



### Introduction

The following questions, prayers and comments are intended to assist you through a Bible study time this summer, especially if we are still practicing social distancing because of COVID-19. Pastor John Foss will continue to provide his sermon notes for each of his Sunday morning sermons. Watch on Facebook Live or [commhope.freeonlinechurch.com/live](http://commhope.freeonlinechurch.com/live) at 9 am on Sundays. This study and Pastor John's sermons will cover 15 men & women of the Bible. Weekly studies like these will be available each week. If you have any questions, please e-mail [koko@commhope.org](mailto:koko@commhope.org).

## **Week 8: Queen Esther:**

### **Do you believe that ALL things can work together for good?**

*"In my experience, persistence in faith pays off in many ways. The more I look for God, the more likely I am to see signs of God at work in my life and in the world. When I press on through adversity, God is able to use my gifts and abilities in ways I could not have foreseen or imagined. ... I invite you to consider your own experiences of persistence, to look for signs of God's presence, and to hold on to the hope of new life in Christ."* Lindsey L. Gray Editor Upper Room

This quote from the editor of the Upper Room devotionals caught my attention as I prepared this lesson about Esther because like Esther this woman has learned that the way to see what God is doing is to look for Him.

**Prayer of preparation:** Jesus please, help me to expect you and enter your pervading peace with confidence in you and your promises to me. Let me hear and incorporate your message into my life so that I, too, may have the strength that comes with the joy of you. Amen.

Comments and references: "Being in the right place at the right time only matters if you are the right person." Women of the Bible ABS: Read the book of Esther.

### **Characters:**

Mordecai was the much older cousin of Esther. On the death of Esther's mother, he took Esther into his household as his own child, (Es 2:7). Why would he do that? No other family members of Esther and Mordecai are mentioned. Rabbinic traditions hold that Mordecai had a wife and that he was an important leader of the Jews, especially those that lived in Shushan. Mordecai moved to Shushan or the Citadel at Susa, when Esther was taken from their home to the palace where Xerxes 1 ruled over 126 countries plus Israel. In Israel, Mordecai, because of his influential position with the Jews, would have spent his days sitting at the gate of the city conducting business. Because of his connection to Esther and because Shushan was not in any way under the control of the Israelites, Mordecai spent his time at the gates of the palace.

Xerxes 1, comes on the scene in our story where he has just disposed of his wife for defying his wish to display her before his drunken self and his supporters. This interaction with his former wife, Vashti, causes him to declare that all men in his vast kingdom are the rulers in their households. Xerxes is the

son of Darius the Great, whom we met in the story of Daniel and the lion's den. Xerxes is 4<sup>th</sup> in the line of empire builders of Persia and is famous for nearly destroying Egypt and for invading Greece and bringing to an end the rule of city states, like Sparta and Troy. According to Biblegateway.com, Xerxes was vicious and merciless in his military dealings. His treatment of Vashti and Haman are evidence of his lack of mercy, too.

*"Although the book of Esther never mentions God by name, the word **favor** pops up frequently. Commentators believe the Hebrew word for **favor** is used regularly "to describe the character of God" and "could be a subtle way of suggesting the presence of the Lord without mentioning His name" In Esther we see that God was still with Israel, even in captivity. Before Haman's edict to destroy the Jews was even a thought God had his players in place: Mordecai the messenger and encourager; and Esther, the link to the King. God's loyal love never ceased." Ten Women of the Bible, Max Lucado.*

Check out these verses about the **favor** of God:

Ps 5:12    Pro 3    Dan 1:9    Gen 39:4    Acts 2:47

Throughout Esther's story we are told that she found favor with family (Es 2:7), captors (Es 2:9), her lover (Es 2:16-17) and God, himself, has seen fit to keep her story in His Bible, too.

Esther is a wonderful story of her faithful rise above her circumstances, much like Joseph, (Gen. 37:18) rising above his sale into slavery. Esther is orphaned (Es 2:7), ripped from her home (Es 2:8), kept captive until she was considered worthy to be presented to an absolute tyrant (Es 2:9), known for his disregard for women and underlings (Es 1:19-22). As Queen, Esther knows both the limits and strength of her position (Es 4:11). Before she risks her life, she prays and fasts, has her ladies in the harem and Mordecai and, all of the Jews in Shushan do the same (Es 4:15-18). All along Esther's story, Mordecai has guided her and strengthened her to be strong and courageous, much like God advised Joshua as he prepared him to go into the Promised Land (Josh 1:9).

Check out these verses to remind you of how the Holy Spirit is our Mordecai in our daily lives:

Jn 14:26    Jn 16:8-10    Rom 8:26

Queen Esther calls for spiritual support she will need as she sets about outwitting Xerxes, Haman and the satanic powers that seek to separate God's people from life. All of the preparations that were poured into Esther prepared her to succeed brilliantly in a very dangerous time.

Whatever the difficulties are in our lives, I believe God is illustrating in this story the promise He makes to us in Romans 8:28, where He says to us that He makes all things work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. God arranged everything in Esther's life to prepare her to be like Jesus and risk her life for the lives of God's people. However, the promise in Romans 8 is not just for Queens; it is for all of us that have a circle of influence in our home, school, neighborhood, and community. I ask myself; what part of God's redeeming power am I called to share with the people in my world? I say that I believe all things work together for good, but do I know what those things are, that God is using to make good in my life, my family's life, my community?

**Prayer:** Jesus I know that you are making all of my life work for good because I do love you. Help me to see your good works and tell others about them. The joy of knowing you is my strength. Amen.