

**CHECKMATE**  
**Next Steps Devotional Guide > Esther 7**  
**Sermon Series: Esther — For Such A Time As This**  
**November 27, 2022**  
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1. Think back over your life, excluding God or a family member, what one person has made a huge difference in your life and why? Think back over your life, excluding family, who would you say you have made the most difference in their life and why do you say that?
2. Read [Esther 7:1-2](#) in your sermon notes. King Xerxes has not forgotten why Esther has honored Haman and him with two banquets. She obviously wants something.
  - a. Think back over your life. Who have you totally surprised with something they were not expecting? What were the results and how did they feel?
  - b. Think back over your life. Who has totally surprised you with something you were not expecting? What were the results and how did you feel?
3. Read [Esther 7:4a](#) in your sermon notes. Esther finally reveals to King Xerxes her request. In doing so, she reveals she is not Persian, but Jewish. For five years she has kept this a secret. Has anyone ever revealed a secret to you that up until that moment, they had kept it from you? What was your reaction and why? Have you ever revealed a secret to someone? Why did you do it and what was their reaction?
4. Read [Esther 7:4b](#) in your sermon notes. Esther pleads with King Xerxes this: if the Jews had only been sold as slaves, she would not have brought this to the king's attention. They were not being sold into slavery; they were scheduled to be slain. The Hebrew text implies that King Xerxes was confused. Haman, the villain, had never specified by ethnicity which people group was disobeying Persian law. The king had not put 2&2 together to realize the group was Jewish and that Esther, his own queen, was therefore a Jew. All the king knew was that Haman had promised to give to the king's royal treasury 10,000 talents of silver.
  - a. Esther 7:4a is a quote directly from the king's edict: this people group (Jews) were *"to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated."* Read [Esther 3:13](#) in your sermon notes and compare it to [Esther 7:4a](#). King Xerxes learned for the first time that his own edict, which had been drafted by Haman, and signed with the king's signet ring, would put to death the his own wife and queen. Haman is learned this too. Now put yourself in Haman's shoes. What do you think he was feeling and why?
  - b. Without knowing it, God had already worked behind the scenes to save Mordecai's life. King Xerxes is furious that he had been used, tricked, and embarrassed to do this. Read [Esther 7:5](#) in your sermon notes. He demands that Esther tell him who did this. Now you are Haman. You hear this demand from the king. What are you thinking?
  - c. This was God's providence. God was working behind the scene to save His people, the Jews from being *"killed, destroyed and annihilated."* In the blockbuster movie, [Forrest Gump](#), Forrest is with Lieutenant Dan in his fishing boat when a storm comes. Forrest Gump's response was, *"And God showed up."* Don't you just love it when God shows up in your own life? When and where have you felt God was absent or silent and then all of a sudden, God showed up?
5. Read [Esther 7:6](#) in your sermon notes. Checkmate! This normally meek queen hurled a dagger with that statement. Did you notice that she didn't just blurt out Haman's name. She actually raised the tension even more by describing the man as a "wicked foe" and an "enemy" to the king.
  - a. The Hebrew word translated as "terrified" is [נֹפֵל, nophe] and it refers *"to the fear one experiences of their immediate death."* Her statement not only "put the fear of God" in Haman, it put the fear of his immediate death in him. For the first time in the last five years, this egotistical, maniacal, evil and demon-possessed man read the handwriting on the wall. He feared nothing until now. How is this part of God's providence?
  - b. The Hebrew word translated as "foe" or "enemy" depending on your translation is the Hebrew word [צָר, tzar]. This word is not the word to refer to former Russian leaders — tzars. This Hebrew word refers to those *"who uses deception, trickery, manipulation, and cunningness to get their will with great damage and loss to others."* Esther accuses Haman of doing this to King Xerxes. Now, put yourself in King's Xerxes shoes. How would you have responded and why?
  - c. Read [Esther 7:7a](#) in your sermon notes. The king was immediately went outside to his palace garden. It was his own signet ring that he had given to Haman to write and execute what was the king's edict. Persia had a law that said once an edict was authorized by the king, it could not be reversed. The king is in a pickle. He had not read the fine print nor asked any follow-up questions to really know what he had authorized.
  - d. Chuck Swindoll puts it this way: *"We live in a world of preoccupied people. They too live in a fog. Who knows how many edicts Ahasuerus (King Xerxes) signed that day? Who knows how many pressing matters of government were on his mind? The king had countless decisions to make. And Haman, who was a trusted official, had proposed it in such a way that he seemed to be solving a problem that directly affected the good of the kingdom. So, the king probably signed it without giving it a great deal of attention, believing that Haman, a man he trusted, knew what he was doing."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, [Great Lives Series](#), "Esther," p. 146, Kindle.

6. Read Esther 7:7b in your sermon notes. Haman begs for his life.
  - a. What Ezra, the most likely author to the Book of Esther does here is remarkable. Though God is never mentioned in the Book of Esther, Ezra puts the final consonants of the four consecutive Hebrew words translated *“that harm was determined against him,”* to be the four consonants that when read backwards, spell the name of God — YHWH — Yahweh. In Hebrew you read from right to left. How is this part of God’s providence in the Book of Esther that God was working behind the scenes to save His people?
  - b. Haman didn’t run for his life because that would confirm his guilt. Old Testament scholar Karen Jobes writes: *“He hadn’t figured out yet who he had been playing against. He had been pitting his wits against the Jews for so long that he failed to take into account the God of the Jews. Haman was in way over his head—the entire match, his opponent had actually been God. God had moved the queen into position—a queen Haman should never have taken his eyes off of.”*<sup>2</sup> When you plan and hit a roadblock, does it ever occur to you that maybe God is your roadblock? Why or why not?
  - c. Old Testament scholar Karen Jobes writes: *“Now all Haman could do was ask ... beg ... for mercy. Don’t miss the irony of this scene: Haman was begging for his life from someone he had already condemned to death. In fact, Esther couldn’t save him if she had wanted to. She couldn’t even save herself. According to the edict, she had less than eleven months to live. In essence, they were both begging for their lives at this banquet. And according to the Law of the Medes and Persians, even the king himself might not be able to save them. But one thing was sure: he couldn’t save them both.”* Think of the irony here. Haman is now begging for his life from the very person his edict has ordered to be killed. This is God’s providence? How?
7. Take your sermon notes and read Esther 7:8a.
  - a. The Hebrew word translated as “falls” is [נָפַל, *nofel*] and it means *“to fall by accident; to lie down; to prostrate oneself.”* In other words, when the king reentered the banquet hall Haman is caught in the very act of falling—somewhere between standing upright and lying on Queen Esther’s couch. Read Esther 7:8b in your sermon notes. The king interprets Haman’s “falling” as an attempt to either harm or assault or kill his queen in his presence. Persian law stated that no one was allowed to be less than 7 spaces from the king’s queen and/or harem. Haman had violated that law and the penalty was clear — death.
  - b. Read Esther 7:8c in your sermon notes. Haman’s face is covered immediately as a way to express that as a condemned man to die, he was not worthy to look upon. According to Herodotus, a Greek historian living around the same time, Persian law required that before a person could be condemned to death, at least two serious accusations were required against that person before they could be convicted and put to death. Read the two legal accusations in your sermon notes that King Xerxes had to have to Haman executed.
  - c. Yet, out of the blue comes a third accusation from a eunuch named Harbona. Read Esther 7:9 in your sermon notes. He said to the king, *“Excuse me, your Highness, but you should take a look outside your window and see the gallows Haman built for Mordecai. You remember Mordecai, don’t you? He’s the hero you just made a benefactor because he saved your life. Evidently Haman wants to kill the man who spoke loyally on your behalf and saved your life.”* Haman had never thought to take down the gallows he had planned to impale Mordecai. In literature, this is called “foreshadowing.” How was this God’s providence being foreshadowed?
  - d. Read Esther 7:10 in your sermon notes. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, adds a verse here. It says that *“Haman was disgraced, convicted and executed for treason.”*<sup>3</sup> Haman is executed by being impaled on the 75-foot pole he had erected to impale Mordecai. This is nail-biting. Have you ever had an experience or situation that was nail-biting and then God took care of it? What was it and how were you before and afterwards.
8. Sometimes God interrupts our plans. Sometimes we take 2 steps forward only to have to take 1 step back. God does this to make us wiser and bolder in our faith. We see this with Peter. Read Acts 4:8-13 in your sermon notes under point #1. How and when has God done this to you?
9. Often in life, God uses the most unlikely thing or person to accomplish His will in our life. Read Deuteronomy 23:1 in your sermon notes in point #2. Eunuchs were considered ceremonially unclean and could not enter into the Lord’s assembly. Yet, in the Book of Esther, God used several eunuchs to accomplish His will. Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 in your sermon notes in point #2. God used a whale with Jonah; a burning bush that was not affected by the fire with Moses, a talking donkey with Balaam; and shoeboxes for children. Who or what has God used that was the most unlikely person or thing to accomplish His will in your life? How did it impact you?
10. God wants to grow our faith and character. This is why He often puts us through challenges before providing deliverance. Read John 16:33, Hebrews 11:36-38 and Romans 8:29a in your sermon notes in point #3. Why do you think we act shocked when we experience troubles and sorrow even though God has told us we will? God is more concerned about our development than our deliverance. God is more concerned about us being disciplined than us having a delightful life. God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. God is more about developing us through challenges rather than delivering us from them. Where have you seen this in your life? Would people say about you, *“He or she is a lot like Jesus?”* Why or why not?
11. God desires us to be in partnership with Him as His providence works in the world. Read John 15:4-5 and 1 Peter 4:13 in your sermon notes in point #3. How much of a partner would you say you are with God? Why? Where do you need God to “checkmate” something in your life to flood your heart with hope?

<sup>2</sup> Karen Jobes, The NIV Application Commentary: Esther, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Jobes, The NIV Application Commentary: Esther, p. 166.