

Day 1 – Read Esther 1

How many times have you made a bad choice? We all do, right? I know I make many choices every day and they are not all good choices. However, how many times do you make a choice you know is not right, and instead of apologizing or admitting you are wrong, you try to find someone who will tell you it wasn't that bad or who actually thinks what you did was the correct action?

As I read the first chapter of Esther, I get the feeling that King Xerxes was the type of person that does not admit being wrong about anything. He obviously is very egotistical. Who throws a party for six whole months to show off how great they are? His ego takes control and he wants to show off the beautiful Queen Vashti.

When she refuses to be shown off, does the King realize he may have gone too far? Of course not. He's angry and he wants to punish the Queen. I think he may have realized that it was not appropriate to punish her, but he wasn't willing to let it go. He brings together his advisors and wants them to come up with a way to punish the Queen that is within the law. Like each of us, he's happy when someone validates his choice. The next time we catch ourselves making a bad choice, let us not follow King Xerxes's example. Instead, let's admit we were wrong and apologize when appropriate.

-Jeremy Skoglund

Day 2 – Read Esther 2

“At that time there was a Jewish man in the fortress of Susa whose name was Mordecai.” Esther 2:5
“This man had a very beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther.” Esther 2:7 (NLT)

Do you ever think to yourself, *I am only one person. How could God possibly use me, one person, to further His kingdom?* Have you ever wondered what God has planned for your life? Have you prayed and asked God to guide and direct you according to His plan?

The Jews were a minority in Persia and were treated with hostility. In Esther, Chapter Two, we are introduced to two main characters: Mordecai and Esther. Mordecai had an official government position among the Jewish captives. Esther was Mordecai's cousin. Mordecai raised Esther as his own daughter after Esther's parents died.

God used Mordecai and Esther to save the Jewish people from a plot to kill all the Jews in Persia. In Chapter Two, we find that Mordecai used his official position and influence to help Esther become the queen of Persia. In later chapters, we will find that God used Queen Esther to save the Jewish people.

In verses 21-23, Mordecai learned of a plot by two of King Xerxes's eunuchs to assassinate King Xerxes. Mordecai gave this information to Queen Esther, who told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for this report. Later in the book of Esther, we will find how God used this incident to further Mordecai's career and position among the Persian people.

-Bruce Walth

Day 3 – Read Esther 3

“Some time later, King Xerxes promoted Haman son, of Hammedatha the Agagite over all the other nobles, making him the most powerful official in the empire. All the king's officials would bow down before Haman to show him respect whenever he passed by, for so the king had commanded. But Mordecai refused to bow down or show him respect.” Esther 3:1-2 (NLT)

Every day we are faced with evil and the ways of the world. Do you find yourself bowing down to the ways of the world to fit in or to be accepted by others, or do you take a stand and say, “I am crucified with Christ and I live with the risen Savior!”? Jesus is here to forgive. You can pray and ask the Holy Spirit to live inside of you to help control your thoughts.

In Esther, Chapter Three, we are introduced to Haman, another main character. Haman wanted to destroy all the Jews because he was an Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekites who were ancient enemies of the Jews. Mordecai refused to bow down before Haman (because he was an Agagite) even though it was what the king commanded. Mordecai was not about to kneel before wicked Haman and, by his act, acknowledge Haman as a god. Mordecai's determination came from his faith in God.

-Bruce Walth

Day 4 – Read Esther 4

Esther's position was no accident; she was placed in her position of influence for a specific purpose. She was a member of a hated race, orphaned, no formal education, and raised by her cousin, Mordecai. God placed her in the royal court of the king and when Esther's purpose is revealed to her, she understood the danger.

Esther 4:14 says, "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 did not have to answer the call; God would have given someone else the opportunity had she refused, but Esther responded with great courage. In verse 16 Esther says "...I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Opportunities to serve are placed in our paths and we can choose how to respond. God's purpose can be accomplished without us, so if we pass by the person in need of a hand out, God will bring another giver. If we do not answer a call to help with a need in church, school, or communities, God will provide another person the same opportunity. If we fail to show kindness to another, God will bless another with the same opportunity. Showing God's love isn't a burden, but an opportunity. If we pass by opportunities put in our path, we are missing out on the love and joy we receive when we fulfill His plan.

Pray: Heavenly Father, help me recognize the opportunities placed in my path that will bring glory to You and joy to me and others. Give me the courage of Esther to take advantage of these opportunities. I ask this in your holy name, Amen.

-Lori Campbell

Day 5 – Read Esther 5

In the first chapter, we read about King Xerxes looking for validation from his advisors to punish Queen Vashti. Today, we read about Haman turning to his friends and family to boast about his good fortune and to vent his anger. Sometimes, we need to vent so we can release the stress and anger we've been feeling. It can be good to vent. However, there are good ways to vent, like journaling or exercising, and then there is the way Haman vents. Haman gathers a group of people to express his anger.

Like the King, he was also likely looking for advice and validation of his anger. His wife and friends were willing to indulge Haman as they came up with a scheme to kill Mordecai. I tend to be no better than Haman when I vent, as I will voice my problems to a single person at a time, whether it is my wife, a friend, or even a coworker.

Occasionally, I feel better after venting to someone, but more often I end up angrier as I relive the issues over again. And, of course, when we vent, we don't usually talk about what we did wrong, so our friends are almost always on our side, just like Haman's friends were. We'll see later how listening to his friends worked for Haman. Today, let us find better ways to vent our anger. Go for a run, ride your bike, enjoy a video game, listen to some music, play the piano. Let's keep that anger from causing us to do something we may regret later.

-Jeremy Skoglund

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