

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Lessons from Esther

I was one of the privileged ones to have been able to sit at the feet of the late and lamented Bobby Duncan, and I still remember hearing him preach this sermon on lessons from the book of Esther. Esther could be renamed, "God in the Shadows," for while the name Jehovah or God does not appear in this book, it does not mean that one will not find His presence in studying this inspired literary piece.

Please read the story of Esther, and then let us notice some lessons from this great woman and the book that is named after her.

1. Let us learn the danger of unholy ambition. The Hebrews writer wrote, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). Ahasuerus and Haman were both guilty of worldly and unholy ambition.
2. Let us learn the danger of drinking (1:10). Solomon sternly signaled, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1).
3. Let us learn how a person discharges his duty to benevolence, seen in how Mordecai provided for Esther. James declared, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to

visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). The apostle Paul penned, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10), and he told Timothy, "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8).

4. Let us learn the value of true devotion and consecration. Esther could have used her beauty for showiness—something even Vashti would not do. Think about the harsh lessons young girls are learning whose parents put them into beauty pageants. Let us not use our blessings as curses.
5. Let us learn the difference between sorrow and repentance. We do not know if Ahasuerus ever repented of what he did to Vashti. The apostle Paul teaches us that repentance is a change of mind leading to a change of action brought about by godly sorrow (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10).
6. Let us learn the smallness of a proud person. Haman is a perfect example of this lesson; he felt threatened by an insignificant Jew, Mordecai. Indeed, pride is a sin: "Pride goeth before

- destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).
7. Let us learn the value of determination (loyalty). Upon hearing the decree of Haman, Mordecai was determined to save Esther and the Jews. We need to have loyal determination to God!
 8. Let us learn the source of comfort, as seen through Esther and Mordecai (as well as all of the Jews). We all need comfort at times. Threatened troubles do not always come; we should not worry. Nevertheless, so many sorrows are so many times accompanied by so much good. The apostle Paul promised, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). No matter what threat, God has the power to deliver (i.e. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego).
 9. Let us learn the value of opportunity. The apostle Paul penned, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). No queen ever had an opportunity like Esther, and she had it one time! This is a lesson that young people need to learn as well (think about the Senior Prom; this may be the only opportunity to stand for the right!).
 10. Let us learn a lesson of self-restraint. Esther was patient with her request, planning another feast night before she revealed her request. Patience is a marvelous virtue—it is a portion of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), as well as something for which Christians should aspire (2 Pet. 1:5-11).
 11. Let us learn the blessing of a good wife. Ahasuerus had Vashti and Esther both for wives in two instances. We need to appreciate good spouses (cf. Prov. 5:18).
 12. Let us learn that courage is often a feminine virtue. Women are very courageous. Not only do we see such with Vashti and Esther, but think about the women that went to Jesus' tomb early Sunday morning.
 13. Let us learn the lesson of providence. We can see the providence of God in Ahasuerus' sleepless night. We can see the providence of God in Ahasuerus calling for a reader. We can see the providence of God in the reader reading the chronicles in the exact spot. We can see the providence of God in Haman's entrance. We cannot pinpoint God's workings, but we do know that He works through His providence.
 14. Let us learn from the character of Mordecai—he did not let his honor go to his head. Pride did not get him.
 15. Let us learn that we will reap if we faint not— Paul proclaimed, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). Both Mordecai and Esther abided their time.
 16. Let us learn how to accuse an enemy. Esther not only used a great deal of tact; she also accused him to his face, not behind his back. We should not talk behind people's backs. Jesus taught us, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18:15).
 17. Let us learn how fleet is fortune. One day Ha – man is rejoicing over his position and riches; the next day he is hanging by his neck. Jesus preached, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21; cf. Luke 12:16-21). James warned against stating, "Go to now, ye that say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain': Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that

appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:13-14).

18. Let us learn that retribution is as much a law of the universe as gravity. Haman is a perfect example. Paul clearly declared, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).
19. Let us learn the mercy of God. Look at the mercy of God expressed to Mordecai and the Jews. One has said, "God's mercy is in his outstretched hand, but his sword of justice is in his scabbard."
20. Let us learn that some things cannot be undone. For example, once the law of the Medes and Persians was in effect, it could not be undone. We cannot unscramble eggs, and we cannot put toothpaste back into the tube once we squeeze it. Young people especially need to learn that they cannot undo what they did yesterday. Paul penned, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).
21. Let us learn that man's extremity is God's opportunity. Esther knew that God was there. What we cannot do, God can!
22. Let us learn that there are two great elements in salvation—God's mercy and man's obedience (both of which we see demonstrated in this book). Paul spoke of both elements when he stated, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus declared that we have a response: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

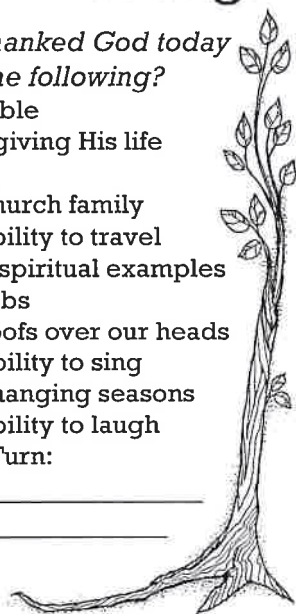
Therefore, there are so many great lessons to learn from this marvelous book about a truly virtuous woman of God. May our lives be blessed by a constant study of this piece of scripture.

Sam Willcut

dear God,
thanks for this
beautiful life
and forgive me if
i dont love it
enough.

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The ability to travel
- Good spiritual examples
- Our jobs
- The roofs over our heads
- The ability to sing
- The changing seasons
- The ability to laugh
- Your Turn:



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Lazarus Raised

N T A W S I K B B Y O M S M I X U M X P
 W Z E G V R P W H M E P B D S S A L B R
 W Y Y D P D A K B M J J E I O L H R Y F
 G I I A I X K L V Z M J T T A J K E I F
 E B P C O N S O L I N G H F P E U V D Z
 T X U Y A R L Q U Q F U A W N U I C Q Q
 K R E S U R R E C T I O N I P C P W Q N
 A U I T M A R T H A S K Y L H Q K Z M D
 M U T O O E N M E S F D P O C I M B H U
 W V Y N V V Q V S N N K K V T O R T K S
 M R H E E S O B A B Z A K E X W R L E F
 C M C U D P D T Q T J E D D D E Y O W A
 V P Z N Z T W O B T H Q M J I Z V L E M
 U C O B J W E D A N N E J S B J Q I E M
 T E B I P U A M B G Z M H A S L E E P H
 M X U N C B G E L E S K A E H F G V I F
 P T R D M J S H G Y T K R B X A X B N T
 Z I U X L Z G R B Q A Y D Q W H I M G A
 I L D M R G S Y J V H C T C U O C A S H
 P P K C L M K I U L X T K C F L K R H K
 A W A K E N E R E W G M H I V U W Y B E

DIRECTIONS: Look up the scripture in the Bible, and find the answer in the crossword above.

John 11:1, Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of _____

John 11:11, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen _____,

John 11:11, ... but I go to _____ him."

John 11:21, _____ said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here..."

John 11:25, "I am the _____ and the life."

John 11:28, she went and called her sister _____

John 11:31, the Jews who were with her in the house, _____ her,

John 11:33, When Jesus saw her _____...

John 11:33, He was deeply _____ in His spirit and greatly troubled.

John 11:36, So the Jews said, "See how He _____ him!"

John 11:39, Jesus said, "Take away the _____."

John 11:44, Jesus said to them, "_____ him, and let him go."