

The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 1

Inductive Women's Bible Study – Lesson 1

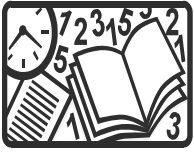
“Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Mordecai’s question to Esther encapsulates the great lesson of this book. God is in control. Though unseen, He is on the scene accomplishing His purposes in this world. Although the future is known only to God, He guides and prepares us for our part in His story. As you read the account of this remarkable young woman who fulfilled her destiny, remember that you too have been chosen by God. You may think, *but I have no extraordinary purpose in life*. No matter. Whatever your place in life may be, God has chosen to work His plan through you. It has been said that destiny is not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice. Will you rise to the call?

Background The events recorded in Esther happened during the reign of Xerxes who ruled from 486-465 B.C. “Ahasuerus” was his title as ruler (just like “Pharaoh” is an Egyptian title). Secular history gives us a substantial picture of Xerxes. He inherited a vast empire from his father, Darius, and referred to himself as “the great King, the King of Kings, the King of this great world.” Wanting to add Greece to his empire, Xerxes brought his nobles and military leaders together for a great banquet to plan the invasion. This corresponds with the feast we read about in Esther Ch. 1. His disastrous attempt to conquer Greece is well documented and fits into the four-year time gap between the first and second chapters of Esther. The remaining years of his reign were mostly devoted to ambitious building projects and a life of indulgence. He is remembered by history as a man given to irrational fits of rage and habitual dalliances with beautiful women.

Returning in defeat from Greece, Xerxes began to miss Vashti, whom he’d deposed. He chose a lovely Jewess named Esther to be queen instead, and so begins our story. The events described in this book all take place in the Persian capital of Susa at a time when the first remnant of Jews (under Zerubbabel) are struggling to rebuild their nation in the land of Judah. Esther’s story fits between events recorded in the sixth and seventh chapters of the book of Ezra. By God’s sovereign design, Esther’s influence with the king saves her people from certain extinction. Some fifteen years later, Ezra will lead the second group of exiles back to Jerusalem, followed by Nehemiah fourteen years after.



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Getting started. Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT

Esther Ch. 1 Read the passage, without interruption, two or three times. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what you have read.

With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

Working Text for Esther Ch. 1

New International Version (NIV)

1 This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: 2 At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, 3 and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

4 For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. 5 When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest, who were in the citadel of Susa. 6 The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. 7 Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. 8 By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

10 On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him-Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas- 11 to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. 12 But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

13 Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times 14 and were closest to the king-Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

15 "According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" he asked. "She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her."

16 Then Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. 17 For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.' 18 This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.

19 "Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. 20 Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

21 The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. 22 He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household.



OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with the writer as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How do the main characters respond to their situation?

Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources. You may want to look up names and places in a Bible dictionary, map or encyclopedia. What else can you discover about the people and places mentioned in this chapter?

You can also use this section to jot down your own thoughts and impressions about people and events. What do you observe about the king’s character? What do you observe in the character and behavior of others in the story?

Esther 1:1-9

Bible Facts and Information:

My Research and Observations:

Ruled lines for Bible Facts and Information.

Ruled lines for My Research and Observations.



INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



APPLICATION – *How does it apply to me?*

We don't study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Esther 1:1-9

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 1:10-12

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 1:13-22

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it. _____



Take A Closer Look

“But Queen Vashti refused to come...”

Esther 1:12

Sometimes we have to make hard decisions. Thrust into a situation beyond our control, we are faced with a choice. Pressure bears as we weigh the options—do what is right...do what is easiest...do what is safe...do what everyone expects you to do. Queen Vashti found herself in such a situation. Esther would face even greater pressure later.

Over the years, Vashti has been portrayed as both a rebellious wife or as a woman of strong conviction for her refusal to obey the king’s command. The fact is, the writer doesn’t explain her motive. We can’t say with certainty what Vashti’s reasons were but we see that her decision had long-term consequences. We make decisions every day, some more important than others. What do our choices say about us? Take a closer look and consider what the Lord wants to show you about making choices.

How can we learn to make good choices? Contemplate what the following verses teach and answer in your own words.

Psalm 119:9-11 _____

Proverbs 3:5-7 _____

Proverbs 19:20 _____

We can learn from the example of others. The following verses give a glimpse of people making an important choice. Consider two things: 1) How their choice reveals what is important to them; and 2) What their example teaches you.

Eve – Genesis 3:1-6 _____

Lot – Genesis 13:10-13 _____

Joseph – Genesis 39:6-12 _____

Ruth – Ruth 1:14-18 _____

Nehemiah – Nehemiah 5:14-19 _____

Mary – Luke 10:38-42 _____

Paul – Philippians 3:7-14 _____

We don't always see the consequences of our decisions ahead of time. Certainly Vashti, who was not a worshipper of *Yahweh*, the God of the Jews, did not see the far-reaching consequences of her choice. But as a child of God, we have a blessed advantage in making decisions. What can you count on when faced with a difficult choice? As you read, note if there are any conditions to the promise given.

Proverbs 2:1-8 _____

Isaiah 41:10 _____

John 14:16-17 & Romans 8:26-28 _____

Philippians 4:6-7, 13 _____

James 1:5-6 _____

What do our choices say about us? Take some time for reflection. Consider the most important decision or choice you are facing at the present time. As you weigh the outcome, put the following considerations in the order of their importance *to you*, with #1 being the most important.

___ Outcome will be what I'm hoping for.

___ God will be glorified.

___ Being in God's will.

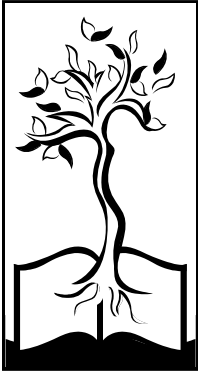
___ Seeing immediate results.

___ Little or no disruption in my life.

___ Spiritual growth.

___ Getting a clear answer.

___ Woman's intuition.



God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

Something to Think About . . .

Our choices reveal the kind of person we are, but there is another side to the coin.
We may, by our choices, also determine what kind of person we will become.

- A.W. Tozer -

