ARE YOU COURAGEOUS?

Esther – a "STAR" and Courageous Queen
Purpose: Be a person of courage Scripture: The book of Esther
Preparation: Pray and ask the Lord to reveal His truth to you as you read the book of Esther.

Open Discussion:

- Share something that God has shown you or taught you this week regarding Himself, your family or yourself.

Bible Study Discussion:

- What comes to mind when you hear the word Courage?
- Who is one person that you would describe as being courageous? Why?
- Can you describe a situation when you had to be courageous?

Background:

Today, we will look at the book of Esther. The author of the book of Esther is unknown; however, it is suggested that Mordecai, Esther's cousin wrote this book circa 486-465bc during the reign of Persian King Xerxes. King Xerxes hosted an elaborate party for 180 days! After 180 days, he hosted a feast that lasted another 7 days. On the 7th day of this feast, King Xerxes who was "merry with wine" (Esth. 1:10) summoned Queen Vashti, his wife, to come before the guests. She was beautiful and most likely he wanted to show her off, (seems as if he wanted to put her on display so his guests to gawk at her). For many reasons, she refused to honor her husband and did not come. That took tremendous COURAGE because she knew that refusing to comply with the king's request would probably lead to her death! Naturally, the king was furious, and his anger burned within him. At the counsel of the king's closest advisers, they determined that Queen Vashti would be banned from the kingdom and never allowed to come before the king, and they would give her royal position to someone else who was better than her. They feared that if the queen's dishonoring actions became known to all of the women in the area, then all of the women would despise their husbands and rebel against them. So, Queen Vashti was sent away and the search for a new queen began. Chapter 1 - After the anger of the King subsided, his servants encouraged the king to let them search throughout the land to find a new queen.

<u>Bible Study</u>

Read Esther 2:5-10; 15

- Who was Mordecai and where was he from? This the first mention of someone being a "Jew." This relates back to the history of the Israelites from the time of the Exile.
- What is another name for Esther?
- Why was Mordecai raising Esther?

There are many reasons why we are called to raise a child who was not born to us. Mordecai, who was Jewish and followed the teachings of the LORD, took Esther and raised her as his own. He taught her the things of the LORD. Who are you raising or helping to raise? Remember how important it is to teach God's truth.

- How was Esther described? vs. 7

A message was sent throughout the land requesting young women to report to the palace and be placed under the care of Hegai, the man who was the overseer of the young women who had been sent to the palace. The women spent twelve (12) months preparing to meet the king. Six months were with oil of myrrh and the next six months were spent with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. After an entire year of preparing, a woman was sent into the King.

- In vs 9 and 15, how did Hegai, the one in charge of the harem, and others respond to Esther?

Everything that we have is from the Lord and we are to give thanks to the Lord for He is good. Esther must have been very beautiful, and she found favor with Hegai and everyone who saw her.

- Why do you think she found favor? Do you think Esther was proud or humble? Why?

Read Esther 2:17-23
Esther found favor with the king and he set a royal crown on her head, called for a great feast (Feast of Esther) and proclaimed a holiday for all of the area (vs 17/18). Esther served in a powerful position of authority as queen AND she continued to listen to the teachings of Mordecai. If you are in a position of authority, are you seeking the Lord's guidance and direction?

- What was the conspiracy that Mordecai overheard? Q11. What did Mordecai do with this information?
- What happened to the king's official when the conspiracy was revealed to the king?

Read Esther 3:3-6
The king chose to honor a man by the name of Haman who was higher than any other leader in the king's court. Everyone was supposed to kneel before Haman whenever they saw him. Haman was associated with Agag, who was the king of the Amalekites. The name "Amalekites" came to refer to any indistinct group of Israel's enemies. The conflict between Mordecai and Haman is portrayed as a continuation of the conflict between Israel and the Amalekites.* (*The Women's Study Bible, NKJV, 1995, p. 790, footnote on Esther 3:1)

- What was Mordecai's response to Haman?
- Why do you think Mordecai didn't kneel before Haman?

- What was Haman's reply to Mordecai? Enraged!
- As a result of Haman's enragement, what did he plan for Mordecai? and the Jews?
- Why do you think Haman was so angry?

After Mordecai discovered Haman's plot to annihilate him and the entire Jewish population, he went to Esther and begged her to go to the King on behalf of all the Jewish nation. To this point, Esther had hidden her Jewish heritage. Have you ever had to hide your faith?

Read Esther 4:14-16

- What does Mordecai tell Esther in Esther 4:14?

"And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" The law states that anyone approaching the King without being summoned could be put to death unless the king extended his gold scepter. Esther had not been summoned for 30 days...

Have you ever considered that YOU are exactly where God wants you "for such a time as this"? God has allowed you to be born into the family, in the country and in the village that He decided. He is sovereign and knows what is best. He wants to use you for His glory right where you are!

- If you were Esther, how would you have responded?

Cowardly - Do nothing for fear of your life? Courageously - Gone to the king?

- How did Esther respond? Read Est 4:15-16
- What does the statement, "And if I perish, I perish" mean?
- Why did Esther's reaction take great COURAGE?

Chapter 5
After fasting for 3 days, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court where the king would see her. He was pleased with her and invited her in and told her that whatever she wanted up to half of the kingdom, he would give to her. WOW! She could have been put to death, but because she had COURAGE and sought the Lord, HE gave her favor with the king and he was willing to give her half of his kingdom!

Esther requested that the king and Haman attend a banquet that she was preparing that day. They both came to the banquet and Esther asked that they come to a banquet the next night as well and then she promised that she would tell the king what her request or "petition" really was.

Read Esther 7:3-10
- What did Esther tell the king?
- Do you think she was afraid of telling the king this about the man that was second in command?
- What was Haman's response? v6
- What was the King's reaction? v7
- In Haman's terrified state, what did he do? v7 - 8
- What happened to Haman?

Be careful to never set traps for others or you might be the one who gets trapped!
The king granted Esther's request and allowed the Jews to triumph and be restored.

Chapters 8-10
- How can you become a person of courage?
- In what area do you need to have more courage?
- Who can you ask to help you become more courageous?

Closing Remarks
Through her obedience, Esther became a true "star" (the meaning of her Persian name) the Kingdom and for an amazing example to each one of us. The book of Esther does not mention God, the temple, Jerusalem or the Law: however, it clearly reflects the sovereign power of God. God will work through pagans (the king) in order to place people where and when He wants them in order to use, preserve and even deliver His people. All for HIS glory! Oh, LORD, help us be courageous for Your glory.

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