

# ESTHER

God - Silent But Not Absent



## Esther – God at Work

Date: Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2017

Speakers: Andrew McNeil, Rosie McNeil

Key Verses: Esther 1 & 2, Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 8:28(footnote)

### Summary

- King Xerxes' kingdom stretched from Turkey to India, including Iraq and Iran. This Persian empire, where our story is set, is the most intimidating superpower of its day. The book of Esther inspires confidence that "God may be silent but He's not absent."
- Queen Vashti is told to appear "wearing her royal crown" during a feast. Many scholars believe the command is to parade with nothing but her royal crown. To the king she's not a bride to be treasured but a trophy to be paraded.
- Queen Vashti refuses and is banished, leaving the King to look for a new Queen. Hundreds of women from all over Persia are brought to the palace, including Esther.
- The book of Esther is unique in the Bible because it's the only book that has no mention of God: God is at work in spite of appearances. If we think God only works in dramatic, extravagant ways, this story tells us to think again. Your bad day could be right in the middle of a God story that you can't see yet.
- Esther keeps her Jewish faith and her real identity a secret. She wants to fit in not stand out. As the story unfolds we see Esther growing in courage. She starts timid but ends up courageous. She grows out of her concern for self-preservation and in the end, saves a nation.
- Some Jewish leaders think Esther failed. Esther sleeps with the pagan King and then marries him, an unbeliever. These are compromises and violations of her faith.
- In this story, Esther had to undergo a year's worth of beauty treatments to be noticed by the King. In a way, that's what religion looks like. Religion says "What do I have to do to get God to notice me? Maybe God will notice me if I pray more, give more, be kind, be compassionate." But the Gospel is unique. It's not about what we do, it's what Jesus has already done.
- We are ushered into the King's presence and become part of God's royal family not because of something we have done but because of what Christ has done. We are not chosen because we are beautiful. We are chosen to make us beautiful.
- Esther gave up her freedom up for the King. Jesus is the only King who gives up His life and freedom for us. On the cross he gave up absolutely everything, not because we're lovely, but to make us lovely

## Questions for small groups

1. What strikes you most about this story?
2. God is at work: In spite of appearances. With the benefit of hindsight, can you see a moment when God seemed silent but He was actually working in your life through circumstances?
3. God is at work: Turning fear to courage. Esther wanted to fit in but in the end stood out. Where are you being invited by God to stand out for your faith? What are the challenges?
4. God is at work: With imperfect people to do amazing things? How does that encourage you as you seek to serve Him?
5. "Just as plants deprived of water put down deeper roots, so the struggle to keep trusting God during His silence and our tragedy proves not necessarily the vulnerability of our faith but the vitality of our faith" (Krish Kandiah: Paradoxology). How have you known this to be true?

## Other Resources for Reflection

Video summary of Esther- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JydNSlufRIg>

More resources - <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/esther/>