

For Such a Time as This

A study in the book of Esther

Lesson One

“The Lust of the Flesh & The Pride of Life”

Prayerfully read through Esther, chapter one.

- 1) King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) decides to hold a grand feast. From **verse 3**. List those who the king invited to this feast.
- 2) **Verse 4** gives us the king’s purpose for holding this feast. What does it say his purpose was?
- 3) This feast lasted for 180 days! That’s 6 months of feasting! But apparently, that wasn’t enough for King Ahasuerus, because we read in verse 5 that afterwards he decides to hold another feast. For this second feast, record from **verse 5** those who were invited and how long this second feast would last.
- 4) **Verses 6 and 7** describe the king’s elaborate and opulent furnishings, décor and table settings. Jot down some of these descriptions below.
- 5) The **end of verse 7** tells us that the king made available to his guests “royal wine in abundance.” In **verse 8**, what does it say about the “generous” supply of alcohol the king served?

- 6) **Verse 9** tells us that while the king was entertaining the men of the city in the garden courtyard, Queen Vashti was holding a royal feast for the women inside the palace. In **verses 10 and 11**, on the last day of the feast, we are told that the king's heart was "merry with wine." Under the influence of a great amount of alcohol, what do we read in **verse 11** that the king asked the eunuchs that served him to do?
- 7) What do we read in **verse 12** about Queen Vashti's response to the king's request, and the king's reaction?

There have been many opinions by many Bible scholars over the years as to the nature of the king's request and of the queen's refusal. Most scholars agree that his request for his queen to appear in her royal crown in front of a crowd of drunken men to "display her beauty" implies that she was being asked to "display herself" in an immodest way. Whatever the case, she was being asked to display her beauty in front of a bunch of men who had been drinking and she refused to do so.

Vashti's decision took some courage. She must have surely known that there would be some repercussions from her refusal. No doubt she knew her husband well and was well aware of the past rash decisions he had made in a fit of rage. History records an incident when King Ahasuerus executed the builders of a bridge because a winter storm had destroyed it.

As we read the account of King Ahasuerus' request and Vashti's refusal, the question comes up as to who was most in the wrong. The king certainly had no thought of protecting his wife's dignity, and she clearly chose to disrespect his request in front of all the men of the city.

We know that neither King Ahasuerus nor Queen Vashti served the God of Israel, but even as a pagan king and queen, there were certain protocols that were to be honored and were being ignored and disrespected.

- 8) As believers in Christ, what does **Ephesians 5:22-24** tell us about what the duty is of a wife to a husband?

- 9) Now record what **Ephesians 5:25, & 28-29** tell the husband his duties are to his wife.
- 10) Putting all that together, what does **Ephesians 5:33** say to both husband and wife?
- 11) Are there times when we **shouldn't** obey the command of **Ephesians 5:24**? Look up and read **1 Samuel 25:1-36**. This story reveals to us that there are times when our obedience to a Higher Power trump our obedience to any man, including a husband. Share your thoughts about Abigail's decision to go against her husband's plans.
- 12) There are some things that we clearly must not submit to, and instead are to obey the higher authority of Christ. But there are some things that tend not to be so clear. Look over the following examples and beside each one write down a "Y" for **Yes, I should submit** to that request, or an "N" for **No, I should not submit** to that request.
- A. My husband requests that I not attend church or a Bible study. _____
- B. My husband tells me not to read the Bible or to pray. _____
- C. My husband asks me not to play any Christian music in the house. _____
- D. My husband asks me to go to a Birthday party for a friend where you know there may be a lot of drinking and partying. _____
- E. My husband asks me to go to an X rated movie. _____
- F. My husband wants me to sign a document that I know contains intentional lies and misinformation. _____
- G. My husband continually asks me to wear clothes that are immodest and revealing. _____

13) Can you think of some other scenarios where you aren't sure whether the right thing to do is to submit or to refuse?

14) To add to the confusion we might feel on the subject, look up and read the following two examples of a wife's submission to her husband:

Genesis 12:10-13 & Acts 5:1-11. In the first example, there is no indication that Sarah was in any way held responsible. In the second example, Sapphira paid the same price as her husband. What makes these two accounts so different?

15) Even in those times when we know we cannot submit to a request, we can do so with a **respectful attitude**. Record the following verses that might help us to maintain an **attitude of submission** even when we **can't** submit.

Proverbs 12:18:

Proverbs 15:1:

Proverbs 15:4:

Ephesians 4:29:

James 1:26:

16) While the king's anger burned within him, what do **verses 13 through 15** of Esther, chapter one, tell us about the action the king took next?

- 17) In verses **16 through 18**, Memucan, one of the seven princes of Persia and an advisor to the king, explains to the king the damage that Queen Vashti's actions will cause. What are the main points he describes that will result in her refusal to obey her husband's request?
- 18) What is his solution, spelled out in **verses 19 and 20**, to detour the results of what Vashti's actions might cause?
- 19) What is the king's response, found in **verse 21**, concerning Memucan's advice?
- 20) Explain the details of the king's response found in **verse 22**.
- 21) The king's response was fueled by his anger, and his anger was fueled by his pride. Looking back at the beginning of chapter one, list all the examples you find of his pride influencing his actions in the following verses. Jot down the **evidence of pride** that you find for each verse listed below.

Esther 1:3-4 –

Esther 1:5-7 –

Esther 1:10-11 –

Esther 1:12 –

Esther 1:13 & 15 –

Esther 1:21-22 –

22) The Bible has much to say about how God feels about man's pride. Look up and jot down the following verses:

Proverbs 11:2 –

Proverbs 13:10 –

Proverbs 16:18 –

Proverbs 29:23 –

1 John 2:16 –

23) Rash decisions never turn out well, and we'll find as we move into chapter two how much King Ahasuerus regretted the actions that he took. Looking at a few examples of rash decisions that were later regretted. Read **Genesis 25:29-34** and **Genesis 27:30-38**. What rash decision did Esau make and what did it cost him?

24) The second example is found in **Numbers 20:10-12**. Record the rash action of Moses and what it cost him.

25) The last example we'll look at is in **Judges 11:30-31**. Record the rash vow that Jephthah made to God.

(It's important for us to note that human sacrifices were strictly forbidden by God, so we can assume that he did not offer up his daughter as a burnt offering, but most likely consecrated her for the service of the Lord, where, like Samuel, she would live out all of her days serving God in the temple.)

There are many other examples we could look at all throughout God's Word where rash decisions were made with pricey consequences. God's people have never been perfect, and only because Christ has clothed us with His righteousness can we enter into His presence.

As we look back over this first chapter, we see God's silent hand behind the scenes, as He orchestrates details that will set in place the fulfillment of His divine plans and purposes. From the very beginning of this book, we see His sovereignty at work. We see Him working out the circumstances that will lead to the good of His people. Romans 8:28 boldly states that He works **all things** together for our good, to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. As we watch the story of Esther unfold, we see Him in every scene, in every situation, and we are reminded that He is working behind the scenes in our circumstances and situations as well.

26) As you look over this first chapter of Esther, what is the thing that resonates most in your heart? What is your greatest take-away?