

# A Practical Study of ESTHER

## Study Number One – Esther 1:1-22

The book of Esther is unique in that there's only two books that are named by women in the Old Testament and that's Ruth and Esther.

There are only two books in the Bible that don't have the name of God in them—the book of Esther and the Song of Solomon.

You will not be able to walk out of the study after six weeks and say that God isn't in it because He's everywhere. It's just that He's not named. Obviously there are two very big things about God that are clear in the passages that are before us and it's the only way you can explain some of the things that happened in the book.

The first is SOVEREIGNTY. When you think of sovereignty you think of God controlling and orchestrating all things from the very creation of the world clear up to the present time. He is the sovereign of the universe.

The second is PROVIDENCE. That's made up "*pro-video*"—to see before—is all providence is.

Because He sees before, "He works all things together for good to them that love God and to those who are the called

according to His purpose.” (ref. Romans 8:28)

This book is filled with providential happenings. You can only explain it in the fact that God is orchestrating these events.

These two things are what God wants to do in each of our lives. He wants to be sovereign and Lord. He wants to orchestrate His plan for your life, which will be the very best that it could be. It will be wonderful when you are surrendered to His sovereignty.

Second, you can trust and recognize in your life lots of providential circumstances that are not just something that happens but God is behind it because He wants to bless you or He’s using it because He wants to touch someone else’s life in some way.

The wonderful thing is, the longer you walk with the Lord, the more you’re aware of **SOVEREIGNTY** and **PROVIDENCE**.

Now with the book of Esther, we need to try to get her located and help us have a little bit of understanding of what is happening so that we can see God’s providential care in the situation.

Do you remember Daniel? When we studied the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had that dream that night and he wanted all the magicians and others to tell him the dream and then explain it.

They were very mad and disqualified themselves. They wanted to know the dream first.

That's not going to work. Daniel was the one chosen.

There was a picture of a man. He had a gold head, silver chest, bronze belly and iron and clay feet. Daniel said there are four empires that are going to come in the future:

1. The head of gold represents the Babylonian empire. Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold.
2. The silver chest represents the Persian empire.
3. The bronze belly represents the Grecian empire.
4. The iron and clay feet represent the Roman empire and that is when Jesus Christ the Messiah is going to come.

There's approximately 400 years of silence in there that is incorporated in those four administrations.

When we studied the book of Daniel, in 539 B.C.—on October the 12th—Belshazzar was having a party drinking the wine out of the temple goblets.

“Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin” was written on the wall and he was so scared. Daniel was called upon to interpret that. He said, “You're weighed in the balance and found wanting. Tonight it's over.” That night the Persians came in under the

wall, cutting off the Euphrates River so they could get in, and literally murdered Belshazzar and took over the Babylonian empire. It began in 539.

First of all, Cyrus the Great in 538 B.C. told all the Jews that had been in captivity in Babylon that they could go back and start rebuilding Jerusalem. Zerubbabel is the first one. He took a large group of Jews back.

There were some of the Jews that were very happy living where they were. In the transition of the administrations, they wanted to stay under the Persian authority so some of the Jews didn't go back.

Some commentaries put Mordecai and Esther out of the will of God because they're in the Persian administration. I want to prove that if you do your chronological homework, Esther wasn't even born yet when Zerubbabel left so she couldn't have made a decision with regard to that. And I don't think that Mordecai could have either.

In the story, when you put these things together, you realize that you can be in the will of God in a foreign country. Daniel served the Babylonian administration for 66 years. If you'll remember in the very first thing that happens in Daniel chapter 6, Daniel is asked to be a part of the Persian administration. He serves the last 9 years of his life—75 years in two administrations. Sixty-six years with Babylon and the last 9 years of his life he spends in the Persian administration.

That's 75 years of service. He died when he was 95. He was in the first group in 605 B.C. that Nebuchadnezzar brought over along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. That was God's will for his life—his total life—to literally be a foreign missionary. He was never allowed to go back to the land that he loved—it was God's purpose and plan.

You can't do that with people. You just can't say, "This is God's will and you've got to do this! And if you don't do this, you're out of God's will."

A lot of people do that and that is really precarious because you're limiting God. And I'm just asking you, if you've heard it taught then just be patient with me. I love what Esther and Mordecai are getting ready to do.

When you put that all together, you need to drop Esther's dates in. Her dates are 483 to 473 B.C. She's going to be in Xerxes' administration. These 10 years are the 10 years that we're going to deal with in the whole book. This is 56 years into the Persian administration. If it started in 539 B.C. when Babylon fell, we're 56 years into the Persian administration.

Cyrus and Darrius are both gone and now Xerxes I is on the throne. And his years of service actually started in 486 B.C. and he died in 465 B.C. (he was assassinated). So if you go from 486 to 465, that's 21 years that Xerxes is on the throne in the Persian administration.

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We've got the **FOUR KINGDOMS** before us:

1. Babylon,
2. Persia,
3. Greece, and
4. Rome.

It's interesting that almost all of those last about 200 years. And here we are living on grace in America. Most great countries last about 200 years.

You have Babylon—fell in 539 B.C.

Persia fell in 330 B.C.

Greece fell in 146 B.C.

And Rome fell sometime in early A.D. after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Esther—483 to 473 B.C.

Xerxes' reign was a reign from 486. So actually Esther comes into the picture three years into his administration and she's there until 473. The ten years would incorporate all of it.

Zerubbabel left in 538 B.C. That's 56 years before Esther is

even known.

Let's say that Esther's 20. At least 30 years before she was even born, Zerubbabel took that big massive group.

The second group went back in 458 B.C. That is actually 25 years between that and Esther. Esther lived 25 years before Ezra went back with that second group of the religious people.

You all know Nehemiah. He went back to build the wall. It's the last of the three groups. And that was 445 B.C. and that's 38 years.

And so you put those together. Mordecai and Esther didn't really have a chance to make a decision that they would migrate back to the land. If they did, they probably didn't want to because they liked where they were living and what they were doing.

You can say the same thing about Daniel because he had the opportunity. When that fell, he could have gone back instead of staying with the Persian administration.

I think there're two things going for it. I think he has decided he's got 66 years in governmental service with a foreign country, why not just stay?

The second thing is, when you are 80 something years old, you don't like making long journeys and resettling your estate. I think age probably played a part in Daniel's decision.

If they're out of the will of God in what they're doing, God still watches over and providentially cares for those that are out of His will. There is a comfort in that, that He is still orchestrating their circumstances. He is not limited by their decisions or their geography in what He wants to accomplish in the given situation.

Here's a little word on providence by J. Vernon McGee:

Providence means that the hand of God is in the glove of human events. When God is not at the steering wheel, He is the backseat driver. He is the coach who calls the signals from the bench. Providence is the unseen rudder on the ship of state. God is the pilot at the wheel during the night watch.  
(source unknown)

That's exactly what's going to happen. And you're going to feel so contemporary with this study because Susa, where all of this happens, is in southern Iran about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf

Now the characters that you're going to look at are:

1. Xerxes
2. Vashti—Her name means “beautiful woman.”
3. Esther and

#### 4. Mordecai.

Remember when Moses got ready to take the people into the land? He was getting them organized and he was going to be the one who was going to die and Joshua was going to take them in. Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh went to Moses and said, “We don’t want to go in the land. We want to live over on this side of the river.”

Those two and a half tribes were allowed to do that and still be part of the 12 tribes of Israel. Even though they had to cross the river every time they went to Jerusalem to worship, they still were a part of it.

Now did they pay a big price for it? You better believe it. When the Assyrians came south, they were the first ones that got nailed because they were on that east side of the river.

There are consequences. It behooves us to realize that in the providence of God, He can orchestrate whatever circumstance He wants but He needs a heart that’s surrendered and obedient. When you get those two things together God’s going to do something pretty great.

I call this study “Providential Preservation.”

**v. 1 This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush:**

“This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush:”—or to Africa.

Twenty-one years of service—this man served from 486 to 465 B.C. In those years of service, he served over a 127 provinces. The curtain lifts, the world belongs to Xerxes. This is the Persian empire.

**v. 2 At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa,**

“At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa,”

The little word “royal”—you’re going to get tired of it—it’s the “royal this” and “royal that.” It’s almost like this is written by a journalist on location because of the detail that’s in it.

“Susa”—Susa is one of the four capital cities of this gigantic 127 province empire. You don’t have to worry about the other three capitals. This is the only one you’re going to have to worry about because this is where everything happens. This is where Esther, Mordecai and of course Xerxes lives.

**v. 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.**

“and in the third year of his reign”—when’s that? 483 B.C.

You have 486. We’re down to 483 now. Here comes Esther. It’s at the 3 year mark.

“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.”

That’s maybe 10,000 people involved in these banquets—a 180 day banquet.

There has to be some reason why it’s a 180 day banquet. The first reason is Xerxes has got an ego as big as all outdoors. And so he is flourishing in all of this and he wants to show it off. And so he has this thought in his mind that for 180 days everybody will gather at Susa on occasion and be there for meetings and all of that.

Now militarily, one of the things that Xerxes wanted to do was accomplish what his dad didn’t do. His dad was defeated by Greece in a military battle. He had the longing of his heart to take his dad’s place and have that battle.

That battle was fought in 480 B.C. So all he’s doing is just really trying to strategize and get everything worked out so that everybody’s behind him in the military.

He wins the first few battles but then he loses the big one. He comes home a failure. He comes home defeated. So all of that

has to play in to a sagging ego. Have a big party, get everybody organized, think it's going to all happen but then it all falls apart.

Notice there are five different groups mentioned:

1. “nobles,”
2. “officials,”
3. “military leaders,”
4. “the princes” and
5. “the nobles of all the provinces were present.”

If you just took the leadership that'd be 508 or 509 different people involved—let alone all of the other people that would be coming.

**v. 4 For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.**

“For a full 180 days”—okay now he's going to do three things:

1. “he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom”
2. “and the splendor” of it

3. “and glory of his majesty.”

Elevating Mr. Xerxes on his throne and the fabulous, fabulous kingdom.

Swindoll when he reads this verse says:

“Can you believe it? A 180-day banquet! We’re talking six full months of banqueting, which makes today’s celebrity blowouts look like a stingy potluck!”  
(source unknown)

**v. 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.**

“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.”

Now this is a local banquet for all the people in the capital city. It’s a seven day deal.

Now you say, “They’re going overboard with banquets.”

Before you get through they’re going to have seven of them here. That’s the seventh banquet so get ready. They party big time.

“When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days,”

And it took place “in the enclosed garden of the king’s palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest, who were from the citadel of Susa.”

Now Susa—150 miles north of the Persian Gulf in Iran—is where it’s located. So this is a local banquet. The other was an international one. It had all kinds of military things.

**v. 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.**

“The garden had hangings of white and blue linen,”—which were the colors of the Persian Empire—“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.”

Do you think it’s somebody on location? If somebody is on location then he’s running it into the ground with all of the journalistic flair.

Obviously this must be Mordecai. He probably was on the local list at this time and was there. It takes us back to the reason that he did the big banquet:

“the vast wealth,”

“the splendor” and

“the...glory of his majesty.”

Wealth—wealth—wealth.

I found a cute little thing the other day about Texas that said,

As you know I have a fond affection for cowboy poetry and JO Kreger wrote this great piece called “Investing”:

(Lookin’ At Life by Joe Kreger)

*Investing*

If Eternity were a sea shore  
framing all of this vast land,  
then the present life we’re living  
is just a grain of sand.

Earthly wealth that we acquire,  
regardless of amount,  
doesn’t put a penny  
in our Heavenly bank account.

Our money, land and cattle  
won't reach the Other Side.  
We'll leave those things behind us  
when we make that final ride.

We work and scheme and calculate  
throughout our daily grind,  
stacking up possessions  
to just be left behind.

The Lord knows our mortal needs,  
our hunger and our thirst.  
He promised to supply these things  
if we'd seek His Kingdom first.

If we would choose a future  
of peace and joy and rest,  
then we need to make some changes  
in the way that we invest.

p. 132

Thank you Joe for reminding us of those things in the midst of all this.

The very first word in verse 7 is what? "Wine." You're going to see this several times.

Wine to the Persian banquets and celebrations was the end of the party. It was with the dessert or with the conversation

even after the dessert. People drank wine after they imbibed in all of the food that was provided.

**v. 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.**

“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.”

Everybody has his own cup and it's gold and it's unique. You don't even have to have your name on it because no other cup is like your cup. For this 7 day celebration they have everything they want.

Isn't it amazing how people will repeat history over and over again without even thinking about the consequences of what they're doing?

Fifty-six years earlier Belshazzar is drinking wine from the temple goblets and that was the fall of Babylon.

Now here 56 years into the administration, Xerxes I is partying up and saucing all the guests for seven solid days. You'd think that eventually they would learn because it's going to be this very thing that's going to lead to the tragedy that we see in this study.

**v. 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.**

“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 whatever he wished.”

In other words, it's free for 7 days. Drink it up, have a good time and have all that you like.

You know one of the things you're going to learn about Xerxes is he really does not exercise leadership very well. He goes with the wind. He consults and he's afraid to make a decision on his own.

I was reading Attila the Hun on leadership qualities. This, from a secular point of view, is what you'd expect in a leader:

(Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun by Wess Roberts)

1. LOYALTY
2. COURAGE
3. DESIRE
4. EMOTIONAL STAMINA
5. PHYSICAL STAMINA

6. EMPATHY
7. DECISIVENESS
8. ANTICIPATION
9. TIMING
10. COMPETITIVENESS
11. SELF-CONFIDENCE
12. ACCOUNTABILITY
13. RESPONSIBILITY
14. CREDIBILITY
15. TENACITY
16. DEPENDABILITY
17. STEWARDSHIP  
pp. 16-21

From a secular point of view, that's what you would use as a guideline to grade leadership.

From the spiritual point of view:

1. you look first of all for **SERVANTHOOD**—and that’s what our men’s conference is going to be on—“Let Me Be Your Servant.”

2. Secondly is **SACRIFICE**. It doesn’t make any difference what price you have to pay, you’re delighted to pay it for the privilege of serving Him.

3. **DEPENDENCE**—His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

4. **SPIRIT-CONTROLLED**—We’re under His direction.

“the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.”

Enter **QUEEN VASHTI**—verse 9. You’re going to see her for just a brief time. It’s the tragedy of tragedies.

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

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

Now that’s Banquet #3 isn’t it?

We had the big one—180 days.

We had the 7 day one.

And now we've got her having one right in the White House, literally, with all the women.

So that tells you what about the other 7-day banquet? It's a STAG PARTY for men. And it's a bunch of guys that are just partying up for seven days with Xerxes being the royal guest at the party. And Vashti has all the women over there.

Now there is a hot word okay? I tell you in the studies when there's a hot word you want to circle it because it affects the whole study. And the word is "COMMANDED."

The first thing Xerxes needs to learn is you don't command a woman anything. But he's getting ready to do that.

**v. 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—**

Verse 10: "he commanded the seven eunuchs."

Verse 12: "they' delivered the king's command" to Queen Vashti.

Verse 15: "she has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes.

Verse 17: "King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti."

That word just jumps out at you and makes your flesh creep. What did he command the Eunuchs to do?

**v. 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.**

“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.”

Of course her names means “beautiful woman.”

Vashti is not going to have any part of a drunken party. This is going to be like a glorified burlesque show and she is not going to do that.

Persian etiquette would call this very repulsive. And Xerxes wouldn't do this if he were not drunk or soused with alcohol.

There's another thing I think that really stands out and I admire Vashti for doing this. That is she's very courageous because you don't mess with the king. You're going to see that over and over again in this story. Even to approach the king there's got to be some very, very careful things that are done. You'll understand that as the study begins to unfold before us.

The other thing I really admire about Vashti is she stood against the tide. She had the courage to say, “No, I'm not

going to go there.”

But there’s one other thing, Artaxerxes—their only son—was born in this very year. So she could well have been very pregnant at this time. Artaxerxes was born in 483 B.C.

You know he’s not around—of course he’s been off on the military campaigns. He just never was around the women that he was related to. You don’t see this very much in his life. Obviously she’s probably showing a whole lot more and a woman feels so ugly. To be the spectacle for a bunch of drunken guests was just more than she could take. I vote for Vashti on this one. She had the courage to do it. It’s going to cost her a ton but at least she stood.

**v. 12 But when the attendants delivered the king’s command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.**

“But when the attendants delivered the king’s command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.”

That’s another side of pride and ego.

“furious and burned with anger”—if you don’t get your way. And obviously it’s a two-fold response on the part of the king.

He “became furious” and he “burned with anger.”

I think all of those things coupled with what's going on help us understand the tragedy of this.

Gary Smalley has written a book called *From Anger to Intimacy*. In the book he makes this statement:

(From Anger to Intimacy: How Forgiveness Can Transform Your Marriage by Gary Smalley & Ted Cunningham)

Anger is not a primary emotion; it is a secondary one. You feel a host of other emotions before anger, such as the feeling of being devalued, cheated, invalidated, unloved, neglected, controlled, disrespected, disconnected, belittled, judged, abandoned or like a failure. Plated and watered over time, those emotions are like seeds that take root in your heart and grow into anger. Anger left unresolved produces poison that ultimately kills and destroys everything in its path.

p. 17

With ANGER:

you can STUFF it,

you can SPEW it, or

you can STUDY it and understand why you are feeling the way you are and taking appropriate action in view of what you have learned.

In the book *Red Sea Rules* book we read:

(The Red Sea Rules: Ten God-Given Strategies for Difficult Times by Robert J. Morgan)

Maturity can be described as the ability to keep one's passions under control. My two-year-old granddaughter has little control over her emotions. When she becomes happy, she's happy all over, racing through the house like a tornado, laughing, playing, screaming. Other time she's angry top to toe, screaming, crying, and stomping her feet.

p. 53

Many times that's what a grown up looks like with the lack of maturity and control.

“when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come.”

And he “became furious” and angry.

Now there are some sad, sad things that happen. You know, Pearl and I do a lot of marriage counseling and a lot of it has to center around this very issue.

The one reason that Pearl and I get so much marriage counseling is we're not a threat to couples. Anybody that wants to go to their minister for marriage counseling, the rumor mill just scatters like buckshot all over the place. So we keep it very confidential and very private.

Over and over again you're going to find that the tendency is—women violate this issue more than anything else—they go to their prayer groups and they start talking with other women in the church about their marriage problems. You need to keep it between yourselves. And if you've got children or grandchildren in the family, you need to come and seek help and be away and deal with those issues privately.

The reason this is such a tragedy is these guys go international immediately. Xerxes is right in the big middle of it.

Since when is the marriage between a king and a queen an international 127 province deal that everybody's got to know about? That's what happens and there's the destruction of the marriage immediately by the council.

Now the other thing I think that's in this is these guys that are his cabinet and counsel that he's calling on have got something against Vashti. I think they've crossed her in some way or she's crossed them in something because you can feel it in the background. There's a lot more than just somebody not coming to a stag party in this situation. The guys that are giving the counsel I think are involved right in the big middle of it.

**v. 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**

“Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in the matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times”

Gary Chapman says these things about love:

(The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate by Gary Chapman)

The object of love is not getting something you want but doing something for the well-being of the one you love.

p. 41

It is a fact, however, that when you/we receive affirming words we are far more likely to be motivated to reciprocate.

p. 41

With verbal encouragement, we are trying to communicate, “I know. I care. I am with you. How can I help?”

p. 45

Eugene Peterson said:

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)

*Free my spirit, God, from self-consciousness and self-righteousness. Forgive me for confusing the outward and the inward. Let my prayers be spontaneously honest and personally passionate. Amen.*

p. 56

Here comes the Persian cabinet. We have gone international. We have gone before the government officials.

**v. 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.**

These were the ones who “were closest to the king—Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan,”—forget the other guys. Just remember Memucan because he’s the only one that’s going to throw the proposal on the table here in just a minute.

“the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.”

**v. 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.”**

“According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?”

Now the agenda's given. Here's the question and then the accusation follows:

“he asked. ‘She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.’”

AGENDA:

“According to law, what do we got to Queen Vashti?”

ACCUSATION:

“She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.”

This makes you realize that the journalists of our day are just exactly the same way. They can tell any story they want and leave anything out that they want in order to accomplish their purposes and their agenda. You're seeing it right here in the passage. They don't say anything about the circumstances around it or anything about her possibly being pregnant or anything else about the fact that it was a drunken brawl and she was going to be shown off and she didn't want to be in that place.

Oswald Chambers says:

(Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom by Nancy

Leigh DeMoss)

WE TALK GLIBLY ABOUT FORGIVING  
WHEN WE HAVE NEVER BEEN INJURED;  
WHEN WE ARE INJURED WE KNOW  
THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE, APART FROM GOD’S GRACE,  
FOR ONE HUMAN BEING TO FORGIVE ANOTHER.

—*Oswald Chambers*

p. 32

Revenge is a top priority.

**v. 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.**

“Then Memucan”—here he comes—“replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, ‘Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also’”

By the way, this guy loves the word “all.” You can circle it a hundred times here before we’re through. If you’re going to make it an international deal, it’s everybody. Everybody’s involved! Oh mercy.

“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.”

This is international—127 provinces. Everybody’s involved in this tragic thing. The accusation is she did not obey King Xerxes and she has done wrong.

“All” elevates the seriousness of the accusation.

All...all...all.

**v. 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.’**

“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.’”

What are the charges?

1. She didn’t obey the king’s command,
2. she’s “done wrong,” and
3. “she would not come.”

Not one thing about where she was going to go, what she was asked to do and what was going to be involved in all of that—none of that. Journalistically that doesn’t fit the agenda for what we’re talking about here. It all centers on Queen Vashti

and I think these seven guys have got some case against her.

**v. 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.**

“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.”

**v. 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.**

“Therefore,”—when you get to the end of a meeting Memucan is going to give his proposal, his recommendation for them to sign off on.

“Therefore, if it pleases the king,”—you always say that first—“let him issue a royal decree”—and if you issue one of those you never can take it back.

Remember in Daniel, Darius had signed that decree for 30 days and Daniel had to be thrown in the lion’s den because

you can't take back what the Persians put in concrete. So this is a "royal decree":

"and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed,"—it's going to have TWO PARTS to it:

1. "that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes."
2. "Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she."

You know there's got to be something back of that, more than just the fact that she wouldn't show up at a party.

Two parts to the proposal:

1. NO ACCESS and
2. NO POSITION.

She's never to enter the king's presence again and her position will be given to somebody else.

You know one of the things you're going to learn about Xerxes is he is quick on the trigger. When he gets advice he just goes with it. He doesn't take time to really think things through. And that's what gets him into so much trouble.

Here these inebriated counselors come up with this two-fold

objective.

I don't think that Xerxes would have done this if he would have been right, if he would have been sober, and really thought it through.

There was a survey taken of over 1,000 U.S. adults and the survey had to do with the feelings about their Ex's. And it's interesting the statistics:

- Forty-eight percent of men still have feelings for their ex-girlfriend or ex-wife.
- Thirty-seven percent of women still have feelings for their ex-boyfriend or ex-husband.
- Overall, two in five adults feel they let the "right one" get away.

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You're going to see some things now that Vashti's gone. How sad he's going to feel next week when he comes home whipped from the Grecian campaign to an empty house. Some of those things are going to start really eating on him. And a lot of these things that he's making the decision over are really sad, sad consequences for the fact that he was inebriated.

I wish Xerxes would have done that because he's listened to a lot of hot air and he's made a big mistake.

There's a wonderful writer by the name of Gary Thomas who's done some fabulous things on marriage. His best book is called *Sacred Marriage*. I love it a lot and I've used it in the couples conferences.

(Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More than to Make Us Happy? by Gary Thomas)

Around which world is your life centered? Your marriage will ultimately reveal the answer to that question. If we have an eternal outlook, preparing for eternity by sticking with a difficult marriage make much more sense than destroying a family to gain quick and easy relief. Most divorces are marked by the actions of someone running from, at most, a few difficult decades—and for this relief, people are throwing away glory and honor that last for eternity. It's a horrible trade!

p. 110

And yet it's happening all around us and it's sad and causes us to hurt.

**v. 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."**

"Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout"—WHERE?—"all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

That is an illusion.

**v. 21 The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed.**

“The king and his nobles were pleased with the advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed.”

We bought into the proposal. Let’s get it done. Meeting adjourned. Done very quickly and ruined a life.

**v. 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.**

“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.”

Well you can see how things get blown out of proportion in situations like that and the contributing factors that lead to so much sadness.

I want to wrap this up by chatting for just a minute with you about the power of forgiveness. Why it would not be possible for Xerxes to swallow his pride and to forgive her and to

restore the relationship.

I'm reading *Just Like Jesus* by Max Lucado. It's a 30-day devotional book and the chapter I just read was on "The Power of Forgiveness":

(Just Like Jesus Devotional: A Thirty Day Walk with the Savior by Max Lucado)

Recently I shared a meal with some friends. A husband and wife wanted to tell me about a storm they were weathering. Through a series of events, she learned of an act of infidelity that had occurred over a decade ago. He had made the mistake of thinking it'd be better not to tell her, so he didn't. But she found out. And as you can imagine, she was deeply hurt.

Through the advice of a counselor, the couple dropped everything and went away for several days. A decision had to be made. Would they flee, fight, or forgive? So they prayed. They talked. They walked. They reflected. In this case the wife was clearly in the right. She could have left. Women have done so for lesser reasons. Or she could have stayed and made his life a living hell. Other women have done that. But she chose a different response.

On the tenth night of their trip, my friend found a card on his pillow. On the card was a printed verse [get this]: "I'd rather do nothing with you than something without you." Beneath the verse she had written these words:

*I forgive you. I love you. Let's move on.*

The card might as well have been a basin. And the pen

might as well have been a pitcher of water, for out of it poured pure mercy, and with it she washed her husband's feet.  
pp. 26-27

Why is it that forgiveness is the major issue when it comes to indiscretions and other things that happen in marriage? The interesting thing in this book by Gary Smalley on turning anger into intimacy, he has nine roadblocks to forgiveness and I think you can see that Xerxes is guilty on every point:

(From Anger to Intimacy: How Forgiveness Can Transform Your Marriage by Gary Smalley & Ted Cunningham)

## **Nine Roadblocks to Forgiveness**

**Roadblock 1: Selfishness**

**Roadblock 2: Pride**

**Roadblock 3: Insecurity**

**Roadblock 4: Resentment**

**Roadblock 5: Unresolved Anger**

**Roadblock 6: Inability to Recognize Your Weaknesses and Mistakes**

**Roadblock 7: Misunderstanding Forgiveness**

## Roadblock 8: Fear of Condoning the Offense

## Roadblock 9: The Passage of Time

pp.180-190

And Max in his book *Shaped by God* says this:

(Shaped by God by Max Lucado)

Here's the point. Don't go to God with options and expect him to choose one of your preferences. Go to him with empty hands—no hidden agendas, no crossed fingers, nothing behind your back. Go to him with a willingness to do whatever he says. If you surrender your will, then he will “equip you with everything good for doing his will” (Hebrews 13:21).

It's a promise.

p. 112

Father, I pray if we've said anything that's not of truth that You strike that from our minds. But if it's prompted for us to think and to study and to anticipate some of these things, we would learn well the lessons that we have had a part in. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# A Practical Study of ESTHER

## STUDY NUMBER ONE – ESTHER 1:1-22

## NOTES

v. 1 This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush:

v. 2 At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa,

v. 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.

v. 4 For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.

v. 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.

v. 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.

v. 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.

v. 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.

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

v. 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—

v. 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.

## NOTES

v. 12 But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

v. 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

v. 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.

v. 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.”

v. 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.

v. 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.’

v. 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.

v. 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.

v. 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.”

v. 21 The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed.

v. 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.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Read Esther 1:1-22 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. According to verses 4 & 5, how long did Xerxes celebrate with his people?

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3. According to verse 11, what was the king's purpose in requesting the presence of Vashti?

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4. Why do you think that Queen Vashti refused to come and honor the king's request for her presence?

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5. Outline how the king responded according to verse 12, and what action that he took in the next verses.

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6. Why was immediate action necessary for the king to take, according to verses 17 & 18?

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7. Outline the proposal made by the leadership to the king recorded in verse 19.

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8. Outline the king's action in verse 22.

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9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Xerxes is a victim of pride, prosperity, and perversion.

LESSON #2: Because of the greatness of his empire, Xerxes felt that he was unbeatable and invincible.

LESSON #3: Too much wine can ultimately lead to poor judgment.

LESSON #4: Xerxes made a big mistake when he sent seven grown men to fulfill the command of bringing his wife to the stag party.

LESSON #5: The last thing Queen Vashti wanted to do was to be put on display before a drunken audience.

LESSON #6: You will find yourself treading in a mine field when you become furious and you burn with anger.

LESSON #7: “This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20).

LESSON #8: The three charges against Vashti were: (1) “She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes; (2) “she has done wrong”; and (3) “she would not come.”

LESSON #9: The penalty of no access and no position is terribly severe.

LESSON #10: When you are most eager to act is when you’ll make the most pitiful mistakes.

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