

The Story: Chapter 20 Influence for Impact

Esther is the only book in the Bible that never mentions the name of God. It doesn't mention miracles and doesn't mention prayer.

- However, you can definitely see the hand of God running all throughout the book and I think there are some great things we can learn from this.

Many of us struggle to know how to live when we're "not hearing anything from God."

- We assume that God is no longer with us, or at least He's not really busy working in us, because we can't hear anything from Him.

I would say MOST of us have been that way, or are that way today.

This story gives us a picture of a God that is working behind the scenes even when we can't see what He is doing.

1. God is at work on His Upper Story, even when we can't see it.

At this point, King Xerxes is ruler over Persia and Esther and her cousin, Mordecai, are still in Persia.

- For some reason, they have not yet made it back to Jerusalem.

Some of us feel like we're right there.

- We're still stuck in exile and can't quite figure out how to get back home.

Good news: I can assure you that God is still working on His story, even if you can't see it.

The fact that you're not where you want to be does not mean God is not right beside you.

Haman was son of Agag, the Amalekite King. This is the one that should have been killed years before.

Look how this story unfolds...

Esther 1:10-12

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him..... ¹¹ 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. ¹² But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

The King gets lonely and starts searching for a new Queen.

- Esther happens to be one of the ladies that are brought before the King.
- And, she just happens to be the one that he picked to make the new Queen.

Things that we see everyday as coincidence, God is using to get His story done.

See, the main point of this story is that God's people are threatened and, once again, God comes through for their rescue.

But look how He set that up:

For some reason, Esther and her cousin, Mordecai, stayed in Persia. Esther, as a Jew, ends up being made the new Queen. Mordecai hears of a plot to kill the King and he tells Esther so she can warn the King.

Esther 2:22-23

²² But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. ²³ And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. **All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.**

- That's going to be very important in just a minute.

Then Haman comes along.

- King Xerxes gave Haman honor that was above all the other nobles.
- Everyone answered to Haman.
- Except Mordecai, who just refuses to bow down to Haman.

This makes Haman furious, but he doesn't want to kill just Mordecai.

- He wants to kill his entire population.
- He wants to kill all the Jews, everywhere.

Why did he want to do something so extreme?

- Haman was actually a descendent of Agag, who was the King of the Amalekites back in the day.
- And, there was a day where God told King Saul to kill all of the Amalekites, but he did not obey.

I Samuel 15:7-11

⁷ Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt. ⁸ He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. ⁹ But Saul and the army spared **Agag**..... ¹⁰ Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: ¹¹ "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

So, Haman had a **family hatred** toward the Jewish people already.

So, Haman has a plan to have the King order the killing of ALL of the Jewish people.

In this time, Mordecai hears about the edict from the King to kill all the Jews.

- He warns Esther. We'll read about that part in a minute.

As part of this process, Esther invites the King and Haman to a banquet. Haman loves the fact that he's the only one she invited other than the King.

Then, one day, Haman's strolling around thinking about how great he has it and Mordecai doesn't bow down to him.

- This ticks him off and leads him to make a huge gallows on which he plans to hang Mordecai the next day.

So, Haman is planning on killing Mordecai the next morning.

- Just so happens that the King can't sleep that night.
- He asks someone to ready him the book of Chronicles.
- In that book he was reminded that Mordecai had actually saved his life at one point.
- He asks Haman what should be done for a man who the King wanted to honor.
- Haman thought he was referring to him so he gives him all these great ideas of how to honor this person.

The King says, "Great idea. Go do **all of that** for Mordecai!"

- So, Haman, is out honoring Mordecai when the night before he was going to kill him.

But, he's still got the banquet to go to. So, he's still feeling pretty good about himself.

What he doesn't know is that at this banquet, Esther was going to tell the King some very important stuff.

- She was a Jew
- Haman was the man responsible for the promotion of killing the Jews.

The King leaves the room and Haman throws himself down before Esther and is begging for mercy.

- The King comes back in the room and does not appreciate the manner in which Haman has "thrown himself down in front of Esther".

Just so happens that the King finds a great gallows right outside the building there and he has Haman hung on it.

Then, the King raises Mordecai to a place of high honor and makes a new rule that gives the Jews an opportunity to save themselves from this plan of annihilation.

So, ONCE AGAIN, God comes through with a plan for saving His people.

Question:

Do you realize how many steps God went through to make sure Esther was in the right place at the right time to become Queen, and Mordecai was in the right place at the right time for God to use them both to save His children?

Remember what I said last week: **God will make a way!!**

That's truly one of our first lessons from this story: God is working on His plan even when we don't see it.

2. God gives us influence to get His Story done

God did all of that planning and strategy to make sure Esther was where she needed to be and that she had the influence to change the King's mind and save the people.

- I'm still wondering why she wasn't already back in Judah.
- But GOD obviously had a plan!!!

Once Mordecai found out about the edict to kill all the Jews, he knew there was only one person that could save them: Esther.

Esther sent one of her servants out to check on Mordecai and he sent her this message:

Ester 4:8

and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

Esther sent back the rule that, "anyone coming into the King's presence without being summoned to be there will be killed."

- On the rare occasion he would hold out his scepter toward the person and spare his or her life but this is not something anyone would count on.

Then we see his response:

Ester 4:12-14

¹² When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

Mordecai points out that God will eventually take care of the Jews, because He always does. However, if she doesn't speak up, her family will not be part of that deliverance!

Then he brings up the most well known statement in the book:
And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

He basically says to her, "Listen to me, there's a good chance that the ONLY reason you're the Queen right now is so that you can go see the King and save our people."

Here's the crazy part:

We all have a sphere of influence.

You have influence!!

No matter where you are or what situation you find yourself in, God can use you as a person of influence with those around you.

EX: From the CEO leading hundreds to the Mom staying home to raise two young children.

- You may be influencing adults on how to live, how to work, how to love others.
- Or you may be influencing two future CEO's and teaching them those same things so that they can one day teach others.

Here's the key to the whole thing:

3. We must be obedient to do what God calls us to do.

Esther 4:15-16

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

Let's be clear: If she chooses not to go to the King, she and her family will soon be killed.

- Mordecai said God would provide a way for the Jews, but not for THESE Jews.

God had put her in a place of influence on purpose. However... Without her obedience, there would be no saving.

We see that Esther did two things:

She sought God

She surrendered her life

That is what is required of you and me if we want God to use our influence to make an impact on His Kingdom.

Here's the truth:

- Speaking up for the truth is not always fun.
- Saying what needs to be said is not always accepted well in our community.
- And if you're truly going to make an impact for God's Kingdom, it's most likely going to cost you something.

EX: Prayer at the MLK Jr celebration.

- As the Pastor of West Rome, other pastors tell me that I have influence to bring pastors together.
- I don't claim that kind of thing for myself but I will gladly run into it if that's what God allows me to do.
- We've worked hard over the years to see unity among the pastors in our community.

But, one day, Mrs. Sundai Stevenson, one of our City Commissioners, invited me to say the closing prayer for the MLK Jr. celebration.

Now, I don't get nervous about much. But, as a white Pastor in Rome, GA, you DO NOT want to go messing up the MLK Jr. celebration!

Two things I knew I was going to do:

Be early and look good!

- Thought I was at the end of the line and had to sit in the middle
- Ended up sitting right in the middle.
- Thought about my prayer the whole way through.
- Decided not to say most of what I was thinking.
- Started praying and let Holy Spirit do what He wanted to do.

Prayer included...

- a repentance for not realizing some things about the racial divide that I hadn't seen until that day.
- A call for us to work for unity from unity instead of from our separate camps.

Basically, as I walked to that microphone I had to do two things:

Seek God and surrender my life.

Mrs. Sundai told her husband, Rick, that he had to go online that afternoon because he needed to watch my prayer.

- In a meeting this week with the One Community group and Pastor stopped me and said, "You're from West Rome Baptist? I really appreciated your prayer!"

The Message in all of this:

If you'll seek the Father, and surrender your comfort, your agenda, your feeling of safety, etc., He will use you to make an impact through your influence no matter where you are.

And, as Mordecai put it, “**And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?**”

What can God do through you if you're willing to surrender, obey, and bring influence to the people He has placed you around?