

Esther

Chapter 5

Note from Kathy

Think about the last time you got in a hurry. What thoughts were going through your head? Were you careful with your words or frustrated and anxious with others? Did you make wise choices or did flashing lights and a siren snap you back to reality. Let's take a lesson from Esther. We need not be in a hurry when we are doing the work of God. The most important thing is to move only where and when He instructs.

Observation

1. Esther prayed and then Scripture says on the third day she dressed and stepped out in faith. What did she do?



2. Why did this action require great faith? (If you don't remember, read Esther 4:11.)
3. What did the king do that allowed Esther to come in and speak to him? She may be his queen but there were still protocols that must be observed.
4. King Xerxes was a very spontaneous person. What did he offer to give her? If we could read between the lines, what do you believe he was saying to her?
5. Esther answered with words filled with humility. God had given her a plan, and she was diligent to carry it out according to God's timing. What did she ask the king to do?
6. Notice the immediate response of the king. What do you believe motivated this urgency?

7. What does verse 6 say the king and Haman were doing?
8. At the banquet Esther arranged, the king inquires once again, "What is your petition?" What does Esther answer?
9. What kind of mood did Haman leave the banquet with that day?
10. What happened that quickly changed his good mood?

Esther 5:10-13

"Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, ¹¹Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. ¹²And that's not all, Haman added. I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. ¹³But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

11. In spite of this embarrassing and frustrating situation, what did Haman do when he arrived home?
12. Power, position, and prestige have truly gone to Haman's head. He has been lavished with all three of these more than any other man under King Xerxes. And yet, what was he focused on to the point that he could not enjoy the blessings he was bragging about?
13. Haman's wife Zeresh along with some of his close friends listened to his problem and offered a solution. What was their solution?
14. What did Haman do?
15. If one cubit is approximately 18 inches, how tall was the pole (gallows) Haman ordered to be erected? _____

Application

1. Esther had been praying and fasting for three days. She had instructed every Jewish person living in Persia to join her praying, fasting, and seeking God because of the terrible persecution the Jews were about to endure. The queen now has the ear of the king who offers her half of his kingdom. What does she ask for?

It may not seem as if there is a reason to wait, why not tell him of the plot against her people right now? But if God instructs you to wait wouldn't it be the wisest thing to do? Does this request make sense to you? It is always in our best interest to wait on the Lord's timing. Are you able to hold your tongue and wait on God's clear direction before speaking?

2. When was the last time you actually fasted and prayed for three days speaking to the Lord and seeking his will?
3. Below are three different definitions for the word "courage." How would you define courage?
 - a. The ability to face danger, difficulty and uncertainty without being overcome by fear or deflected from a chosen course of action.
 - b. The power to do well when the air is turbulent and the going gets tough. It is having character to do well when things are dangerous, difficult and when things are painful.
 - c. The power to do well in the face of a threat to your life, security and future.

Psalms 37:1-9

"Fret not because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! ²For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. ³Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. ⁴Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. ⁶He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. ⁷Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! ⁸Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. ⁹For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land."

4. We do not know if Esther had the Psalms to give her comfort. If she did Psalms 37:1-9 might have been one she held on to during those three days of fasting and prayer. Underline anything in these verses from Psalms 37 that would have served as a promise for Esther to hide in her heart.
5. If you are experiencing a difficult and trying situation right now, why not write these verses out and place them around your apartment, home, or car so you will see them often during the day. Focusing on the promises of God and hiding his word in our heart will give us the strength to face every trial.
6. When the king and Haman went to Esther's first banquet what does she ask them to do for her? Esther is showing honor by preparing two beautiful banquets for these two men. They would have both left the first banquet in good spirits. Notice her wording; she is gracious and humble in her request. How do you present your requests?
7. Do you think Haman sees what is coming? Esther 5:9 says he went out in high spirits. If we rely on favorable circumstances alone to dictate our happiness, what will inevitably happen?
8. Haman may have walked out of the banquet in a very good mood but seeing Mordecai brought his feelings of hatred right back to the surface. Why do you suppose he did not kill him right then and there?

9. Haman may have been filled with anger, but he was motivated by pride to go home and brag to family and friends about how he had been honored by the queen. But even in his boasting he could not find true happiness. The bubble of his pride was quickly burst when one man would not honor him as he thought he should. Have you ever allowed one person to rob you of your happiness? Perhaps everything is going well, and yet, one person's words, actions, or in Haman's case, lack of action, ruined everything.

Proverbs 31:10-12

"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. ¹¹Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. ¹²She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life."

10. A wife can be a great gift, or she can be a huge hindrance. Haman and righteous Job have little in common, other than their foolish wives and worthless friends. Job was suffering greatly; his wife was tired of the whole mess, so her advice to him was, "why don't you simply curse God and die?" She added temptation to his affliction when she advised him to sin. Haman's wife thought so little of others, and the value of life, that she simply instructs him to put up a pole or a gallows and do away with this irritating person, Mordecai. If you are married, what kind of advice do you give? Is your advice consistent with Scripture? This might be a good time to read Proverbs 31:10-12.

11. Sadly, Haman was not a righteous man like Job. Job was able to hear his wife's foolish advice and remain a man of integrity. The text tells us Haman heard the counsel of his wife and friends and was delighted by the murderous idea. He ordered a massive pole to be erected so that he could kill Mordecai. Read Job chapters 1 and 2. To be a person of integrity is a personal choice. It is not a result of your circumstances. When you look at Haman and Job, what are some of the glaring differences between them? What contrasting desire were they each consumed by? Who was the driving force behind these two men? Make a few comparisons in the table below.

Job	Haman

12. Is it possible to remain a person of integrity when things are not going as you had planned?
13. We can expect to fight battles every day of our life, some are big with weighty consequences and others are smaller and carry a lesser price. How we fight, the weapons we rely on, and the strength we fight with all determine our outcome. You have made a wise choice to be feeding on God's word. God is always faithful; His word will never let you down. Ultimately, who is responsible for every decision we make?
14. I read a story one time that illustrated the battle that is going on for each of us. It is the battle between our good thoughts and our bad thoughts. It has been said that we must choose carefully what we think about for our thoughts lead to our actions, and our actions become our habits, and our habits become our character, and ultimately, our character will determine our destiny.

2 Timothy 2:15

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

This is a unique story about two dogs. I hope it makes you think. "An Eskimo fisherman came to town every Saturday afternoon. He always brought his two dogs with him. One was white and the other was black. He had taught them to fight on command. Every Saturday afternoon in the town square the people would gather and these two dogs would fight and the fisherman would take bets. On one Saturday, the black dog would win, and another Saturday the white dog would win – but the fisherman always won! His friends began to ask him how he did it. He said, "I starve one and feed the other. The one I feed always wins because he is stronger." Studying God's word is a wise choice. You are feeding on the very word of God. Read 2 Timothy 2:15.

Matthew 4:18-22

"While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

15. What is your initial response to real problems?

Do you sit down to put your thinking cap on? Do you phone a friend? Do you run to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith?

16. Jesus chose ordinary men to be his disciples. His call was very clear, and their obedience was immediate. Have you heard Jesus' words "Follow me?" If so, how did you respond? Read Matthew 4:18-22 when Jesus called his disciples.

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

17. What is your purpose in life? Read Ephesians 2:10 to be reminded what God says about our purpose.

18. According to Isaiah 6:8, *"And heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'"* Then I said, *"Here I am! Send me."* Do you have a heart to be used by God?

1 Corinthians 3:7-8

"So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor."

19. Share something of your study of Esther with someone else this week. Be prepared to share with your small group this experience. Any act of sharing God's word can be destiny altering. Do not minimize the planting of seeds or the importance of watering what someone else has planted. It is God's part to give the increase. Read 1 Corinthians 3:7-8.