

Note from Kathy

This chapter leads us to the reality of destiny. We have all been given life and breath by God's sovereign purpose. Every choice we make either leads us closer to the fulfillment of our God-ordained purpose or farther away from it. Let's keep Mordecai's words in the forefront of our thoughts each day. "Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" If you are a believer, then you are part of the church; His bride. You are a child of the King of Kings!! Will you step up to your divine purpose?

Observation

1. In Esther 4 we see Mordecai learn of the plot to kill the Jews. How did Mordecai respond?
2. What amount of Persia was involved in this edict/proclamation issued in the king's name?
3. What was the response of the people, Jew, Persian, and every other nationality that lived in this land? Read Esther 3:15 and 4:3.
4. When Esther heard that Mordecai was in such great distress what did she do to try to help? When that did not work, what did she do next?
5. Mordecai not only shared the facts of what was happening, but he sent a copy of the edict for her to read. What did he ask Esther to do?
6. Esther understood Persian law. Which law did she not want to break? Briefly state the law.
7. Mordecai loves his precious niece Esther. What were his words of warning?
8. Notice the challenge Mordecai extended to Esther in verse 14. Write it in your own words.

9. Esther wasted no time, and quickly sent word back to her uncle. What did Esther ask her uncle and all the Jews to join her doing?
10. We see tremendous resolve and strong character in Queen Esther. What did she say in verse 16 concerning the possible outcome of the situation?

Application

1. Mordecai is experiencing deep grief in this chapter. This is an understandable emotion for the news he has just received. The king has written an order to have all the Jews killed. Not merely asked to leave the country, but killed. It is difficult to imagine a heart so dark that the person would not merely want one man that they hated killed but all people of that nationality? Can you think of another man who hated the Jews this much?

2. What is it about the nation of Israel that stirs up this kind of hatred?



1 John 4:8

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."



John 8:44a

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning."



John 8:44b

"not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

3. The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:8, "God is love." Satan is the opposite of love. God seeks to give eternal life; Satan seeks to destroy and kill. Read the two verses from John 8:44, and underline what you learn about Satan. What do you think Jesus is referring to when he says Satan was a murderer from the beginning, and he is the father of lies."
4. After reading the verses in the previous question, whom do you believe Haman was being led by?
5. Esther is faced with a choice in a time-sensitive situation. What are her two choices at this point? There is a famous quote attributed to Edmund Burke, but has been stated by countless others in similar forms. "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."
 - a.
 - b.

6. Have you ever been faced with a choice that was similar to Esther's? Perhaps, lives were not on the line. Perhaps, it was jobs or reputations and to speak up could cost you dearly.



Problems are like icebergs: there is so much more going on under the surface than the tip we see. Listening is becoming a dying art. In this day and age of email, text, twitter, and snapchat, we are expected to keep conversations brief. But, in order to become a good listener, we must slow down long enough to engage with another person. We must be present in the moment; not merely in the room. It can be tempting, but we should not equate our own personal experience with theirs. All too often in an attempt to relate, we say things like, "I know how you feel." Then we share a story from our own life, when we should simply listen. It is not about us. In order to be a good listener, we should be empathetic. Try saying something like, "This must be very hard for you right now." It has been said that "most people don't listen to understand; we are simply waiting for our turn to reply. Listening is an art that we should be working on all our life."

7. I can relate to Esther and her initial response to Mordecai's grief. She tried to fix the situation; she tries to cheer him up. She sends him a gift, something beautiful and new to wear. Have you ever tried to fix a problem for someone you love without even really investigating and getting to the heart of their grief? It is noble to try to help relieve someone's suffering, to cheer a loved one on. We may mean well, but are new clothes the answer to this problem?
8. What would make Esther think she could simply fix Mordecai's grief? Are you in a position that lends itself to fixing things? Perhaps by your position you get things done in a more timely fashion than the average person? It has been said, "It is not so much what you know but who you know." Could merely knowing Esther really be the answer to Mordecai's problem? Could Esther change the king's edict?
9. When fixing things did not work out as she had hoped, we see Esther try to get to the root of the problem. Have you ever tried to fix a problem for someone before you actually took the time to find out the real problem? Perhaps, you tried to initiate a conversation, and the only response you got was, "I'm fine. Don't worry." What are some questions you might ask that could help you identify the problem and understand the other person? We must remember, the most important part of finding the root of a problem is: listening.
10. Mordecai needed to share some devastating news with Queen Esther. All Jews living in all of the 127 provinces of Persia were to be annihilated at the end of the year. He does not merely send her word of this terrible future event but sends a copy of the edict. He is her uncle, why do you suppose it was not enough to merely tell her of the event.
11. Can you think of a time when you needed to share some very bad news and enlist the help of someone of higher position, power, or influence? Did you feel compelled to share some proof of what you were sharing? Not because they might think you were lying, but so the gravity and depth of the problem could be appreciated.

12. Being in an "Esther position" is never easy. Esther is the queen, that is true, but what have we seen this king do to previous queen? On the other hand to say nothing and hope it would not affect you because of your position is naïve. What would be your attitude, "why me" or "if I perish, I perish?"
13. Mordecai asked Esther to do something that literally could cost her life right then. There would be no optional punishment such as Vashti who was banished for her disobedience. No, to appear before the king without being summoned could carry a death penalty. Previously his advisors had encouraged him to handle marital matters with an extreme hand. Have you ever been asked to be the spokesman for those on the chopping block? What emotions did you experience?
14. Esther feels the gravity of this situation possibly more than her Jewish relatives. She is about to reveal her nationality. The Jews had at least 12 months to pack up and sneak out. Esther on the other hand is walking right into the lion's den. What is her plan? Where is her focus? Esther asks everyone she knows and even those she does not personally know to pray and fast. When was the last time you prayed and fasted? Did you ask anyone to join you? What was the nature of the need?
15. Matthew 6 shares Jesus' final words as he teaches what we have come to know as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus addresses prayer and fasting. Read Matthew 6:5 and 6:16. Notice the first few words of each. Do you believe prayer and fasting are things other Christians are to do, or do you see them as essential tools for a believer's walk of faith? What are you fasting and praying for this year?
16. In Esther 4:14 we read Mordecai's challenge to Esther. Have you ever felt like God had placed you in a position of influence "for such a time as this?"
17. How should this challenge affect our every day walk of faith? Would God's plan unravel if we do not step up? What do you see concerning the sovereign plans of God?

Esther 4:14

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Hebrews 12:1-2

"Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

James 4:5-8

"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?' ⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' ⁷Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

18. God uses ordinary people to carry out extraordinary plans. Do you agree? If so, why? What type of ordinary person can God use to carry out his plans?

Read Hebrews 12:1-2. Are there Christians who are not prepared for God's service? List a few things that might hinder our service.

- a.
- b.
- c.

19. If we are children of God then we have the Holy Spirit living in us. Read James 4:5-8, what are believers to do in order to serve the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

20. List a few of the emotional obstacles Esther had to face as she stepped up and accepted this challenge.

- a. *She was a woman in a male-dominated society*
- b.
- c.
- d.

21. How are you preparing yourself for the next Esther challenge you may need to face? What might we each do today that would prepare us to be able to quickly face a difficult situation with confidence? After all we may not have the luxury of three days to pray. Some of life's difficulties come without warning or extended deadlines. Why not stop and prepare your heart for service right now.

22. What valuable lesson will you take away from your time in Esther 4?

