

Character – from book of Esther

It's hard to over-estimate the value of character. God values it so highly that he is often more interested in who you are, than in what you do. So God doesn't always give you guidance about who, what and where. Sometimes, God is more interested in who you are, your character and Godliness. So, take a look today in the mirror that is the Bible, take a check on your character. Maybe you even need to stop blaming others, take personal responsibility and allow God to make changes in you.

This talk will take a look at some of the story in the book of Esther at the life of Esther and Mordecai. This will show how character – such as obedience, humility, Godliness – were essentials in making the story of Esther what it was. There is so much we can learn from this. But we will stick with a few basic points, taken mainly from Esther 1 and 2.

Reading

The main reading for this talk is Esther 1 and 2, although a good understanding of the complete story of Esther would help.

Be Ready

You never know when God will step in and make a change in your life, so be ready.

Someone I know was introduced to a girl by a friend. Within 2 weeks they were going out, within 3 months they were engaged. I know of another situation where a man went to a conference at the wrong time. Because of this, he had to stay over with someone from the church. This one happened to be a lady. The two got married. In the Bible we have characters like Joseph who were in prison one day, and second in charge over Egypt the next day!

So watch out. But make sure you're ready, because being ready and willing is one of God's pre-requisites.

Esther was ready. We know that because of the way that circumstances panned out for her throughout the book of Esther. God was able to take her and use her, because she was ready. If she hadn't the character to handle the momentous changes in her life, she would have failed. But she stepped up to the mark, she was ready. Where she wasn't ready, she was willing to serve, to persevere and to learn.

How can we be ready?

By learning, by waiting and by being under discipline.

In Esther 2.7, we learn this: "Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died."

Esther was fortunate enough to have Mordecai take care of her, look after her and train her. Esther must have listened to Mordecai and respected him. We find that she was

happy to listen to authority and be under its influence. In Esther 2.8, we learn, *“Esther also was taken to the king’s palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem.”*

Later, in verse 15 we read, *“When the turn came for Esther (the girl Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king’s eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favour of everyone who saw her.”*

So, we know that Esther was happy to be under authority and had great wisdom, in following guidelines. Hegai suggested she asked the King for nothing other than what he’d advised. She followed this advice, and found favour with the King – and everyone who saw her. Wow! So, you want favour? If you do, follow wise people’s advice. I have seen many young people ignore wise advice and many times, the consequences are damaging. Be wise, get good people around you, and listen to them.

Esther’s obedience

We know that Esther trusted Mordecai because of what she did. In Esther 2.2 we find the edict of the King, *“Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king..”* Esther was one of those chosen.

We learn in verse 8 that, *“When the king’s order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king’s palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem.”*

This was no small thing. Esther was to leave Mordecai’s house and care, and go to be part of the harem of the King, where she would have to sleep with the King, along with many other women. OK, she’d get 12 months of incredible top notch beauty treatment that any girl would love! But, her life would never be the same again!

Note, that Esther was a virgin still – we know that because she was chosen. Holiness and following God’s laws brings blessing.

So firstly, Esther obeyed Mordecai (presumably) and went to be part of the harem. We’ve already noted how she then followed the suggestions of Hegai. We’ve seen how Esther gained the favour of all who saw her. And this wasn’t just because she *“was lovely in form and features..”* (verse 7), although I’m sure this had something to do with it!!

We continue to find acts of obedience that brought blessing, right throughout the life of Esther. We know that she famously saved the Jewish people from extermination by the evil Haman. But this act of obedience advised by Mordecai, *“for such a time as this”*, had its roots in Esther’s on-going obedience..

We know this because in Esther 2.10, we see that, *“Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so.”*

Then, in Esther 2.20, we read, *“But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai’s instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.”*

What an amazing testimony!

Let's repeat that: *She continued to follow Mordecai's instructions, **as she had done when he was bringing her up!***

What about you? How obedient are you to God, to your family, to those in authority over you? You show your love for God by obeying his commands. You are blessed when you obey your parents. You are commanded to obey those in authority and mandated to pray for them too. Do you do these things? If not, a new life awaits you, with obedience as the key.

Mordecai the Mentor

Mordecai himself showed tremendous character in the fact that he took Esther under his wing and treated her as his own daughter. This simple act of kindness not only made a difference in his life, it ultimately made a difference in the lives of the entire Jewish people. Mordecai showed an incredible level of support towards Esther. We know this from the fact that she readily obeyed him (this was beyond the simple obedience of a man).

He had real character and wisdom himself. What he suggested and did, showed wisdom and gained great favour. His words and thoughts were Godly and they produced Godly results. You can tell a tree by the fruit it bears!

But Mordecai didn't just train up Esther, and send her off out into the world. He continued to actively support her.

Listen to this incredible verse in Esther 2.11: "Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her."

Mordecai's support for Esther was on-going, to the extent that it was daily. Daily he would wait for her, walking back and forth (suggesting he often waited for long time periods) to find out 2 things.. Firstly, how Esther was. Secondly, what was happening to her. Note that his interest was first and foremost in her. Secondly it was on what she was going. What an incredible guy, testimony and precedent. There's so much we can learn from this.

Too often we value the programme over the person. Too often, churches don't support people at all. Too often, we give young people a bit of training, nothing more. But the life of discipleship and God's love, demands that we value and love the person first; that we train one another; that this is on-going.

If you're a leader, or want to be.. Take note. Leaders who care, who show care – will reap a great harvest. I have seen too many leaders care more for what happens, or show little care for people. Value and love people. Support them. Make this support an on-going one, as you can and God leads!

The consequences of Mordecai's care

The care and attention that Mordecai gave to Esther was rewarded in so many ways. Esther became Queen, Israel was saved from destruction and Esther became a beautiful woman in every respect. But there were more immediate consequences too.

It is likely that Mordecai had a job in and around the Royal Palace. Nevertheless, we find in verse 19 that when the virgins (of which Esther was one) were assembled a second time, Mordecai was again by the gates, looking out for Esther. And no, he wasn't just sat there eyeing up all the fit women...!! Check your motives!

Mordecai waited for news and to talk to Esther by the gate more than once. In verse 21 we find that again Mordecai was by the gate. On this occasion, he overheard a plot against the King, by 2 of his jealous and angry officers. Wisely, he reported this to Esther.

Verse 22: "But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai."

STOP.. Now rewind.. Now, if Mordecai had not shown care for Esther, he would not have been by the gate and would not have overheard the plot to kill the King. Maybe the king would have been killed, Esther would not have become Queen, and Israel would have had problems from Haman.. You see, the care that Mordecai showed, had a major result.

The application for you and I is that we should always care for people, never stop caring. We never know what result it may have. The story is told of a faithful servant who doted on a wealthy family for years, taking special care of the father's boy. One day the boy died. But the servant remained faithful, looking after his master as he got older. When the wealthy man died, there was an auction to sell of the goods. Bidders came from around the place to bid on the wealthy items. The first item to go under the hammer was a painting of the boy. No-one wanted the painting, but the faithful servant bid and bought the painting, such was its value to him. The auctioneer then closed the auction. There was uproar. But the auctioneer pointed out that the wealthy man had instructed the painting of the boy to be sold first. Whoever bought that, inherited all the wealth. The faithful servant had inherited everything. The lesson is clear, be faithful.

But what happened with the plot to kill the King? Well, Mordecai told Esther. Esther then showed wisdom in telling the King. But more than that, Esther showed even greater wisdom and humility. She told the King about the plot – **and credited Mordecai**. Wise move. Because of this, Mordecai gained favour in the King's eyes. At a later date, this act of saving the King's life, the act of Esther crediting Mordecai, would lead to the Jewish people being saved and Mordecai being promoted and favoured, along with Esther.

You see, we need to be faithful, to be true, honest, to have integrity. We need to fulfil what God has given us to do and to do it well, as if we were serving Jesus directly. If we do, we will be rewarded. Unlike Mordecai and Esther, we may or may not see the consequences of our actions. But even the smallest thing you do in obedience to Jesus may well even save a nation.