



# Calling All Women: Be an Esther

If you think there is nothing for females to do in Church, think again



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All Bible verses are taken from the Book of Esther

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“I’m a woman and I don’t know what I’m supposed to do in the Church. Women aren’t allowed to do as much as men; what is there for me to do?” I’ve heard this from women and girls in Church, and, to be honest, I’ve said these same words myself. The response? We can be Esthers.

### Far From Home

Esther, a “fair and beautiful” woman (Esther 2:7), became Queen of the Persian Empire. She lived in royalty, had “maids and chamberlains” to serve her (4:4), and “obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her” (2:15). Sounds like a pretty good life,

doesn’t it? But there’s much more to Esther than meets the eye. Let’s look a little deeper.

Esther was Jewish. This is significant because more than 100 years before Esther was born, the Jewish people had been exiled from their homeland of Jerusalem. The exiles were scattered among different nations, many settling in Persia. Esther and her parents lived near the king’s palace in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire. Since Jews were treated poorly in Persia, Esther and her parents kept their Jewish identity a secret. Sadly, both of Esther’s parents died, and her older cousin Mordecai was given custody of her. Mordecai worked for the Persian government, and knowing

how risky it would be for Esther’s identity to be discovered, he continued to keep it a secret.

*Chances are you can relate to parts of Esther’s life. I know I can. I’ve experienced the seclusion of loneliness, the anxiety that comes with secrets, the pain of loss, the shock of death, the homesickness for a familiar place.*

### Just a Pretty Face

In a strange turn of events, the Queen of Persia was dismissed from the throne, and the King decided to host a beauty pageant to choose a new queen. (Yes, a beauty pageant.) The King knew nothing about Esther except that she was beautiful, but

that was all he needed to know. In preparation for the new role as Queen, Esther was forced to spend the next twelve months being made “according to the manner of the women” (2:12). In other words, she spent the next year of her life undergoing beauty treatments so that she could be physically and sexually appealing to the King.

After 12 months, Esther was brought before the King again. When he saw Esther, “she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen” (2:17). The King still knew nothing about Esther except how beautiful she was; most significantly, he didn’t know she was Jewish.

*I can relate to this too, can't you? No, I haven't been sent away for a year of beauty treatments, but I've been in situations where someone has judged me solely on my appearance, knowing nothing more about me than what they see at that moment. "Oh, she has a nose ring." "Would you look at those clothes?!" "Hey baby! Nice (fill in the blank)." Yes, at different times, I've been ridiculed, teased, praised, evaluated, accepted, and rejected based on what I look like. Haven't you?*

### **Challenge of a Lifetime**

Life was still hard for the Persian Jews. Eventually, tensions got so high in the kingdom that one of the King’s leaders, Haman, developed a plot to execute all of the Jews in Persia and secured the King's approval to carry out the

killings. As the news reached the Jews, there was “great mourning...and fasting, and weeping, and wailing” (4:3). Mordecai met with Esther and wanted her to talk to the King.

After some thought, she told Mordecai there wasn’t much she could do. Nobody could approach the King’s court without first being invited by the King himself, and she hadn’t been called in over 30 days. Approaching the King without special invite meant death for the unwelcome visitor.

***While I've never been faced with the possibility of my death, I have faced the possibility of public humiliation, loss of friends, and exclusion. Standing up against the majority can be terrifying.***

Mordecai called her out on her cowardly response: “Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time...thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed” (4:13-14). In other words, Mordecai exclaimed, “Just because you live in the safety of the King’s palace, don’t think for one second that you won’t be impacted by this great destruction of the Jews. You are part of the same family as all of the Jews outside of this palace who are facing the end of their lives.”

*Yep, I've been there too. Faced with a really hard situation, I've got a choice. Do I act? Do I say nothing? And, just like Esther, my initial response often is to take the easy way out. Think of myself before others. While I've never been faced with the possibility of my death, I have faced the possibility of public humiliation, loss of friends, and exclusion. Standing up against the majority can be terrifying; it's so much easier to stay where we are comfortable and safe.*

### **Answering the Call**

In one final attempt to convince Esther to act, Mordecai asked her a piercing question: “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (4:14) In other words, “What if God placed you in the position of Queen for this very moment? What if you let this moment pass without acting? How will you feel then?” Upon hearing these words, Esther gathered every ounce of courage within her and told Mordecai that she would approach the King. Knowing her strength came from the Lord, she told Mordecai to ask all the Jews to fast for the next three days and nights on her behalf. She added, “And so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (4:16).

After the fast, Esther approached the King. To her surprise, he welcomed her into his presence. Next, Esther decided to invite the King to a feast, hoping that the happy occasion would provide the right timing for her to

present her plea and reveal her own Jewish identity. The final chapters provide really exciting details about the feast and how Esther revealed her identity — you really should read the book for yourself! In the end, Haman was killed for plotting against the Jews, and the lives of the Jews were spared because Esther had the courage to put herself on the line.

Imagine the great joy and excitement Esther must have felt. Imagine her relief at finally revealing her Jewish identity. Imagine knowing that God looked to her, an orphaned Jewish woman, and saw a Queen.

### Being an Esther

Do you believe me when I say we can be Esthers? Being an Esther means...

### Identifying Where God Might Use You

Look at your current life circumstances. Have you been through a trial or experience that you might use to encourage someone else?

### Acting Courageously

Can you testify boldly on Sunday about God's presence in your life? Can you make a CD of encouraging music for someone you know needs uplifting? Can you give someone an unsolicited hug? Remember, courageous acts are not necessarily loud or in front of large groups of people.

### Volunteering

Esther didn't have to go before the King. She chose to do this. She chose it even though it was scary and uncertain. You don't have to be ordained to do God's work; you can volunteer to help out around the church building, teach a Sunday school class, visit an elderly member of your branch, or write an article for The Gospel News or Gospel Blog. It's OK to feel nervous about volunteering; I'm sure Esther did.

### Preparing Yourself

Once Esther decided to act, she knew she needed to prepare herself by fasting, praying, and asking those around her to do the same. We are no different; we

need to prepare ourselves for the work God has for us, whether this work be in an ordained position or not.

### Drawing Strength from Your Identity

Esther's identity as a Jewish woman, although something she initially felt she needed to hide, ultimately allowed her to save her people. What are your identities and how can you see them as a strength that God has given you to be used for His purpose?

### Standing up for Those Without a Voice

Esther's people were at the King's mercy, and she was the one in the position to make a difference for them. Is there a person at school, at work, or in your home who could benefit from your voice? From your perspective? From your position?

As we strive to be Esthers in our daily lives, remember that God has a work for each one of us to do. He's already prepared the way. All He asks is that we be willing.

## Making Peace with Proverbs 31

Proverbs 31:30 says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Ponder this verse, and reflect on these questions.

- "Favor" is a synonym for "popularity." Do you think a lot about how others view you? Where does popularity rank on your list of priorities? How can popularity be deceitful (misleading)?
- Some synonyms for "vain" are "conceited," "narcissistic," and "useless." Do these words apply to a girl who spends a lot of time thinking about her looks? How much time do you spend?
- Do you fear displeasing the Lord more than you fear being different from your friends and standing out from the crowd? Is keeping His commandments important to you?
- Are you constantly looking for praise and affirmation? Are you looking to the Lord for His approval? Or are you looking for approval in society's eyes?