The Chosen Life
Studies in Esther

Session 13 – Winsome to Win Some | Esther Chapter 2

As you look at this chapter, resist the tendency to read it like a fairy tale. Get to know Esther and she will surprise you. She may puzzle you. Hopefully she will challenge you.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what set Esther apart and brought her into a position of honor.
- Consider God's purpose for all believers and what shapes us for influence.
- Pray honest prayers that embrace wise counsel and cultivate a heart to serve.

Ice Breaker (choose one)

In high school, what would you have been voted "most likely" for and why?

Finish this sentence: In the next five years, I can see myself …

Living the Good Life?

Esther 2:1–23
The search for a new queen begins.

1. Summarize what the plan was to find a new queen.

   a. As far as the king was concerned, what three things made a woman desirable?

   b. By God's standard, what makes a woman desirable? Consider what you read in Proverbs 31:30 and 1 Peter 3:1–4.

Good to Know

"After these things…" Three years have gone by between chapter one and two. During that time, Ahasuerus invaded Greece but his army was soundly defeated. A dejected king is a recipe for trouble, so his personal attendants come up with a plan to find him a new queen.

2. It's reasonable to suppose that the king's edict caused mixed reactions among his subjects. Some girls would have gone against their will, deprived of any real chance for a normal life with the people they loved. Others would see the opportunity of a lifetime.

   a. Mordecai adopted his young cousin and raised her as his own, providing stability and shelter. The king's edict changed any plans Mordecai had for Esther's future. Mordecai couldn't change Esther's circumstances, but he helped her navigate them. In what way?

   b. Regardless of what she may have thought or felt about it, Esther found herself living in a culture obsessed with physical appearance, looking at an uncertain (to her) future. How did she respond, and what does that say about her?

   c. At this point in the story, can you identify with Mordecai or Esther in some way? Consider the summary statements below. If you could ask a question or offer advice to Mordecai or Esther, what would it be?

      - ☐ Mordecai gave Esther wise instruction and inquired daily (from a distance) about her welfare—but he had to relinquish direct control over her care and safety.

      - ☐ Esther's life took an unexpected turn; she was plunged into an environment that tested her values and compelled her to choose between what's right and what's culturally acceptable.

3. This chapter raises a valid, head-scratching question that has been asked by many people. *What's a nice girl like Esther doing in a place like this?*

   This is a good time to remind ourselves that "God is working in places where you and I might think He is absent."[1]

   a. It was Hegai's job was to make sure the king was always pleased. Explain how God used him to advance Esther's position.

   b. Mordecai's job (thanks to Queen Esther?) put him in the right place at the right time. Explain how God used him to save the king's life.

Some see this episode as proof positive that Mordecai and Esther had no business being in Susa when they should have been in Jerusalem with the rest of God's people. But the record shows the returned exiles were living in a perpetual cycle of backsliding too (see Haggai 1:2-7 and Zechariah 1:3-4).

[1] Warren Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, p. 713

Memory Verse
As you memorize this verse, make it part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.
Proverbs 11:2 NLT

Think About It . . .
Like Esther, we live in an all-about-me world. When everything within us asserts *me, myself, and I*, we are driving blind. Am I pursuing any unwise path? How will I make a course correction?

Shaped to Influence

Esther 2:15
On the surface, it appears that Esther led a charmed life simply because she was a natural beauty. But more than a lovely face, she had a disposition to match.

1. The narrator frequently mentions that Esther *obtained favor* with everyone who knew her. When we trace this phrase through the Bible, we see that obtaining favor isn't about how you look—it's about how you live. More to the point, it's about making the most of your influence as an opportunity to serve God.

   From the examples given, explain how God used these individuals who had *favor with others* to influence their world.

   Joseph (Genesis 39:4, 21 and 41:38–41, 57)

   Moses (Exodus 11:3)

   Samuel (1 Samuel 2:26 and 3:19–21)

   David (1 Samuel 16:7, 12 and 21–22)

   Jesus as a boy (Luke 2:52)

   The early church (Acts 2:47)

2. **When opportunity knocks.** On the surface, Esther's story appears to be a random string of events and relationships strung together by circumstance. But she was given a position of privilege for a reason. And with privilege comes responsibility.

   Even those of us who live more ordinary lives answer to God for the opportunities we are given. According to God's Word, what is our purpose and how does God shape us to be an influence?

   Ephesians 2:8–10

   Philippians 2:13

   Romans 12:1–2

   Colossians 3:12–14

   Titus 2:11–13

3. By the providence of God, Esther found herself in a palace. Where has God placed you? Identify key roles and relationships you have in life. List them here.

   a. In what ways has God given you favor with others? How can you make the most of these opportunities to serve God?

"The great use of one's life is to spend it for something that will outlast it, for the value of life is calculated, not by its duration but by its donation."

J. Oswald Sanders
Spiritual Leadership

Gospel at a Glance: Adoption and a Crown | Esther's story from rags-to-royalty almost sounds like a fairy tale. Considering that God's name is never mentioned, we might wonder where the gospel can be found. But here is a glimpse, pure and simple. Mordecai adopted his orphaned cousin, a lovely girl named Hadassah. Her Jewish name means *myrtle* or *fragrance*. Esther, her Persian name, means *star.* She is doubly named, and doubly blessed. Chosen for adoption simply because she was loved (Deuteronomy 7:6–7) by Mordecai who chose to become a father to her (2 Corinthians 6:18). By God's grace and favor, she was chosen for a crown—and so are we. Destined to reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12) by virtue of putting our faith in the saving work of Christ on the cross for us. "*But thank God! Now He uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume"* (2 Corinthians 2:14 NLT).

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18 NIV

In each session, we will take time to pray—for others and for ourselves, for our church, our communities, and our nation.

As a focus for prayer, you can use the memory verse, another scripture, or simply what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Record your simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

Group Prayer Requests

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Notes

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