

Esther

July 20 | Stephanie Fehr



Simplistic version

- Veggie Tales version: “Don’t let fear dictate your life” or “You never need to be afraid to do what’s right.”
- Sunday School “Big Picture Idea”: “God gets us ready to do good things for him”



Context of Esther

- Book of Esther is one story in 10 chapters
- 100 years after the Babylonian exile, Jewish people in Persia
- One of two books that centres on a woman



Context of Esther

- God is never mentioned
 - Theme: God’s providence
 - Festival of Purim
- The people are not great/moral ambiguity
 - Hold tension



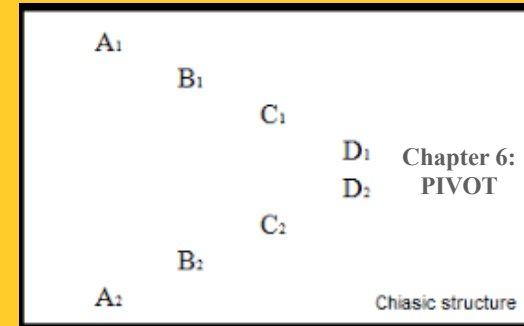
The Story of Esther

- Four main characters (one minor):
 1. Esther: orphan
 2. Mordecai: Esther's cousin
 3. Xerxes (King Ahasuerus): King of Persia, fifth century BCE
 4. Haman: grand vizier, main antagonist, Agagite (Canaanite)
 1. Queen Vashti: the king's wife



The Story of Esther

- Great reversal
- Chiasm structure:



The Story of Esther

- Chapter 1: two banquets
 - King Xerxes: opulent, week long
 - Queen Vashti: for the women
 - Xerxes summons Vashti, but she refuses
 - What if this influences other wives?
 - “All women will respect their husbands” (v.20), no Vashti



The Story of Esther

- Chapter 2:
 - Xerxes misses his wife
 - Find a new wife for King Xerxes through a competition
 - Esther is taken to the king's palace for the competition
 - Mordecai advises her to not make public her Jewish heritage



The Story of Esther

- Chapter 2:
 - Esther woos the king, becomes queen, party is thrown
 - Ending: Mordecai discovers murder plot, saves the king



The Story of Esther

- Chapter 3: Haman, the villain
 - People are to kneel to Haman, but Mordecai does not
 - Haman uses Mordecai's Jewishness as reason to destroy him and his people
 - Haman rolls a *pur*, sets date for genocide
 - Xerxes and Haman party



The Story of Esther

- Chapter 4: Mordecai and Esther's reaction to the decree
 - Mordecai mourns
 - Esther seeks out Mordecai
 - Mordecai asks Esther to beg King Xerxes for mercy and to reveal her Jewish identity
 - Esther hesitates



The Story of Esther

- Chapter 4: Mordecai and Esther's reaction to the decree
 - Mordecai: "Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" (v.14)
 - Esther relents, "if I perish, I perish" (v.16)



The Story of Esther

- **Chapter 5: Esther's plan**
 - **Esther approaches the king, invites Xerxes and Haman to a banquet**
 - **Makes plans for a second banquet**
 - **Haman still wants Mordecai dead, makes plan to kill have him killed**



The Story of Esther

- **Chapter 6: PIVOT**
 - **King Xerxes cannot sleep, has his royal records read to him, remembers how Mordecai saved him**
 - **Consults Haman on how to honour someone who pleases the king**
 - **The King honours Mordecai - the reversal has begun**



The Story of Esther

- **Chapter 7: unravelling of Haman's plans (mirrors chapter 5)**
 - **Esther's second banquet, begs for her life and her people**
 - **Esther reveals Haman to be the villain**
 - **Haman is sentenced to death**



The Story of Esther

- **Chapter 8: further elevation of Mordecai (mirrors chapter 3)**
 - **The king cannot reverse the edict to kill the Jewish people**
 - **Mordecai issues a counter-decree: the people can defend themselves and destroy anyone who attempts to kill them**
 - **Mordecai is honoured**



The Story of Esther

- **Chapter 9: the walking out of the edict and the counter-edict**
 - **Filled with bloodshed**
 - **Celebration of Purim is established; saved by God's hand**
- **Chapter 10: short epilogue - Mordecai is second in command, the Jewish people thrive in Persia**



In closing

- **Simplistic/traditional: picture ourselves as Esther, imagine God is preparing us to accomplish his purposes**



In closing

- **The story of Esther reminds us that God is at work even when we do not explicitly see it**
- **God directs toward goodness**
- **God is committed to redeeming his good world and overcoming evil**



In closing

- **The story of Esther points us to Jesus Christ**
 - **Esther is a messianic figure**
 - **Esther risked the comfort of the palace and her powerful status for the sake of her people**
 - **Jesus let go of his status and power for the sake of all people**
 - **Jesus is THE Messiah and Saviour**

