Esther
In the Providence of God
Lesson 5

Day One: Surveying the Chapter

Please read Esther 5.

The firm belief that our times are in God’s hand raises the expectation level to the point that we look for God to do something great in our lives—and so we should! The Bible clearly teaches that, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Esther wasn’t living in a fantasy world; her title and position had brought her to the palace for a purpose that was greater than her own expectations and, along with that purpose, she had to deal with some cold hard facts. She was facing a situation that was insurmountable, impossible, and even life threatening. She had absolutely no illusions about the risk she was taking and no doubts as to the possible consequences. It was just the kind of situation God loves to engineer so that He can show Himself strong on behalf of His people!

Esther’s life was in God’s hand when she fully surrendered and uttered the words: “If I perish, I perish!” Her life was in His hand those three days while she and the Jews fasted and prayed. Her life was in His hand as she put on her royal robes, dressing in all her queenly splendor as she prepared to go—uninvited—before the king. The time of inward spiritual preparation allowed Esther to have the confidence to move forward.

Can you relate to Esther’s predicament? Have you found yourself facing an impossible situation where it seems that all the odds are stacked against you? God would have you to know that, like Esther, “in returning and rest you shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). Would you hit that pause button today and just allow Him to minister to your heart? Read on . . .

1. Invest some time today in quiet preparation for what is yet ahead of you. Look up the following passages in Scripture and let them instill in you the encouragement God’s Word supplies. After pondering each verse for a few minutes, jot down what the Lord ministers to your heart about who you are, who He is, and what you have as the result of your relationship with Him.

Psalm 23:1–3

Psalm 46:10a
2. Sum up in a sentence or two what you learned about God from these verses.

- What did you learn about yourself?

- What, specifically, did God show you that will help you take the next step with confidence?

This world can be a scary place at times, so much so that the Lord Jesus had specific words for His followers: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Wisdom dictates that you walk circumspectly (carefully), with your eyes focused on the Lord. Be obedient to the next thing He asks of you, knowing that He has your best interest at heart.

Memory verse: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

Day Two: Exploring the Text

Esther Takes the Next Step

Read Esther 5:1–6

After three days of fasting and praying, Esther prepared herself to enter the palace by putting on her royal robes (5:1); literally, the Hebrew reading is, she put on her royalty, no doubt to remind the king that she was his queen.

1. Where did she go to make her entry? v. 1

   a. Describe where the king was sitting.
b. How did King Ahasuerus respond to Queen Esther’s entrance? v. 2

c. What gesture did Esther make to show she received the king’s favor?

Whenever the king held out the golden scepter to an individual, he was extending pardon to nullify the death sentence for unauthorized entrance into his presence. This was the first answer to the many prayers on Esther’s behalf.

2. What did the king ask to show that Esther not only had his favor but also his interest? v. 3

a. To what extent was the king willing to grant her request?

3. Her immediate response to the king’s question was a simple request, what was it? v. 4

Can you imagine how Esther must have felt as she continued to realize God’s answer to her petitions? Certainly it was over and above what she had expected. So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared (verse 5), but she was not out of the woods yet!

Esther was about to realize some things about God that she did not have the opportunity to know before. Placed in circumstances that were not of her choosing, she chose to let God have His way. Sometimes it is only through adversity that we really come to know who He is. It is when we experience times that He is all we have, we realize that He is all we need!

*Selah* . . . Are you in a difficult spot right now? Are you getting to know God in a deeper way? The lesson He wants to teach you is found in Zechariah 4:6, what is it?

- When you reach the point where you realize you cannot do it in your own strength, to what extent does God promise to provide for you? Ephesians 3:20 Will you take a moment to thank Him?

*Review this week’s memory verse.*
Day Three: Exploring the Text    Esther’s First Feast

Read Esther 5:6–8

Esther carefully selected the right words at the right moment and, though it may seem to us that she delayed her purpose, she had sought God’s timing to make her request and was working towards that end. Because Esther was dependent on God’s guidance, she did what she thought was best in the moment. When we rely upon Him we can trust those moments when we feel it is right to wait, whether or not we can explain it at the time. Don’t forget that all the while this scene was being played out, behind the scene, Mordecai and the rest of God’s people were continuing to pray for God’s intervention.

1. What question did the king again ask of Esther? v. 6

The king repeated his willingness to grant Esther almost anything she wanted. Rather than exposing Haman’s plot too early, Esther did something else.

2. When did she promise to tell the king her true request? v. 7–8

Esther and Haman each had a strategy for getting what they wanted, though they were at polar opposites! Haman occupied himself with manipulation and power plays, while Esther exercised patience and planning. Proverbs 16:32 (NLT) says, “It is better to be patient than powerful; it is better to have self-control than to conquer a city.” From a spiritual perspective, patience will get you much farther than power will. And God will always honor the self-control that is exercised through patience.

3. What does James 1:2–4 have to say about the virtue of patience?

   a. What is ultimately gained through patience?

   b. What do these verses say about the perspective you should have?

4. What does 1 Timothy 6:11 have to say regarding patience? To what degree are you pursuing this quality?

Review this week’s memory verse.
Read Esther 5:9–14

In the game of life when somebody wins, somebody else loses—it has to be that way. Haman now comes to the forefront of our story and things really begin to heat up! Leaving Esther’s banquet with a glad heart, Haman stumbles upon Mordecai, sitting in his usual place at the king’s gate.

1. What was Haman expecting Mordecai to do as he approached him? vv. 9–10

   a. How did Mordecai defy Haman?

   b. What happened to Haman’s joy at this point? What did he do?

Haman’s pride was damaged, but he didn’t attack Mordecai, rather he retreated to his home to be with his wife and friends. He knew his plans for destruction were already set in motion and he no doubt looked forward to not having to see Mordecai in the future. Esther’s strategy of including Haman at the banquets had lulled him into a false sense of security.

2. Who else did Haman call for and what did he do next? vv. 11–12

   a. What evidence of pride is there in his words? Be specific with your examples.

   b. Why do you think Haman felt he had to boast after seeing Mordecai?

After sharing everything he was proud about, Haman put himself on the same level with the king by saying that he was the only one apart from the king that Esther had invited to the banquet.

3. What warning does the Bible give about the danger of pride and a haughty (arrogant, conceited, self-important, overconfident) spirit? Proverbs 16:18

We will see the reality of this truth come to full fruition shortly!

- The root cause of anger is pride and, left unchecked, it will lead to jealousy, envy, and even malice. Using the resources you have on hand, define the word *malice*. From your investigation, what kind of damage will it produce?

In order to “control” his anger problem, Haman surrounded himself with like-minded people who would understand him. But instead of dealing with his anger and coming to some resolution, he let bitterness and then malice take over.

5. What should a person do when facing the problem of uncontrolled anger? 
   Ephesians 4:31–32 (If these verses apply to you, take steps to deal with this today.)

6. Instead of helping Haman with his anger management, his wife and friends only added more fuel to his fire. What advice did they give him? v. 14

   a. How did they think Haman would feel after Mordecai was hanged on the gallows?

Did you notice how contagious bitterness can become? Once unleashed, it can easily become transmitted from one person to another like a wildfire. Haman, pleased with the advice of his friends, had the gallows erected. The height of fifty cubits was the equivalent of seventy-five feet! It was deliberately designed to be a prominent fixture that would generate a great deal of attention and make a strong statement.

Pride, anger, jealousy, envy, and malice all played a role in Haman’s ultimate destruction. It’s easy to look at these sins when reading about someone else’s life, but lest we overlook what may be lurking in our own hearts, we would do well to examine ourselves before moving on any further. Take a moment and ask God to show you if any of these tendencies are visible to Him. Record what He speaks to you and then humbly deal with them in prayer.

*Review this week’s memory verse*
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 for faith to take the next step . . .
Whatever it is that you are facing at this moment—before making your next move—take time to prepare your heart. Ask God to give you the confidence in Him to take the next step.

A prayer for patience through the trial . . .
James 1:4 (AMP) says: “let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work.” When you ask God for patience you are asking Him for steadfastness and persistence; the ability to bear the trial without grumbling. Ask Him, and then let Him complete the work in you.

A prayer for putting away all anger . . .
When God asks you to put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice, He asks you to replace them with kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. Tell Him you need His help to forgive as He (in Christ) has forgiven you.

Write out this week’s verse from memory:

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