

Note from Kathy

Do you enjoy a good story with twists and turns, love and loss, drama and intrigue? The book of Esther is packed with all of these. This true story took place many, many years ago, but the actions and emotions are just as real for us today. Let's glean all the lessons we can from these chapters.



As You Read...

In the margin of your Bible make note of the different sins you see as you study Esther 1-5, such as gluttony, selfishness, greed, pride, anger, jealousy, slothfulness, etc.

Observation

1. Esther 1:1-3 gives us the time setting for this book. Who was the king ruling at this time?

2. How vast was his rule?
3. The king decided to host a banquet. Who did he invite?
4. How long did the king's banquet last? _____
5. What was the purpose of this lavish event?
6. After the banquet ended King Xerxes (or King Ahasuerus, his Hebrew name) decided to host a garden party. Who was invited to this event?
7. How was his garden decorated?
8. How were the goblets described?
9. What unusual instruction did King Xerxes give his servants?
10. Queen Vashti decided to host a banquet also. Who did she invite?
11. The king has been drinking and feasting for over six months and is in a very good mood. Unfortunately, the wine and his pride clouded his better judgment. What did he command his servants to do?



Susa was the city of the winter palace of the Persian rulers.

12. What was Queen Vashti's response to this command for her appearance?
13. How did King Xerxes respond to her answer?
14. Scripture tells us it was King Xerxes habit to seek counsel from certain trusted advisers in matters of law and justice. How did those in the king's inner circle view Queen Vashti's answer to the king? What advice did they give King Xerxes and why?
15. The king sent out a decree. Communication across 127 provinces was probably very similar to the pony express used by our nation in the early years. What did this new law require?

Hebrews 13:16

"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

1 Peter 4:8-10

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

Galatians 5:14

"For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Application

1. In the first few verses of Esther 1, King Xerxes is hosting a banquet for all those in positions of authority under his rule. Scripture says for 180 days they ate and drank and he displayed his great wealth. Have you ever gone to a party where you felt this was the motive behind the party? Have you ever been tempted to host a party just to show off your kingdom? What should be the motive for hospitality? Hospitality isn't about your house; it's about your heart. Read Hebrews 13:16, 1 Peter 4:8-10, and Galatians 5:14, and write below what you learn from Scripture about showing hospitality.
2. In Esther 1:5-12, we read of a second party. This one is a garden party, and this time all are invited from the least to the greatest. This sounds very noble, but just as the party is ending King Xerxes decided to show off one last treasure, his queen. A man should be proud of the woman he married, but is that really what we have here? What the king had asked was against Persian customs. This conflict between Persian custom and the king's command put Queen Vashti in a difficult situation, and she chose to refuse. She may have hoped he would come to his senses later. There are many reasons that have been speculated as to why she refused to come. Perhaps the way she refused could have been handled a bit better. How would you handle a situation if your husband asked you to do something that made you feel uncomfortable?

3. Queen Vashti's refusal left King Xerxes in an uncomfortable situation. No one was allowed to refuse the king. The king would not have been accustomed to being told no. Consider if you have ever, accidentally or intentionally, put or left your husband in an embarrassing position in front of his friends or peers. What result did you get?
4. Close friends and counselors can be a very valuable asset. Seeking counsel can be a wise decision; the problem was King Xerxes' advisers had a personal interest in his ruling in this matter. The king's ruling would have an effect on the home life of each of these men. How objective could they really be? Who do you seek counsel from? Can they be totally objective, or do they stand to gain or lose depending on your decision?
5. The fact that this is a matter of such personal concern to these advisers suggests that the problem of who rules in the home is not a new one. Perhaps, the advisers thought they could settle the matter once and for all. These men asked for a royal decree; a brand new ruling and law from the king. They asked that it be written into the laws of the Persians and Medes. A Persian king was thought to be a god by the people. Once a law was written, it could not be changed, even by the king. Why was this domestic matter of such grave importance? What do you believe they hoped to accomplish with this new law?
6. Esther 1:21 states the king and his nobles were pleased with Memukan's advice. Do you believe King Xerxes thought this through? In such a serious matter as this what should he have done after receiving their advice? Was there a need to react this quickly? Have you ever ruled on a matter far too quickly in the heat of the moment and later wished you could take back your ruling? If you have raised children you may know how easily this can happen. Write down some safeguards you can choose to help you when ruling on a matter.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.



Ephesians 5:33

"Let each one of you love his wife as he loves himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

7. Dr. Emerson Eggerichs has a wonderful series on love and respect in marriage. He speaks about the "Crazy Cycle" married couples find themselves in from time-to-time. He defines the "Crazy Cycle" this way: **without love, she reacts without respect...without respect, he reacts without love.**

The challenge is to recognize when you are in this cycle and **choose to get off.**

Dr. Eggerichs says that in Ephesians 5:33, we learn that a wife needs love and a husband needs respect. Understanding this helps couples get off the Crazy Cycle. **His love motivates her respect, and her respect motivates his love.** The wife needs love; she is not trying to be disrespectful. The husband needs respect; he is not trying to be unloving. When this is decoded good things are in store! (*Love and Respect for a Lifetime* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs)

King Xerxes and Queen Vashti seem to be on the Crazy Cycle in chapter 1. Can you relate to this?

Do you feel you are sometimes on the Crazy Cycle.

8. Considering the love and respect dynamic, what act of respect might you sow today that would reap a harvest of love in your future?

A wise farmer chooses good seed that will produce the exact crop he hopes to harvest. He works hard preparing the ground to receive the seed, planting, watering, and then waiting. Why not begin sowing seeds of respect today, and ask God to bless your harvest?

9. Take a few minutes to pray and thank God for giving us these examples in his word. Thank him that he is not done with us yet and that he has given us this opportunity to make changes that will enable us to walk in obedience to him. Take some time to talk to him about all you have seen so far in this first chapter of Esther. Also, ask him what lesson(s) he wants you to learn from this chapter, and then wait for a few minutes listening for his response.