

ESTHER STUDY 5

Walk of Life

All heroes have their defining moment, the moment they were born for, trained for, and in many cases, have been waiting for. As we begin our Bible study today in Chapter Five, Esther's move toward the throne room places her right there with so many other courageous men and women who have died standing up for their faith. Esther walks with courage, trust,

and the unshakable faith that may not have come immediately, but arrived just when she needed it. Her last statement in Chapter Four, verse sixteen sets the stage for today, "if I perish, I perish."¹ Esther has decided to move, to say yes to her God-given destiny and make an appeal on behalf of the Jews to God and Xerxes.

As Esther prepared for her "walk" she brilliantly demonstrated her wisdom once again as she asked all the Jews in Susa to pray and fast for her. Furthermore, she prayed and fasted for three days herself to prepare for this task. She understood she was ultimately appealing to both Kings. She humbled herself before God, seeking for His counsel and deliverance, and in the meantime made sure she was physically ready to see King Xerxes. One can only imagine how she felt as she was putting on her robes and getting ready to enter the throne room, all the thoughts racing through her mind, sweat pouring off her hands. "Esther had never felt more alone. More forsaken. Ironically, a person is never less aware of divine intervention than when he or she has been chosen to render it. Sometimes God's hand is so close that it covers the eyes."² Esther didn't know what would happen, but she was resolved. In that she found herself at the entrance to the king's hall.

While she was standing at the entrance, King Xerxes was taken with her. "The King looked up from a document and then drew down his brow as if focus would help him fathom the sight. Only her beauty exceeded her audacity, and feeling the weight of the crowd's expectation, King Xerxes somehow found himself more intrigued than insulted. His thoughts and feelings towards Esther in that moment are revealed in verse two, 'When he saw Queen Esther standing in court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand.'³ Imagine the relief Esther felt. She had obeyed, fulfilled her calling, perhaps expecting the worst, but receiving mercy instead.

Let's pause a moment to apply this profound happening to our own lives as daughters of the King of Kings. Christ as our King longs for us to come to Him, to come as we are, even if we feel as though every law is against our coming. Our King is not too busy, He is not shocked at our sin, and He is not concerned about what others think. This is one of the greatest pictures in the Bible of how we are to "boldly approach the throne of grace."⁴ We are to come knowing we are royalty, adopted into the King's family. Not only are you a princess, but you are His bride and what you have to say matters. He has not forgotten us, though

Pre-Article Questions:

1. Who would you deem one of the wisest people you know, why?
2. Thus far in our study of Esther, what has impressed you the most about her?

1. Esther 4:16. The Holy Bible, New International Version.

2. Moore, Beth. Esther: It's Tough Being A Woman. LifeWay Press: Nashville, TN. 2008. p. 109.

3. Moore, Beth. Esther: It's Tough Being A Woman. LifeWay Press: Nashville, TN. 2008. p. 110.

4. Hebrews 4:16. The Holy Bible, New International Version.

sometimes it may seem as though we have forgotten Him. This scene is a picture of intercession at its best. Some critics and scholars are shocked by the book of Esther, saying it is a Godless narrative. However, here and in many other places, we see the nature of the Kingdom of God whispering to our hearts, calling from the shadows.

In the second half of the chapter, Esther demonstrated immense self-control. When the King asked her what troubled her and declared that whatever she wished was his command, she humbly invited him, and the sinister Haman, to a royal banquet she had arranged. This invitation was a brilliant and wise move, as Dr. Charles Swindoll writes, "Notice what Esther doesn't do. She doesn't point a finger at Haman. She doesn't rush ahead and tell the King what is troubling her. She doesn't play on his emotions or try to manipulate him by bursting into tears. She very calmly says, without frenzy or sobs, "I've planned a banquet, and I'd love to have you and Haman attend."...The king may rule the kingdom of Persia, and Haman may sign edicts with the king's official seal, but it is the Lord who is in control of this entire situation. And in the nucleus of His divine plan, Esther becomes invincible."⁵

In the process of waiting, praying, fasting, and preparing for this moment, Esther sought the Lord for His wisdom in what she should say to the King if by the grace of God she was alive when she reached him. We know her plan did not come out of thin air, but from a heart that was recklessly confident in God's sovereign grace. It would be difficult for any one of us not to fall to our knees and fall apart at the feet of the king, particularly if the fate of our entire nation was resting on our shoulders, but Esther stands tall, confident, and poised. Once again, Scripture's Cinderella truly rose to the occasion, in more ways than one.

Esther 5, NIV

1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. 2 When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. 3 Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you." 4 "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."

5 "Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks." So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. 6 As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, "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."

7 Esther replied, "My petition and my request is this: 8 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." 9 Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. 10 Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, 11 Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. 12 "And that's not all," Haman added. "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. 13 But all this gives

5. Swindoll, Charles. A Woman of Strength & Dignity. W Publishing Group: Nashville, 1997. 102.

me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate." 14 His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that in You we are royal. We are the Bride of Christ Jesus and we have authority on those grounds to come boldly to Your throne of grace. Help us to make time, put away all the excuses we make, and to reach out to you through prayer and intercession. Use us to intercede for our families, for ourselves, and for this broken world. Forgive us for allowing our false perceptions of You and our false perceptions of ourselves keep us from coming to You in confidence. Give us wisdom and self control as we navigate the trials of this life and the trials we are facing now. Give us a plan of action; show us your divine will in all matters we are facing right now. Make us women of courage, unshakeable faith, and ruthless trust in our God who never fails us or forsakes us. We love you. Amen.

Scripture Questions:

1. How many days had it been that Esther prayed, fasted, prepared, and waited on the Lord?
2. Explain what you think was going through her heart and mind right before she entered the king's hall?
3. Why do you think Esther invited Haman to the banquet too?
4. In Chronological Order, list three things that happened after Haman attended the banquet.
5. What do you gather about Haman's wife from this passage?

Application Questions:

1. Read Hebrews 4:14-16, what are your first thoughts and/or reactions to this scripture? How does this passage encourage you on the topic of coming to God in prayer?
2. What is the difference between prayer and intercession? (intercession is a specific type of prayer/communication with God, that deals with making a request or petition on behalf of someone or something) Has God called you to intercede for someone or something lately, how did it go?
3. Last week we saw how Esther had self-control in her great crisis of confrontation with Mordecai. In today's passage she demonstrates great restraint and wisdom again as she goes before the king. Tell about a time or crisis in your life where you had to use restraint or self-control? What recently or in the past few months has God been using in your life to produce more self-control in your life?
4. Has there been a time where your pride prompted you to overreact when the circumstance didn't necessarily call for an extreme response? How did you grow from that situation or what did you learn about yourself from that situation?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

This week you will be meeting with a girl from your small group to memorize scripture, re-read the text for this week, and discuss what God is speaking to you through the Chapter. Please use this time to pursue the Lord together and deepen your relationship as sisters.

1. Memory Verse: Hebrews 4:16
2. Please re-read Esther Chapter Five