



Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2018

## 5. Esther [Don't try to cover all the questions!]

Sometimes risk taking is not about going somewhere new, it is sometimes about recognising where you are, seeing yourself as part of God's massive plan and then playing your part in faith.

Esther is a phenomenal book (if you look under the surface) even though there are no obvious signs or wonders, voices from heaven or overt calls on God. In fact, God isn't mentioned anywhere and yet it sits squarely in the Bible and Torah as evidence of God's divine plan.

I would encourage you to read the whole book of Esther – it's only 10 chapters. It is just packed with plot, sub plot, strategy and even down-right craftiness, or wisdom, depending on how you look at it! But also, there are things that occur that are so timely you can't consider them as just coincidence. Although this is quite a long reading I suggest focusing on the following chapters and verses:

3: 8 -10

4: 1-5

5: 9-11

6: 1-12

7: 1-8

8: 3,4,9,11

### From orphan immigrant to Queen

- Esther, an orphan and a refugee, taken in by her cousin Mordecai who became a surrogate father. She was clearly a beauty and when Xerxes decided he needed to restock his harem she somehow finds herself not only selected, but also highly favoured.
- Esther finds herself in a position of favour, but also as a woman still highly subject to a male dominated world.
- Esther maintains her perspective and links with Mordecai.
- While Esther is clearly labelled as beautiful, she would have been in a harem with many others and yet she wins favour with both the palace attenders and the King. She also honours advice given by Mordecai.

*What does this suggest about her character?*

### Mordecai

- *What can you tell about Mordecai's character and beliefs from his actions?*
  - He takes his orphaned cousin as his own.
  - He refuses to bow down to Haman.
  - He reports a potential assassination to the king.
  - He tears his clothes and puts on sack cloth and ashes and makes a public spectacle.
  - He challenges his cousin to action.

*What do your actions say about your character and how do your actions and character compare with Esther and Mordecai?*

### Taking the risk

- Esther accepts the challenge and calls her people to fast. *Why? What is the purpose?*
- How Esther comes by the plan she does we do not know, but it starts with knowing she has to appear before the king and that could mean certain death. She fasts and calls others to join her and then when confronting the King withholds the real reason even though he offers her half the kingdom.

*When you're faced with a challenge how do you prepare?*

### Lessons for now

Mordecai's words in 4:14 "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" have echoes for us today.

Each of us stands in our own time as part of God's plan, and while you may not have had a divine revelation on what you need to do -

- *Are there things you need to speak up about or stay silent about?*
- *Is there someone you should be challenging or encouraging?*
- *Are your actions speaking of your faith and integrity to all those around you? Would others know of and see your passion and reliance on God?*
- *What do you do when taking a risk, how can you prepare?*
- *How can you remain focused and encourage yourself that as part of God's plan he will be faithful even if you don't know how?*

As I said there is a lot in this book, but take time to reflect on the story, identify for yourself the salient points and then decide what are the 1 or 2 key messages and actions you want to take away from it.

**FOR YOUR OWN NOTES:**