

**Fulfilling your  
life's purpose with  
ESTHER**

**A unique, verse-by-verse,  
life-application commentary  
by Terran Williams,  
assisted by  
Michael Eaton's  
commentary.**

## Do you know how to apply the Bible to your life?

Did you know that God put every verse in the Bible so that your mind could be totally renewed, so that your life could be deeply changed, and so that your calling could be fully fulfilled? (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17 if you're not persuaded.) That's why reading the whole Bible again and again is one of the most important things we can do.

Sometimes, however, the Bible is hard to understand. That's why commentaries are so useful. Most commentaries help you understand the *technical* meaning of each verse. These commentaries do a little of that too, but rather, they focus on the meaning of each verse *for our lives now*.

## Using these commentaries in your daily Bible reading.

- Make time every day. Allocate as much time as you need to really hear from God for your life. Read until you are full - don't just *snack* on the Bible rather enjoy a *solid meal*.
- Read one book of the Bible at a time. Alternate between a New Testament one (27 in total) and then an Old Testament one (39 in total). Perhaps start with the books that have commentaries available on this website ([www.friends-first.com](http://www.friends-first.com) and click on 'free resources'). It doesn't matter if you do the whole Bible in a year, or in four years, just as long as you're *steadily* moving through it.
- Trust God to speak to you every time you read the Bible. Expect to hear from God and expect to receive just what you need for each day. Invite the Holy Spirit to be your primary teacher as you read.
- Keep two questions in your mind as you read: 1) What do these verses mean? 2) What do they mean for my life now? ***If you can't find solid answers to either of these questions then get help from one of these commentaries***, or another commentary if you're reading a book we don't yet have a commentary of. (The NIV Study Bible and the internet resource [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net) is recommended.)
- Carry into your day what you sense God saying to you. Perhaps write down the main things you sense God telling you each day. Pray to God about what he has just said to you. Make any needed adjustments in your heart and life as God reveals more and more of his Word, will and ways to you.

## Using these commentaries if you're a preacher.

- These commentaries are adapted from a highly recommended series called, 'Preaching through the Bible' by Michael Eaton, who is arguably one of the world's most skilled Bible preachers (see [www.Michael-Eaton.de](http://www.Michael-Eaton.de)). That is why these commentaries are excellent resources for preachers. They will help you apply the Scriptures to the lives of your hearers.
- Freely download a manual called, 'Preaching for a change' (see [www.friends-first.com](http://www.friends-first.com) and click on 'free resources' and then on 'stuff for church leaders'). Chapters 2 and 3 will especially help you to adapt this commentary to a preaching format.
- Keep coming back to this website (see [www.friends-first.com](http://www.friends-first.com), click on 'free resources' and then, 'explore the Bible') for the latest uploaded commentaries.

## About this book

The year was 483 BC. King Xerxes had inherited (just 3 years before) the control and rule of a vast, prosperous empire - Persia. It stretched from India to Ethiopia (1:1), spanning 2 million square miles. Soon into his reign however, King Xerxes would face a real crisis. The Greeks (who had submitted to the reign of the previous King Cyrus, then Cambyses, then Darius) began to rebel against his authority, precipitating the wars between Persia and Greece.

The book of Esther fits (chronologically) between Ezra 6 and 7. Although some Israelites had returned to Israel, most were scattered throughout the Persian world. They had abandoned the idolatry that had brought them under God's judgement (and into captivity). But, as exiles, they still lacked the freedom to freely proclaim the God of salvation.

In this amazing story, we will see how God gives his people a platform, from which they can proclaim his goodness and salvation. The whole book is about God's sovereignty over all circumstances in order to preserve his people, and use them to impact the world.

# Esther Chapter One

*Read Esther 1:1-8*

- **Life without God is empty and temporary.**
  - Xerxes had *power* - he ruled the world's greatest kingdom. Xerxes had *popularity* - he showed off his kingdom to all the nobles, military leaders and princes. Xerxes had *possessions* - he showed off the 'wealth' of his kingdom, and had a palace to himself. It had the finest furniture and fittings. Xerxes had *pleasure* - he had abundant supplies of wine and hosted lavish parties. Thousands of years later, people still spend their lives in pursuit of these things; power, popularity, possessions and pleasure.
  - Despite all of Xerxes' apparent abundance, all that he had would eventually be lost. The Greek empire would ultimately prevail over the Persians. In fact, Herodotus the historian tells us that this gathering was actually a council of war, during which Xerxes revealed his plans to invade Greece.
  - All that a person has is ultimately temporary. It will come to pass. Success is always temporary. The greatest kingdoms, companies and personalities will eventually come to pass. Even our lives are temporary. 'Only the person who does the will of God lasts forever' (1 John 2:17).
  - Despite Xerxes' apparent abundance, underneath it all, was emptiness. Ecclesiastes was written by a king who, like Xerxes, lived in lavish abundance and yet described his life as meaningless, empty, and a 'chasing after the wind' (Eccl 2:1-11). Other than the anxiety Xerxes was dealing with regarding the Greek threat, he was probably experiencing a similar emptiness. The same is true of us today. Life outside of God - no matter how successful we are or how much stuff we manage to accumulate - is doomed to be an empty existence. This is because there is a God-shaped vacuum inside of us, which only God can fill.
- **King Jesus wants to lavish his Spirit on his people.**
  - Verses 5-8 speak of a second banquet - lasting 7 days - to which all the men (both the greatest and the least) of the inner city were invited.
  - One of the ways to apply Old Testament narratives to our lives is to ask the question, 'What New Testament truth is this Old Testament story symbolic of?' In this case, we see that:
  - 1) The banquet serves as a picture of the heavenly banquet. In Matthew 22:8-10, heaven is described as a great banquet with a great king and a great diversity of guests.
  - 2) The banquet serves as a picture of a community intoxicated by the Spirit. In Acts 2 at Pentecost, we see 120 people so intoxicated by the wonderful, lavish outpouring of the Spirit, they are wrongly described as 'drunk'. In Ephesians 5:18-21 the church is compared to a party or banquet of people intoxicated on the

wine of the Spirit. In this Ephesians 5 picture of the church, there is singing, music, joy, spontaneity and camaraderie - much like at a lavish party. If we further explore this analogy from these verses in Esther, we notice that:

- The least to the greatest were invited (v5). Joel prophesied that the Spirit would be poured out on all - even the servants. The outpouring of the Spirit is for all people. God does not favour the wealthy and the strong over the poor and weak.
- The wine was served in cups, each was different from the rest (v7). Similarly, when God pours out the wine of his Spirit on his gathered people, each person encounters God uniquely. God reveals himself in unique ways to each person. We should not compare our experiences of the Spirit with another.
- The wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality (v7). This echoes the story of the wedding banquet in John 2, where Jesus turned water into wine. It speaks of how King Jesus has inexhaustible grace that he wants us to experience through the outpouring of his Spirit.
- Each person could drink as much as they want (v8). AW Tozer said, 'We are never more filled with the Spirit than we want to be.' Our experience of the Spirit is directly proportional to the degree of our thirst for God.

### Read Esther 1:9-22

- **We desperately need a Saviour to save us from our sin.**
  - These verses show us why we need a Saviour - someone who can save us from the foolishness of our ways. Let's explore the reality of sinfulness in these verses...
    - *Vashti was defiant.* She refused to fulfil her husband's command. But it was not only she who was sinful and selfish. Xerxes proved himself just as sinful.
    - *Xerxes was vain.* As everyone was praising him for his greatness, he thought, 'Let them see my beautiful wife and they'll be even more impressed with me.'
    - *Xerxes was inconsiderate.* Queen Vashti was hosting her own party. Xerxes didn't care, he wanted to pull her from that and use her as a show-thing. Not surprisingly, she refuses.
    - Xerxes, with his *ego wounded*, burned with fury and anger against his wife (v12).
    - Xerxes then sought advice from *unwise advisors* whose advice is full of male arrogance (v15-20) and undiscerningly, Xerxes receives it (v21). Was it really necessary to get divorced for such an isolated incident?
    - Xerxes issued an *ungodly policy*, insisting on national male

- domination (v22).
    - Xerxes made a *rash decision in a semi-drunken state*.
  - Today, life and leadership outside of God is still full of the self-destruct mechanism of our own sinfulness. ‘We all like sheep have gone astray’. Vanity, inconsideration, acting out of ego-interests, anger, choosing unwise advisors, receiving bad advice, ungodly policies, substance abuse, and rash decision making are the order of the day. Xerxes was surrounded by people (the Jews) who were waiting for the promised Messiah to rescue them from their sin, and yet he was oblivious to them and their message. Similarly, everywhere we look, people’s need for a Saviour from their sin is most obvious, yet most are blind to both their sinfulness and their need for a Saviour.

## Esther Chapter Two

*Read Esther 2:1-9*

- **God is able to sovereignly place us where he wants us.**
  - God was positioning Esther for impact. Yet she would never have guessed that this was what he was doing at the time. She would not have even had a choice in the matter when she was taken from her home.
  - God had sovereignly allowed the wickedness of Xerxes to cause him to lose his wife, Vashti. God had also sovereignly made Esther very beautiful. And he had sovereignly given her favour with Hegai (v8-9).
  - God ‘works together all things for those who love him’ (Romans 8:28). God is able to place us where he wants us. While we were in our mother’s womb he knitted us to have just the right bodies and personalities that would be compatible with our destiny. He places us in the place, circumstance and family that will best serve as the launch-pad for the call on our lives - each and every one of us. He will give us favour where we need favour. He will even use human wickedness for good in our lives if, as Romans 8:28 says, we love and trust him.

*Read Esther 2:10*

- **God usually allows us to go through pain before he uses us.**
  - Esther had lost her parents. She had lived as a Jew-in-secret. She lived in Persia because her people had been taken captive a century before. She could not even be open about her faith - in order to survive. She had suffered greatly already. And now she was being dragged off from her home and life. She would have experienced the dog-eat-dog environment of a harem. But instead

of all of this pain being a hindrance to the call of God on her life, it was shaping her for her destiny.

- God will often allow us to experience pain, and ‘trial of many kinds’ as a means of preparing us for our call. This pain humbles us, develops our character, enables us to gain wisdom, and increases our dependence on God - if we let it. Pain can either make us bitter or better, depending on whether we see God’s sovereign grace in it all. Behind an apparently ‘frowning’ circumstance, there is God’s loving, smiling face.

**Read Esther 2:11-20**

- **Patience, humility and wise mentors will help us prepare for our future in God.**
  - *Esther was patient* (v12). For 12 whole months she submitted to a beautification process. Similarly, we are not ready for all God has for us until we are able to patiently wait for it. Sometimes, the worst thing that can happen to us, is not that we fail, but that we succeed prematurely.
  - *Esther was humble* (v13-15). Although she could have demanded whatever she wanted (such as jewellery and perfumes), Esther just humbly received what was given her. Similarly, the person that God is going to use must learn not to grasp, demand or self-promote but rather, how to humbly receive those opportunities and resources that God gives.
  - *Esther was mentored*. She was mentored by Mordecai (v11-12, 20), and by Hegai (v15). Like Esther, each one of us also needs to learn how to stand on the shoulders of mentors. Life is too short to learn all we need to learn from our own mistakes. We need to learn from the mistakes of others. We should try to seek out wise mentors, no matter our stage in life.
- **Like Esther, the church is being beautified too.**
  - Like Esther, we as the church, are being beautified as Christ’s bride (see Ephesians 5:22-25) in preparation for the wedding day, which will happen when Christ returns (see Revelations 19:7).
  - In ancient cultures, weddings would have two stages. Stage one would be an engagement (which was as serious and binding as the actual marriage). This stage would then help the couple prepare for the next stage, the wedding, from which time the couple would live together.
  - These verses beautifully illustrate how the church, the bride of Christ, is being beautified in preparation for our bridegroom, Jesus. We are already engaged to be married, but there is so much more to come - a massive wedding day (which Revelations 19 speaks of) followed by an eternity of living together. The Holy Spirit is the beauty parlour. Our beauty is the level of godliness which we have currently attained with the help of the Spirit, as

well as the degree to which our hearts have been won by the beauty and strength of Christ.

*Read Esther 2:21-23*

- **Our sins will be exposed.**
  - In these verses, we can see a warning for our own lives. God exposed the sinful plotting of two men. They thought they were speaking in secret, but Mordecai 'just happened' to be in ear-shot of their conversation.
  - At Judgment Day, all our sins will be exposed, but already now, God is in the business of exposing our sins. He has his ways of exposing our secret sins. This should cause us to live in a healthy fear of God's holiness and justice.
  
- **Be loyal to God-given leaders.**
  - We see here an example to copy. Mordecai was loyal to the king in telling of the men's plot to kill him. These acts of loyalty played an important part in earning Esther favour with the king (as we will see in chapter 6:1-3,10).
  - Mordecai was loyal to human leaders because of his faith in God. Similarly, we should be ready to be loyal to those whom God appoints to be our leaders.
  - A basic law of gaining favour and influence with people is that we are loyal to them. Loyalty to our God-given leaders is necessary if doors of opportunity are to open up for us. Our loyalty to them shows that they can trust us. And leaders seldom delegate meaningful responsibilities to those they do not feel they can trust.