

# Meet Christa

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On May 29, 1976, the day after her mother's 25th birthday, a bicentennial baby was born. She had fair porcelain skin and curly red hair. She was given the name Christa Anne Ray.

Her middle name carried the legacy of generations—from her great-grandmother Catherine Ann, grandmother Beverly Ann, and aunt Bobbi Ann, to her mother Phyllis Georgiann. Her family surnames reflected a rich patchwork of European ancestry (a true “European mutt”), with Germany and Holland leading the way. And her first name? It means “follower of Christ” or “anointed one.”

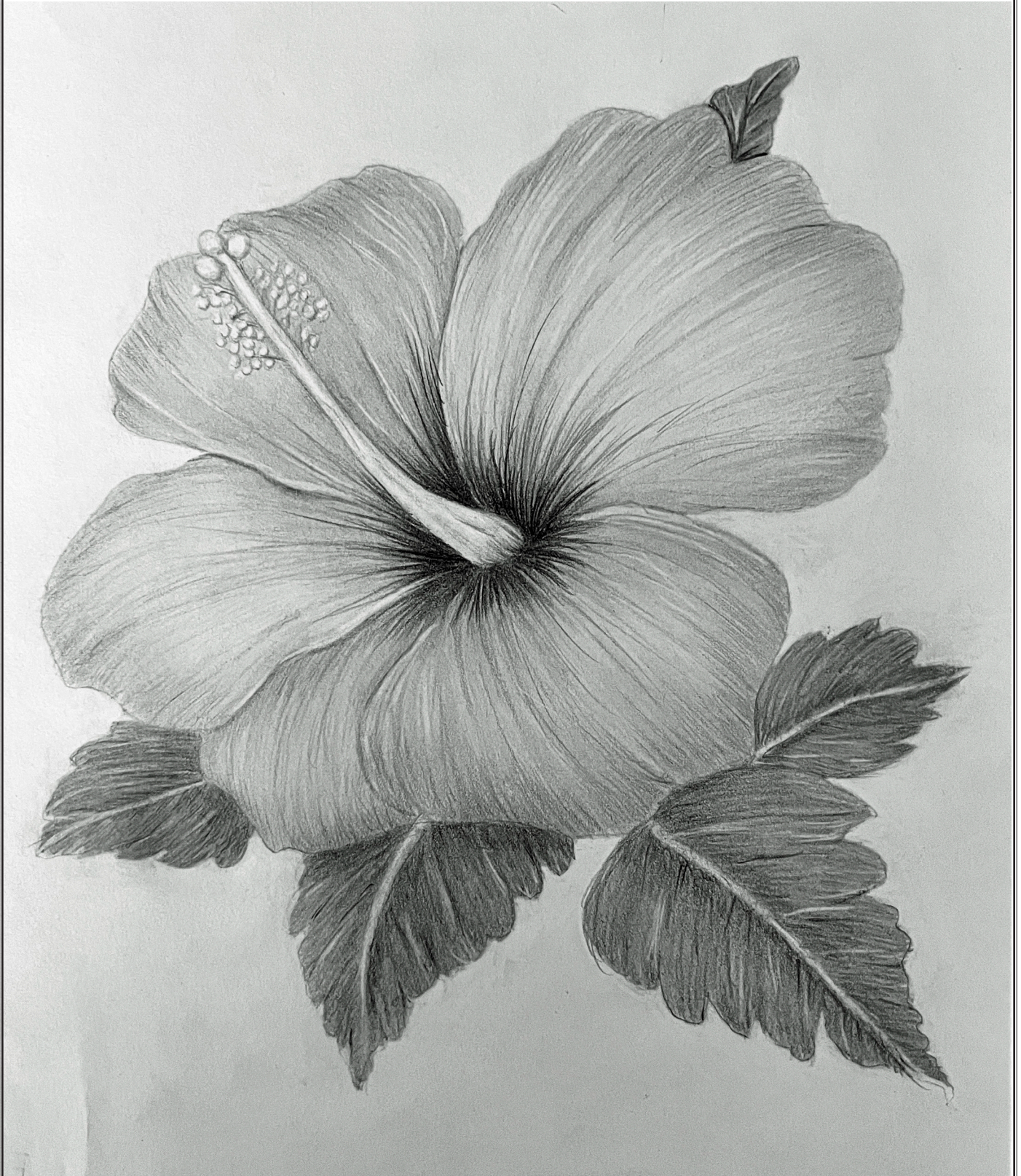
In her downstairs bedroom, in the old 2-story farmhouse on the Beatie Ranch in Anderson, not too far from Hawe's Ranch, she had a picture of Jesus painted by Warner Sallman. Jesus was always there watching, and she doesn't remember a time in her life without Him, though at times, He wasn't always her best friend when things weren't easily going her way.

While growing up on the ranch and living the country life with Arabian show horses, she was always academically adept. She loved to write and draw and was the reigning Spelling Bee champion in her class until she mumbled and stumbled on the first letter in the word “knowledge” in 6th grade to the glee of her fellow classmates. That year, she also entered her first poem into the Shasta County schools literary works competition, won an award, and became published for the very first time.

When she was five, her parents were invited by horse show friends to a new little church in town called Little Country Church. Through that church, she stepped into the world of music and began performing in large-scale productions at the Redding Civic Auditorium. From singing in the choir for Kid's Praise and Go Tell It on the Mountain to dancing with the original cast of Kids' Unlimited, she also sang in many Christmas and Easter performances—and eventually stood center stage, singing solo in the very place where it all began.

After a brief stint away at CSU Sacramento, she eventually returned home—and once again, it was at church where something new began to unfold. That's where she met her future husband, Cal. She sang on the church stage; he cooked for the church events. Being center stage in service came naturally to them both, and it's a rhythm they've shared for the past 20 years. Together, they've served in the kitchen for the school ministry while Christa continued writing and teaching for the women's ministry. Now, Cal is writing too, as they work side by side to publish a cookbook. This week, Christa will be your writer and teacher, walking with you through the life of Mordecai. Let's dig in with her...

# Meet Mordecai



*"In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai  
the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite."*

Esther 2:5

# MORDECAI

## Unseen but Positioned: Mordecai and the Power of Obedient Influence

Remember the game 20 Questions?

Maybe you played it in school, on a long car ride, around the dinner table, or just to pass the time with friends. The rules were simple: one person thinks of something, and everyone else has up to twenty yes-or-no questions to figure out what it is. You had to ask carefully, listen closely, and follow the clues. It was part guessing, part logic, and part learning how to ask the right questions. It usually starts with this first question: is it a person, a place, or a thing? This week, we're asking questions to uncover Mordecai's identity. In a way, it will be like playing a deeper, Spirit-led version of 20 Questions—but instead of guessing, we're digging into Scripture and answering 30 questions. Over the next several days, we will be searching for the details that help us learn:

- What kind of PERSON was he?
- What PLACE did he live in, and how did it shape him?
- What THING did he do that changed everything?

### PERSON: Who was Mordecai?

*"In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter"* (Esther 2:5-7 NKJV).

1. Who was Mordecai's father?
2. Who was his grandfather?
3. Who was his great-grandfather?
4. Their great-great (+ many greats) grandpa Kish—a notable patriarch in their lineage over 400 years earlier (whom Mordecai's great-grandfather was likely named after)—was described as a: "\_\_\_\_\_ man of \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Samuel 9:1-6 NKJV)
5. Who was G-G-Pa Kish's famous son? (1 Samuel 9:15-16)
6. Which of the 12 tribes of Israel were they all from?
7. Benjamin was which of Jacob's sons? (Genesis 35:23, Genesis 49:1-28)

## MORDECAI

8. Who was Benjamin's full brother? (Genesis 46:19)
9. Was the tribe of Benjamin a large and powerful tribe? (1 Samuel 9:21)
10. Which tribe did Benjamin align with? (1 Kings 12:21, 2 Chronicles 11:12, 2 Chronicles 15:8–9, Ezra 4:1)

Benjamin was Jacob's youngest son and the only one born in the Promised Land. All of Jacob's other sons came into the world while he was living in Paddan-Aram, far from home. But Benjamin was different. His birth happened on the road in Canaan, near Bethlehem, and came at a cost. His mother, Rachel, died giving birth to him. With her last breath, she called him Ben-Oni, *son of my sorrow*.

But Jacob, heartbroken yet hopeful, gave him a new name: Benjamin, son of my right hand. In Hebrew, *ben* means "son," and *yamin* means "right hand," a symbol of strength, blessing, and honor. His name holds grief and greatness, sorrow that gave way to strength, pain that gave way to promise.

Though his tribe would be small, Benjamin's legacy would endure for generations.

11. Who was King Saul commanded to kill and completely destroy but disobeyed by sparing?

“ \_\_\_\_\_, *king of the* \_\_\_\_\_ ” (1 Samuel 15:1-9).

12. Who was the Agagite, living in the time of Esther, that King Xerxes I promoted to second in command? (Esther 3:1)

13. Who was Mordecai's uncle? (Esther 2:15, 9:29)

14. Mordecai was Esther's:

- a) uncle
- b) brother
- c) cousin
- d) dad

15. Does the Bible mention anything about Mordecai being married or having children?

### **Named While Born in Exile**

The name Mordecai (Hebrew: *Mordokhay*) is most likely of Babylonian origin, possibly connected to the name of the Babylonian god Marduk, the chief deity in their pantheon.

That may sound strange, a Jewish man with a name tied to a foreign god, but it wasn't uncommon. Many Jews living in exile were given or born with names reflecting the surrounding culture. Think of Daniel and his friends, who were all renamed by the Babylonians (Daniel 1:7).

We don't know if Mordecai had a separate Hebrew name or if this was simply the name he was given in the world he was born into. Marduk was the top god in the Babylonian belief system, associated with judgment, magic, and creation. For context, the Babylonians had named and assigned roles to over 300 deities.

So yes, Mordecai's name may reflect the culture around him, but as we will discover, his character reflects the covenant within him.

**PLACE: Where and when did Mordecai live?**

Esther 2:6 tells us that Mordecai's great-grandfather, Kish, was taken from Jerusalem during the Babylonian exile around 586 BC. Then, about 50 years later, when Persia took over, King Cyrus gave the Jewish people permission to return home and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1–4). Fast-forward to when we meet Mordecai. We're now smack dab in the middle of the reign of King Xerxes I (Ahasuerus), which is around 486–465 B.C. For reasons we're not told, Mordecai's family chose to remain in exile—even when going back to Jerusalem was an option.

16. What city did Mordecai live in and what was it also known as?

17. What is a citadel?

18. Who else lived in Shushan/Susa, the citadel, approximately 35 years later and served King Artaxerxes I (son of King Xerxes 1)? (see Nehemiah 1:1)

The Hebrew word translated citadel (*bíráh*) refers to a fortified palace complex, which means it was a walled administrative and ceremonial capital. Susa was no ordinary city; it's one of the oldest in the world, with roots reaching back to at least 4,000 B.C. Over the centuries, it served as a capital for the Elamite, Assyrian, and later the mighty Persian Empire. By the time of Esther, Susa was one of four royal capitals of Persia and home to the king's winter palace. The grand palace at Susa, where the events of Esther unfolded, was built by King Darius I around 500 B.C. He expanded the city into a royal center of glory and power, commissioning a lavish citadel with materials and craftsmen gathered from across his empire. When archaeologists began digging at Susa in the late 1800s, located in what is now southwestern Iran, they uncovered remains that lined up remarkably with the biblical account. A trilingual royal inscription found at the site, known as the DSf inscription, was King Darius' (King Xerxes 1 father) detailed charter of foundation and captures his pride in his construction: "At Susa a very excellent (work) was ordered, a very excellent (work) was (brought to completion)."

19. Where at the citadel did Mordecai sit regularly? (Esther 2:21)

Mordecai sitting at the royal gate wasn't random or casual. In the Persian Empire, the king's gate (Esther 2:19, 2:21, 3:2, 5:9, 6:10, 6:12) was a highly significant place. It wasn't just the entry point to the palace—it was the official place of business, justice, and governance. Mordecai's regular presence at the gate suggests he served in some form of public service or court appointment. In ancient Persia, officials, scribes, judges, and advisors often conducted royal business and hearings at the gate. From the gate, Mordecai could gather news, overhear palace events, and stay aware of the political climate, which is exactly how he learned of the assassination plot in chapter two and Haman's plans later on. Also, being at the gate gave him proximity to protect and advocate for Esther (Esther 2:11).

**THING: What things did Mordecai do?**

*"Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it. And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her"* (Esther 2:10-11).

## MORDECAI

*“When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king’s gate. Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him. In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king’s gate, two of the king’s eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai’s name. And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king” (Esther 2:19-23 NKJV).*

20. What did Mordecai instruct Esther not to do?
  
21. What did Mordecai overhear at the gate?
  
22. What did Mordecai defiantly choose not to do? (Esther 3:2-5)
  
23. What did Mordecai finally reveal about himself? (Esther 3:4)
  
24. What did Mordecai wear to the front gate? (Esther 4:1-3)
  
25. What did Mordecai challenge Esther to do? (Esther 4:8, 13-14)
  
26. What was Esther’s command, and did Mordecai obey it? (Esther 4:15-17)
  
27. What did Mordecai do that was revealed? (Esther 6:1-2)
  
28. What position did Mordecai take on? (Esther 8:2)
  
29. What did Mordecai write and deliver? (Esther 8:7-10)
  
30. What celebration did Mordecai establish?(Esther 9:20-22, 28)

### **Hidden Faithfulness**

This week wasn’t just about learning Mordecai’s story. It was about uncovering what God might be speaking into your own. Mordecai didn’t plan to save a nation—he just raised a girl, reported a crime, and stood when others bowed. What seems small in your life may be the hinge of someone else’s deliverance.

### Faithfulness in the Background Lays the Foundation for Breakthrough in the Foreground

It's remarkable to trace Mordecai's story back through his lineage. He was from the tribe of Benjamin—a tribe that existed because Joseph, Benjamin's brother, remained faithful and preserved their family during famine. Benjamin's tribe began small (1 Samuel 9:21), nearly vanished (Judges 20:46–48), then rose to royal kingship with Saul, and produced protectors like Jonathan (1 Samuel 19:1–6), redeemers like Mordecai, and witnesses like Paul (Philippians 3:5). God has a pattern of using small, overlooked places, and people, for His biggest plans (Micah 5:2). Like Joseph, many generations before him, Mordecai lived in a foreign palace and used his position to protect God's people. Both men endured hidden seasons before being honored. Both rose to prominence in enemy territory. Both preserved the remnant of Israel.

<b>Joseph</b>	<b>Mordecai</b>
Lived in a foreign palace (Egypt)	Lived in a foreign palace (Persia)
Rose to power after interpreting dreams and saving lives	Rose to power after exposing plots and saving lives
Spoke wisely to Pharaoh and ruled with integrity	Spoke wisely to Esther and advised with discernment
Used power to provide for his people	Used power to protect and preserve his people
Was falsely accused and later honored	Was overlooked, then publicly honored
Preserved the remnant of Israel through a time of famine	Preserved the remnant of Israel through a time of a political genocide

Both stories are full of hiddenness—hidden identities, hidden motives, hidden faith. Yet, through quiet courage and obedience, both Joseph and Mordecai helped preserve God's people. Like Joseph, Mordecai never sought the spotlight. He didn't come with a title or a crown, just faithfulness and conviction. And that was enough. Ultimately, Mordecai wasn't remembered for his power but for "*seeking the good of his people and speaking peace*" (Esther 10:3).

Ponder the following questions. Be prepared to talk in your small group about any that speak to you.

31. What does it mean to be faithful in the shadows, not just the spotlight?

32. Who has God placed in your life to raise, mentor, or care for?

MORDECAI

33. Has God positioned you in a place that feels ordinary but could actually be strategic?

34. Are there “family stains” in your background God is rewriting for His glory?

35. What small act of courage could ripple into someone else’s breakthrough?

Before any man or woman rises to a place of influence, they often live in the quiet background of obedience. We may not live in a palace. We may not feel particularly brave. But like Mordecai, we are not forgotten, and our moment has not passed. We can miss our moment, even if God won’t miss His. God will accomplish His purposes—and He invites us to step into them. If God has placed you where you are—in your job, family, and community—it is not by accident. It may just be that you were born for this very hour. Remember, God uses background people for front-line impact.