

# Power, Drunkenness, and Weak Men

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, take your Bibles, if you would, and turn with me to the book of Esther. Have you ever felt like God just wasn't there? Have you ever felt like you were living life and it was like, where is he?

What's he saying? What's he doing? God doesn't tell us stories in the Bible just to fill up space. God doesn't tell us stories in the Bible so we'll know Jewish history.

God tells us stories in the Bible so we'll know God. He wants us to know him. And in the story of Esther, this is like a wild and crazy story.

I want to just take you through an overview, if I can, before we get into the book. I'm not sure how many of you have read the book of Esther. I know you start reading the Bible at the beginning of the year and you read Genesis and you've read that a lot of times.

And you've read Exodus quite a few times and when you hit Leviticus, you got stuck and then you stopped reading. So you never got all the way around to Nehemiah even. And so like Esther, you're like, what's a woman's book doing in the Bible?

[ 0 : 58 ] Well, it's been in here the whole time. You just never read that far. You got from Genesis to Exodus and you skipped the Psalms and Proverbs and then you went to the New Testament. You're going to find this is a wonderful story.

You're going to find that it's a story that shows a lot of what's going on in your life right now, though it would appear to you maybe that it's Old Testament, so it doesn't. But we live our lives often wondering where God is.

And it's like God's not even being mentioned. And so in this whole book of Esther, the word God will not be mentioned at all. You might have felt like God wasn't present and you might have felt like God wasn't working, but God was at work.

He's not mentioned in the book of Esther. So what you're about to read is a story where God's not mentioned, but God is at work behind the scenes. You may not see him in your life right now, but he is at work.

You need to learn to watch for him and watch for his hand when you can't hear his voice. There are a lot of lessons in this book. There's hope when things are bad.

[ 2 : 03 ] If you'll take a stand, risk your life and seize the opportunities. I'll tell you about that in a second. When it seems that God is absent and even good people are doing wrong and are unfaithful to God, God is still faithful and God will get his work done.

God works in the real messes of our lives. He is interested in those small details you don't think he is. You can trust God to work. God will redeem his world.

This is a story of sex and anger and murder and intrigue. In this story, there aren't really any real good people. Just to be blunt honest, they're all breaking rules.

They're all not doing quite right. They're not living up to Jewish standards. They're plotting and scheming to work out their own purposes, but God will still be at work. That gives you hope because you know good and well, y'all don't do too good and neither do I.

Sometimes we wonder like, well, if I was perfect, maybe God would do right. In this story, in the book of Esther, there's just not really any perfect people. There's a perfect God, but not any perfect people. That's how God works our lives.

[ 3 : 08 ] I'd like you to read with me, if you would, Esther chapter 1, verse 17. I'm going to tell you the story in just a minute and try to get you through as much of chapter 1 as I possibly can today. But read with me, if you would, in Esther 1, 17.

For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes when it shall be reported. The king has commanded Vashti, the queen, to be brought in before him, but she came not.

Now, you remember the story. He's been going on with this big party that's lasted six months of the year, and he's had the final week of the party, and his wife's been having parties over in another section of the palace.

So at the last party there, he's just getting real good and tipsy. He's been that way for six months, by the way. For six months, he's been partying. So he says, you know what, guys?

My wife's a stinking, good-looking woman. And I know it's just me and my buddies in here, me and my cronies, but go in there and get her and bring her out here, and let's all just gawk at her a little bit. Let's have her walk around the room and show off her beauty and see how pretty she is.

[ 4 : 13 ] I just like y'all to see, I married a beautiful woman. So they sent word to Vashti, and Vashti said, sorry, buddy, I ain't coming. And he said, bless God, I'm a stinking king around here, and you will get your fanny in this room.

And she sent word back and said, nope, not coming. Some of us married to women like that, amen. And so Vashti, or the king and his men, got to talking it over, and they said, what in the world are we going to do?

We can't let women tell us what to do. So read with me now. That's where we are in the story. Verse 18, you see, she didn't come. So he said, man, if you're not careful, likewise shall the ladies of Persia and media say this day unto all the king's princes, thus shall arise too much contempt and wrath.

So if it please the king, let there be a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king, and let the king give her royal estate unto another that's better than her.

Let's can her. She won't obey. We can her and pick another girl who will do a better job obeying you. Verse 20, when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all the empire, it's a big empire, all the wives shall give to their husbands honor.

[ 5 : 35 ] Big shots and little shots are supposed to be honored by their wives. And the saying, please, the king and the princes, they're all tipsy, and they're going, well, bless God, that's a good idea. We need to make a rule, and women got to obey us.

If they don't do it, we're going to get them. So they sent letters all over the province. Verse 22, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and it should be published into the language of every people.

Just imagine this. The president gets the Congress together, and they're all tipsy. They probably are anyway. And they don't have any of the girls in there with them, and they're all talking. They're saying, I'm about tired of these women running a show around here. Bless God.

Let's make a law, and let's pass it everywhere. Every woman in every house better show respect to her husband. And they said, well, king, if you like that, I don't. He said, oh, I like it. And they said, all right, we'll like it.

So they made a law, and they passed the law, and Miss Vashti gets kicked out. Now, let me give you an overview of the whole story. The book of Esther has taken place about 100 years after Ezra and Nehemiah.

[ 6 : 35 ] Ezra and Nehemiah. You know, that's when they went back, and they built the temple, and they put the walls around the city. It's been about 100 years. And not all Jewish people have returned to live in Jerusalem or in Israel like they should have.

They decided, well, we've been living in the world a long time, and we might as well stay living in the world. And so they're like still exiles, and they're a hated people. The Jews have always been a hated people.

In the story you're about to read, the main characters are Esther and Mordecai, and he's a good guy, as good as you can get in his book, and Esther's as good as you can get in his book. And there's a wicked king, and there's a guy named Haman, and he is the bad guy.

And all the other people in the whole story are weak, drunken leaders who can easily manipulate an even weaker and drunker king. That's the story. In the first chapter, there are two banquets that take place for 180 days.

Now, six times 30 is 180, so that's roughly six months. And then they added another week of banquet on the end of that. My wife gets upset when the Sunday school class comes to the house. Just teasing, baby.

[ 7 : 45 ] Obey. There is a rule in the book of Esther. And so it's 180 days. Of course, I'm sure the wife didn't have to do anything to sit around and do. And the king gets drunk and wants Vashti to come show off her beauty.

And Vashti refuses to come. So the king and his cronies make a plan to replace Vashti and get somebody else so that every kingdom, the whole kingdom, everybody will know, men get to run the show.

And we want that real clear. So he holds a beauty pageant. And there's this girl named Esther. Now, she's a Jew. But nobody knows that she's a Jew. And so she gets into the pageant.

And now, the reason this pageant's being held is to make it real clear, men run the show. Vashti messed up. She hides her ethnicity.

She enters a contest. And at the same time all this is going on, Mordecai, related to her, is a Jewish man. And he overhears two guards in the palace talking about a plot to kill the king.

[ 8 : 53 ] And he hears that plot being discussed. And he decides to go tell somebody. So he goes over and says, you know, they're talking about killing the king. And when he tells them that, they write that into the chronicles. And then they get all the perpetrators.

And they protect the king. But apparently, the king doesn't know about that yet. It all happened behind the scenes. The Secret Service took out the bad guys. And they didn't even tell the president.

And now, the villain steps into the story. And his name is Haman. And Haman is an Agai, a Canaanite. His people are sworn enemies of all Jewish people.

And he is given the highest position in the kingdom next to the king. And everybody has to bow down before him. So when Haman walks around, the king's like the big, big shot.

And Haman's like the vice president or one of them highfalutin congressmen or senators. He's walking around like, bow down. Because everybody in this whole story, all these weak men just love it when you, whoo, you are somebody.

[ 9 : 55 ] And so they're all bowing down. But Mordecai, he just is not into the bowing business. He doesn't like bowing. And that really makes Haman mad.

And Haman gets so mad that he goes to any length he can to destroy Mordecai. So he gets to talking to the king. And he says, I got an idea, king. There are some people that still live amongst us that are not good people.

And he says, after one, we're going to kill all the Jews. And so he says, let's get rid of these people. And by getting rid of them people, he knows he can get rid of this guy who won't bow down to him. So they roll the dice.

It's called the poor. And they roll the dice. And they pick a date that all Jewish people in the nation will be killed in one day. Don't roll your eyes at that.

There's been genocide going on all over the world lots of times. And the Germans definitely went into that with the exact same people. Well, Esther has now been made a queen.

[ 10 : 53 ] And Mordecai reminds her, you've been put in as queen. Now, we don't know why a Jewish girl like you got picked out of all this kingdom.

We don't know why. But maybe something brought you here for this time just like this. You need to try to save our people. If you don't, we know that deliverance will come.

Somehow, someday, he'll get us out of this. Doesn't mention his name. We just know God, he, whatever, takes care of his people. And so you better help.

She says, but you realize he hadn't even invited me to speak to him for 30 days. And you're not allowed to go into the room, the throne room where he sits on the throne, unless you're summonsed.

If you walk in the room and he doesn't want you in the room, he'll just have you killed right there on the spot. He said, well, somebody's going to do something. Might as well be you.

[ 11 : 52 ] She said, well, you guys pray and fast for three days and I'll go in. So they prayed and fasted. And Esther walks to the door. You see these big old soldiers standing there with their swords and their spears.

And she steps in and the swords or the spears cross in front of her. And the king holds up this scepter and say, let her in. She walks over and touches the top of the scepter.

She's been allowed in. Somehow, something happened that turned the heart of the king. It's not mentioned, but we know who it was. And she got in.

And she says, he says, well, what do you want, my queen? She said, would it be possible for me to invite you to a banquet? I'm going to cook ribeye. And it'll be just medium rare, a baked potato, massive, lots of butter and cheese.

I'll have some shrimp wrapped in bacon on the side. Just got to throw that in. And she says, well, that'd be great. He said, I'd like that.

[ 12 : 56 ] She said, why don't you bring Haman? Bring old Haman with you. He said, well, good deal. I'll do it. So they have this banquet. Well, the king, after the banquet, he can't sleep.

Too much shrimp or something. And while he's there, he said, I've got to have something to do. He tried to turn on Netflix, but it wouldn't come on because it didn't exist. And so he said, call for the people that read to me and let somebody come read to me out of my chronicles, out of my history books.

And they came in and they started reading. Well, king, this is what happened on this day and this day. And in the middle of the reading, one of them says, they were plotting to kill you. And a guy named Mordecai heard about the plot and turned them in.

And we killed those guys and nobody even harmed you. And the king goes, read that paragraph one more time. What? Well, now, what did we do for that guy?

Did we honor him? And they said, no, we didn't get around to honoring him. He's just doing his duty. The king said, well, nope, I'm going to honor him.

[ 14 : 01 ] So the next day, Haman walks in. Now, Haman's got an ego so big, it can't hardly get through the door. And Haman walks in and the king looks up and says, Haman, I've been thinking about honoring somebody I really like.

Haman goes, I appreciate that, king. Really do. He said, what would you have me do? He said, man, I'd put him in your clothes. Dress him in your clothes so everybody knows he's wearing the king's clothes.

I'd put him on your best horse. And I'd have your top man lead him around the city saying, hey, this is how the king honors somebody he really likes. And so Haman's kind of like, oh, man, I got it coming.

Going to be a good day for me. Everybody down going to know who I am. Everybody going to, Mordecai is going to be bound down on this one. And the king says, okay, I want you to do all that for Mordecai.

And Haman's like, excuse me? He said, and by the way, you lead him around. And you holler for him. Now, that is not what Mr. Haman wants done.

[ 15 : 03 ] They have another banquet. In the next banquet, she says, king, there's some people who want to kill me and my family and all my relatives.

And he says, do what? Because he's like a little child. Irritable. That's why he has to be such a big bully. And she says, yeah. Well, Haman hears that.

And she's in there kind of laid back on her bed. It's a gold bed. Don't forget that. I mean, this is no sleep number bed. This is no fancy mattress. It's a stinking gold bed. That's pretty nice.

When you've got a bed made out of gold, you're not doing too bad. Some of y'all were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. This girl is sleeping on a gold bed. And Haman sees her. And he runs.

And he lays out on the bed with her. And he says, please, please, don't tell him about me. And about that time, the king's been furiously walking around outside in the cooler.

[ 16 : 03 ] And he comes in and said, what are you doing in her bed? And she said, he's the one who wants to kill me. Well, Haman had already had some gallows built to hang old Mordecai outside. He already built the gallows so they can kill him.

And so the king said, get this buzzer, take him outside there, and hang him on the gallows he built. And so things don't go too good.

And then they make a plan to how they can stop the people from killing the Jews. And the king said, man, once I make a law, I can't go back on it. So Mordecai and his cronies get together.

And they said, what about if we made another law that went into effect before their law, and we kill them before they got to kill us? And the king said, that'll work. So I'll just tell you what.

We'll make it a law that you kill them before they kill you. And they kill them. And all Haman's family gets killed. And all of his junk is taken away. And the story ends with the rich and powerful enemy of God's people destroyed.

[ 17 : 03 ] And God's man elevated. The Jews are rescued. They plan a celebration of their victory. And it's celebrated year after year.

And when you get to the end of that story, you're like, well, what is the big deal about the story? There's a lot of them. And I won't take you through the chapter. But, you know, the whole point is, when you tell your story, you might very likely be thinking, me and Esther, we've got to do a little plotting to get something done.

And what you don't know is God's already at work. And this old king over here, and every little detail in this story, every little detail in this story is just working out.

What a coincidence. If you believe in those. But if you believe in God, you're like, he's God. And since he's God, he does big stuff.

Can I get an amen there? And so, Mordecai just happens to hear about a plot at just the right time. It just happens to get written in a book. And it just happens to get read to the king at just the right time.

[ 18 : 11 ] I know. You say, I don't live in Bible days. Oh, I think you live in Esther days. Maybe you don't see God's name being mentioned every day in your life. Maybe you don't hear the God thing happening.

And maybe as a preacher, I probably think I do. Because I live in this so much, I kind of think I'm always saying, what's he doing? What's he doing? What's he doing? And maybe you don't ever even think about that. And I don't know if they thought about it that way.

Because if they did, they never said his name. But he's at work in your life. He is at work in your life. He brought you here this morning. You're like, no, he didn't. I came here by myself.

I know. It's okay, Mordecai. That's okay, Esther. I know. You don't realize he's at work in your life. So let's just get some things.

I got 12 minutes and about 400 things I want to say. So go with me, if you would, to Esther chapter 1 and verse 3. Number 1. Well, number 1 was the story. Number 2.

[ 19 : 06 ] It better have been number 1 as long as it took. Number 2. Pride leads to destruction. That's a Bible truth all through the story.

Can I just tell you, somehow we get so proud just like that. We get so egotistical, self-centered, self-absorbed. In Esther chapter 1 and verse 3, the king wants everybody to know how important he is.

You know that me wall you got at your house? You know what a me wall is, don't you? And that's when they did this for me, and that's when they did this for me, and that's my degree about this, and that's me and me and me. And long before there were selfies, there were me walls.

They've been around for a long time. It's all about me. If you don't know, just come to my house, and I'll show you my me wall. In Esther chapter 1 and verse 3, it was the third year of his reign, and he's got all of his princes and his servants.

And in verse 4, it says, and he showed his riches. Underline this, of his glorious kingdom. Come over to the house. Come over to the house. I'll show you all my glory. Come over, and I'll show you all my honor of my excellent majesty.

[ 20 : 15 ] And by the way, we can't get this done in an evening. I'm going to need 180 days to get it done, because I'm not just any everyday king. I am the king. It's possible that he wasn't bringing everybody, and everybody didn't stay 180 days.

It's possible he brought the leaders from that area. He brought the senators and the congressmen and the state senators from Washington and Oregon. And that one week, and he brought the others from another area another week.

But for 180 days, all CNN's got to say is, boy, he's having another party today. Telling everybody how great he is. Here I am on the west wing. I was sitting right there, right over there. But you see that? Everybody from Georgia's here.

And all he's telling them is, check me out. Am I not great? He is great. His palace is elaborate. Even the beds are gold and silver.

Chapter 1 and verse 6, you've got to underline it. He says, check out the curtains with all these colors. Check out the silver rings and the pillars of marble. And the beds were of gold and silver and marble everywhere.

[ 21 : 17 ] You and I need to remember that all authority and all influence we have comes from God. God's in control. Not me and not you.

Could you remember Pharaoh? It's a regular Bible lesson that God likes to show you men who think there's something and he demotes them. He likes to show you men who believe they're big enough and they did it on their own.

And he lets them know, no, I am God. Pharaoh's in Egypt and he has the people of God under his control. And he's like, check me out. Am I not something? And when God works 10 plagues, those 10 plagues are attacks on 10 of his gods.

And by the end of the story, Pharaoh's whipped. I think the story that's most fits this right here is the story of old Nebuchadnezzar. Look, if you would, at Daniel chapter 4 and verse 30.

Just write it down and check it out later. You need to understand God wants the glory. God wants the praise. And God's tired of you acting like he's not there.

[ 22 : 19 ] In Nehemiah chapter 4 and verse 30, the king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?

And in verse 31, a voice fell from heaven and said, Well, you just lost the kingdom and you will live, in verse 32, among the animals until, Look at verse 32, until you know that the most high rules in the kingdom of men and God gives it to whomsoever he will.

And it happened. And he went out there and he started eating grass. And his fingernails grew like claws and his hair grew like fur. And he became like an animal. In verse 34, At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes unto heaven and my understanding returned.

And I blessed the most high. I praised and honored him that lives forever. Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingdom is from generation to generation.

And in verse 35, he does what he will with the army of heaven. Verse 36, My reason returned unto me. My kingdom, my honor, and my brightness was given back to me.

[ 23 : 38 ] In verse 37, just check out what he said. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven. All whose works are true. His ways are judgment.

And those that walk in pride. He is able to abase. What's your story here, Mr. King, in the book of Esther? I am big.

I am the stuff. Nobody tells me what to do. Especially not some little squeaky woman getting to tell me what to do. But I am big stuff. Check out my glory. Let me ask you a question this morning.

How are you handling what God's given you? I'm standing among rich people. We drive nice vehicles.

I didn't say you. I said we. We live in nice houses. We wear nice clothes. We eat nice food. And the truth of the matter is, I'm not even, I don't even want a gold bed.

[ 24 : 41 ] I mean, I just kind of, I don't know how that'd feel. I might like the gold somewhere else in the house, but I don't think I want it in the bed. Maybe in my account. Hmm?

But are you lifted up in pride? It's amazing that humble people, poor people often seem more hungry for God than people like us.

There was a day when we cried and prayed to God because we weren't sure we were going to eat. But now, we don't have to worry about that.

We don't pray, God give me my daily food. We're like, I don't even worry about the food. God, can you just make me richer? God, can you just bless me more? I mean, I need another gold bed.

I need something else. And we've let our pride be lifted up. We think somewhere along the way that we earned it. Or we deserve it.

[ 25 : 41 ] Or we did it. Isn't that what's going on with the king? Y'all come for 180 days and let me show you my glorious kingdom and all of my honor.

Check it out. I live here on the Ponderosa. I got it all. I got it all. Do you believe that others should think of your glory and greatness?

We can say we don't, but isn't it amazing how we got me walls and selfie sticks and selfie pictures and everything's about check me out?

Where we ought to have a mirror, a window to look out on a world that's lost and needed in God. We got a mirror to look at ourselves and think of how great we are. Are you humbly thanking and magnifying God for all he's done?

Are you sitting at your house and saying, oh God, this is not my money. This is not my house. This is all yours. And I honor you today. And I magnify you today.

[ 26 : 50 ] Or are you like the king? Secretary, get in here. Let's make a plan. I'm thinking about how I can show off. What do you think? Let's figure it out. Let's get on the, hmm.

How about 180 days we invite all the biggest shots in the kingdom and we bring them here and I get them drunk and I just show them everything. Fact is, I think I'll sum up the end of my 187 days by bringing out my wife to show them I got the prettiest wife in the kingdom.

I just like everybody to know how great I am. Who's the hero of your story? Who's the hero of your story?

Is it you? Or is it God? There's a big danger in being who we are and having what we have. Because it's easy to think I deserve more.

In fact, I've been looking at some of your houses and I think I need more. I've been looking at the cars in the parking lot and I think I need more. Come on, tell the truth.

[ 27 : 57 ] I really haven't been doing that, but you get the point, don't you? The story of Esther is going to be the story of how God uses Esther and Mordecai to rescue the Jews.

But the sub-story, the sub-plot is going to be about an egotistical maniac named Haven. It's a king saying, check me out.

When our lives ought to be lived with, check him out. Boy, he saved me. Check him out. He blessed me.

Check him out. He is good. Check him out.