

Learning to Trust God's Unseen Hand

A Study of Esther

Lesson #2: Sometimes must make a moral decision without a specific direction from the Lord.

Last week we were reminded that while learning to trust God's unseen hand, we must not be deceived by the appearances of those who seem to be against you. Not only do these times present opportunities for us to minister and love our enemies, but also the fact that they too face struggles and difficult decisions. As we will see tonight, Queen Vashti will be forced into a difficult circumstance in which her decision to either comply or to deny will have drastic implications. While we may never be placed in such a severe circumstance as Vashti, we nonetheless can find ourselves in moral dilemmas circumstances that require a decision where the outcome may be seen as offensive to others or otherwise costly in its outcome. Tonight we can learn principles on how to help us make difficult decisions when we do not always have a specific word from God.

To begin with, as the reader of this book, we are already facing a small dilemma. Our dilemma is in figuring out what specific purpose this book has for us. As Barry Davis writes, "The pace of the story is beginning to pick up. We are moving now but we are not sure yet where the author is taking us. We are still interacting with pagans and there is no indication of the presence of God or of the existence of God's people. Yet, this story, as does each episode in the entire Book of Esther, has a purpose, a divine purpose, for being included."¹ In other words, the behavior of pagan society can still offer lessons for a follower of Christ.

- In verse 10, we immediately see a King who has followed his own command for everyone to drink as they see fit. King Xerxes is now inebriated but to the point of being completely drunken.²
- What about these men who were with the king? These seven men were eunuchs, a man who has been castrated and is therefore incapable of reproduction. Eunuchs were invaluable to the Persian kings. When queens of ancient times left the palace area (which they rarely did), eunuchs always accompanied them.³
- As a result of his apparent lack of reasoning skills, the king commits a grievous error in asking for Vashti to come before this crowd of wine-drunk men in order to exploit the Queen's beauty. Although we do not know why she refused specifically, the text clearly

¹ Barry C. Davis, "Expositions of the Book of Esther," in *Ruth & Esther: God behind the Seen*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 122.

² Roger L. Omanson and Philip A. Noss, *A Handbook on the Book of Esther: The Hebrew and Greek Texts*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 30–31.

³ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012), Es 1:10.

indicates that the Queen would have possibly been ordered to appear in some state of undress, which would have been a violation of custom.⁴

- After the King is refused, he calls in more consultants, thereby enlarging the issue. The King displays his “wisdom” by basically asking them what he is supposed to do next.
- When control is lost or feared to be lost, then compounding an error becomes easy. Such as the case with the decision based upon the reasoning of the king’s “wise men.” Wisdom that never challenges bad thought is not wisdom.
- The order given was two-fold: first, every woman is commanded to recognize her husband as the master of the household. Second, Queen Vashti is to vacate her position immediately.

Decisions made during times of inebriation rarely work out for anyone’s benefit. However, God knew things were about to happen to His people and His servants would be in a special place to make a difference all because a pagan King made some selfish errors. But what lessons can a disciple of Jesus learn from this circumstance? Here are three important reminders about how to make moral decisions when you do not have a specific direction from the Lord.

- 1) Do not allow yourself to become controlled by that which will bring unnecessary harm.

Our text begins with a King who is slightly drunken and decides to break custom by exhibiting Queen Vashti in an improper way. I read somewhere that the text leads us to think that the King would have never acted in such a way had he not been under the influence of alcohol. 1 Corinthians 6:12. Do not let outside influences distort the priority of relationships. Before Xerxes and Vashti were King and Queen, they were husband and wife. His irreverent behavior caused him to misplace his relational priorities.

- 2) Do not include people that will give you irrational or unbiblical advice.

Personally, I would think that the consequences of such a grievous error would have been known by Xerxes already, but the problem was exacerbated by the King asking advice from “yes” men. Notice that they did not quote a law already on the books, but rather desired to introduce new legislation (v.19). Unbridled desire legislates its own morality and law of ethics. If you do not know the law, know people who do.

- 3) Do not make rash decisions.

A wise statement was given that before spending large sums of money, sleep on it for several days. As was the case with Xerxes, I wonder if he would have made a different decision if he were not under the influence. For that matter, would he have even

⁴ Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, electronic ed., vol. 10, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 307–308.

found himself in the situation to begin with? Not every circumstance requires an immediate answer. See Proverbs 12:26, 13:12, 14:17, 18:4.

So, in times where we do not always hear or see the Lord moving, we are still called to make decisions. But how we make those decisions is critically important. If we place our trust or otherwise seek help from those who have little or no scriptural compass, then our troubles may likely increase. As followers of Christ we may face moral dilemmas, but with the right strategy of heart and mind, we can avoid those choices that would bring harm to ourselves, others, and most importantly, Jesus.