

It comes back to story

Esther

Week 4
FAMILY & GROUP DISCUSSION

Esther becomes Queen (Esther 2:1-18)

INTRODUCTION

This episode in Esther's life offers great encouragement and comfort when we find ourselves facing those difficult decisions. **Only God knows the end of our story from the beginning!** We are called to live in faithful obedience to his word in every situation the best we know how. Even if we make the "wrong" decision, our God is gracious and omnipotent, and he can use our failures, those weak links in a chain of events that will perfect his purposes in us and through us.

DISCUSSION

Describe a wrong or questionable decision you have made that changed the course of your life? What were the consequences?
How has God redeemed those actions?

EXPLANATION

Why are we often tempted to conceal our faith?

What cultural activities do you see the most disagreement about in the Church?

Why do you think they are hot topics?

What aspects of our culture do you most struggle with?

APPLICATION

Have you ever felt that your disobedience disqualified you for future obedience and use by God? Where do you think this idea comes from?

How can we be less judgmental of others mistakes?

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Proverbs 21:1-2
Romans 8:28
Esther 1:19
1 Samuel 16:7
Daniel 1:6-7

John 17:14-16
Ephesians 4:17
Romans 12:2
Ezra 9:12; 10:10
Daniel 1:8-16

Week 4 Notes

& SCRIPTURE VERSES



Esther becomes Queen (Esther 2:1-18)

Proverbs 21:1-2 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.*

You've probably heard it said that God works in mysterious ways. The book of Esther has some great examples of just how mysterious his ways can be. Even though the author is silent about God's involvement in the story, God is nonetheless working all things according to His purposes—even when they can't see or feel Him, and even when they make the wrong choices.

Esther 2:1-4 The plan to replace Vashti

Xerxes regrets his decision and decree to remove Vashti as queen, but there is nothing he can do now. Having suffered a great military defeat, the king consoles himself with all sorts of sensuality and the suggestion to hold a beauty contest to replace Vashti and add to his harem is appealing. The search is for someone "better" than Vashti as we saw in verse 1:19, which really means someone just as beautiful, but much more submissive and controllable.

Esther 2:5-7 Introduction to Mordecai and Esther

Mordecai and Esther are identified as "Jews," people of God, which have been in captivity for a few generations. They have been partially assimilated into the culture that they live in, but not completely. The fact that they have Babylonian names shows that they are in transition between two cultures, or two kingdoms. Each of us are in transition between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. The author describes Esther's beauty to give us an indication about how she will fair in this crazy competition.

Esther 2:8-11 Esther wins favor, but at what cost?

Esther is drafted into this competition and quickly wins the favor of those in charge. However, she hides her nationality and family background as commanded by Mordecai. She chose to go with the flow and meet the demands of the empire, even though it meant compromising her religious beliefs. Christians wanting to obey the Bible often disagree about which cultural activities are acceptable and which ones are not. Each of us has to struggle with living *IN* the world, but not being *OF* the world (John 17:14-16).

Esther 2:12-18 Esther's big night

Xerxes spared no expense to prepare his women for one night in his bed. He required 12 months of eating the best food and being perfumed with oils and spices. Before Esther's turn with the king, we're told that she won the favor of everyone who saw her. So we're not surprised that the king was attracted to Esther more than any of the other women. He crowns Esther as queen and celebrates extravagantly as is his style.

What do we learn from Esther's story so far?

Jewish Esther ends up eating the empires food, sleeping with a pagan Gentile King and then marrying him—all of which is forbidden by the Torah. At this point in her life, we can't use Esther as a role model for us or young girls today. If we did, the lessons would be to make yourself as attractive as possible to powerful men, use your body to advance God's kingdom, and the end justifies the means?

We all, like Esther, face times when we are tempted to conceal our faith. Sometimes the pressure comes from one's own family. Sometimes our success in this world could be at risk if we take a stand and make it known that we are Christians. Caving into this pressure may lead to progress in this world, but at what cost to our souls?

The silence in Scripture about Esther and Mordecai's spiritual fidelity is a powerful encouragement when we see that despite their mistakes, God providentially works through their imperfect decisions to achieve His good purposes for His people. We learn that previous disobedience (theirs and ours) does not disqualify us from future obedience, and that God controls every detail so that he can graciously create a masterpiece out of the messes that we make.