

## **A Queen Trumps a King**

Alexandra Flynn of Fremont, Nebraska, was really excited to be going to her school's homecoming dance her senior year. But in all the excitement of taking photos at home and picking up friends with her date, she forgot her school ID and the "nice security man" at the entrance refused to let her in without it.

So, she and her date drove all the way back home, but she couldn't find it anywhere. So, her mother grabbed her ID and went back to the school with her daughter to explain to the "nice security man" that this was, in fact, her daughter. No deal. He wouldn't let her in. Even though Alexandra was the Student Body President, played in the All-State School Orchestra, was on the honor roll, was the captain of the cheerleading squad and had spent hours in that same gym decorating it for the homecoming dance over the last two days – STILL, she was not admitted.

Oh, did I mention... she was also the Homecoming Queen!!???? But that "nice security man" wasn't budging. So, guess what? She never did get in. <sup>i</sup>

Ladies, have you ever wished you could be queen? We're gonna see today, being queen isn't always easy. And the main reason being queen isn't easy is usually because of who's king! This was especially true for the woman who was queen before Esther. Her name was Vashti and, rather than seeing her as a failure, I think we need to see her as a role model. We need to see that in THIS card game, a queen trumps a king. First, the Scripture shows us...

### **I. The King Is Making Destructive Decisions.**

Abraham Lincoln said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."<sup>ii</sup> Xerxes was the most powerful man in the world as king of Persia. But how did he wield that power? Not well. In v. 4-8 we find a description of the king "*displaying the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.*" (v. 4) This went on for six months!! What's this all about? Psychologists today would say that Xerxes was very insecure. If you KNOW that you have real power, why would you have to show everyone how powerful you are, day after day, for six months? Only someone who isn't really sure that he IS powerful needs to do that. The "Iron Lady" of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, once said:

"Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't." <sup>iii</sup>

So, rather than being strong and powerful, Xerxes was actually very weak and impotent and, therefore, constantly overcome by fear and anxiety. This made him a danger to himself and those around him. It also made him very susceptible to chemical addiction. Which verses 7 and 8 demonstrate:

**Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished. (Esther 1:7-8)**

So, by the king's command, there was an "open bar" for seven days. Seven days! What do you suppose that produced?

**On the seventh day, when King Xerxes (was plastered! I mean) was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him... to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. (Esther 1:10-11)**

So, what do we make of all this? Major Ian Thomas was a remarkable Christian author and teacher from Britain. He wrote a commentary on this book of Esther called, *"If I Perish, I Perish."*<sup>iv</sup> In his commentary, he makes what I think is a very helpful observation for how we can apply the truths of this book to our own lives. He sees in this book an analogy between the main characters in the story of Esther and the main elements of spiritual influence in each of our lives. So, Mordecai represents the Holy Spirit of God. Haman and the other Persian nobles represent what the Bible calls "the flesh," the desire to do the opposite of what God wants. And King Xerxes represents the human soul, the entity that makes decisions in the "palace" of your life.

So, with Mordecai at the gate and Haman and the nobles in the palace, what do we have? **We have the wrong man in and the right man out.** From a New Testament perspective, the Holy Spirit is outside the palace, the place where life-directing decisions are made. And the Flesh, the desire to do the opposite of what God wants, is inside the palace, influencing empire-wide decisions.

What's the nice way of saying that someone is drunk? We say, "They're under the influence." Right? And today, we like to say that excessive drinking is a "disease," inferring that a person has no control over it. But the Bible never speaks of drunkenness that way. The Bible assumes that you DO have control over it because it **COMMANDS** you not to drink excessively. Eph. 5:18 says:

**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.**

If drunkenness were a disease, like cancer, you couldn't command anyone not to do it. You can't say, "Don't get cancer!" That would be foolish. But if it's NOT a disease, if it's the result of really bad decision-making, then you CAN command someone not to do it. And the Bible commands us not to get drunk... ever!

The problem with King Xerxes isn't just his drunkenness. His drunkenness is a symptom of his real problem, which is his ungodly decision-making. In chapter one, King Xerxes makes seven major decisions and not one of them is wise or godly. Look at them. He:

1. Decides to *"display his vast wealth and splendor."* (v. 4)
2. Decides to have a seven-day banquet. (v. 5)
3. Decides to provide unlimited wine. (v. 8)
4. Decides to *"command"* Queen Vashti to parade before his guests. (v.11)
5. Decides to *"consult experts in the law"* when she refuses to come. (v.13)
6. Decides to accept the ungodly advice of his experts. (v. 21)
7. Decides to make this ungodly advice a new empire-wide law. (v. 22)

In chapter one, the king goes from bad to worse to disastrous. His seven decisions are a slow-motion train wreck. Why is this happening? Because the wrong

man is in the palace and the right man is outside at the gate. Next, we need to consider the Queen. While the King is making destructive decisions...

## **II. The Queen Is Modeling Maturity.**

We don't know much about Queen Vashti. About all we have is a couple of verses. One verse, verse 9 says:

**Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. (Esther 1:9)**

Now, we have to be careful here not to read too much into this, but what it looks like to me is that Vashti is providing a safe place for the wives of these drunken noblemen. And when her husband, the king, in a drunken stupor, asks her to come and display her beauty before several hundred other drunken men, she wisely refuses his "modeling" request and instead "models" for these wives a healthy, mature and, I would even say, a godly behavior of how to respond to a drunken husband.

We have no idea about the spiritual condition of Queen Vashti, but I do know this: in chapter one, she's the only one acting in a manner that pleases God.

There are some Christian teachers who use Esther, chapter one, as an example of what a Christian wife should NOT do. They teach that King Xerxes' proclamation is an appropriate example of the husband's role in a marriage:

**...every man should be ruler over his own household. (Esther 1:22)**

Now, let's just consider this for a moment. The question is, what does it mean to be the "ruler"? The Septuagint, which is the Latin translation of the Hebrew, translates this to say, "*...in order that men might be feared in their own houses.*" Is that God's intent for a husband's role in a family, to be "feared"?

In the New Testament the word "ruler" is never associated with being a husband or a father. In fact, it's only used of Jesus Christ as the "ruler of the nations." A husband's role in a marriage and family is described by words like *love, is the head, cleansing, washing with water through the word, be considerate, and treat them with respect.* Specifically referring to his role with children, there are phrases like: *do not exasperate your children, do not embitter your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* A term that has been used to sum up this New Testament role of a man in a family is "Servant Leadership." Yes, you are to lead but you are to lead with a gentle and loving hand, focusing on meeting the needs of both your wife and children.

And yes, there are words like "submit" and "obey" as the proper responses by wives and children to a husband's leadership. But wives and children are never commanded to obey a father or husband "no matter what he tells you to do." No, instead, wives for example are told to:

**...submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (Col. 3:18)**

Two things are important here. First, the grammar of the verb makes it clear that the submission is to be voluntary, never forced. Secondly, the Greek word translated "fitting" means that her submission is both to the Lord and to her husband, so if her husband asks her to do something that is NOT in sync with God's commands, she must obey God rather than man, just as Peter told the Sanhedrin:

**...“We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29)**

You see, King Xerxes' proclamation fails the test of New Testament teaching on the role of men in a family. Its purpose was not to be a Servant Leader but a Dangerous Despot. It wasn't birthed from a loving concern for the spiritual wellbeing of the women of Persia but from a selfish desire to force women into submission. We shouldn't be surprised at this because the men who devised, wrote and sent out this decree were drunk as skunks!! Esther 1:22 is NOT a godly command! Queen Vashti's response is a much more mature representation of a godly path, considering what she was facing. She may have been deposed as Queen, but she left with her dignity and integrity intact. Queen Vashti definitely trumped King Xerxes this day and that was God's will. Lastly then, we simply need to ask...

### **III. What's to Be Learned from Esther Chapter 1?**

Let's go back to Major Thomas' metaphor of this book which views us as the kings and queens of our own palaces. You are the decision-maker of your life. God has granted you that great power. Do you see what your most important first decision is? Which man have you appointed as your top advisee: Haman or Mordecai, (the desires of the flesh or the Holy Spirit of God)? If Mordecai had been IN the palace, even if the king had already made the first four bad decisions, he still could've avoided the train wreck. If Mordecai, instead of the drunken law expert, had been there to advise him, he would've said, "King, king; you're drunk! You're not thinking or deciding or reacting well to what's happening all around you. Queen Vashti is right to refuse you! Send another message to her apologizing for what you've done and beg her to forgive you. That's the manly thing to do. That's the strong thing to do. That's the right thing to do."

Do you see this? If the right man had been in the palace and the wrong man out at the gate, this book would've been only one chapter long. Esther wouldn't have had to risk her life, Haman wouldn't have had to die and the Jews would've all been saved and guided back to where they belonged – in Israel. And the King and Queen would've lived "happily ever after." The whole mess of this book could've been avoided if the King had changed one thing: if he had had the right man in and the wrong man out.

So what's your circumstance? Does life seem to be unraveling all around you? No matter how hard you try to solve the problems, are they just getting worse? Well, whose voice are you listening to? Are you listening to friends and co-workers or are you searching the Scriptures for God's voice? Are you going to a non-Christian therapist who keeps asking you, "What do you really want? You're the king, you should get whatever you want... because you're the king!" That's the kind of advice you get from a drunken scoundrel! If Xerxes had had even one godly advisor, he would've said, "King, you're drunk! Go sober up and we'll talk. But making a major life decision while you're drunk is cosmically stupid!! I'll talk to the queen; you go and get sober." Bottom-line, King Xerxes didn't have a "queen problem," he had an "advisor problem." So, what's your problem?

The solution to your problem begins with a critical, single decision: Kick the wrong man out of the palace and bring the right man in from the gate. You say, "But how exactly do I do that?" Here's how, three words: Confess, Repent, Receive.

1. Confess – "Lord, forgive me for trying to run my own life. That was wrong. I've been listening to bad advice. Forgive me."

2. Repent – “Jesus, I want to go a new direction. In every decision I make this week, I will be listening for Your voice and then I will obey it.”
3. Receive – “Lord, I need your power to do this. I want to bring the “right man” in. Fill me with Your Spirit. Today, right now, I invite Him in. Gal. 5:25 says: **Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.** I want to “keep in step” with Him this week. Amen.”

Confess your sin, repent of your direction (commit to go in His direction) and receive the “right man,” the Holy Spirit, to give you power and to guide you. If we all do that, if we all “keep in step with the Spirit” this week, it’s going to be a much better week. Let’s pray...

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<sup>i</sup> Paul Harvey News and Comment (12-3-02)

<sup>ii</sup> [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com), “37 Quotes on Power”

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Major W. Ian Thomas, *If I Perish, I Perish* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967)