



The Chosen Life: Studies in Esther

Esther Ch. 2

Inductive Women's Bible Study — Lesson 2

Esther's story unfolds against such a vividly detailed backdrop that we can see every scene as if we were sitting in a darkened theater. The pomp and drunken revelry of the first scene has died down. The queen is gone and King Ahasuerus appears—if only for a moment—to regret his rash behavior. Gloom is a dangerous mood for such an erratic man, so the king's attendants suggest that he enlarge his harem. The command goes out across the king's vast empire. Countless beautiful young women are brought into the palace compound for an elaborate year-long preparation only to spend one night with Xerxes. In the morning they return to the harem, destined to live out their days in luxury and loneliness. Somewhere in this sea of loveliness Esther appears and, true to her name ("Star"), she outshines all others.

As you read this familiar story, resist any tendency to let Esther slip into the role of a fairy tale princess. Get to know her and she will surprise you. At times, she may puzzle you. Hopefully she will challenge you.

Background Esther was a Jewish orphan who was raised by her cousin Mordecai. We are introduced to Mordecai first. Some scholars believe that the brief description of his genealogy here indicates he was descended from the same family as Saul, the first king of Israel. His ancestors had been carried away in the Babylonian captivity, which is how he came to be a Jew living in Susa.

Mordecai has been faulted by some for allowing Esther, a Jewess, to be taken into a pagan king's harem but there is nothing to indicate he had any choice in the matter. Clearly, Mordecai loved Esther and she obeyed him as a devoted daughter would, even after she became queen. The wisdom and influence of his counsel to Esther is another indication of the unseen yet ever present hand of God in the affairs of His people.



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. 2 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. 2

New King James Version (NKJ)

1 After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. 2 Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; 3 and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given them. 4 Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

5 In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. 6 Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

7 And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

Jewish people in ancient times often had two names—a secular name known in their culture, and a sacred name given in the Hebrew tongue. Hadassah was Esther's Hebrew name.

8 So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women. 9 Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women. 10 Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it. 11 And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

12 Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. 13 Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. 14 In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

The young women who failed to be recalled by the king would live the rest of their life as a virtual widow isolated in the king's harem.

15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. 16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. 20 Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. 23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.



Esther 2:8–16

Bible Facts and Information:

[illegible]

Esther 2:17–23

[illegible]

My Research and Observations:

[illegible]



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 2:1–7

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 2:8–16

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Esther 2:17–23

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

“Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.”

Esther 2:15

Esther was a beautiful young woman with a disposition to match. On the surface, it appears she led a charmed life with circumstances falling easily to her advantage. Yet even the phrase *obtained favor* so frequently used to describe Esther’s relationships hints at the providence of God in her life. If we trace this same phrase through the Bible we see an unfolding pattern of God’s hand in the lives of His servants. Each one was given an opportunity to influence their world. Take a closer look and consider the opportunities for influence that God has given you.

The writer frequently mentions that Esther found favor with everyone she encountered. Scan through the scripture references given below—you may want to circle each phrase in your Bible as a reminder of the unseen hand of God in Esther’s life.

Esther 2:9; 2:15; 2:17; 5:2; 5:8; 7:3; 8:5

The Hebrew word for *favor* is a term used regularly in the Bible to describe the character of God. This word may be translated “loyal love.” The frequency of this concept with regard to Esther in this book may be a subtle way of suggesting the presence of the Lord without actually mentioning His name.

-Nelson Study Bible

Trace this same phrase through the Bible to find others who, in the providence of God, found favor with man. On the line beside their name, briefly describe the role they later played in God’s plan.

Joseph – Genesis 39:4, 21 & 41:38 _____

Moses – Exodus 11:3 _____

Samuel – 1 Samuel 2:26 _____

David – 1 Samuel 16:21–22 _____

Jesus as a boy – Luke 2:52 _____

Early Church – Acts 2:47 _____

We would probably all agree that having “favor with man” opens doors of opportunity. Joseph’s work ethic and business acumen earned him a place in Pharaoh’s government. David’s courage and military skills made him a legend in his own time. It was Esther’s physical beauty that brought her to the attention of the Persian royal court. While life seems to favor those who possess attractive qualities or exceptional talents and abilities, many fail to recognize the One who has opened that door, and for what purpose. Favor with man has no lasting purpose unless it is used for the glory of God.

Esther learned that her position of privilege was also a call to responsibility. Even those of us who live more ordinary lives answer to God for the opportunities we are given. Our influence may not reach as far as Esther’s, but we face the same choice she did. What will we do with the life we’ve been given?

Many people see life as a series of relationships and events randomly strung together by circumstances. But God's Word clearly shows that our lives have a purpose and we are part of a greater plan.

What do Ephesians 2:8—10 and Philippians 2:13 say about our purpose in life? _____

How does God want us to respond to the life we've been given in Him? Romans 12:1-2

Esther found herself in a palace, placed there according to the sovereign will of God. Where has God placed you? Consider the roles and relationships you have in life. List what comes to mind.

The concentrated preparations that Esther underwent enhanced her beauty and won her favor and influence with the king. What are the "beauty preparations" we need in order to win favor and influence others?

1 Peter 3:3–4 _____

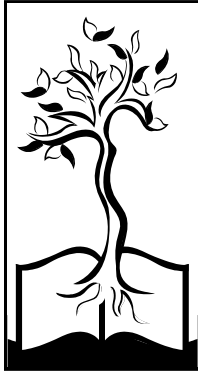
Colossians 3:12–14 _____

Philippians 2:3–4 _____

Titus 2:11–13 _____

Colossians 4:5–6 _____

God has brought you to your position in life for such a time as this. What would you like the lasting influence of your life to be?



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 . . .

Whatever God is putting into your hands to do today, tomorrow, or next week
is never without meaning, never without significance.
God has brought you to your present position and place in life for His own purposes.

- Alice Mathews -
A Woman God Can Use

