

# Sample Study

# Esther

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**Read - Esther 1:1-2:18; other references as given.**

1. On the seventh and final day of Ahasuerus' banquet for the people of Susa and Vashti's banquet for the women in the palace, he commanded seven servants to bring Vashti to his banquet, but she refused (Es. 1:12).
  - a. Why did Ahasuerus want Vashti to come to his banquet?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. How did Ahasuerus respond to Vashti's refusal to come to his banquet (Es. 1:12-15)?
  
2. Ahasuerus was able to control the entire Persian Empire but not his own spirit or his own family. The Bible says, **Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls** (Pro. 25:28).
  - a. In what ways *do you think* a man who has no control over his spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Have you allowed God to take control of your spirit so that you are not like a city that is broken down and without walls?
  
3. Ahasuerus and Vashti allowed an interpersonal disagreement to become a national scandal. In the same way, Christian churches often allow personal problems with others to become "national" issues.
  - a. What *do you think* Ahasuerus could have done to prevent the problem from becoming a major issue?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What *do you think* Vashti could have done differently to resolve the problem and not dishonor her husband?
  
4. Ahasuerus asked the wise men what they thought should be done with Vashti (Es. 1:15). Fearing that her example might cause widespread contempt within the homes of the Persian Empire (Es. 1:16-18), they advised the king to divorce Vashti and marry another, more worthy than she (Es. 1:19). Although Ahasuerus took their advice and had Vashti deposed, he later regretted his foolish and hasty decision (Es. 2:1).

- a. In the book of Esther, many people received counsel from others (cf. Es. 2:22, 23, 3:13-16, 4:14, 6:6-9). Although the Bible encourages believers to seek counsel from others, it cautions them to receive only godly counsel (Pro. 1:4, 24:6). When *do you think* a Christian should not accept the counsel of other people?
  
  - b. How can a Christian be sure that the counsel he receives from another person is godly counsel (Is. 8:20)?
5. Perhaps the king's attendants (probably the wise men of Es. 1:13, 14) feared that Ahasuerus might reinstate Vashti as queen (Es. 2:1). What plan did they offer the king so that a new queen might be chosen (Es. 2:2-4, 12-14)?
  
  6. Esther was taken into Ahasuerus' harem to prepare herself for twelve months before being presented to the king (Es. 2:8, 12). During this time, she found favor with Hegai, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the king's harem (Es. 2:3, 8, 9). By law, Esther was not to marry a pagan (De. 7:1-4) nor was she to have sexual relations with a man before marriage (Ex. 20:14). What evidence does the Text offer to prove that Esther did not willingly volunteer for this responsibility (Es. 2:3, 8)?
  
  7. When the prophet Daniel was taken to Babylon, he refused to defile himself by eating the king's choice food (Dan. 1:8). The three Hebrew youths refused to bow down to the king's statue (Dan. 3:13-18). However, several years later, Esther apparently had no qualms about the food she ate in the palace (Es. 2:9). In addition, Mordecai instructed her not to reveal her Jewish identity. What *do you think* this indicates about the faith of Mordecai and Esther?
  
  8. Among all the beautiful women of the Persian Empire, Esther was chosen to become queen (Es. 2:17). Little did she realize at the time that God had placed her in a strategic position within the kingdom so that he might use her in a mighty way. Give a personal example of how God providentially directed your life and then used you for His glory.

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1. a. Ahasuerus wanted to display her beauty to the people and the princes.  
b. The king became very angry and his wrath burned against her (v. 12; in other words he allowed his anger to continue). He asked the wise men of Persia what they thought should be done about her unwillingness to honor his request (vv. 13-15).
2. a. 1. He is defenseless. An ancient city without walls was an easy target for an enemy. In the same way, an individual who cannot control his spirit is an easy target for Satan.  
2. He is insecure and fearful. The citizens of an unwalled city must have felt a degree of apprehension and fear, knowing that they were easy prey for enemy attack. Their fear must have influenced their actions and their ability to live confidently. A person who has not learned to control his spirit is often insecure and fearful because he knows that he is vulnerable to Satan's attack at any time. His insecurity and fear often cause him to avoid certain situations in life that could cause him to "lose his cool." Instead of allowing God to give him control over his temptation, he avoids the situations that upset him.  
3. He lives in defeat. Like an unwalled city that must be willing to surrender at any time, the man who has no control over his spirit lives in defeat rather than experiencing the victory that Christ wants to give him (cf. Ro. 8:31-39).  
b. Answers will vary.
3. a. 1. He should not have allowed his anger to continue to burn within him (v. 12). His continuing state of wrath indicates that he was focusing on Vashti's error rather than his insensitivity toward his wife.  
2. He should not have attempted to solve the problem until he gained control over his emotions (vv. 13 ff.).  
3. He should have attempted to resolve the problem personally without soliciting the counsel of others (vv. 13 ff.).  
4. He should not have prejudiced the counsel of the wise men by asking what should be done with Queen Vashti. The manner in which he approached the problem and their counsel dictated their response to him.  
b. She could have appealed to her husband in private. This would have allowed him the opportunity to graciously withdraw his request without embarrassing him. (Note: There is nothing in the passage or the Hebrew grammar to indicate that Ahasuerus wanted Vashti to appear naked or dance lewdly before the king and his guests. Some scholars believe that the queen was pregnant with Artaxerxes [Ahasuerus' son who became the next king] and did not want to appear before the drunken king and his guests.)
4. a. The Christian should not accept the counsel of other people if the counsel does not agree with the Word of God.  
b. The counsel that the believer receives must agree with the Word of God.
5. The king was to appoint overseers in all the provinces of the kingdom who would gather all the beautiful young women from various parts of the empire. These young women would be brought to the Persian capital where they would be placed in the custody of Hegai, the eunuch who was in charge of the king's harem. The women would be given oil of myrrh for six months and spices and cosmetics for another six months. At the end of the twelve months, the women would spend the night with the king. The woman most pleasing to the king would become the new queen.
6. 1. The king's attendants recommended a plan that appointed overseers to gather every beautiful young woman to Susa so that she could become part of the king's harem (v. 3).  
2. Esther was taken to the king's palace, into the custody of Hegai (v. 8). Both verses indicate that this was not a voluntary surrender or "beauty contest."
7. Although Mordecai and Esther possessed a faith in God and trusted Him to protect His people (cf. Es. 4:14), it appears that their immersion into the secular environment in which they lived had caused them to become weak in faith. Under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, Ezra and Nehemiah, many of the Jews had returned to Palestine as the prophets had commanded. Those who remained behind in Persia seemed to be more concerned about their personal interests than obeying the direct command of the Lord.
8. Answers will vary.