



G3 DISCIPLESHIP CLASS

Esther – Character Under Pressure

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Lesson 1 | September 24, 2022

Lesson 1 – TRUSTING GOD'S WORK

Background: The events of this powerful book of the bible take place in Persia during the reign of King Xerxes from 486 to 465 B.C. It has been over one hundred years since the beginning of the exile and some of the Jews have returned to Jerusalem. The story is set in the city of Susa, which is where the king has his winter palace. The key characters in this story are King Xerxes, Queen Vashti, Esther, her Uncle Mordecai and Haman, the king's highest noble.

Esther Chapter 1

Queen Vashti Deposed

¹This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush^{1b}: ²At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, ³and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

⁴For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. ⁵When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. ⁶The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. ⁷Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. ⁸By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

⁹Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

¹⁰On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Karkas—¹¹to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. ¹²But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger

For Discussion

Why did King Xerxes ask Queen Vashti to come to him. (v 10-11)

Do you believe that this request placed Vashti in a difficult position?

Why do you think Vashti refuses to obey the King?

Reflections:

1. In the book of Esther, God is not mentioned, but He is the key figure in the story. God works through circumstances to place everything in order so that his plans will be accomplished.
2. To show respect between individuals is built through mutual regard and appreciation rather than demanding respect or controlling one another.
3. As God works in our lives, we must choose what is right so we can be a part of God's plan.
4. Our response to God is to look for his hand moving and to trust his direction.

Chapter 2

Introducing Queen Esther

⁵ Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, ⁶ who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin^[a] king of Judah. ⁷ Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

⁸ When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. ⁹ She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem

For Discussion

How does Esther enter the story?

The author mentions three times that Esther won approval in someone's eyes (vv 9,15,17). What does this tell us about Esther?

Even though God has not been directly mentioned in the book, where do you see his hand moving in the story so far?

As you look back over your life can you see his handprints over your life?

Do you see God's hand moving in circumstances in your life right now?

Reflections:

1. To recognize God's ordering work in our lives and to learn to trust His direction is key to being in the will of God.
2. God fits experiences together to prepare us for his work and to transform our character.
3. People put together a picture of our character from the times they interact with us, no matter how briefly.

4. God wants us to be daughters of godly, consistent character and that means choosing to do what is right in all situations.

Chapter 3

Haman's Plot to Destroy the Jews

¹ After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. ² All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

³ Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" ⁴ Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew.

⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. ⁶ Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes

⁸ Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. ⁹ If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents^[b] of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury."

¹⁰ So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

For Discussion

How does Mordecai enter the plot of the story?

What is the conflict between Haman and Mordecai?

Why is their conflict significant to Esther?

How can emotional conflict lead us to disobedience?

Reflections:

1. We need to remember that we have a responsibility in giving advice to others.
2. So often we give a quick advice to one another without truly understanding the situation or without pure motives
3. Part of godly character is knowing how to evaluate the advice we receive and the advice we offer is lined up with the character of God.
4. Loud voices do not necessarily mean right voices

5. The stronger **God's presence** is in my life **the clearer** the voice of God is, the **farther away** that God is-the **harder it** is for me to hear His voice.



No one has the right to counsel others who is not ready to hear and follow the counsel of the Lord for themselves.

A.W. Tozer

