

# A Practical Study of ESTHER

## Study Number Four – Esther 5:1-6:14

Reading in *Chasing Daylight* this one little sentence just kind of jumped out at me:

(Chasing Daylight: Seize the Power of Every Moment by Erwin Raphael McManus)

God would give them victory in the battle, but He would not fight their battle for them.

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What you're going to see is a completely different picture of Esther than we've seen in these first three studies. It's an amazing thing to see the transformation of a woman in a crisis with the character, the consistency and the perseverance. It is just awesome. I hope you'll be blessed by this study when you see the transformation and realize that God wants to do the same thing with you and with me, if we'd simply believe and follow in His footsteps in the way that He would like that to happen.

I've mentioned to you Marcus Luttrell's book the *Lone Survivor*. When I thought of Esther I thought of the words that Marcus gave for the Navy SEALs:

(Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of Seal Team 10 by Marcus Luttrell with Patrick Robinson)

We train for war and fight to win. I stand ready to bring the full spectrum of combat power to bear in order to achieve my mission and the goals established by my country. The execution of my duties will be swift and violent when required, yet guided by the very principles I serve to defend.

Brave men have fought and died building the proud tradition and feared reputation that I am bound to uphold. In the worst of conditions, the legacy of my teammates steadies my resolve and silently guides my every deed. I will not fail.

p. 15

The last thing we heard in the previous study was from the lips of Esther: “If I die, I die.”

The promise that she made was that she would go in to King Xerxes, even though he hadn’t called her in 30 days, and even though it meant death for her if he did not extend to her an audience.

You never had the right to go uninvited into the presence of the king. And so it’s with all of this on the line that she’s willing to get into that company of people who have sealed their commitment with their own blood.

I read some statistics from Anne Graham Lotz that kind of shocked me. In the twentieth century there've been 45 million people who have died for the cause of Christ. That's the most magnanimous group in all of human history. So we are still living in the centuries of the martyrs even though we're in the twenty-first century.

It is costly and difficult but Esther is going to rise to the occasion.

As the crisis came, Mordecai warned her that if there was not help coming from her, God would provide it from some other place.

I want to read three verses, the last three that we had together.

I'm reading from the NET Bible. It's in 474 B.C. that the edict was written and so we're right in that period of time.

### Esther 4:15-17 (NET)

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa and fast in my behalf. Don't eat and don't drink for three days, night or day. My female attendants and I will also fast in the same way. Afterward I will go to the king, even though it violates the law. If I perish, I perish!...

And then that last statement—you've had a complete reversal

of roles. In the first three studies anything that Mordecai said, Esther was quick to do it and to be obedient. Now the roles have been reversed. Listen to our last verse:

### Esther 4:17

So Mordecai set out to do everything that Esther commanded him to do.

And so there is that picture. She is in center stage. This is just nine months from her walking off the stage of biblical revelation. So what's happening is very significant because there are close to 15 million Jews whose lives hang in the balance with how Esther's going to conduct herself.

She doesn't let any grass grow under her feet.

**5:v. 1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.**

“On the third day”—this is the time of fasting—“Esther put on her royal robes and she stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.”

She doesn't come in there head bowed, trembling in her shoes. She comes and stands right where he can look from the throne and see her. She's out there for everybody to see.

Now just for a moment, what do you think is going on in Xerxes' mind?

“It’s been 30 days since I’ve seen this beautiful lady and obviously something horrible has happened in her life that she would put her life in jeopardy to come and have an audience with me.”

Underneath those are the feelings that he has as he begins to realize she has risked her life and is standing here wanting an audience with him.

God’s timing is so perfect in everything. After 30 days Xerxes realizes what a beautiful queen he has and he hasn’t seen her for 30 days. On top of all that he realizes there must be something really bad going on that he didn’t know anything about.

Max Lucado, when he gets to this particular part, tries to describe Esther in this way by quoting Lewis Smedes:

(Practical Christianity by Lewis Smedes)

[Courage] is the power to do well when the air is turbulent and the going gets tough. It is having the character to do well when things are tempting, when things are painful. It is easy to be a mother when a baby is cooing and gurgling over breakfast; it takes courage to be a mother when the child suffers from a terrible and incurable handicap. Courage is the

power to do well in the face of a threat—to your life, to your security, to your future, to the things you hold dear.  
(source unknown)

It almost sounds like all of us as American citizens. I'm sorry but, you know we feel so sad about the direction that our country is going. And Max is describing perfectly some of the feelings that are going on in Esther's mind and the courage to put her life on the line for the sake of others.

Can you feel the tension start to mount?

“The king was sitting on his royal throne” and he just happens to be facing the alcove. And there in the alcove is our heroine, Queen Esther.

**v. 2 When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.**

“When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and he held out to her the golden scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the scepter.”

Remember Marcus Luttrell and the Navy SEALs?

(Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of Seal Team 10 by Marcus

Luttrell with Patrick Robinson)

...philosophy of the U.S. Navy SEALs: “I will never quit...My Nation expects me to be physically harder and mentally stronger than my enemies. If knocked down, I will get back up, every time. I will draw on every remaining ounce of strength to protect my teammates...I am never out of the fight.”

p. 235

There she is. Naturally she’s got a long way to go in these two chapters to get where she needs to feel comfortable that she’s going to get a favorable disposition from the king. She is no dummy. The other thing I love about her is she’s not in a hurry. She is evaluating everything standing there and listening to every word, and she’s not going to be deceived by some promises that are made prematurely.

“When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out the golden...”

I’m sure that Esther was much in prayer at this very tense moment. She hasn’t eaten for three days and I think of the prayer of Eugene Peterson:

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

*Lord Jesus, you are my way and my truth and my life. Lead me through the narrow gate into the wide life, through the*

*place of concentrated decision into the country of expansive blessings Amen.*

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We're distracted by all kinds of things when God's saying this is the greatest day of opportunity and you are a privileged generation to be alive to be a part of it.

For Esther, she's reading the signals beautifully. I want you to notice some of these words because from the Hebrew language it sounds a little bit different.

“When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court”:

1. “he was pleased with her”
2. “[so he] held out the golden scepter...”

Now the word “he was pleased with her” could be translated more accurately “she gained favor in his sight.” In other words, as soon as he saw her it brought back so many pleasant memories so she gained favor in his eyes.

I thought immediately of Proverbs 21:1:

Proverbs 21:1 (NET Bible)

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord like channels of water; he turns it wherever he wants.

Esther's immediate response is to move forward and to touch the scepter.

Here's a wonderful statement by Isobel Kuhn:

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

*I have found that if we go as far as we can,  
God often opens up the rest of the way.*

—ISOBEL KUHN

p. 58

That's our Esther. She has put it all on the line. She's gone as far as she can go and so the rest of it's in the Lord's hands. And is He capable? I hope you're going to say, "Boy is He capable. And WOW can He pull it off when we let Him."

**v. 3 Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."**

"Then the king asked, 'What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half of the kingdom, it will be given you.'"

There are going to be EIGHT QUESTIONS in these two chapters. These first two are coming from the lips of Xerxes. I want you to note them carefully because Esther's going to pick up key words out of these questions and give them back to him

to set the table for what she hopes to accomplish—the liberation of the Jews.

“Then the king asked”

Question #1: “What is it, Queen Esther?”

What is it that’s really bothering you? Why would you run the risk of losing your life? It has to be something horrible. It’s like he’s so curious but she’s so cool. She’s not going to tell him because she really doesn’t know where his heart is in all of this.

“What is it, Queen Esther?”

Question #2: “What is your request?”

“Obviously to solve this problem you have a request. I’m here to do it and even if it costs me up to half my kingdom.”

That’s an empty promise. That’s just basically being nice and saying whatever it’s going to take I’m going to do it, if you want to have the interpretation of Xerxes in this situation.

What is your desire?

She’s had to risk her life. She’s obviously very, very, very, very hurt.

Lucado kind of sets the stage for the whole thing when he

says:

“What follows is the rapid collapse of Satan’s deck of cards. Haman schemes to string up Mordecai, the only man who won’t grove at his feet. Esther plans to throw a couple of banquets for Xerxes and Haman.”

(source unknown)

This is the picture that now comes before us.

The first two questions out of the eight:

1. “What is it, queen Esther?”

2. “What is your request?”

And then he concludes with a promise:

“Anything up to half of the kingdom can be yours.”

Now whenever you talk to the king, you always start with “If it pleases the king.” She’s right on track with her etiquette.

**v. 4 “If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.”**

“If it pleases the king,” replied Esther,

“Let’s go for the throat!” Is that what she’s saying? You see

she is so careful in the way she says things and the timing in the situation because she doesn't know where he's coming from. She also knows that the edict that was written cannot be undone.

So unless something happens that's going to be an alternative that edict is going to be in effect and it's going to be instituted just like Daniel being thrown in the den of lions. Darius could not undo something that a Persian edict had already done.

“let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.”

Now you know as well as I do, Persians love banquets. That 180 day deal that we had in the first session, then she had a banquet and then he had a banquet—seven days each.

“Come to a banquet that I have prepared for you.”

What she's doing is trying to find out what the real temperature is.

Swindoll catches that when he says:

I love that. Esther doesn't know what to expect, and the king says simply, “What's on your mind? What's troubling you?” In fact, he goes further. He says “What can I do for you? Name it. There's no limit; it's yours.”

Now this is her moment to bring down the roof on Haman—but she doesn't. Not now. This is a wise woman who

understands the value of timing. She isn't in a hurry, nor is she revengeful. You know why? She has been *waiting* on the Lord.

We get in a hurry when we don't wait on the Lord. We jump ahead and do rash things. We shoot from the hip. We run off at the mouth, saying things that we later regret. But when [we] have sufficiently waited on the Lord, He gets full control of our spirit. At such moments, we're like a glove, and His hand is moving us wherever He pleases. Having known that experience, I can testify, there's nothing to compare with it. It's marvelous!

And look at her response. This is beautiful.  
(source unknown)

"I have a banquet and I would like for you to please send your newly appointed Prime Minister."

"I have a better candidate"—she didn't say that.

Remember how upset we were over Mordecai, that he was not even honored or respected at all because he had saved King Xerxes' life from those two Homeland Security guys that were trying to kill him? And Mordecai was the one that tipped them off on that deal but yet nothing was done.

It's God's timing. Xerxes is used to barking these signals. He doesn't let any grass grow under his feet.

**v. 5 “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.**

“Bring Haman at once,’ the king said,”

“Get him out of his office. I don’t care if he’s on the phone or whatever he’s doing, just get him here.”

“so that we may do what Esther asks.’ So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.”

They got him there immediately and they went to the banquet.

When you get to verse 6, isn’t it interesting that these two guys are doing something they did right after that edict was signed a couple of weeks ago?

Drinking wine again, celebrating the death of 15 million people at the end of that edict—Haman and Xerxes.

Now you have to understand in Persian etiquette the wine always came last. It didn’t come with the meal or first. So the fact that they’re drinking wine right now show it is the end of the banquet. It’s already been celebrated. They’ve been satiated with the food. Notice Xerxes, he goes right back to it very quickly because he’s troubled.

**v. 6 As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”**

“... ‘Now what is your petition?’”

There’s a word. Hold onto that because she’s going to use that again.

“It will be given you.”—what a great promise—“And what is your request?”—another hot word—“Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”—that’s the same thing he said before.

But now the words “petition” and “request” are the ones that she’s going to hang on to in this situation. So questions 3 and 4 are by Xerxes again—almost a repetition although different.

Question #3: “...what is your petition?”

Question #4: “And what is your request?”

“Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given to you.”

You ready for this? If you haven’t been reading ahead you’re holding your breath right now because the roof’s going to be blown off. This woman now has the ability to speak a petition, give the request that’s on her heart.

## **v. 7 Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this:**

“Esther replied, ‘My petition and my request is this:”

She uses those very two words and you’re thinking, oh here it comes. We’re all braced for the crisis. We’re holding our breath knowing the lid’s going to be blown off here because we have an idea that something’s getting ready to happen. Now she says it again.

Now get in your mind’s eye the king has a rough schedule and immediately he works out the banquet for today. But she doesn’t know what’s on his agenda for tomorrow, all the appointments and things that he has to be taking care of. Would he be able to slide his schedule so that he could indeed accept this invitation again? Those are all things you have to realize. She is laying it all on the line.

The other reason she’s doing it twice is she’s not secure and at peace that this is the right thing to do. Have you ever been in an experience where you have really prayed about something and you really wanted it or wanted a position yet you didn’t have any peace? There seemed to be a constant restraint but you wanted it so bad you went ahead with it?

Esther wants this so badly. I love her self-control. I love her restraint. I love the way she is sensitive because she’s fasted for three days. The fact that there’s something that has to happen before everything’s in place.

You'll miss the will of God if you don't go through this kind of a process. You'll get yourself into left field and do some things that you should have said no to. You said yes to something because you really wanted to do it and you didn't check in with the Lord and give the process time to work.

That's Psalm 27:14:

### Psalm 27:14

Wait on the Lord; be of good courage  
He'll strengthen your heart,  
wait I say on the Lord.

When you're most eager to act is when you make the most pitiful mistakes.

**v. 8 If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."**

"If the king regards me with favor and"—she adds a second one now—"if it pleases the king"—and this next one's very important—"to grant my petition and fulfill my request,"

She doesn't know yet whether he will live up to his promises so the word "grant" and "fulfill" are very important to her.

“let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them.”

Then she ends with a promise:

“Then I will answer the king’s question.”

“Okay I’m not going to hold you off any longer. I can tell you, when you come to the party tomorrow. I’m going to lay it all on the line. It’s going to be tomorrow though. I’m not going to do it today.”

But she repeated those words:

“petition” and “request.”

And then she says two things:

1. “If the king regards me with favor,”
2. “if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request” then I’m going to answer that tomorrow.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He makes all things beautiful in his time...

Not in our time and with our schedule.

Now you’re going to see the wisdom of all of this. This is

what's so beautiful about it.

There were some things she didn't know that had to be worked out with regard to Mordecai. God needed one more night and she'd have blown it apart if she'd gone ahead prematurely because there never would have been this conflict between Mordecai. These things would have never come about if she'd gone ahead with the first banquet and done what she really longed to do.

**v. 9 Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai.**

“Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai.”

The longer I live the more I realize that effective leaders have to maintain control of their emotions. When you have a person in leadership and one moment you see him angrier than a nest of hornets and the next minute he's gushy and lovey and all of that, he will never make a good leader.

Haman has disqualified himself. He's so into himself that he's a happy clam walking out of there.

“And on top of that I must have really impressed them because I get to come back tomorrow!”

You can just see it. Then he walks out of the gate and there’s old Mordecai. He’s not going to get off his duff for any Amalekite for anything. He’s from the tribe of Benjamin and he just doesn’t do that stuff. So he’s sitting there.

You know what’s cool about Mordecai? He doesn’t have any sackcloth and ashes. I think he got word from the headquarters that he put out the scepter so his sweet little girl is all okay and everything is fine so he’s back at the gate doing what he usually does.

It’s kind of like when you really pray over something, fast over it, and you get the first indication that God has given an answer. Xerxes is on your team. It kind of helps a whole lot. So there he is back at the gate, back to life as normal.

I think sometimes in our lives we emotionally get involved in situations where later we regret what we’ve done and what we’ve said and how we’ve handled it but we don’t do anything about it. We grieve and quench the Holy Spirit by the very fact that we’re unwilling to be taught, unwilling to learn the lesson that God is trying to teach us. As a result of that, we really ruin a relationship that could be very beautiful with the Lord.

Song of Solomon 2:15—that wonderful little verse that changed the whole relationship between Solomon and

Shulamith—is what we ought to listen to:

Song of Solomon 2:15

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.

Your relationship to the Lord—when you get out of bounds—it's best to go catch the foxes. It's best to go back and get it started.

Leadership requires emotional stability and Haman has just been blown apart in the way he has conducted himself. One thing you have to give him credit for, he stuffed it.

**v. 10 Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife,**

“Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home.”

Now he has to try to save his saggy ego doesn't he? He has to have a party. This is going to be Haman on stage. You are so fortunate to have Haman in this household so he:

“calls together his friends and Zeresh, his wife,”—so she can partake in this wonderful demonstration of what a fabulous man Haman is.

I happened to write down three verses from the book of

Proverbs:

Proverbs 16:18 (NET)

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 11:2 (NET)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Proverbs 11:3 (NET)

The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the unfaithful destroys them.

He went home and he has to minister to his pride.

Do any of you have any problem with pride?

One guy said, “No I wrote a wonderful book: *Humility and How I Attained It With 38 Life-Size Pictures of Myself.*”

I love me!

I love myself!

I have my picture on the shelf!

That’s basically the way he is. This is going to kill him.

He has six things on his agenda in verses 11 and 12 that he's proud of and he wants the whole world to know it.

**v. 11 Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials.**

“Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth,”

We saw 375,000 tons of silver last week given to implement the edict.

“his many sons,”—he has 10 of them—“and all the ways the king had honored him”—he is Prime Minister next to the head honcho. There's nobody higher in the administration than him. That's what he means by that one.

“and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials.”

That's number four and then the other two are in verse 12.

**v. 12 “And that's not all,” Haman added. “I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow.**

“And that's not all,”—he's not through bragging yet—“Haman added. ‘I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to

accompany the king to the banquet she gave.”

“I’ve just come from there! Can you believe the three of us had a private banquet together? Woo! I’ve always wondered about that Queen Esther but she must like me to invite me to that!”

“And she has invited me along with the king [to come] tomorrow.”

How’s that for being important and big time?

That’s his boasting list. Then he has to tell them the truth. The little word “but” in verse 13 gives you the CONTRAST.

**v. 13 But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.”**

“But all this gives me no satisfaction as long” —as that creep down there at the gate is sitting there and not bowing before me” —“as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.”

Those six wonderful things just don’t mean a thing to me.

Now sometimes women speak a little prematurely. Try to say “you always” and “you never.” Zeresh is going to live to regret this.

Do you remember when Ahab was so ticked off over the fact that he couldn’t get that vineyard right next to the palace and he turned his face to the wall like a spoiled little brat and

Jezebel came in and said, “Why are you doing that?”

“Oh I can’t have that vineyard.”

“Don’t sweat it.” She sets up the deal and gets him killed and comes and says, “Okay, the vineyard’s yours.”

**v. 14 His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy.” This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.**

“His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, ‘Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high,’—so everybody in the city of Susa can see it—“and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then”—when that’s over—“go with the king to the dinner and be happy.’ This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.”

So quick!

I always wondered why Xerxes couldn’t go to sleep. I’ve realized that when we get in a fuss in my marriage and we don’t have it resolved, we’re sleepless too.

The situation here with Xerxes is that he really is hurt. He’s hurting bad for his queen that he’s chosen, realizing all that’s gone on. He doesn’t feel yet that she’s close enough to him or

that she can comfortably come and communicate her heart. That's why she's asked for the second banquet.

Secondly he doesn't know. Because he doesn't know, he can't sleep.

**6:v. 1 That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him.**

“That night the king could not sleep;”

If you don't think there is sovereign intervention in this deal and providential workings, when has a sleepless king ever asked for the record of his career to be read to put him to sleep? That's about as boring as you can be.

“so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him.”

Hoping he would go to sleep in the process of it being read.

Sleepless in Susa—Xerxes can't figure out what's wrong with Esther.

In *Chasing Daylight* we read:

(Chasing Daylight: Seize the Power of Every Moment by Erwin Raphael McManus)

Those open doors and windows of opportunities are wrapped around what appears to be perfect timing. It's what is often described as being at the right place at the right time. It's walking in with your résumé five minutes after the employer had someone with your qualifications quit. It's finally going to share the message of Jesus Christ with a friend who just prayed to God, *If You're out there, give me a sign*. It's working backstage during auditions and suddenly they decide you have the look they've been searching for.

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This is providential.

Vance Havner says:

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

*God marks across some of our days, "Will explain later."*

— VANCE HAVNER

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And this is certainly the case.

William Cowper was so famous for it:

(10 Lies About God: And The Truths That Shatter Deception by Erwin W. Lutzer)

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm  
Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will  
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessing on your head...<sup>12</sup>

12. William Cowper, *Cowper's poems*, ed. Hugh I'Anson (New York: Everyman's Library, 1966), 188-89

pp. 111-12

Fanny Crosby says:

“Through each perplexing care and strife,  
that marks the checkered path of life,  
My Savior's guiding hand I see,  
And know that still He leadeth me.”  
(source unknown)

You can't come at it any other way.

Now you see the reason for the delay. You see the reason for appointing Haman instead of Mordecai. Do you see now the reason why we have to have a second banquet because all of

this has to happen? The scaffold had to be built, the king had to be sleepless, he had to be reading the chronicles. The picture is just a vein of providential circumstance to lead us to success and victory at the second banquet.

**v. 2 It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.**

“It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.”

And he asked the question—here comes Question #5.

**v. 3 “What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. “Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered.**

“What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. ‘Nothing has been done for him,’ his attendants answered.”

He hears a noise in the court as he gets an answer.

**v. 4 The king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him.**

“The king said, ‘Who is in the court?’”—there comes Question #6.

“Now Haman had just entered the outer court”—right on schedule—“to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him.”

One of the things you have to learn in life is you have to understand interpersonal relationships. He doesn't know anything about the hatred that Haman has for Mordecai or the fact that hatred precipitated the edict because he said “for a certain people in your kingdom.” Xerxes doesn't even know that the edict involves a Jew at this point. He doesn't know that his queen is a Jew either.

**v. 5 His attendants answered, “Haman is standing in the court.” “Bring him in,” the king ordered.**

“His attendants answered, ‘Haman is standing in the court.’ ‘Bring him in,’ the king ordered.”

Just like he said yesterday, “Bring him to the banquet!”

“Bring him in,”

Brigitte Gabriel has written a great book she is basically saying what I'm trying to say to you. We need to be wise as serpents and as harmless of doves.

Her book is called *Because They Hate*. Listen to what she says. She was in Lebanon when she was eleven and that's when the war took place and they were bombed incessantly. Her parents were seriously injured and she took them to an Israeli hospital and for the first time she saw real love and real care. As a result of that she became an interpreter in Israel for the Arabic network and later worked in the United States as a journalist.

Listen to what she says:

(Because They Hate: A Survivor of Islamic Terror Warns America by Brigitte Gabriel)

The Christians, whether in Lebanon or in Bethlehem in the West Bank, knew that the Islamic agenda was violently against anything non-Muslim. The West was ignorant and refused to learn and listen to what the Arabs and radical Muslims were openly saying to their people about what was in store [this is what was in store]: *“We will be victorious against the Jews. We will destroy Israel. We will conquer the Christians and claim the world for Islam. Islam will once again dominate the world.”*

p. 120

In the same way Xerxes has no idea of what he's getting ready to do. It makes us laugh because Haman is so proud that he puts himself in this mess. But look at it!

**v. 6 When Haman entered, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to**

**honor?” Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?”**

“When Haman entered, the king asked him,”—here comes question number 7 and 8.

Question #7: “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?”

A guy with a big ego, first in the kingdom next to Xerxes, the only thing left for him is to become the king. It’s quite obvious that subversively what he’s suggesting is something he would really like to have happen to him.

And look at what his question is. It’s unspoken but it’s the eighth question:

Question #8: “Now Haman thought to himself, ‘Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?’”

He is into himself. When you see a proud guy get stepped on it kind of makes you feel like they’re getting their just desserts.

**v. 7 So he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor,**

“So he answered the king, ‘For the man the king delights to honor,’”

I do have SIX THINGS I would suggest Xerxes consider:

**v. 8 have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head.**

1. “have them bring a royal robe the king has worn”
2. “and a horse the king has ridden [on]” and be sure it has the “royal crest” or the presidential seal on “its head.”

**v. 9 Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king’s most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’”**

“Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king’s most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!””

SIX POINTS right off the top of his head. You know he’s been thinking about this.

1. bring the royal robe,
2. bring a horse,

3. “let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king’s nobles.”
4. “Let them robe the man the king delight,”
5. “Let them...lead him...through the city streets,” and
6. “proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’””

You read for the king’s command? Talk about a letdown.

**v. 10 “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.”**

“‘Go at once,’ the king commanded Haman. ‘Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew,’”

I thought you said Mordecai and not Haman. Is that right?

“who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.””

This Prime Minister has been put in a situation and there have been four quick barked COMMANDS:

1. “Got at once,”
2. “Get the robe and the horse,”
3. “do just as you suggested for Mordecai,” and
4. “Do not neglect anything that you have recommended.”

Well what do you do? You obey the king. All of this has to be tough.

**v. 11 So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!”**

“So Haman”—totally humiliated—“got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!””

I want you to see the difference between PRIDE and HUMILITY.

It’s one thing to feel like we are broken and contrite before God and we want to honor Him and please Him but still there’s that old nature inside that often reveals itself.

The real test is what’s going to happen to these two guys—the different response of both of them. Here is Mordecai who has

been elevated to this high honor because of what he did to save Xerxes' life. And here is Haman so ticked that he is not the one, manifesting his pride.

See the difference between the two of them? It's beautiful.

**v. 12** **Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief,**

“Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate.”

He didn't wear the robe. He didn't wear the crest. He didn't take the horse. He just gave it all back to him. Just went right back to business as usual, right at the king's gate. Just doing what he's always done.

You can tell a person's heart when they've been honored by what they do immediately following that honor. In humility he just goes right back to his regular job there at the king's gate.

But what does Haman do?

“But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief,”

He is so upset about it.

**v. 13** **and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “Since Mordecai,**

**before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!”**

“and [he] told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him,” —notice the wisdom she gives this time—“Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!””

There’s no nation that has violated the Jews’ rights that has ever survived. We’ve seen the funeral of scores and scores of leaders who’ve had an unsympathetic stand toward Israel. Over and over again it’s the same thing.

“You can’t stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!”

His pride is so strong and he’s so hurt that he’s “covered with grief.” But now he’s going back to the banquet. It says they hurried him to the banquet.

I think he realizes that Zeresh and his friends are probably saying some things that are pretty prophetic.

**v. 14 While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.**

“While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs

arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.”

Denise Jackson, Alan Jackson’s wife, has written a wonderful book, *It’s All About Him*. In the book she describes one of the clearest presentations of the Gospel. This is what she says:

(It’s All About Him: Finding the Love of My Life by Denise Jackson with Ellen Vaughn)

The only thing that can fill us up to overflowing is a real relationship with Jesus. That’s not just nice religious talk. It’s true. While material stuff is great fun, [I can see how it would be] and I enjoy it and try to share whatever I have, I could give it all up tomorrow. [And so she’s going to] But I could never give up Jesus, and more important, He will never give up on me.

Softly and tenderly, He calls each of us, His arms flung wide to hold us tight. He can give us real joy, true peace, and fulfillment forever. This isn’t about religion or going to church or looking holy or trying to do all the right things. It’s about being in an unbreakable bond with Jesus, living with Him in a cherished connection of love. He longs to bless us abundantly, beyond our wildest dreams.

p. 4

Many of us are a lot like Ravi Zacharias in his book *Jesus Among Other Gods*. This closing story was so touching.

(Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the

## Christian Message by Ravi Zacharias)

As I mentioned previously, Jon Krakauer's book *Into Thin Air* relates the hazards that plagued the climbers in their expedition to Mount Everest during the spring of 1996. That year, the attempt to reach the summit resulted in a great loss of life. Some circumstances were out of their control, but fundamental mistakes cost them dearly. And some of those were unfortunately made while still within reach of solutions.

One of those whose life was lost was Andy Harris, one of the expedition leaders. Harris had stayed at the peak past the deadline that the leaders themselves had set. On his descent, he became in dire need of oxygen. Harris radioed his predicament to the base camp, telling them of his need and that he had come upon a cache of oxygen canisters left by other climbers, all empty. Those who had already passed by the canisters on their own return from the summit knew that they were not empty, but full. Even as they pleaded with him on the radio to make use of them, it was to no avail. Already starved for oxygen, Harris continued to argue that the canisters were empty.<sup>3</sup>

The problem was that the lack of what he needed so disoriented his mind that though he was surrounded by a restoring supply he continued to complain of its absence. The very thing he held in his hand was absent in his brain and ravaged his capacity to recognize what he was clutching in his grasp.

What oxygen is to the body, the Bread of Life is to the soul. Without that bread, all other hungers will be improperly perceived. In fact, in like manner, the absence of that bread

over a prolonged period makes the bread itself seem worthless. Life is meant to be lived with the fulfillment of the one need that defines all other means of fulfillment and the one love that defines all other loves.

3. Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air* (New York: Villard Books, 1996), 187-88. pp. 86-87

Father, thank You that we've found that in Jesus. Thank You that we've seen so many graphic demonstrations of God-things that we've experienced. Lord, please keep our focus on You and not on ourselves and what our needs are. That we would understand Your needs. You've got such a plan for this generation. You've got such a plan for the people that are lost and dying. We pray that You'll help us to provide the oxygen, to provide the Bread of Life to be faithful to present the message of the Gospel. Father, we love You and thank You for this time we've had in Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## A Practical Study of ESTHER

### STUDY NUMBER FOUR – ESTHER 5:1-6:14

### NOTES

5:v. 1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.

v. 2 When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

v. 3 Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

v. 4 "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."

v. 5 "Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks." So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

v. 6 As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, "Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."

v. 7 Esther replied, "My petition and my request is this:

v. 8 If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."

v. 9 Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai.

v. 10 Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife,

v. 11 Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials.

v. 12 "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow.

v. 13 But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

v. 14 His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.

6:v. 1 That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him.

## NOTES

v. 2 It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

v. 3 "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.

v. 4 The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him.

v. 5 His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered.

v. 6 When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?"

v. 7 So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor,

v. 8 have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head.

v. 9 Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"

v. 10 "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended."

v. 11 So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"

v. 12 Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief,

v. 13 and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!"

v. 14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Read Esther 5:1-6:14 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. Read verses 1-4 and describe how Xerxes responds to Esther's presence.

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3. How did Haman respond to Esther's request for the banquet, according to verses 11 & 12?

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4. Describe how Zeresh proposed that Haman take care of Mordecai's disrespect, according to verse 14.

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5. Outline God's perfect timing in all of this by summarizing Esther 6:1-3.

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6. Summarize how pride caused Haman to misjudge the situation, according to verses 4-6.

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7. Outline the humiliation of Haman in verses 10-12.

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8. Outline carefully the counsel of Zeresh, Haman's wife, in verse 13.

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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: When we pray and proceed in fulfilling His purpose, God will be there to provide.

LESSON #2: A proud person is often blinded by reality.

LESSON #3: “Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials” (Esther 5:11).

LESSON #4: God’s hand moves perfectly in the situation and He is right on time. “That night the king could not sleep” (Esther 6:1).

LESSON #5: Haman’s situation is so similar to the experience of Belshazzar in Daniel 5:5-6: “Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way” (NIV).

LESSON #6: God is very much at work in this situation and Haman is not even aware of His ultimate purpose.

LESSON #7: Haman is totally humiliated because of his false assumptions about what the king was proposing.

LESSON #8: “Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins” (Micah 6:13 NIV).

LESSON #9: “Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them” (Hosea 14:9 NIV).

LESSON #10: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7 NIV).

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