

A Mighty Redwood/ Esther the Garden Tool

Lesson 5

SEEING YOUR LIFE as a MEANS, NOT an END

10/18/15

Remember Ezra the Tree Man? He used God's word as a powerful, sustaining nutrient, flowing through the veins of a healthy, growing Christian (tree). Just as he determined to *study, practice, and teach* the Word, so Esther in our story today is determined to be *used* by God as His tool. Sometimes we are already equipped for service, and simply must choose to let God use us.

Principle: *"The lives of committed believers are inseparably wedded to the purposes of God. We must therefore always be watching for spiritual opportunities that lie just beneath the surface of our circumstances. Our lives are a means for God's work, not an end in themselves."*
– Fran Sciacca

"Life is a mission. Every other definition of life is false, and leads all who accept it astray."
– Giuseppe Mazzini

Bible Character: ESTHER

Background: Just as Jeremiah predicted, Jerusalem was destroyed and many of its inhabitants carried off to Babylon. After many years the Jews were thrilled to learn of an edict allowing them to return and begin to rebuild their lives, beginning with the Temple.

The Book of Esther takes place between the accounts of two migrations of Jews back to Jerusalem during the time of Ezra (The Tree Man). A young Jewish beauty is living in the capital city of Susa, Persia. She is transformed from orphan to queen of the land in an amazing fashion. Esther learns that for those who love and serve the God of the Bible, there are no coincidences – only choices. (Taken from *To Stand and Not Be Moved* by Fran Sciacca.)

Scripture: The Book of Esther: (Selected Verses)

- 2:10 **Esther did not make known her people or her kindred**, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make them known.
- 2:15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, **she did not request anything** except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.
- 2:17 And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.
- 2:20 **Esther had not yet made known her kindred** or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.
- 3:8-10 ⁸Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people⁹ let a decree be issued to destroy them....." ¹⁰ So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman..... the enemy of the Jews.
- 4:14 (From Mordecai) "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for **such a time as this?**"

A Key to Being Used by God (vs. 2:10, 15, 20)

Sometimes God chooses to use people with strong personalities, and at other times He uses ordinary "behind the scenes" people. But a common denominator of usefulness is humility. Remember what James said? "...*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble*" (James 4:6). And Proverbs 16:18 pronounces, "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.*"

What can you discern about Esther from these verses? How do you suppose that God cultivated this character quality (humility) in her? Often the people we respect and from whom we've learned something valuable have this quality.

- ▶ *A key to being used by God is to not “think more highly of (ourselves) than (we) ought to think” (Rom. 12:3) and to “not be wise in (our) own estimation” (Rom. 12:16).*

Such a Time – God’s Time (4:14)

The entire book of Esther pivots on the last half of Mordecai’s statement in 4:14. *“And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?”*

If Mordecai was correct, what was God’s purpose in what happened in 2:8-17 (Esther found favor before King Ahasuerus more than all the other women)?

Mordecai wanted Esther **not to confuse the means with the end** when it comes to life’s circumstances. Why is this such good timeless counsel?

Group Assignment

Look at the following five groups of Scripture passages. In the space beneath each of them, write out what God really wanted to accomplish (the “end”) and how He went about it (the “means”).

The MEANS	The END
Genesis 37:12-13, 23, 28	Genesis 41:39-41; 42:1-2
1 Samuel 17:17-19	1 Samuel 17:26; 17:40 – 18:2
Luke 2:1-5	Matthew 2 1-6
John 4:4-7	John 4:28-30, 39-42
Acts 6:1-5	Acts 6:12-15; 7:54 - 8:1

What truth in your own life can you distill regarding you as an individual and the overall plans of God?

For Discussion

1. Are you where you are as a result of God “putting” you there, or because He has merely let you have your own way?
2. Are there any instances right now that are opportunities for you to be an “Esther”?

Next Time: Esau – “Who Needs God?” / *Ignoring God: The Subtle Deception*