THE BOOK OF ESTHER

The King Who Is Never Silent

Esther, Unfiltered

For teens who think they've heard it all

BILL McLEOD

Papa Bill Books

THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR TEENS

The King Who Is Never Silent: The Book of Esther, Unfiltered

Part of The Old Testament for Teens series.

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In the author's own text, pronouns referring to God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are capitalized for reverence. Scripture quotations follow the WEB Protestant Edition exactly, including its capitalization.

AI Disclosure. This book was written by Bill McLeod with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools for drafting, research, and editing. All content was reviewed and approved by the author, who takes full responsibility for it. Readers are encouraged to open the Scriptures and study them for themselves.

A WORD TO THE READER

Before You Start

You know the saying by now: “If you want to get something done, hire a teenager while they still know it all.” Esther is the story of a young orphan girl, probably still in her teens, who ended up in the palace of the most powerful man on earth, and then had to decide whether to risk her life to save her people.

It has everything: a drunken king, a queen who says no, a secret identity, an assassination plot, a villain with a giant ego, a sleepless night, a parade that goes horribly wrong for the guy who planned it, and a twist ending. It reads almost like a thriller. Some parts are even funny.

But Esther also has one of the strangest features of any book in the Bible. God’s name never appears in it. Not once. No one prays out loud. No prophet speaks. No miracles happen. And yet, by the end, you can’t miss that Someone has been working behind every scene. So why read it? Because sometimes God feels silent in your life too. Esther shows that silent doesn’t mean absent.

Let’s go.

How This Book Works

This book walks through Esther in six chapters: the party and the palace (Esther 1–2), the lot is cast (3), for such a time as this (4), the night the king couldn’t sleep (5–6), the great reversal (7–8), and from sorrow to gladness (9–10).

Before chapter 1, a section called Setting the Scene explains what kind of book Esther is, when it happened, and why God's name is missing from it. Read it first.

Each chapter ends with a Key Verse quoted word for word from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain modern translation used for every Scripture quotation in this book (Scripture is quoted exactly as the WEB prints it; in the rest of the book, pronouns for God are capitalized out of reverence); Real Talk questions to think through alone or argue about with friends; and a Try This challenge.

On questions where sincere Christians disagree, such as how to read the violence in Esther 9, I'll lay out the main views fairly and leave the decision to you, your family, and your church. This book quotes Esther in places and explains it mostly in my own words, so keep a Bible open next to it. Don't take my word for it. Take His.

FOR THE ADULTS

A Note for Parents and Youth Leaders

Thank you for putting this book in a teenager's hands. It's the seventeenth book in The Old Testament for Teens, a companion to the New Testament for Teens series, written for readers who can smell a sermon coming a mile away. I've tried to write honestly, directly, with some humor, and with real respect for what these readers can handle.

Esther is often told as a fairy tale about a girl who won a beauty contest and became queen. The real story is darker and richer. Esther was an orphan from a minority people, taken into the harem of an absolute monarch who had just deposed his previous queen for refusing to be put on display. This book is honest about that in an age-appropriate, non-graphic way. It notes the realities of royal power and coercion in the ancient world, and includes a gentle safety box encouraging any reader who has experienced pressure, exploitation, or abuse to talk to a trusted adult, with RAINN, Childhelp, and 988 listed.

Esther 9 describes the Jews defending themselves and killing their attackers. A hard-passage box explains the background of the irrevocable Persian edict, notes that the Jews refused the plunder three times, and presents fairly how Christians have read the chapter. Other Real Talk boxes address courage, identity, pride,

prejudice, waiting on God when He seems silent, and using whatever influence God gives you.

The closing section, Where This Points, shows how Esther's story of God working behind the scenes, and of a queen who risked her life before the king for her people, points to Jesus, who actually laid down His life to rescue His people, while acknowledging that Jewish readers treasure Esther and celebrate Purim in their own rich ways. Wherever Scripture is quoted directly, in the chapters and in the Key Verses, the wording is from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain translation.

The Real Talk questions are designed for discussion. They work well for a youth group, a small group, a family dinner table, or a car ride. Don't rush to the right answer. Let them wrestle. Faith that has been thought through tends to last.

My prayer is that every reader will discover that God is never really silent, and will find the courage to act when their own moment comes.

Grace and peace,

Bill McLeod

Papa Bill Books

BEFORE YOU OPEN THE BOOK

Setting the Scene

What Kind of Book Is This?

Esther is a historical story told with the skill of a great storyteller. It is full of irony, reversals, and suspense. Banquets show up again and again: there are about ten feasts in the book, and many of the key moments happen around a table. The story also explains the origin of Purim, a Jewish festival still celebrated every year.

When It Happened

The king in Esther is Ahasuerus, the Hebrew form of the name the Greeks called Xerxes. Xerxes I ruled the Persian Empire from 486 to 465 BC. He is famous for invading Greece, the war behind the battles of Thermopylae and Salamis. The story of Esther takes place roughly between 483 and 473 BC. That puts it between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7: after the Second Temple was finished, but before Ezra and Nehemiah went to Jerusalem.

The Jews Who Stayed

When Cyrus let the exiles go home in 538 BC, many Jews didn't go. They had built lives, homes, and businesses across the Persian Empire. Esther is their story: a book about God's people living as a minority far from Jerusalem, in a culture that didn't share their faith. That makes it surprisingly relevant for anyone trying to follow God in a world that doesn't.

Where God's Name Went

Esther never mentions God, prayer, the temple, or the law. People have explained this in different ways. Some think the author was deliberately showing how God works through ordinary events. Some think it reflects life in exile, where faith was often lived quietly. Later Greek versions of Esther added extra sections, including prayers by Mordecai and Esther that mention God many times. Those additions appear in the Apocrypha in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, but not in the Hebrew text Protestant Bibles follow. Interestingly, Esther is the only book of the Hebrew Bible not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Is It Real History?

Some scholars see Esther as a historical novel, pointing out that Persian records don't mention a Queen Esther and that the Greek historian Herodotus names Xerxes' queen as Amestris. Others note how accurately the book describes Persian court life, the palace at Susa, and Persian customs, and that a Persian tablet mentions an official named Marduka, possibly Mordecai, at Susa in Xerxes' time. Many Christians see no conflict, since kings often had more than one wife. You can read the evidence and decide.

The Map

Chapter 1 (Esther 1–2): The party and the palace.

Chapter 2 (Esther 3): The lot is cast.

Chapter 3 (Esther 4): For such a time as this.

Chapter 4 (Esther 5–6): The night the king couldn't sleep.

Chapter 5 (Esther 7–8): The great reversal.

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Where This Points .....

CHAPTER 1

The Party and the Palace

Esther 1–2

The story opens with a party. Not a small one. King Ahasuerus, the ruler of an empire stretching "from India even to Ethiopia, over one hundred twenty-seven provinces," throws a celebration that lasts one hundred eighty days. For half a year, he shows off the riches of his kingdom and the splendor of his majesty to his officials and military leaders.

Then he throws a second party, a seven-day banquet for everyone in the citadel of Susa, the royal capital. The writer describes it like a reporter who can't believe what he's seeing: white and blue linen hangings, silver rods, marble pillars, couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement, and wine served in golden cups, each one different. The drinking had only one rule: no one was forced to drink, and everyone could have as much as he wanted.

Meanwhile, Queen Vashti is hosting her own banquet for the women.

On the seventh day, "when the heart of the king was merry with wine," Ahasuerus sends seven servants to bring Vashti the queen before him wearing the royal crown, "to show the people and the princes her beauty; for she was beautiful."

A drunk king wants to put his wife on display in front of a room full of drunk men. And Vashti says no.

"But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by the eunuchs. Therefore the king was very angry, and his anger burned in him."

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Why Did Vashti Refuse?**
>
> The text doesn't tell us why Vashti refused. Some later Jewish traditions imagined that the king wanted her to appear wearing only the crown, though the Bible doesn't say that. Others think she simply refused to be treated like one more treasure in the king's collection. Either way, saying no to an absolute monarch in front of his whole court took enormous courage. Readers have seen Vashti in different ways: some as proud and disobedient, many as a woman who protected her own dignity at great cost. What's clear is that the king's request treated her as an object, and that she paid a heavy price for refusing.

The king is furious, and also, apparently, unsure what to do. So he asks his wise men. One of them, Memucan, makes it into a national crisis. If word gets out that the queen disobeyed the king, he says, every wife in the empire will start disrespecting her husband. So he proposes a royal decree, written into the laws of the Persians and Medes "so that it cannot be altered," that Vashti may never again come before the king, and that her royal position be given to someone else. Letters go out to every province, in every language, declaring that every man should be the ruler of his own house.

It's almost comical: the most powerful man in the world can't get his own wife to come to dinner, so he passes a law about it. The book of Esther is full of moments like this, where the mighty Persian Empire looks a little ridiculous. But notice that detail about Persian law. It can't be changed. That's going to matter later.

Some time later, when the king's anger cools, he remembers Vashti and what was decreed against her. His servants suggest a solution: search the whole empire for beautiful young virgins, gather them into the harem at Susa, give them beauty treatments, and let the girl who pleases the king become queen instead of Vashti.

Now the story introduces two new characters. "There was a certain Jew in the citadel of Susa whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite." His family had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. And Mordecai had raised his young cousin. "He brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother." Hadassah is her Hebrew name, which means myrtle. Esther is her Persian name, which may come from the word for star.

So Esther is an orphan, a member of a minority people living in a foreign empire, raised by her older cousin. And then the king's decree goes out, and "Esther was taken into the king's house" along with the others.

> **REAL TALK** **This Wasn't a Beauty Pageant**
>
> Esther's story is sometimes told like a fairy tale, as if she entered a beauty contest and won a crown. That isn't really what happened. Esther was taken. She was probably a teenager. In the ancient world, a king like Ahasuerus had near-total power, and girls gathered into his harem didn't get a vote. Each one spent one night with the king and then went into a second harem, where she might never be called again unless the king remembered her name. Esther ended up as queen, but she started out as a young woman with very little control over her own life. The Bible doesn't say whether she wanted any of this. It simply tells what happened, and then shows God working even through a situation that was far from fair.

REAL TALK **If Someone Is Pressuring You**

Esther's story is a reminder that powerful people sometimes use their power to take advantage of others, especially young people. If anyone, whether an adult, a boyfriend or girlfriend, someone online, a coach, a relative, or anyone else, is pressuring you into something sexual, touching you in ways that aren't okay, or making you feel trapped or afraid, it's not your fault, and you don't have to handle it alone. Please tell a trusted adult, like a parent, a school counselor, or a pastor. You can also call RAINN at 1-800-656-4673 or Childhelp at 1-800-422-4453, any time. If you're feeling hopeless or thinking about hurting yourself, call or text 988. And if you're in danger right now, call 911. God sees you, and you deserve to be safe.

In the harem, Esther wins the favor of Hegai, the official in charge of the women. He gives her beauty treatments, special food, seven maids, and the best place in the house. And Esther keeps a secret. "Esther had not made known her people nor her relatives, because Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make it known." Every day, Mordecai walks back and forth in front of the court of the harem to find out how she is doing. He clearly loves her.

The preparation lasts twelve full months. Then each young woman is taken to the king. When Esther's turn comes, she asks for nothing beyond what Hegai advises. "Esther obtained favor in the sight of all those who looked at her." She is taken to the king in the seventh year of his reign. "The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she obtained favor and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." He throws another banquet, of course, in her honor.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Esther's Secret**

Why did Mordecai tell Esther to hide that she was Jewish? The text doesn't say, but it's easy to guess. Jews were a small minority in a vast empire, and

> prejudice against them was real, as the rest of the story will show. Some readers wonder whether Esther compromised her faith by hiding her identity, eating the palace food, and marrying a pagan king. Others point out that she had very little choice in most of this. Either way, the story is building toward a moment when Esther will have to decide whether to keep hiding or to tell the truth about who she is.

Chapter 2 ends with what looks like a small side story. While Mordecai is sitting at the king's gate, which probably means he held some kind of official job there, he overhears two of the king's doorkeepers, Bigthan and Teresh, plotting to assassinate the king. He tells Esther, and Esther tells the king, giving Mordecai the credit. The plot is investigated, the two men are executed, and the whole thing is written down in the king's book of records.

And then everyone forgets about it. Mordecai saved the king's life, and he gets no reward at all. Remember that. It's not really a side story.

Look back over these two chapters and notice something. No one prays. No one mentions God. There's no prophet, no vision, no miracle. Just a drunk king, a brave queen, a decree, a beauty program, and a plot overheard at a gate. And yet, by the end of chapter 2, a Jewish orphan is queen of Persia, and her cousin has saved the king's life. Neither of those things looks important yet. They will.

KEY VERSE

He brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother. The maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter.

Esther 2:7 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Vashti refused the king's command? Was she right?
2. How is Esther's real story different from the way it's sometimes told?
3. Why do you think Mordecai told Esther to keep her identity a secret? Would you have done the same?
4. Where can you already see God working in chapters 1 and 2, even though He isn't mentioned?

TRY THIS *Think about a time when something that seemed small or unfair turned out to matter later. Write it down and thank God for working in it, even if you didn't see Him at the time.*

CHAPTER 2

The Lot Is Cast

Esther 3

Chapter 3 introduces the villain. “After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes who were with him.” Haman is now second only to the king. And the king commands everyone at the king’s gate to bow down to him.

Everyone does, except one man. “But Mordecai didn’t bow down or pay him homage.”

The other officials keep asking Mordecai, day after day, why he’s disobeying the king’s command. He won’t listen. Finally, he tells them the reason: he is a Jew. They report this to Haman, to see whether Mordecai’s excuse will hold up.

> BACKGROUND CHECK **Agagite vs. Benjamite**
>
> The book of Esther carefully tells us two family trees. Mordecai is a Benjamite, a descendant of Kish. Haman is an Agagite. Readers who know their Bibles will hear an echo. Kish was the father of King Saul, Israel’s first king, from the tribe of Benjamin. And Agag was the king of the Amalekites, whom Saul was commanded to destroy in 1 Samuel 15. Instead, “Saul and the people spared Agag” and the best of the livestock, and Saul lost his kingdom because of his disobedience. The Amalekites had been Israel’s enemies since they attacked the weakest Israelites in the wilderness after the exodus. Many readers think

> Esther is deliberately setting up a rematch, centuries later: a son of Kish facing a son of Agag. This time, the Benjamite won't fail.

Why wouldn't Mordecai bow? The text doesn't say exactly. Jews bowed to kings and officials in other parts of the Bible, so it probably wasn't just a rule against bowing to people. Some think Haman demanded the kind of honor that felt like worship. Others think it was about Haman's ancestry, and the long history of Amalekite hatred toward Israel. Either way, Mordecai would not give Haman what he wanted.

"When Haman saw that Mordecai didn't bow down nor pay him homage, Haman was full of wrath." But killing just Mordecai isn't enough for him. "But he scorned the thought of laying hands on Mordecai alone, for they had made known to him Mordecai's people. Therefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even Mordecai's people."

One man won't bow, so Haman decides to wipe out an entire people.

> **REAL TALK** **How Hatred Grows**
>
> Haman's story shows how hatred works. It starts with wounded pride: one man won't bow. It grows into obsession: Haman can't stop thinking about it. Then it spreads from one person to a whole group: all Jews are the problem. That pattern has repeated throughout history, from ancient empires to the Holocaust to the prejudice and hatred people still face today because of their race, religion, or background. It also shows up on a smaller scale, when someone hurts us and we start resenting everyone like them. If you notice that kind of bitterness growing in you, take it seriously, and bring it to God before it grows. And if you're being targeted or harassed because of who you are, tell a trusted adult. You don't have to face it alone.

So Haman starts planning. In the first month, Nisan, "they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, and chose the twelfth month, which is the month Adar." Casting lots was a bit like rolling dice. Haman's advisors were trying to find the luckiest day for his plan. The lot falls on a date almost a full year away.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Pur**
>
> Pur is an Akkadian word meaning lot. Archaeologists have found an ancient clay die from around this time, inscribed as the lot of an Assyrian official, which shows how lots like this were used. Haman thought he was letting fate choose the perfect day. But the Bible says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." The lot gave the Jews nearly a whole year before the attack, plenty of time for things to change. The festival of Purim, which means lots, is named after this moment. The day Haman chose for destruction became a day of celebration.

Then Haman goes to the king with a carefully worded proposal. He doesn't name the Jews. He says, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, and their laws are different from other people's. They don't keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not for the king's profit to allow them to remain."

Notice how he mixes truth and lies. The Jews were scattered. Their customs were different. But they didn't refuse to keep the king's laws, except, in one case, the command to bow to Haman. And he makes it about money. He offers to pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasury, an enormous amount, probably more than half the empire's yearly income.

The king doesn't even ask who these people are. He takes off his signet ring, gives it to Haman, and says, in effect, keep your money and do whatever you want with them.

So the decree is written, sealed with the king's ring, and sent to every province in every language. It orders everyone "to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to plunder their possessions."

It's an order for genocide.

> **REAL TALK** **Words That Kill**
>
> Haman never picked up a weapon himself. He used words: a speech to the king, a few half-truths, a letter, and a signature. Words can be powerful enough to destroy lives. Rumors, labels, stereotypes, and online posts can spread fast and do real harm. Haman's speech worked because the king didn't ask questions. Be the kind of person who asks questions before believing what you hear about a whole group of people, and who refuses to pass along words that tear people down.

The chapter ends with one of the most chilling sentences in the Bible. "The couriers went out in haste by the king's commandment, and the decree was given out in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was perplexed."

The two most powerful men in the empire have just ordered the death of thousands of people, and they sit down for a drink. Meanwhile, the whole city is confused and upset. Ordinary people can see that something is terribly wrong.

And still, no one mentions God. Where is He? The Jews of Persia must have been asking that question too. But remember: Esther is

already in the palace. Mordecai's good deed is already written in the king's book. And the lot has given them eleven months. The pieces are already in place.

KEY VERSE

All the king's servants who were in the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai didn't bow down or pay him homage.

Esther 3:2 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Mordecai refused to bow to Haman?
2. How did Haman's anger at one person grow into hatred of a whole people? Where do you see that pattern today?
3. What half-truths did Haman use to convince the king? Why do half-truths work so well?
4. Where is God in chapter 3, even though He isn't mentioned?

TRY THIS *This week, notice when you hear someone talk about a whole group of people in a negative way. Ask a question instead of agreeing, or gently say something kind about that group.*

CHAPTER 3

For Such a Time as This

Esther 4

When Mordecai learns about the decree, he does what people in the ancient world did in times of grief and disaster. “Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the middle of the city, and wailed loudly and bitterly.” He goes as far as the king’s gate, but he can’t go in, because no one wearing sackcloth was allowed to enter.

He isn’t alone. “In every province, wherever the king’s commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.”

Notice the fasting. In the Bible, fasting is almost always connected to prayer. The book never says the Jews prayed, but it’s hard to imagine they didn’t.

Inside the palace, Esther doesn’t know about the decree yet. Her maids tell her that Mordecai is in sackcloth, and she’s deeply distressed. She sends him clothes to wear, but he refuses them. So she sends Hathach, one of the king’s servants assigned to her, to find out what’s going on.

Mordecai tells Hathach everything, including the exact amount of money Haman promised to pay. He gives Hathach a copy of the

decree to show Esther, and he sends her a message: go to the king, beg for mercy, and plead for your people.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Inner Court**
>
> Persian kings were surrounded by strict rules meant to protect them and to make them seem almost godlike. Ancient carvings from the Persian palaces show kings seated on their thrones with guards standing nearby. The Greek historian Herodotus says no one could approach the Persian king without being summoned. Anyone who came uninvited risked immediate death. The only exception was if the king held out his golden scepter. Even the queen wasn't exempt. And Esther knew how this king treated a queen who displeased him. Vashti had lost her crown for refusing to come when called. What would happen to a queen who came when she wasn't called?

Esther's reply is honest and afraid. Everyone knows the law, she says. Anyone who goes to the king in the inner court without being called will be put to death, unless the king holds out the golden scepter. "I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."

Thirty days. The king hasn't asked for her in a month. Maybe she's lost his favor. Going to him now could cost her life.

Mordecai's answer is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. "Don't think to yourself that you will escape in the king's house any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent now, then relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **From Another Place**
>
> Mordecai's words are as close as the book of Esther comes to mentioning God. He's confident that deliverance will come for the Jews, even if Esther stays silent. From where? He just says, from another place. Many readers

believe that's a deliberate hint. Mordecai trusts that God will keep His promises to His people, one way or another. Some Jewish writers even noticed that place, makom in Hebrew, later became a way of referring to God. Whether or not that's in Mordecai's mind, his point is clear. God's plan doesn't depend on Esther. But Esther has the chance to be part of it.

Think about what Mordecai is saying. First, you're not safe just because you're in the palace. Hiding won't protect you. Second, God's people will be rescued with or without you. Third, maybe this is why you're here. Maybe everything that's happened to you, being orphaned, raised by Mordecai, taken into the harem, chosen as queen, was leading to this moment.

REAL TALK **For Such a Time as This**

You probably won't ever be queen of Persia. But you are where you are for a reason. Your school, your team, your family, your neighborhood, your friendships, even the hard things that have happened to you, aren't random. God may have placed you exactly where you are so that you can speak up for someone, show kindness to someone, or tell someone the truth about Jesus. Most of the time, your moments won't look dramatic. It might be sitting with the kid who's alone at lunch, standing up for someone who's being mocked, or refusing to go along with something wrong. But who knows if you haven't come to this place for such a time as this?

Esther makes her decision. "Go, gather together all the Jews who are present in Susa, and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I and my maidens will also fast the same way. Then I will go in to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish."

This is the turning point of the whole book. Up to now, Esther has been mostly passive. Things have happened to her. She's been taken, prepared, chosen, and crowned. She's obeyed Mordecai. Now she takes charge. She gives Mordecai instructions, and he

obeys her. “So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.”

And notice what she asks for first. Not a plan. Not a speech. A fast. She asks her people to stand with her, and she gets ready to go before the king by going, in a sense, before God.

> **REAL TALK** **If I Perish, I Perish**
>
> Esther wasn’t fearless. She was afraid, and she had good reason to be. Courage isn’t the absence of fear. It’s deciding that something matters more than your fear. Esther decided that her people mattered more than her own safety. She also didn’t try to be brave alone. She asked for help, and she prepared. When you face something hard, like telling the truth, standing up for someone, or making a choice that could cost you, it’s okay to be scared. Ask people you trust to pray for you. Prepare as well as you can. And then do the right thing, trusting God with the outcome.

It’s worth noticing how much Esther’s life had already prepared her for this moment, even the parts that hurt. Losing her parents meant she was raised by Mordecai, who taught her to listen and to care about her people. Being taken into the harem put her in the one place in the empire where she could reach the king. Even the year of waiting and the months of feeling forgotten taught her patience. None of it was easy, and some of it was deeply unfair. But none of it was wasted.

That doesn’t mean God causes every painful thing that happens to us, or that we should pretend hard things are good. It means that God is able to take the broken pieces of a story and use them for something bigger than we can imagine. Paul put it this way: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Esther couldn’t see that yet. She just had to take the next brave step.

KEY VERSE

For if you remain silent now, then relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why was Esther so afraid to go to the king? Would you have been?
2. What do you think Mordecai meant by "from another place"?
3. Where has God placed you right now? What might your "such a time as this" look like?
4. Why do you think Esther asked people to fast with her before she acted?

TRY THIS *Ask yourself where God has placed you and who around you needs someone to speak up for them. Pick one small brave thing you can do this week, ask someone to pray for you, and do it.*

CHAPTER 4

The Night the King Couldn't Sleep

Esther 5–6

Three days later, Esther puts on her royal robes and walks into the inner court of the palace. The king is sitting on his throne, facing the entrance. Everyone can see her. Everyone knows the law. For a moment, her life hangs on one man's reaction.

"When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter."

She lives.

The king can tell she wouldn't have risked this for something small. "What would you like, queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you even to the half of the kingdom." That was a polite way of saying, ask for anything. It wasn't meant literally, but it showed how pleased he was.

And Esther, with her people's lives on the line, invites him to dinner. "If it seems good to the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

REAL TALK **Wisdom and Timing**

Why didn't Esther just blurt out her request right there in the throne room? Because she was wise. She knew this king. She'd seen how he made decisions: at banquets, over wine, and on impulse. She knew that accusing his most powerful official in public could backfire. So she was patient. She chose the right setting and the right moment. Courage and wisdom work together. Sometimes doing the right thing means speaking up immediately. Sometimes it means waiting, planning, and choosing your moment carefully. When you need to have a hard conversation with a parent, a friend, or a teacher, think about the timing. Pray for wisdom. A good message delivered at the wrong time can be lost.

At the banquet, the king asks again: what's your request? And again Esther waits. Come back tomorrow, she says, the king and Haman both, to another banquet, and then I'll tell you.

We don't know exactly why she delayed a second time. Maybe she lost her nerve. Maybe she sensed the moment wasn't right. Maybe she was building suspense. But that one-day delay is about to change everything.

Haman leaves the banquet "joyful and glad of heart." He's just had a private dinner with the king and queen, and he's been invited back. Life is good. Then he walks past the king's gate and sees Mordecai, who doesn't stand up or even move for him. And all his joy turns to rage.

He controls himself and goes home. Then he gathers his friends and his wife, Zeresh, and he brags. He tells them about his great wealth, his many sons, his promotions, and how the king has placed him above everyone else. He even brags about the banquet. "Yes, Esther the queen let no man come in with the king to the banquet that she

had prepared but myself; and tomorrow I am also invited by her together with the king."

Then he says something revealing. "Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

> **REAL TALK** **Never Enough**
>
> Haman had almost everything a person could want: money, power, family, fame, and the favor of the most powerful man on earth. And none of it was enough, because one man wouldn't bow to him. That's what pride does. It makes you focus on the one thing you don't have instead of all the things you do. It makes you obsessed with what other people think of you. You might know the feeling: a hundred people like your post, but you can't stop thinking about the one who left a mean comment. Haman shows where that path leads. The cure for pride isn't getting more. It's gratitude and humility, remembering that everything you have is a gift.

His wife and friends have a suggestion. Build a gallows, they say, fifty cubits high, about seventy-five feet. In the morning, ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go enjoy the banquet. Haman loves the idea. He has the gallows built that night.

And then comes the hinge of the entire book.

"On that night, the king couldn't sleep."

Of all the nights in the history of the Persian Empire, this is the one when the king can't sleep. So he does what some people do when they can't sleep: he asks for something boring to read. He orders the book of records, the official chronicles of his reign, and has it read to him.

And of all the pages in those records, the servant reads the one about Mordecai uncovering the plot of Bigthan and Teresh to assassinate the king.

The king asks, "What honor and dignity has been given to Mordecai for this?" His servants answer, "Nothing has been done for him."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Coincidence?**

Count the coincidences that come together in chapter 6. The king can't sleep on this particular night. He asks for the royal records. The servant reads the exact passage about Mordecai. Mordecai's good deed was never rewarded, years earlier, so the king can reward him now. And at that exact moment, Haman is walking into the outer court to ask permission to kill Mordecai. The book never says God did any of this. It doesn't have to. Many readers think that's the whole point of Esther. God's name is missing, but His fingerprints are everywhere. The Bible says, "Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." The king couldn't sleep. God never does.

It's early in the morning. The king asks, "Who is in the court?" And who should be standing there but Haman, who has come "to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him."

The king calls him in, and before Haman can say a word, the king asks him a question. "What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?"

Now read Haman's thoughts, because the narrator lets us in on them. "Who would the king delight to honor more than myself?"

So Haman dreams big. Let the man wear a royal robe that the king himself has worn, he says. Let him ride a horse the king has ridden, with a royal crown on its head. Let one of the king's most noble princes dress him and lead him on horseback through the city square, shouting, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"

The king loves it. “Hurry and take the clothing and the horse, as you have said, and do this for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Let nothing fail of all that you have spoken.”

You can almost hear Haman’s face hit the floor.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Comedy of Esther**
>
> Esther is a serious book about life and death, but it’s also funny, and it’s meant to be. The scene in chapter 6 is pure comedy. The proud man designs his own dream parade and then has to lead his worst enemy through it, shouting his praises. Bible scholars often point out how many reversals the book contains: Haman plans honor for himself and gets humiliation; he builds a gallows for Mordecai and ends up on it; the day planned for the Jews’ destruction becomes a day of celebration. Jewish families still laugh, cheer, and boo when they hear Esther read aloud at Purim. Sometimes laughter is a way of celebrating that evil doesn’t get the last word.

So Haman takes the robe and the horse, dresses Mordecai, leads him through the city square, and shouts, “Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!”

Afterward, Mordecai goes quietly back to the king’s gate. Haman hurries home, “mourning and having his head covered.” He tells his wife and friends everything. And this time their advice isn’t encouraging at all. “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him.”

Even Haman’s own family can see it. There’s something about this people that can’t be defeated.

While they are still talking, the king’s servants arrive to rush Haman to Esther’s second banquet.

KEY VERSE

On that night, the king couldn't sleep. He commanded the book of records of the chronicles to be brought, and they were read to the king.

Esther 6:1 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Esther waited until the second banquet to make her request?
2. Why wasn't all of Haman's success enough for him? Where do you see that same attitude today?
3. How many coincidences can you count in chapter 6? What do they suggest about God?
4. Has anything ever happened in your life that seemed like a coincidence but might have been God at work?

TRY THIS *Make a list of five things you're grateful for, and thank God for each one. When you're tempted this week to focus on what you don't have, read your list again.*

CHAPTER 5

The Great Reversal

Esther 7–8

"So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen." On the second day, over wine, the king asks for the third time. "What is your petition, queen Esther? It shall be granted you. What is your request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed."

This is the moment. And Esther finally speaks. "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish."

She uses the exact words from Haman's decree: destroyed, slain, perish. And she reveals her secret. She is one of the people sentenced to die. If we had only been sold as slaves, she says, I would have kept quiet. But this is death.

The king is stunned. "Who is he, and where is he who dared presume in his heart to do so?"

Esther points across the table. "An adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman!"

> REAL TALK **Speaking Up**
>
> After years of hiding who she was, Esther told the truth about her identity in front of the most powerful men in the empire. She said, "my people." She

stood with them instead of protecting herself. Sometimes following God means being honest about who you are and whose you are, even when it's risky. That might mean telling friends you're a Christian, standing up for someone who's being treated unfairly, or refusing to laugh along when people mock a group you belong to. Esther's courage didn't come out of nowhere. It came after three days of fasting and a lot of fear. If speaking up feels scary, you're in good company.

Haman is terrified. The king gets up in a rage and storms out into the palace garden, maybe to cool down, maybe to figure out what to do. After all, he signed the decree himself.

Haman stays behind to beg Esther for his life. And in his desperation, he falls onto the couch where she is reclining. At that exact moment, the king walks back in. "Will he even assault the queen in front of me in the house?"

It's another perfectly timed coincidence. Haman's servants had once covered Mordecai with humiliation. Now the king's servants cover Haman's face, a sign that he has been condemned.

Then one of the king's servants, Harbonah, mentions a helpful detail. There's a gallows seventy-five feet high, he says, which Haman built for Mordecai, "who spoke good for the king," standing at Haman's house right now.

"The king said, 'Hang him on it!'"

"So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath was pacified."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Caught in His Own Trap**

The Bible often describes evil people falling into the trap they set for others. The Psalms and Proverbs say it again and again: the one who digs a pit falls into it. Haman is the perfect example. He planned to kill Mordecai, and he

died on the gallows he built for him. He planned to destroy the Jews, and his own house was given to a Jewish queen. He designed a parade to honor himself, and it honored Mordecai. Joseph once told his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to save many people alive." Esther shows the same pattern. God can turn even the worst plans of evil people upside down.

That same day, the king gives Haman's estate to Esther. Esther tells the king that Mordecai is her cousin, and Mordecai is brought before the king for the first time. "The king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman." The signet ring that sealed the death decree now belongs to the man it was meant to destroy.

But there's still a huge problem. Haman is dead, but his decree is still law. On the thirteenth of Adar, people across the empire are still authorized to kill the Jews and take their property.

So Esther goes before the king again, uninvited, and falls at his feet weeping, begging him to stop Haman's evil plan. Again he holds out the golden scepter. She asks him to write a new letter reversing Haman's. "For how can I endure to see the evil that would come to my people? How can I endure to see the destruction of my relatives?"

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Law That Couldn't Be Changed**

Remember the detail from chapter 1: the laws of the Persians and Medes couldn't be changed. The book of Daniel mentions the same rule. The king explains the problem to Esther and Mordecai: "the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may not be reversed by any man." He can't cancel Haman's decree, even though he wants to. But he can issue a second decree. So he tells them to write whatever they want, in his name. The solution is a new law giving the Jews the right to defend

themselves. The first decree still stands, but now anyone who attacks the Jews will face armed resistance, backed by the king's authority.

Mordecai writes the new decree. It goes out to all 127 provinces, in every language, including Hebrew, carried by couriers riding the king's fastest horses. It gives the Jews in every city the right "to gather themselves together and to defend their lives" against anyone who would attack them, their children, and their wives, on that same thirteenth day of Adar.

Then Mordecai walks out of the king's presence dressed in royal blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple. "And the city of Susa shouted and was glad." Remember how the city was "perplexed" when Haman's decree went out? Now it celebrates.

"The Jews had light, gladness, joy, and honor." Across the empire, wherever the decree arrives, the Jews hold feasts and celebrate. "Many from among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews had fallen on them."

REAL TALK **When God Turns Things Around**

Chapter 3 ended with a decree of death, a king and Haman drinking, and a city in confusion. Chapter 8 ends with a decree of life, Mordecai in royal robes, and a city shouting for joy. It's the same city, the same king, even the same royal ring. Everything has been turned upside down. If you're in a season where everything seems to be going wrong, remember that the story isn't over. God is able to bring light out of darkness and joy out of grief. That doesn't mean every hard situation will be fixed quickly or in the way you want. But it does mean that the darkness never has the final word.

Notice, too, how the king changes in these chapters. He doesn't become a good man. He's still impulsive, still easily swayed, still ruling from banquets. He signed a decree of genocide without

asking a single question, and now he signs a decree of rescue with the same ease. The difference isn't the king. It's who is standing beside him. When Haman had his ear, he did evil. When Esther and Mordecai had his ear, he did good. The Bible says, "The king's heart is in the LORD's hand like the watercourses. He turns it wherever he desires." Even the most powerful people on earth are not beyond God's reach.

That's encouraging when it feels like the people in charge, whether at school, in government, or anywhere else, are making decisions that hurt others. Pray for them. Speak up when you can. And trust that God is still able to turn hearts.

KEY VERSE

The Jews had light, gladness, joy, and honor.

Esther 8:16 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Esther used the same words as Haman's decree when she made her request?
2. What made it so risky for Esther to reveal she was Jewish?
3. What examples of great reversal can you find in chapters 7 and 8?
4. Why couldn't the king simply cancel Haman's decree? What does that say about the limits of human power?

TRY THIS *Think of one person who might be going through a dark season. Send them a message, write a note, or spend time with them this week to remind them that their story isn't over.*

CHAPTER 6

From Sorrow to Gladness

Esther 9–10

The thirteenth of Adar arrives, the day Haman's lot had chosen. It was the day "that the enemies of the Jews hoped to conquer them," the writer says, "but it turned out that the opposite happened, that the Jews conquered those who hated them."

The Jews gather in their cities throughout the empire "to lay hands on those who wanted to harm them." No one can stand against them. Even the governors and royal officials help the Jews, because they're afraid of Mordecai, who has become powerful in the palace and famous throughout the provinces.

In Susa, the Jews kill five hundred men, including Haman's ten sons. The king tells Esther and asks if there's anything else she wants. She asks that the Jews in Susa be allowed one more day to defend themselves, and that the bodies of Haman's sons be hung on the gallows, a public warning. On the fourteenth, the Jews in Susa kill three hundred more men. In the rest of the empire, the Jews defend their lives and kill seventy-five thousand of their enemies.

And three times, the writer repeats the same phrase: "but they didn't lay their hand on the plunder."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Reading Esther 9**

This is one of the hardest chapters in Esther, and readers have understood it in different ways. A few things help put it in context. First, the Jews didn't start this fight. Haman's decree, which could not be canceled, authorized anyone in the empire to kill them on this day. The second decree gave them only the right to defend themselves against those who attacked them. The text repeatedly describes those killed as "those who hated them" and those "who wanted to harm them." Second, the second decree allowed the Jews to take their attackers' property, just as Haman's decree allowed attackers to take theirs. But three times the text emphasizes that the Jews refused the plunder. Many readers see this as a deliberate contrast with Saul, who kept the plunder from Agag's people. This wasn't a war for profit. Third, some Christians are still troubled by the scale of the killing and by Esther's request for a second day in Susa. Some see her as acting wisely to stop a remaining threat in the capital. Others think the story honestly records a moment when self-defense may have gone further than necessary. The Bible often records what people did without approving every detail. As you read, it's okay to wrestle with this chapter, and to talk about it with a parent or pastor.

REAL TALK **Self-Defense and Revenge**

The Jews in Esther had the right to defend their lives, and that's a real right. But there's a difference between protecting yourself and getting revenge. Jesus taught His followers not to repay evil with evil, and Paul wrote that we should leave vengeance to God. If someone has hurt you, you don't have to let them keep hurting you. It's right to protect yourself, set boundaries, and get help. But be careful about letting the desire for payback take over your heart. And if you're ever in danger, whether at home, at school, or anywhere else, tell a trusted adult right away, or call 911.

After the fighting is over, the Jews rest and celebrate. In most of the empire, they celebrate on the fourteenth of Adar. In Susa, where the fighting lasted an extra day, they celebrate on the fifteenth. And this is the beginning of a festival.

Mordecai writes down what happened and sends letters to Jews everywhere, near and far, telling them to celebrate both days every year, "as the days in which the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned to them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending presents of food to one another, and gifts to the needy."

"Therefore they called these days 'Purim', from the word 'Pur.'" The festival is named after the lot Haman cast to choose the day of destruction. The thing he used to plan their death became the name of their celebration.

The Jews agree to keep Purim forever. The book insists that "these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city." Esther herself writes a second letter with full authority to confirm the festival. "The commandment of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Purim Today**

Jewish communities still celebrate Purim every year, usually in February or March. The whole book of Esther is read aloud, often in a scroll called the Megillah. Every time Haman's name is read, people boo, stomp their feet, and shake noisemakers called groggers to drown him out. Kids and adults dress up in costumes. Families send gifts of food to friends, give to the poor, and share a festive meal. A popular Purim treat is a three-cornered cookie called hamantaschen. It's one of the most joyful days on the Jewish calendar, a celebration of survival and of a God who works even when He seems hidden.

The book ends with a short chapter about Mordecai. "For Mordecai the Jew was next to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and

accepted by the multitude of his brothers, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his descendants."

The man who wouldn't bow to Haman now holds Haman's position. But notice how he uses his power. He seeks the good of his people and speaks peace. That's the opposite of Haman, who used his power to destroy.

> **REAL TALK** **When God Seems Silent**
>
> Look back over the whole book. God's name never appears. No one hears His voice. No miracle splits the sky. And yet an orphan became queen at just the right time. A plot was overheard. A lot fell on a day almost a year away. A king couldn't sleep. A servant read the right page. A villain walked in at exactly the wrong moment. Isaiah once said, "Most certainly you are a God who has hidden yourself, God of Israel, the Savior." Sometimes God feels hidden in our lives too. You pray and hear nothing. You wonder if He's paying attention. Esther is in the Bible to remind you that silence doesn't mean absence. God is often doing His most important work when we can't see it. And if you're in a season of feeling far from God, or if sadness or hopelessness feel heavy, please talk to someone you trust. If you're thinking about hurting yourself, call or text 988 any time.

The story of Esther started with a party for a king's glory. It ends with a festival celebrating God's rescue of His people. In between, God never once spoke out loud, but He never stopped working.

Esther is the last of the Old Testament's historical books, and it's a fitting place to pause. Since Genesis, we've watched God make promises to Abraham and his family and keep them through slavery, wilderness, judges, kings, exile, and return. In Esther, those promises face one of their most dangerous threats: a plan to wipe out the entire people of God in a single day. If Haman had succeeded, there would have been no rebuilt Jerusalem, no line of David, and no Messiah born in Bethlehem. Esther shows that God

keeps His promises even when His people are scattered far from home, even when they hardly mention Him, and even when He seems silent.

The rest of the Old Testament, from Job through Malachi, is made up of poetry, wisdom, and prophecy, written by and for the same people whose story we've been following. As you keep reading, remember the lesson of Esther. The God who worked behind the scenes in Susa is the same God who works behind the scenes of every life, including yours.

KEY VERSE

as the days in which the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned to them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending presents of food to one another, and gifts to the needy.

Esther 9:22 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think the text repeats three times that the Jews didn't take the plunder?
2. How do you think Christians should think about the violence in Esther 9?
3. Why do you think God's people were told to remember this rescue every year?
4. When has God felt silent to you? Looking back, can you see ways He might have been working?

TRY THIS *Celebrate something God has done in your life. Like the Jews at Purim, share a treat with a friend and give something to someone in need, and tell someone why you're celebrating.*

THE END (AND THE BEGINNING)

Where This Points

God's name never appears in Esther. But look at what happens: an orphan becomes queen at just the right moment, a man overhears a plot, a king can't sleep and reads exactly the right page, and a villain gets caught in his own trap. Every coincidence lines up. Esther teaches that God is never really silent. Even when you can't see Him, He is working.

Jewish readers treasure Esther as a story of survival and courage, and every year at Purim they read it aloud, cheering for Mordecai and drowning out Haman's name with noise. Christians love it too, and see in it a pattern that points to Jesus. Esther stood between her people and death and said, "if I perish, I perish." But she didn't perish. The king held out the scepter, and she lived. Jesus went further. He didn't just risk His life for His people. He gave it. Paul wrote that He "humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, yes, the death of the cross." Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." And because He did, we don't have to wonder whether the King will receive us. We can "draw near with boldness to the throne of grace."

Here's what the Bible says about where that story leads, as plainly as I can put it.

1 God made you, and He loves you.

God made you on purpose, and He loves you. He sees you, even when He feels silent.

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* **John 3:16 (WEB)**

2 We've all sinned.

Haman's pride and hatred are extreme, but the same seeds are in every heart. The Bible says all of us have sinned.

> *for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;* **Romans 3:23 (WEB)**

3 Sin has a real cost.

God is good, so He doesn't shrug off evil. The Bible says its result is death, separation from God forever.

> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* **Romans 6:23 (WEB)**

4 Jesus gave His life to rescue us.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again. Esther risked her life for her people. Jesus actually gave His.

> *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.* **1 John 4:10 (WEB)**

5 You can't earn it. You receive it.

Esther approached the king not knowing if she would live. Salvation isn't a reward for being good enough. It's a gift you receive by trusting Jesus.

> *for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast.*
> **Ephesians 2:8–9 (WEB)**

6 Come to the King.

Turn from running your own life, and trust Jesus as your Savior and King. Then you can know, not just hope, that you have eternal life.

> *that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
> **Romans 10:9 (WEB)**

So what do you do with that? You don't need perfect words. You can talk to God honestly, right now, wherever you are. If it helps, you could pray something like this:

God, sometimes You feel silent, but I believe You are here. I've sinned against You, and I can't fix that myself. Thank You that Jesus didn't just risk His life for me. He gave it, and You raised Him from the dead. Forgive me, and make me Yours. Help me trust You when I can't see what You're doing, and give me courage for whatever moment You've placed me in. I trust Jesus as my Savior, and I want Him to be my King. In Jesus' name, amen.

If You Just Said Yes

Tell someone. A parent, a youth leader, a pastor, or a Christian friend. Start there.

Read the real thing. Read Esther 4 and 6, then Philippians 2:5–11, the King who gave His life.

Find your people. Get connected to a church where the Bible is taught and Jesus is honored. Ask about being baptized.

Don't stay silent. Esther spoke up for her people. Look for one way to speak up for someone who needs it.

Not Sure Yet?

Not ready? That's honest, and honesty is a good place to start. Keep asking. Keep reading. Esther fasted three days before she acted. Just don't settle for "I already know all that."

Because if Esther is right, the God who worked behind every scene in Susa is working behind the scenes of your life too, and who knows if you haven't come to this moment for such a time as this?

Let's therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16 (WEB)