



Character Study ESTHER - COURAGE FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

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Esther's life begins in the Persian Empire during the reign of King Ahasuerus, commonly identified as King Xerxes I, between 486 and 465 B.C. (Esther 1:1). Her Hebrew name, Hadassah, meaning "myrtle," reflects her Jewish heritage. She was an orphan, and her cousin Mordecai raised her as his own daughter. The Bible describes Mordecai as a prominent figure in the Persian court, where he held a position as one of the king's officials (Esther 2:5-7).

Esther's early life was marked by humility and obedience, which undoubtedly played a crucial role in shaping her character for the events that would unfold later. Little did she know that her destiny would soon lead her to the throne of Persia and a pivotal role in the salvation of her people.

Esther's Ascension to Royalty

King Ahasuerus removed his queen, Vashti, when he became enraged with her after she refused to appear before the king and his guests during a lavish banquet (Esther 1:10-12). In search of a new queen, the king ordered officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the citadel. Esther, with her captivating beauty and inner grace, caught the attention of the king's officials and eventually found favor in the eyes of King Ahasuerus himself (Esther 2:17) and is crowned queen.

In this position of influence, she would soon be called upon to protect her people from a grave threat that loomed on the horizon.



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The Plot to Destroy the Jews

Haman, a descendant of the Agagites, rose to power in the Persian court (Esther 3:1). He harbored deep animosity towards the Jewish people and devised a plan to annihilate them entirely. Through manipulation and deception, he managed to convince King Ahasuerus to issue a decree for the destruction of all Jews within the empire (Esther 3:8-11).

As the news of this deadly decree spread throughout the kingdom, great mourning and distress fell upon the Jewish people. Mordecai, who remained devoted to his Jewish identity, demonstrated his grief openly, wearing sackcloth and ashes in the public square (Esther 4:1-3).

Mordecai, realizing the perilous situation, urgently contacted Esther to intervene on behalf of her people. At first, Esther hesitated to approach the king, fearing that her sudden appearance before him could result in her death (Esther 4:11). Yet, Mordecai's response to her reluctance was a reminder that she was not immune to the fate of her people.

He said, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace, you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13-14 ESV).



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This powerful declaration stirred Esther's resolve and sense of duty. Recognizing that she had been placed in her position of royalty for a divine purpose, she chose to put her life on the line to save her people. She asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Susa for a three-day fast and prayer, after which she would approach the king without being summoned—an act that could have resulted in her death if the king did not extend his golden scepter to her (Esther 4:15-17).

Esther's Courageous Appeal

Esther's boldness and faith in God were evident as she approached the king, trusting in His providential care. Miraculously, the king extended his golden scepter to Esther, granting her permission to speak (Esther 5:1-3). Rather than revealing her request immediately, she invited the king and Haman to a banquet she had prepared.

At the banquet, the king asked Esther what she desired, and she made an intriguing request: she asked the king and Haman to attend another banquet the following day, where she promised to disclose her petition (Esther 5:6-8). This suspenseful turn of events placed Haman in high spirits, assuming he was the center of Esther's attention and favor. However, his delight would soon be replaced with shock and dread.

Haman's Downfall and the Salvation of the Jews

On the night after the first banquet, the king could not sleep and decided to read the chronicles of his reign. There, he discovered a significant event that had been forgotten—the time when Mordecai had uncovered a plot to assassinate the king, saving his life (Esther 6:1-3). Realizing that Mordecai had not been adequately rewarded for his actions, the king sought counsel from Haman, who was coincidentally at the palace to request Mordecai's execution.



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Unaware of the impending twist of fate, Haman proposed an elaborate plan to honor someone the king favored. To his dismay, the king instructed Haman to carry out this plan for Mordecai himself, which was a tremendous humiliation for the vengeful nobleman (Esther 6:6-11).

At the second banquet, Esther finally revealed her identity as a Jew and exposed Haman's wicked plot to destroy her people (Esther 7:1-6). The king, enraged by Haman's treachery, ordered his immediate execution on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:9-10).

The Triumph of the Jews and the Feast of Purim

Esther's bravery and the turn of events were a pivotal moment for the Jewish people. King Ahasuerus granted a new decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies (Esther 8:11). On the appointed day, the Jews fought valiantly and emerged victorious, slaughtering those who sought their destruction (Esther 9:1-16).

To commemorate this incredible deliverance, Mordecai established the feast of Purim, a joyous celebration of remembrance and thanksgiving. The festival is still observed by Jews today, marking God's faithfulness and the courage of Esther and Mordecai in the face of adversity (Esther 9:17-32).



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Esther's life is a testament to the providence of God and the impact one person can make when they choose to stand up for what is right, even at great personal risk. Her faith, courage, and obedience to God's plan allowed her to play a significant role in the preservation of her people.

When we align ourselves with God's purposes and seek to honor Him in all we do, we can become instruments of His grace and instruments of change in the world. Like Esther, may we rise to the challenges before us, knowing that God is with us, guiding our steps, and using our lives to bring about His redemptive purposes in our time and generation.



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LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Courage in the Face of Adversity:** Esther's courage in approaching the king without being summoned, risking her life to save her people, demonstrates the importance of standing up for what is right, even in the face of great danger. Her bravery teaches us to be bold and resolute when advocating for justice and protecting others from harm.
2. **Faith and Trust in God:** Despite the absence of direct references to God in the book of Esther, it still shows God's unseen hand at work behind the scenes. Esther's ability to seek the Lord through fasting and prayer before going into the king's presence is a great example of how to seek God first before we take action.
3. **Obedience and Submission to Authority:** Esther's initial obedience to her cousin Mordecai's instructions, even when she was hesitant, shows the importance of submitting to wise counsel and authority figures in our lives. It also underscores the significance of following God's commands and principles in all situations.
4. **Using Influence for Good:** As queen, Esther utilized her position of influence to protect her people and bring about positive change. Her example encourages us to use our influence and resources to advocate for the vulnerable and contribute to those in need.
5. **Divine Timing and Purpose:** Esther's rise to the throne at a critical moment in history highlights the concept of divine timing and purpose. It reminds us that God places us in specific circumstances for a reason, and there may be opportunities for us to play essential roles in His plans.



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6. God's Protection and Deliverance: God used Esther to protect and deliver His people. He still uses people today to further His plans. This assures us that nothing is impossible for God and that He is faithful to His promises and can save us from seemingly insurmountable challenges.

7. Humility and Selflessness: Esther's humility is evident in her actions, putting the needs of her people above her own safety and comfort. Her selflessness serves as a reminder to prioritize the welfare of others and exhibit compassion and empathy.

8. Prayer and Fasting: Esther's call for prayer and fasting before approaching the king emphasizes seeking God's guidance in crucial decisions and difficult circumstances. It teaches us the significance of seeking God's will through prayer and fasting.

9. Overcoming Fear: Esther's initial fear of approaching the king was replaced by her determination to fulfill her calling. Her story teaches us to overcome fear and rely on God's strength to face challenging situations with courage.

10. Celebrating God's Faithfulness: The establishment of the feast of Purim commemorates God's faithfulness in delivering the Jewish people. It reminds us to celebrate and remember God's victories and blessings in our lives and communities.



Character Study **NOTES**

NAME:

MEANING:

KEY VERSES:

KEY LIFE EVENTS:

SUMMARY OF LIFE:

APPLICATION: HOW CAN I APPLY WHAT I'VE LEARNED TO MY LIFE?

PRAYER/NOTES:



RELATED VERSES





WORDS TO LOOK UP





Character Study **DEEPER REFLECTION**

What character traits do you admire most in Esther, and how do they inspire you in your own life?

Reflect on the moments in Esther's life when she faced fear and uncertainty. How did she overcome these challenges, and what can you learn from her approach to dealing with fear?





Character Study **DEEPER REFLECTION**

Reflect on the moments in Esther's life when she faced fear and uncertainty. How did she overcome these challenges, and what can you learn from her approach to dealing with fear?

Reflect on the power of prayer and fasting in Esther's story. How does her call for prayer and fasting before her pivotal moment of intervention demonstrate the importance of seeking God's guidance in significant decisions?





Character Study **DEEPER REFLECTION**

Explore the theme of deliverance and salvation in Esther's life. How do you see God's hand of protection and deliverance at work in her story, and how does this speak to your own experiences of God's faithfulness?

What pivotal moments or opportunities have you encountered in your life that made you feel like you were placed 'for such a time as this'? How did you respond to these moments, and what did you learn about your purpose and calling through those experiences?





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