther, I give you the estate of Haman.

Mordecai, here is my signet ring. You are now the number 2 man in all of Persia. *(Narrator 2 holds up "our Hero" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to clap)*

ESTHER: *(falling at his feet and weeping)*

Put an end to the evil plan of Haman. If it pleases the king, and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman wrote to destroy the Jews. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?

XERXES:

Write another decree in my name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with my signet ring.

CARCAS:

For no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked.

ZETHAR: *(Voice of a Yonker's street corner newspaper seller)*

Hear ye, Hear ye! Jews in every city have the right to assemble and protect themselves.

BIZTHA:

and their women and children.

HARBONA:

This is a time of happiness and joy and gladness with feasting and celebrating.

ZETHAR: *(Voice of a Yonker's street corner newspaper seller)*

Hear ye! Hear Ye! Mordecai the Jew has been promoted to second in rank to King Xerxes! *(Narrator 2 holds up "our Hero" sign and Narrator 3 gets audience to clap)*

CARCAS:

He is preeminent among the Jews.

NARRATOR 2:

Mordecai was held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because ...

NARRATORS: *(in unison)*

...he worked for the good of his people ...

NARRATOR 3:

...and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews....

NARRATOR 1:

.... And Purim has been a Jewish holiday ever since.

QUEEN ESTHER

Reading comprehension and vocabulary

Scene 1

What is the setting (time and place) of this story?

Is this story fiction or non-fiction? How do you know?

What kind of banquet did the king host? What foods would you choose for a feast?

Why did Vashti lose her place as queen?

Why is respect important? How do we show respect?

Banquets are a recurring event in the story of Esther. As you read, figure out how many are mentioned.

Predict what will happen in scene 2.

For further research: What were gardens like in Persia? What foods would have been served?

Scene 2

As you read, notice how people treat Esther. Why do you think they do so?

How will the next queen be chosen?

Why was Esther brought up by Mordecai? How are they related? Do you know anyone brought up by someone other than their parents?

How was the next queen to be chosen?

How did Hegai show special favor to Esther?

What is a harem?

Why do you think Mordecai told Esther to hide the fact she was Jewish? Do you think this will be important in the story later on? Why?

If you were Esther and a queen would you continue to obey your parents? Why or why not?

Scene 3

As you read, decide what lines the author made up to be funny and which ones are from the Bible? Why do you think that?

What is oil of myrrh? Liberality? Use liberality in a sentence about giving a present.

Scene 4

As you read look for adjectives and actions that describe Haman.

What is a book of chronicles? What does execute mean in the story? What is another meaning of execute? Use execute in a sentence and tell which meaning it has.

Speculate (or guess) why Mordecai refused to bow to Haman?

Have you ever had to show respect to someone you didn't like? Share about that? Who do we owe respect to? Why?

Predict what will happen to Mordecai.

Scene 5

As you read look for symbols. What symbol of power was Haman given? What symbol of power did the king use? What do people in power today have that is a symbol of power? That shows their signature is authentic?

What is "pur"? What does "dispersed" mean? "tolerate"? "annihilate"? "bewildered"? "woe"? "edict"? "perish"? Make up a sentence using two or more in the same sentence.

What happened if you went to see the king and he did not hold out his scepter?

For further research: How many months were in the Jewish calendar? What did wearing sackcloth and ashes mean? How much would 10 thousand talents of silver buy in today's economy?

What does "deliverance" mean? What root word does it come from? Use both of them in a sentence.

Predict what will happen to Esther. To the Jews.

Scene 6 & 7

What are gallows? What is a petition? How do we use petitions in court or the government today? What does "vast" mean? Use it in a sentence. What does "elevate" mean? How is it related to the word "elevator"?

The gallows were to be 75 feet tall. How many floors up would you need to travel on an elevator to go up 75 feet if each floor is 10 feet tall? What man made building or God made natural feature do you know of that is 75 feet high?

Predict what will happen to Mordecai.

Scene 8

The king had trouble sleeping. What might have made it hard for him to sleep? Do you ever have trouble sleeping?

What do "conspire" and "assassinate" mean? Can you think of any United States leaders who have been assassinated or almost assassinated?

What does "entrusted" mean? What is the root word it comes from?

What do you think King Xerxes' royal crest looked like?

How would you be feeling if you were Mordecai at the end of scene 8? If you were Haman?

Predict what will happen in the final scene, scene 9.

Scene 9

In scenes 1-8, how many banquets have already taken place? How many total?

What do these words mean: "slaughter", "adversary", "vile", "molest", "preeminent"? Use them in a sentence.

When Xerxes saw Haman falling on Esther's couch what did he think was happening? What was really happening?

Poetic justice is a [literary device](#) in which [virtue](#) is ultimately [rewarded](#) or [vice punished](#), often by an [ironic](#) twist of fate related to a character's own conduct. What is the poetic justice that occurs in scene 9?

What is the resolution or ending of this story? What holiday is created as a result?

For further research: How was Purim celebrated in Esther's day? How is Purim celebrated in modern times?

QUEEN ESTHER



Bible Study Packet

Accompanies Esther script By Kathy Applebee

Welcome. This packet is to assist you and your group as you read the book of Esther, meet to discuss the book, how it connects with your life and the scriptures. As you read, if you notice something you want your group to talk about jot down a note. You may want to look at the questions in this study guide before you read.

This is presented as a 3 session Bible study but you should adapt to your group's needs and desires. You may or may not get to all the questions. You may or may not read all the scripture references (although I strongly suggest you read all the passages written out). This is a tool to help generate fruitful discussion, not a detailed road map. Your best preparation for leading the group is to pray about it. God promises to give us wisdom if we ask in James 1:5. You may want to open your study with a prayer that includes God giving all of you wisdom as you meet and talk.

The comfort level of your group will dictate how much of the focus is on Esther and other characters and how much is on the lives of the individuals in your group. It is natural to be more comfortable talking about someone else's problems, thoughts and feelings than one's own in a group one does not know well. Do your best and encourage others to do theirs to make everyone feel welcome but not forced to share. Establish some ground rules everyone is comfortable with such as what stays in the room and what can be shared outside of the group

If you are using this material solo, you can use the discussion questions as journal prompts or as a personal Bible study.

After scenes 1 and 2

As you read write a couple of questions to ask your group at your next meeting. Try to make them OPINION questions, such as "Why do you think...", or "How did you feel when...", or "What would you do if..."

Connecting with others:

Why do you think Mordecai adopted Esther? Did he choose to take these responsibilities on or did circumstances force him? Share how a responsibility in your life dictated an action you took or a choice you made. How did it turn out?

"Turning lemons into lemonade." is one way of describing how one can take a bad situation and make something good come of it. Share a situation where you saw this happen.

Mordecai checked on Esther every day. If you were Esther would you find this annoying, comforting, unnecessary?

King Xerxes seems to get rid of Queen Vashti over a small thing. What does this reveal about his character? Knowing this about him, if you were Esther would you be nervous about being married to Xerxes?

Candidates for queen are initially selected on looks. Would this be your first priority in selecting a mate? Why or why not? If not, what criteria for selection might be better? Why?

Connecting with God's Word:

The Bible mentions caring for orphans in both the Old and New Testament. Read Exodus 22: 22 "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. 23 If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. Read James 1: 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. How do Mordecai's actions compare? Share about any orphans you know personally or from the news. How are things the same and different from Mordecai's time? What duty do Christians owe orphans today?

During the reign of King Xerxes Jews were an enslaved people, second class citizens at best. Think about the treatment of African Americans prior to the Civil War (and for sometime thereafter). What was life probably like for a Jew at that time? Socially, politically, economically?

Xerxes throws a 180 day party to show off not only his power and material wealth but also his wife's beauty. When Queen Vashti refuses to answer his summons, she is deposed. His advisors propose something like a beauty content to determine who the next queen will be and Xerxes agrees. Read Esther 2:5-18.

5 Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, 6 who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. 7 Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

- If life was bad for Jews in general, what might life have been like for an enslaved war orphan? Mordecai may have felt like Gabby. He was responsible to bring up his orphaned relative. We don't know from the Biblical account exactly how he felt about it; we know only what his actions were. Before reading the next passage brainstorm different attitudes Mordecai may have had about taking on responsibility for his cousin. What would be the pros and cons of accepting responsibility for her? Would it have dictated his life? Then read on.

8 When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. 9 The girl pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven maids selected from the king's palace and moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.

- If you were Esther how would you have felt when you found out you were being sent to the king? Resentful? Excited? Abandoned for a second time? After you arrived and won everyone's favor what might be running through your mind? Making lemonade out of lemons?

10 Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. 11 Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

- What insight does knowing Mordecai checks on Esther on a daily basis give us?

15. Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. 16 She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Verse 19 tells us although she was now queen, Esther continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

- Taking Mordecai's advice seems to have worked out great for Esther. Despite her new position and power she continues to do as Mordecai instructs. How does this strike you? Odd? Foolish? Wise? If you don't know the rest of the book of Esther, predict what her life will be like? Will it be a "and they lived happily ever after" or something else?

Connecting with yourself (Pray and ponder):

- How has God helped you make lemonade out of lemons?
- What criteria does God want you to have for selecting a mate?

After scenes 3, 4 & 5

Connecting with others:

- Esther has kept her Jewish heritage secret. Have you ever held back information from a friend, associate, boss, parent, anyone but wish you had not later on? Were you ever glad you did? What was the outcome of the situation?
- What responsibilities does a job applicant have to bring up pertinent but potentially negative information about themselves if the interviewer doesn't ask? Would you have told the king, Hegai or your maids? Why or why not? How do you find a workable balance between vulnerability and self disclosure?
- Why do you think Mordecai refused to bow? Was it a selfish act that could have cost other people their lives or something else? What would you have done if you were Mordecai?
- Think about Bigthana, Teresh and Haman. Being in office means power and prestige that some people would kill for. What would you be willing to kill for? To die for?
- Esther, Mordecai and the Jews fasted and prayed. Did they place their situation in God's hands totally or did Esther's actions nullify that? Can you continue to work on a situation and have it be in God's hands at the same time?
- Haman rolls the dice to make decisions. Would you consider that wise or unwise? Why?

- Haman relies on dice, Esther on her cousin's advice when it comes to making big decisions. What do you rely on?

Connecting with God's Word:

Putting God in charge of your life can be a scary idea. In Esther chapters 3 & 4 we find all Jews are about to be exterminated. Esther faced a dilemma. She might be exempt from the death sentence since she has obeyed Mordecai and not told anyone she is a Jew. As the Persian Queen she could possibly get help from her husband to stop the genocide. Mordecai, her cousin, urges her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people. Read Esther 4: 6 – 16.

6 Hathach (Think Esther's private bodyguard) went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. 7 Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

- What is probably going through Esther's mind at this point?

9 Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, 11 "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

- At this point if you were Esther, what would you do? Why?

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

To make the long story found in Esther 5-10 short, Esther succeeds in saving all the Jews and Mordecai is promoted to the number two spot in the Persian government. Her bravery did not cost her life and did save the Jews. But... the happily ever after ending was not a sure thing. In what situation would you be willing to risk your life and say "And if I perish, I perish."?

- How is Esther putting her life in Mordecai's hands like us putting our lives in God's hands?

Read John 15: 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. Would you consider Esther's love Christ like? Why or why not?

Connecting with yourself (Pray and ponder):

- How much of your life is under God's control? How comfortable are you with that? Where would you like control to be?

After scenes 6 through 9

Connecting with others:

- What is your favorite holiday? Why?
- Why do you think Esther dragged out asking the king to deliver her people? Are there times when talking to someone in a more confidential setting a good idea? A bad idea?
- Esther may have invited Haman so everything would be in the open. Have you ever done that? How did it work out?
- What gives meaning to people's lives? What would you consider empty pursuits? What specifically gives meaning to your life? What wouldn't you want to change that is meaningful? What would you change to add more meaning to your life?
- How do you think Haman felt when he thought he was going to be rewarded, then found out it was not only his worst enemy but that he would have to do the honoring? Share a similar situation that happened to you or someone else.

Connecting with God's Word:

- Esther may have felt that even though she had the title of queen, she was really powerless. Read what Paul has to say about being powerless. Romans 5: 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Do you take it personally when you hear Christ died for you?

Esther and David (the one who faced Goliath) have a lot in common. They were young and both faced giant problems that could result in their deaths.

Do you see any other parallels connecting the two of them? How are they different?

Romans 12: 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

- How do you think Haman would react to this passage? Can humans treat their enemies this way or does it take supernatural strength? Paul may have been influenced by Jesus teachings on how to treat one's enemies. Read on.

Luke 6: 27"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31Do to others as you would have them do to you.

- Where do you draw the line between being a doormat and turning the other cheek? When should a person turn the other cheek? When not?

32"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

- Besides people in the Bible, have you ever known anyone who lives by these principles? What is their life like? Do you or could you embrace this lifestyle? Why or why not?

Connecting with yourself (Pray and ponder):

- What gives your life meaning? Where do you find your significance?
- Who or what would you die for?

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