

Esther

The Bold One

Making The Bible Come Alive

Who was this person?

- The book of Esther was written approximately 470 B.C. (Before Christ)
- Esther is only one of two Books of the Bible names for women. The other book is Ruth.
- Esther was a beautiful Jewish maiden. Her family were part of the Benjamite tribe.
- Esther's Hebrew name was Hadassah, which means 'myrtle'. The myrtle plant was a symbol for renewal. Her Persian name, 'Esther' means 'star'. When Esther became Queen she certainly became a star that brought renewal to her Jewish people.
- When Vashti was dismissed from being queen, the king chose Esther to take on the role of queen because of her beauty, not knowing her race or who her parents had been.
- Esther became Queen in 479 B.C.
- Esther's older cousin, Mordecai, adopted her as his daughter because her parents were killed. Esther was a Jewish woman living in Persia. (The Persian Empire was very large and included the modern countries of Iran, Turkey, and parts of Central Asia).
- Esther was a woman who listened to God and did her very best to follow what her cousin Mordecai instructed her to do, and he did what she instructed as well. (Esther 4:17)
- There is a special time the Jewish people celebrate in late winter/early spring. It often lands in March. It's called the Feast of Purim, and commemorates the divinely orchestrated salvation of the Jewish people through Esther's actions.



What is this person known for?

- King Xerxes had been publicly embarrassed by his wife (Queen Vashti) when she refused to come before him. Queen Vashti's pride and stubbornness came at a price as she was banished from the King's life and removed as his Queen (Esther 1:10-21). After the King's anger subsided, he went in search of another queen. Women were selected from all over Persia. The king arranged for wonderful spa and beauty treatments to prepare the women to appear before the king. (Esther 2:1-4)





- Mordecai, Esther's older cousin who had adopted her, heard about this 'beauty pageant' of sorts and knew that Esther's beauty would be noticed by the king. When Esther was taken to the palace she was cared for by a kind man named Hegai with whom she found favour. Hegai specifically chose servants to aid Esther in the 12-month beauty treatment process to become queen. (Esther 2:10-14)
- When Esther appeared before King Xerxes, he was smitten! Esther kept her nationality and family background a secret just as Mordecai had instructed her to do (Esther 2:10-20). He loved Esther more than all the other women; she won his love and adoration. The King threw a party in her honour, placed a crown on her head and made Esther his queen. Mordecai worked at the King's gate. He uncovered a plot devised by some of the king's guards to kill King Xerxes. Mordecai quickly reported it to Esther who in turn told the King. The King was saved and the guards were killed. (Esther 2:21-23)
- Haman was a horrible, racist man who worked for the King. He craved the attention of men and asked the king to order people to bow before him. Everyone bowed except Mordecai. This increased his hatred of Mordecai and all the other Jews. Haman schemed to use his position to get rid of the Jewish people. As he continued to scheme and gain more power and authority from the King, Haman would also use his time with the king to plant 'seeds' (thistles) of negativity about the Jewish people. Before long the King gave Haman his royal ring. This ring would enable Haman to create, and validate decrees and laws without the King knowing the details about them. These decrees would be made legal as they were sealed/marketed with the King's official stamp made from the King's ring. (Esther 3:1-14)
- Mordecai was horrified when he found out about Haman's deadly schemes to destroy the Jews. Mordecai was so upset that he tore his clothes and went into mourning. Esther's servants found out about it. Esther sent him fresh clothes but he refused to change. Finally, one of Esther's servants went to find out what was wrong. Mordecai shared with the servant everything that had happened, including that Haman had promised to pay money (silver) to the royal treasury in order for the Jewish people to be destroyed (Esther 4:1-7). Mordecai urged Esther to use her position to change these circumstances by going to the king, begging for mercy and pleading with him for her people. (Esther 4:8)

- Esther reminded Mordecai that she needed an invitation to speak to the king or she will be killed. He reminded her that when the king would find out that she was a Jew, she would be as good as dead, even if she was the Queen. The law was the law!
- Mordecai says to Esther in chapter 4, verse 14, “And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such as time as this?” (Esther 4:14)
- Esther dressed in her finest clothes and went to stand in the outer courtyard of the King. He was pleased to see her there and extended his gold scepter towards her. This was the official ‘sign’ that you could speak to the King. King Xerxes loved Esther and promised her anything she wanted—up to half his kingdom. She requested a party with Haman as an ‘honoured’ guest. (Esther 5:1-14)
- That night the King was restless. He requested the official royal records to be read to him. He discovered that Mordecai had prevented the plot designed to kill him. He realized Haman was out in the courtyard and asked him for advice. What should I do to honour someone who has helped the king? Haman was so pride-filled that he thought the king was referring to him. So Haman suggested an amazing ‘prize/recognition’. The King urged Haman to prepare the reward which the King placed upon Mordecai, as well as publicly thanking him. Haman was stunned!!! (Esther 6:1-11)
- When Esther showed up for the party, the king was so pleased to see her that he promised to give her anything she would like. She shared with the king Haman’s deadly plan. The king was angered so greatly that he left the party to compose himself. (Esther 7:1-7)
- Haman acted quickly to beg Queen Esther for his life. The King returned angered that Haman was so close to his Queen. The King had Haman killed by being hung on the same gallows that he had made for Mordecai. (Esther 7:8-10)
- The King removed the special ring from Haman’s hand and gave the signet ring to Mordecai along with all of Haman’s possessions. (Esther 8:1-2)
- Esther again pleaded with the king. She fell at his feet and wept, beginning him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman, which he had planned against the Jews. Mordecai was elevated to ‘official’ law-making status and they changed the law and the Jews were saved. (Esther 8:3-8)

WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN GOD'S STORY?





To remind us that kindness matters. Mordecai's kindness and adoption of Esther set the stage for her to be able to save the Jewish people. Esther was equally kind in her interactions with other people that she came in contact with and that proved to be valuable all the way to her becoming Queen. We never know how kindness can change the outcome of a situation but it does. When someone is upset or angry, a kind word can often change a horrible situation and bring peace. (Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 4:32)

God is in Charge. When God is in charge we can have courage that God will guide us through the difficult things we may face in this life. We need to have faith and believe that God will help us at all times. Esther really showed courage in the face of some frightening circumstances. (Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 46:1; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 John 4:18)

To remind us that God uses ordinary people. Esther didn't have a particular lineage or wealth to make her extra special but she was willing to do what was asked of her. God uses ordinary people and things to accomplish His purposes. There are many times we don't feel qualified or equipped to do what God asks us. We must follow His instructions and trust Him, no matter what. This is important all the time, not just when we encounter a difficult situation. (Proverbs 3:5; Philippians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 1:27)

Being selfless is brave. It wasn't easy for Esther to go to the King. If a person appeared before him without an invitation could have meant their death. She knew the risk was great, however, if it meant saving the Jewish people it was a risk worth taking. The King received her and listened to Esther tell of Haman's plan to kill the Jews.

Obedience always pays off. As a young woman Esther followed Mordecai's instructions as he raised her after her parents died. As a young woman she agreed to take part in the selection process to become a Queen. Mordecai told Esther to speak to King Xerxes to stop the Jews from being killed. He reminded her that the Jews would be saved some other way but that she would suffer. Mordecai encouraged her to do the right thing and make a difference and she obeyed. (Esther 4:14; Matthew 26:24; Acts 3:23)

Pride is a deadly path. Haman thought he was so superior and he loved to receive the praise and accolades of the people he was in charge of. Haman felt as though he was better than everyone else because of his position, his family and all of his possessions. When the king talked about

honouring someone who helped him, Haman automatically thought that King Xerxes was referring to him, not someone else. (Proverbs 16:18; 29:23; James 4:6; Galatians 6:4)

• **To remind us that God has equipped each person.** God made each person perfect. He made you and me with talents and abilities to accomplish great things. As younger people, sometimes we wish we can do more. We look at the example of an older person and wish we were as good at something as they are. We can't and shouldn't compare ourselves to someone else. A more mature person has developed their talents through practice, experience, determination, education and more. It is important to remember that you can do great things for God at any age. There are kids that God has in mind for you to reach with the skills and abilities you have today. Don't wait until you are older to show and tell others about Him. (1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 13:21)

• **God gives us wisdom.** We don't always have the answers when we start something but God will guide us. Mordecai and Esther certainly lived in a difficult time, but God was faithful and He provided a plan. Mordecai also knew the truth that God would make a way as He had done with ancestors before him. It is so important for us to know the truth of scripture so we can make God-honouring decisions with our lives. (James 1:5; Proverbs 2:6)

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Pose the following two questions to your children, one at a time. Allow for interaction and discussion, letting them share their thoughts while you guide the conversation.

- What life lessons can I learn from this Bible character about how I should and should not live?
- Based on what I have learned from this Bible character, how can I live in a way that is pleasing to God.

MORE IN GOD'S WORD

Scripture tells us that we should pray for things we need God to do. It also says we should fast. Prayer comes much easier for people than fasting does. Fasting requires us to give up something we would normally like to have. It means sacrifice. Some people choose to go without food. Some people fast other things that they would usually spend time doing, such as watching TV, playing video games, or being on the internet. What would be something that you might find difficult to give up in order to fast and focus your time more on God?





Esther 4:16 describes the instructions Queen Esther gave to Mordecai, "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Esther knew that it could be possible that she might die. But she knew that following God was most important, and sacrificing food and drink was important to get the attention of God. Esther called for a fast, asking the Jewish people to pray for God to help her on the dangerous mission she was embarking on.

In the Old Testament prayer always went hand-in-hand with fasting. Check out these verses to hear more of what God's Word has to say about fasting: Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9; Ezra 8:21-23.