

## Esther, Vashti & Providence

Lesson 01 of the series “Esther: A Tale of Faithfulness and Courage.”

### I. In 483 BC Xerxes, the king of Persia, deposed Vashti, his beautiful queen.

“These events happened in the days of King Xerxes, who reigned over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia... In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. He invited all the military officers of Persia and Media as well as the princes and nobles of the provinces. The celebration lasted 180 days—a tremendous display of the opulent wealth of his empire and the pomp and splendor of his majesty. When it was all over, the king gave a banquet for all the people, from the greatest to the least, who were in the fortress of Susa. It lasted for seven days... By edict of the king, no limits were placed on the drinking, for the king had instructed all his palace officials to serve each man as much as he wanted... On the seventh day of the feast, when King Xerxes was in high spirits because of the wine, he told the seven eunuchs who attended him... to bring Queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head. He wanted the nobles and all the other men to gaze on her beauty, for she was a very beautiful woman. But when they conveyed the king’s order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come. This made the king furious, and he burned with anger. He immediately consulted with his wise advisers, who knew all the Persian laws and customs, for he always asked their advice...’ So if it please the king, we suggest that you issue a written decree, a law of the Persians and Medes that cannot be revoked. It should order that Queen Vashti be forever banished from the presence of King Xerxes, and that the king should choose another queen more worthy than she. When this decree is published throughout the king’s vast empire, husbands everywhere, whatever their rank, will receive proper respect from their wives!’ The king and his nobles thought this made good sense... But after Xerxes’ anger had subsided, he began thinking about Vashti and what she had done and the decree he had made. -Esther 1:1-2:1 (NLT)

*Note:* Respect is earned NOT legislated.

“Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands... Then people who are not Christians will respect the way you live...” -1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (NLT)

*Life Application:* We must NEVER forget that alcohol clouds our thinking and ruins our judgment.

“Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.” -Ephesians 5:18 (NLT)

“Wine produces mockers; alcohol leads to brawls. Those led astray by drink cannot be wise.” -Proverbs 20:1 (NLT)

### II. Providentially, Esther was chosen as Vashti’s replacement.

Providence = “foreseeing care and guidance of God.” *Dictionary.com*

“So his personal attendants suggested, ‘Let us search the empire to find beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint agents in each province to bring these beautiful young women into the royal harem at the fortress of Susa. Hegai, the king’s eunuch in charge of the harem, will see that they are all given beauty treatments. After that, the young woman who most pleases the king will be made queen instead of Vashti.’ This advice was very appealing to the king, so he put the plan into effect. At that time there was a Jewish man in the fortress of Susa whose name was Mordecai... His family had been among those who, with King Jehoiachin of Judah, had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. This man had a very beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter. As a result of the king’s decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to the king’s harem at the fortress of Susa... Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had directed her not to do so... Before each young woman was taken to the king’s bed, she was given the prescribed twelve months of beauty treatments—six months with oil of myrrh, followed by six months with special perfumes and ointments. When it was time for her to go to the king’s palace, she was given her choice of whatever clothing or jewelry she wanted to take from the harem... When it was Esther’s turn to go to the king, she accepted the advice of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. She asked for nothing except what he suggested, and she was admired by everyone who saw her... And the king loved Esther more than any of the other young women. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti.”

-Esther 2:2-17 (NLT)

*Note:* Esther made the most of her opportunities. “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. -Luke 16:10 (NIV)

### III. Providentially, Esther’s cousin Mordecai uncovered an assassination plot and saved Xerxes’ life.

“One day as Mordecai was on duty at the king’s gate, two of the king’s eunuchs, Bigthana and Teresh—who were guards at the door of the king’s private quarters—became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him. But Mordecai heard about the plot and gave the information to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. When an investigation was made and Mordecai’s story was found to be true, the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole. This was all recorded in *The Book of the History of King Xerxes’ Reign*.”

-Esther 2:21-23 (NLT)

*Note:* Mordecai made the most of his opportunities.

*Life Application:* God is providentially working in my life.

“The LORD will work out his plans for my life— for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.” -Psalm 138:8 (NLT)

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” -Romans 8:28 (NLT)

*Life Application:* The opportunities we have are more important than the opportunities we wish we had.

The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.” -Psalm 32:8-9 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 08-17-14 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

## Connect Group Questions

To prepare for this week's meeting, take some time to focus on the following questions and write out a few brief answers. Be prepared to share them with your group

### My Story

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching on Esther, Vashti and Mordecai was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?
2. Describe a time in your life when you had a clear sense of God providentially working in your life? What got your attention? What convinced you that God was somehow guiding your life?
3. Describe an uncle, aunt or cousin with whom you have a special relationship? What makes him / her so special?

### Going Deeper

1. What do the following passages teach us about God's providence?
  - Proverbs 16:9
  - Psalm 1:6
  - Psalm 138:8
  - Romans 8:28
2. What do the following verses say about drunkenness?
  - Proverbs 20:1
  - Proverbs 23:29-35
  - Proverbs 31:4-7
  - Ephesians 5:18

Why do many Christians abstain from drinking alcohol completely? What is their concern? Why is alcoholism so rampant in our society? What can we do about it?

### Life Application

1. In his message this week John made the statement, "The opportunities we have are more important than the opportunities we wish we had." Do you agree? Why? Why not?
2. What opportunities are in front of you right now? What would keep you from making the most of them?
3. In the first chapter of Esther King Xerxes followed bad counsel from his royal advisors. In the second chapter queen Esther followed good counsel from her cousin Mordecai and from Hegai, the eunuch in charge of Xerxes' harem. Whose counsel do you follow? How do you know they are trustworthy?
4. Discuss the following lyrics to the hymn, "Be still my soul." Written by Catharina von Schlegel.

*Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In every change, He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future, as He has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know  
His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.*

*Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on  
When we shall be forever with the Lord.  
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone,  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past  
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

Do these lyrics bring you comfort and hope? Why? Why not?

**Resources:**

Character: Who You Are When No One Is Looking, by Bill Hybels, Inner Varsity Press, 1995.

Esther: A Woman of Strength & Dignity, by Charles R. Swindoll, Thomas Nelson / 2008

For Such a Time as This: Queen Esther's Secrets for Strategic Living, by Ray Stedman, Discovery House / 2010