Esther
In the Providence of God
Lesson 4

Day One: Surveying the Chapter

Please read Esther 4.

God, in His providence, makes amazing things happen when we make ourselves available to Him. Usually we don’t see it coming, but there will be a moment in time when circumstances present themselves to us and we have a choice to make that ultimately will impact the lives of others. As Christians we have the responsibility to continually be at our fittest spiritually so that when the crisis hits, we are ready to respond in complete obedience to what God would have us to do!

Several years have now passed since Esther ascended to the throne, years of apparent well being for God’s people. As chapter four opens, Mordecai has discovered the plot wickedly devised by Haman and now the time of joy and celebrating has turned into a time of mourning. We’re not told how Mordecai came to hear the news or what his thoughts were when he found out, but it would seem that he realized the answer to this horrible dilemma might somehow be connected to Esther and her position as Queen of Persia. His immediate problem was how to get the news to Esther.

1. How did Mordecai’s actions reveal his feelings about Haman’s decree? vv.1–2

Sackcloth was usually made of coarse rough animal hair and worn by mourners or the poorest people in open demonstration of guilt or grief. To clothe oneself in sackcloth and sit in ashes was a symbol of great mourning.

a. Where did Mordecai go? Why couldn’t he go any further?

The gate mentioned here was not merely one of many gates into the city, but the door to the palace itself. No one dressed in clothes of mourning was ever allowed to enter the king’s presence—to do so would result in a death sentence! Mordecai was not trying to attract the king’s attention, he wanted Esther to take notice.

2. What was the response of the Jews in the provinces as they heard the news? v. 3

a. Do you think perhaps that Mordecai may have felt responsible? Please share your thoughts.
Mordecai was grieving because his people were under a death sentence due to the hatred of just one man. The Bible says that hell and destruction are never full (Proverbs 27:20) and that the heart of man is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

3. According to Jeremiah 17:9–10, who searches out the human heart? What else does he do?

4. Proverbs 6:16–19 states that there are six things the Lord hates—no, seven things He detests. These seven things are listed for you below. Take a moment to think about them and write down in a few words the possible resulting consequences to others.

- A proud look
- A lying tongue
- Hands that shed innocent blood
- A heart that devises wicked plans
- Feet that are swift in running to evil
- A false witness who speaks lies
- One who sows discord among brethren

Can you see why God would hate these things because of the destruction they bring? If you recognize any of the above manifestations in your own life, ask God to forgive you and help you to change your heart attitude. If you don’t deal with these behavioral symptoms now, then in time you may see a Haman emerging in your own life.

Memory verse: “...Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4:14

Day Two: Exploring the Text

Esther Hears the News

Read Esther 4:4–12

Well known British official Edmund Burke once said, “All that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” Mordecai was a good man and did what he could; now it was Esther’s turn.

1. How did Esther initially hear of Mordecai’s distress? v. 4–6
a. What did she send to Mordecai and why did he refuse?

b. Whom did Esther then send and what was he told to do?

2. What specific details did Mordecai relay to Esther? What proof did he present? v. 7–8

a. What did Mordecai hope to accomplish in doing this?

3. Esther was honest in her reply but very hesitant initially to become involved. What word did she send back to Mordecai through Hathach? vv. 10–12

a. How long had it been since Esther had been to see the king?

b. What was the penalty for breaking the law?

The king’s throne room was off limits to the majority of the people of Persia. Even the king’s wife could not enter his presence unless he sent for her, otherwise she too was placed under a death sentence. The only hope for survival was for the king to hold forth the golden scepter, the symbol of his power, authority and favor.

c. Why do you think Esther feared she might be unwelcome?

Selah . . . Because of Persian law, Esther had good reason to fear the consequences of going to see the king. Whatever situation you are facing right now, God invites you to come. “Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God’s unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].” Hebrews 4:16 AMP

❖ Are you taking full advantage of your all access pass?

Review this week’s memory verse.
Day Three: Exploring the Text  The Right Response

Read Esther 4:13–17

A right response involves knowing what to say and when to say it; there is a time to speak and a time to keep silent. Words of correction should be doled out and received back in the spirit with which they are given. If you’re a Mordecai (an advisor) to someone, a rebuke given in love can be appropriate; if you’re an Esther (someone who can initiate change), you need to listen to that word of exhortation and take it to heart.

It’s obvious from Mordecai’s words to Esther that he perceived she would play an instrumental role if God’s people were to be saved. Sensing the desperateness of the hour, he spoke plainly to her.

1. Do you think that Esther believed she would escape the king’s decree? vv. 13–14

   a. What words did Mordecai use to assure Esther that the opposite was true?

   b. What did Mordecai say would happen if she did not speak up?

   c. If she chose not to become involved, what did Mordecai say would happen to her and her family?

2. What piercing question did he ask her to awaken her to the fact that her role as queen was not a coincidence?

Selah . . .

Are there ever coincidences in the life of a child of God? Please explain your answer.

We probably wouldn’t be reading this story today—at least not with this outcome—if Esther had chosen not to allow God to use her. How sad if God had to find another person and pursue another course to accomplish His will. In tomorrow’s lesson, we’ll examine our role in God’s plan and how He wants to use us for such a time as this. Close your study today with a time of heartfelt examination in preparation for the next step. Ask Him to cleanse you and make you useable, then trust—nothing doubting—His call for what is to come.

Review this week’s memory verse.
Read Esther 4:13–17 for review.

Today in our story we see Esther rise to the role of heroine by humbling herself before God. She’s had time to think about Mordecai’s words and to realize that God may, in fact, use her to deliver His people. She replies to Mordecai with a plan that involves both strategy and surrender. From this point forward we see her assuming responsibility and taking initiative.

1. What did Esther ask Mordecai to request the Jews to do on her behalf? v.16
   
   a. What did Esther commit to doing and who would support her?
   
   b. What did she determine to do even though it meant breaking the law?

Fasting involves the voluntary abstaining from food or drink, for the purpose of praying (even though prayer is not specifically mentioned here). Prayer is the primary purpose in fasting, in order to focus on God. It is an expression of earnestness and seriousness whenever important decisions are made. Jesus spoke to His followers about fasting in the context of when you fast, not if you fast—to Him it was as normal as breathing for every child of God.

   c. Are you making fasting and prayer a priority in your Christian walk?

2. What words did Esther use to reveal the degree of commitment she had to her people? v. 16

   a. According to her words, in whose hands was she placing herself?

Esther was literally laying her life on the line for her people. To commit such an act of sacrifice involves the recognition of a higher power (God), and the realization of a greater purpose (God’s providence). It is this same act that He asks of every disciple today.

3. You will most likely not be required to lay your life down in the literal sense as Esther was; your sacrifice will probably involve giving your life in service to others and placing their needs ahead of yours. Write out 1 John 3:16 in your own words.
4. Use the following check list to determine if you are ready, willing, and able to follow in Esther’s footsteps. Keep your answers short and to the point.

• *Do you recognize there is a higher power at work in your life?*

• *Do you realize that God is moving you toward a greater purpose than what you see at this moment in time?*

• *Do you acknowledge that your times are in His hands?*

• *How do you see His hand at work in your life right now?*

• *Is there something you are doing to hinder His work in you?*

• *Are you willing to lay your life down for your brothers and sisters in Christ, even though it may involve great personal sacrifice?*


Read Philippians 2:5-11, the ultimate example of humility and surrender. Do you fully understand why Christ made Himself of no reputation, took the form of a bondservant, and came in the likeness of men? Do you realize why the Creator of the universe humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death—even the death of the cross? It was all for—you! He had you in mind when He surrendered who He was, where He was, and all that He possessed. If you haven’t yet surrendered yourself to Him as Lord, would you like to today? Just bow your heart and repeat these words: “Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner in need of You as my Savior. Please forgive me and cleanse me of my sin and come inside and be my Lord. I surrender myself to You—everything, my all—just as You did for me; and I thank you for filling me with Your Holy Spirit, so that I can walk in obedience to You and serve you for the rest of my life. Thank you for using me to draw others to You that they also might be saved, in Jesus name, Amen.” If you prayed that prayer today and meant it in your heart, you are now a child of God. He has filled you and empowered you to live for Him!

Share with your leader or someone you trust if you have made this commitment. God bless you in your new walk of faith!
**Day Five: Praying God’s Purpose**

Take a moment to ponder each request before writing out your prayer. Lift these requests at home in your quiet time with the Lord. (If you are participating in a group study, you will also have the opportunity to pray for these requests in agreement with others.)

*A prayer to renounce what God hates and love what He loves . . .*
We looked at the things in Scripture that God detests; we know that what He loves is His Word and His people. Ask Him to help you share His passion. ____________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

*A prayer to avail yourself of full access to the Throne room . . .*
How will you respond to God’s open invitation to come *fearlessly, confidently, and boldly* into His presence? His grace, mercy, and help are available for whatever situation you are facing. ____________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

*A prayer to surrender all to Jesus . . .*
He’s your Savior and your Lord, but are you holding something back from Him? Ask Him to search your heart and reveal anything that you are keeping from Him that would keep you from realizing your full potential in Christ. ____________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Write out this week’s verse from memory: ____________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________