

THE REACH

filtering everyday life through the word of God

The book of Esther takes up a small space in Old Testament history, only 10 chapters. Yet, Esther's story is an overstuffed suitcase filled with fortitude! It plunges into events that changed the course of history.

Before unpacking the details of this orphaned girl, raised by her cousin, Mordecai, it is crucial to understand her time and place. Esther's story happened in Persia, several years AFTER Zerubbabel and Ezra led the first group of Jews to rebuild the temple, ([Ezra 1:2-4](#)). And, about 30 years BEFORE Nehemiah led a group of Jews to rebuild the walls surrounding the temple, ([Nehemiah 2:4-6](#)).

- REBUILDING! Often, our husbands are either rebuilding their team or fortifying the walls around that team. Like Esther, sometimes we're caught in the middle, going through the day-to-day, unable to see a dramatic BEFORE and AFTER. Where are you coach's wife? Rebuilding, fortifying, or caught in between?

"Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans." - John Lennon

Esther's story gives us a snapshot of what life was like for those individuals caught in the middle, who remained in Persia never leaving to rebuild Jerusalem. But how did the Jews end up there in the first place? And, why did they choose to stay?

Decades earlier, as a result of disobedience, the Israelites living in Judah were scattered among pagan nations after their temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The temple symbolized the height of Israel's glory days. The destruction signaled the end of that glory, ushering in a dramatic turning point for Judaism. Read [Deuteronomy 28:36-37](#). Scripture prophesied Judah, who later became known as the Jews, would take up residence where they never belonged, serving other gods, while adapting to their surroundings.

- Think about adapting to new surroundings. As a coach's wife, if you haven't done this, at some point you will. Given personal experiences, why do you think most Jews chose to stay in Persia and not return to Jerusalem?
- Have you ever remained in an unhealthy place (physically, emotionally, or spiritually) because it was easier and more comfortable than actually changing? Why do we do that?

"the journey homeward to habitual self." - John Keats

Read [Esther 2:5-9](#). Esther, whose Hebrew name was Hadassah, first appeared on the scene as a young virgin brought into the king's harem. King Xerxes was searching for a replacement for his banished queen. Forced into a morally corrupt circumstance, completely out of her control, Esther managed to win favor of those around her. After completing her beautification period, it was her turn to spend the night with the king. ([Esther 2:15-17](#)).

- Esther "won" the favor of the king, if you can call it a win! Surrounded by a harem of beautiful women, she won. Probably there was more to her than her beauty. What other traits win favor with both peers and authorities? As a coach's wife, favor is very important. What can we learn here?

Esther really couldn't dwell on what was right or wrong while facing unavoidable circumstances with shameful choices. She arrayed an attitude of survival... whatever that looked like... for herself, and as we will learn... for her people.

Ironically the entire book of Esther never mentions God's name, and during this time in history, the Jews were bent toward paganism. They could no longer worship through sacrificial rituals at the temple. New religious practices had replaced those that disappeared years ago leaving them unsure of their place in history.

- Was God present, or was he absent in the book of Esther? The Jews of Persia did not have the answers. But, the author's silence about God pushes us to discover that in the darkest of times, God was still moving. As Christians, what assurances do we have of this that they did not?

"You can be in a good place...in your bad place." - John Piper

Can you even imagine yourself as a young woman forced into a harem? Or better yet, your daughter? How can we relate to this Old Testament story?

Similar to the Jews in Persia, God's name is becoming obsolete to our pagan world, forcing a political, ethical, and religious agenda of corruption. Fundamental rights are met with complete opposition. Black and white has turned gray. And, like Esther, many young people are forced into unfathomable choices, equally dark, and beyond comprehension.

But, many, years before Esther's time, God, in his faithfulness, sent the prophet Jeremiah to cast a ray of hope for the future, exiled Jews. Read [Jeremiah 29:11-14](#). We see Jeremiah 29:11 everywhere – bookmarks, graduation cards, etc. But what about the context of Jeremiah's words here? This was a promise for all Jews scattered among the nations after the temple was destroyed! A remnant would eventually return to Jerusalem!

- This promise also points to the New Testament church today. What is the "the church" and how does Esther's place in history, along with Jeremiah's words, cast light in our darkness?

Like Esther, we don't have the prophet Jeremiah among us pointing the way. Like Esther, we struggle to respond wisely to circumstances over which we have little or no control. And, we live in a world where God is unseen. And yet, GOD IS AMONG US, his omnipotence is present, even when his name is presumed absent.

"I am going to venture to say that artificial equality is necessary in the life of the State, but in the life of the Church, we strip off this disguise..." - C.S. Lewis

COACHES OUTREACH
2024
SUMMER
MARRIAGE
RETREATS

MID WEEK	WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY
JUNE 5-7	SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

WEEK END	FRIDAY - SUNDAY
JUNE 7-9	SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
JUNE 14-16	SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO
JUNE 21-23	GRANBURY, TEXAS
JUNE 28-30	FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE
JULY 12-14	DEGRAY LAKE, ARKANSAS

REGISTRATION OPENS MARCH 1ST
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