

Esther 5

Commitment and obsession



Several years elapsed between each of the introductory chapters of this book, as key elements of the story subsequently to unfold are put in place. But now that main story itself *is* happening, and the narrator deliberately slows the pace. We probably want to rush on to *what happened next? Did it work, and how?* And yet we are as intrigued as was Ahasuerus to find out precisely what Esther has planned. The question remains, though: as the gallows are constructed at the end of this chapter ... will Esther's wiles be enough to save Mordecai ... or the Jewish people as a whole?

➤ Esther's calm poise (1-8)

Perhaps amazingly, Esther now shows no hesitation in proceeding to put her own life at risk by approaching the king.

v1 absolutely *screams* "royalty" (the Hebrew words for "king" "queen", "royal" and "royal robes" (literally, *royalty*) all sound very similar) – so this continual repetition speaks of the overwhelmingly intimidatory atmosphere Esther must have encountered as she dared approach the throne. Where did she find the courage?

Where else do you see this principle of weakness triumphing over strength in the Bible? Think, perhaps, 2 Corinthians 12:9. And yet ... does that mean we should deliberately avoid giving position to people of obvious education or talent?

Why didn't Esther just come out and present her request right away to king Ahasuerus? Shouldn't she have been simple and straightforward, instead of "wise" like this? Wouldn't that have been more trusting in *God* to move the king's heart?

➤ Haman's driven obsession (9-14)

How fragile are our triumphs and joys, really? What has this world given that can't actually be taken away in an instant?

To anyone outside his immediate circle (who had to endure his elaborate CV (11)!), Mordecai is the picture of success. How easily do we find ourselves envious of the arrogant (Psalm 73:3)? But what is the reality? And how can we reassure ourselves of that reality, without despising those taken in by the lie?