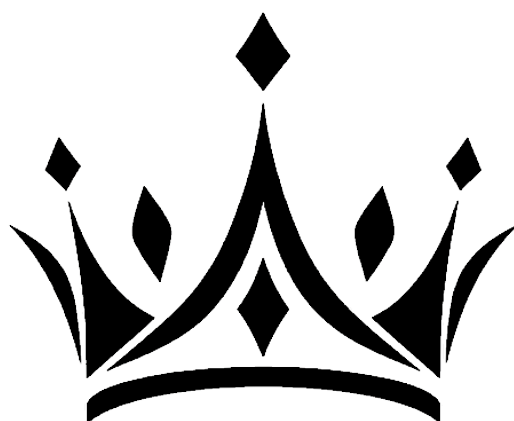




FORMED BY WHAT MATTERS

Lessons in Character through Esther

#integrity • #kindness • #wisdom • #perseverance •
#humility

#courage • #faith • #hope • #servanthood • #god'spurpose



FORMED BY WHAT MATTERS

What kind of person am I becoming?

Our choices shape our character. The people we listen to, the pressures we face and what we decide matters most all influence the kind of person we become.

This booklet follows Esther's story to explore how character grows through everyday choices and difficult decisions. Each study focuses on one quality and invites you to reflect on your own life. As you read, discuss and put the ideas into practice, keep asking: What kind of person am I becoming?

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET



READ

Start with the key idea and the story from Esther.



THINK

Notice what the story reveals about character and faith.



TALK

Use the questions to listen, discuss and learn from one another.



LIVE

Choose one practical action and carry it into the week.

The LIVE section includes “Put it into practice” and “Prayer” prompts.

Use the Bible references to read the passages alongside each study.





ESTHER

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Esther's story takes place in a world where she does not control everything around her. She finds herself in a position of influence, surrounded by uncertainty, danger and decisions that affect far more than herself. Throughout her story, Esther learns when to wait, when to speak, when to act and when to trust.

01 Doing the right thing even when no one is watching

#integrity

Esther 2:19-23, pp. 4-5

02 Generosity and care for others

#kindness

Esther 4:13-17, pp. 6-7

03 Knowing when and how to act

#wisdom

Esther 5:1-8, pp. 8-9

04 Remaining faithful when results take time

#perseverance

Esther 6:1-10, pp. 10-11

05 Using success without making ourselves the centre

#humility

Esther 9:20-22, pp. 12-13

06 Doing what is right even when it costs something

#courage

Esther 7:1-6, pp. 14-15

07 Trusting God when we cannot control the outcome

#faith

Esther 4:12-16, pp. 16-17

08 Believing the story is not finished

#hope

Esther 8:1-17, pp. 18-19

09 Using what we have for the good of others

#servanthood

Esther's wider story, pp. 20-21

10 You are here for a reason

#god'spurpose

Esther 4, pp. 22-23

"Being formed by what matters means becoming ready to respond when those moments arrive."





01 Doing the right thing even when no one is watching

#integrity

KEY IDEA

Integrity means doing what is right, even when nobody notices or rewards us.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 2:19-23

Mordecai uncovers a plot against the king.

Mordecai discovers that two of the king's officials are plotting against King Xerxes. He could have ignored what he heard or decided it was somebody else's responsibility. Instead, he tells Esther, who reports the plot to the king. Mordecai receives no immediate reward or celebration. The royal records simply note his actions. He does what is right without expecting anything in return.



What matters? Integrity means our actions match what we say we believe. It is easy to make good choices when people are watching, when there is a reward, or when doing the right thing makes us look good. Integrity becomes clearer when nobody notices. Mordecai could not know whether anyone would ever recognise what he had done. He acted anyway. The choices nobody applauds are often some of the choices that shape our character most.

#integrity





Q1 Why did Mordecai do the right thing even though he was not rewarded immediately?

Q2 What does integrity look like when nobody else notices?

Q3 What are some situations at school where integrity can be difficult?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Choose one opportunity this week to do the right thing without expecting anyone to notice or congratulate you.

PRAYER

God, help me become someone who does what is right because it is right. Give me integrity when people are watching and when nobody sees. Amen.

"People do not drift toward holiness."

Don Carson, For the Love of God, vol. 2, 23 January

#integrity





02 Generosity and care for others

#kindness

KEY IDEA

Kindness turns compassion into action, even when helping others costs us something.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 4:13-17

Esther prepares to risk her life for her people.

Esther learns that her people are in enormous danger. Mordecai challenges her to consider whether her position as queen might give her an opportunity to help. Approaching the king without being invited could cost Esther her life. Yet she decides that the wellbeing of others matters more than simply protecting herself. She asks her people to fast for her and prepares to approach the king.



What matters? Kindness is sometimes much more than being friendly. Real kindness notices the needs of another person and is prepared to act. For Esther, caring about her people eventually required courage. Her concern for them led her to decide whether she was prepared to help. Sometimes kindness means including someone. Sometimes it means listening. Sometimes it means speaking up when someone else is being treated badly. Kindness becomes character when compassion turns into action.

#kindness





Q1 How did Esther show kindness in a dangerous situation?

Q2 Why might courage sometimes be necessary if we genuinely care about someone?

Q3 When have you seen someone stand up for another person?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Step outside your normal comfort zone to show kindness this week. Notice someone who might normally be overlooked, excluded or left out.

PRAYER

God, help me notice the people around me. Give me compassion that leads to action and courage to care when caring costs something. Amen.

"When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him."

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, "Charity"

#kindness





03 Knowing when and how to act

#wisdom

KEY IDEA

Wisdom helps us choose when to speak, when to wait and how to act.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 5:1-8

Esther waits for the right moment.

Esther bravely approaches the king, but she does not immediately tell him everything. Instead, she invites the king and Haman to a banquet. Even there, Esther waits. She arranges another banquet before finally explaining what is happening. Esther has something incredibly important to say, but she recognises that how and when she says it matters too.



What matters? Wisdom is different from simply knowing the right answer. Wisdom asks: What is the right thing to do? When should I do it? How should I say it? Who should I listen to? Esther does not allow the urgency of the situation to make her careless. She shows patience, planning and self-control. Sometimes wisdom means acting quickly. Sometimes wisdom means slowing down long enough to make a better decision.

#wisdom





Q1 Why do you think Esther did not immediately make her request to the king?

Q2 How can wisdom help us when we face difficult decisions?

Q3 What helps someone grow in godly wisdom?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Think of one decision you currently face. Before acting, pray about it and speak with a trusted, wise adult.

PRAYER

God, you are the source of wisdom. Help me know when to speak, when to wait and how to make decisions that honour you and care for others. Amen.

"Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it."

J. I. Packer, Knowing God, "God Only Wise"

#wisdom





04 Remaining faithful when results take time

#perseverance

KEY IDEA

Perseverance means remaining faithful when progress is slow, even without recognition.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 6:1-10

Mordecai is finally honoured.

Earlier in the story, Mordecai protected the king by exposing the assassination plot. The royal records noted his actions, but he received no reward. Much later, the king cannot sleep and asks for the royal records to be read to him. He discovers what Mordecai had done and realises that nothing had been done to honour him. Mordecai's earlier faithfulness finally receives public recognition.



What matters? We often want good choices to produce quick results. We hope hard study will bring good results, good choices will earn praise and help will receive thanks. But life does not always work that way. Perseverance means continuing to do what is worthwhile even when progress is slow and recognition never comes. Character asks us to remain faithful before we know what the outcome will be.

#perseverance





Q1 What can Mordecai's story teach us about remaining faithful without recognition?

Q2 Why can waiting be difficult?

Q3 Where do you need perseverance at the moment?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Choose one worthwhile goal or responsibility you have been tempted to abandon. Take the next small step this week.

PRAYER

God, help me remain faithful when progress is slow. Give me patience when I cannot see results and strength to keep doing what is good. Amen.

"By perseverance the snail reached the ark."

Charles Spurgeon, The Salt-cellars, p. 89

#perseverance





05 Using success without making ourselves the centre

#humility

KEY IDEA

Humility celebrates success with gratitude and generosity towards others.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 9:20-22

The feast of Purim is established.

The danger facing the Jewish people is finally overcome. Esther and Mordecai have every reason to celebrate. But the response is not simply, "Look at what we achieved." Instead, the people are called to remember what happened, celebrate together, give gifts to one another and care for those in need. Their victory becomes an opportunity for gratitude and generosity.



What matters? Humility does not mean pretending our achievements do not matter. It means remembering that success is rarely ours alone. Other people helped us. Opportunities were given to us. God has given us abilities, relationships and circumstances that have shaped us. Humility allows us to enjoy success without needing to make ourselves the centre of everything.

#humility





Q1 How did Esther and Mordecai respond to victory?

Q2 What does it look like to honour God when things go well?

Q3 Why can staying humble after success be difficult?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Think about something that has gone well recently. Thank God for it and deliberately recognise someone else who helped you.

PRAYER

God, thank you for the good things you give me. Help me celebrate without becoming proud and remember the people who have helped me along the way. Amen.

"True gospel-humility means I stop connecting every experience, every conversation, with myself."

Tim Keller, The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness

#humility





06 Doing what is right even when it costs something

#courage

KEY IDEA

Courage means speaking up for what is right, even when we feel afraid.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 7:1-6

Esther reveals Haman's plot.

The moment Esther has been preparing for finally arrives. She tells the king that she and her people are facing destruction and reveals that Haman is responsible. Esther does not know exactly how the king will respond. She is confronting a powerful man and revealing information that places her at risk. But silence would leave others in danger. So Esther speaks.



What matters? Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is choosing to act even though there is something to fear. For Esther, courage means using her voice when remaining silent would have been much safer. Most of us will never stand before a king, but we will face moments when doing what is right feels uncomfortable. Speak up or stay quiet? Include someone or follow the crowd? Tell the truth or protect ourselves? Courage chooses what matters over what feels safest.

#courage





Q1 What risks did Esther face when she spoke to the king?

Q2 What does courage look like in your life right now?

Q3 Who is someone whose courage inspires you?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Look for one situation this week where courage might mean speaking up, acting kindly, telling the truth or refusing to follow the crowd.

PRAYER

God, give me courage when doing what is right feels difficult. Help me care more about what matters than about feeling comfortable or fitting in. Amen.

"Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality."

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 29

#courage





07 Trusting God when we cannot control the outcome

#faith

KEY IDEA

Faith means trusting God and choosing faithfulness when the outcome is uncertain.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 4:12-16

"If I perish, I perish."

Mordecai challenges Esther to act. She cannot guarantee what will happen if she approaches the king. She cannot control his response. She cannot promise herself that everything will work out exactly as she hopes. Esther calls the Jewish community to fast and then makes her decision: she will go.



What matters? Faith does not mean knowing everything will happen exactly the way we want. Faith means trusting God when we cannot see the whole picture. There are times when we can make wise choices, prepare carefully and ask for advice, yet still be unable to control the result. Esther chooses faithfulness even though the outcome remains uncertain. That is one of the hardest forms of trust.

#faith





Q1 How did Esther demonstrate faith?

Q2 Why is trusting God harder when we do not know what will happen?

Q3 Is there something you need to trust God with at the moment?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write a short prayer about something you cannot completely control. Tell God what you are worried about and ask him to help you trust him.

PRAYER

God, I cannot always see what will happen next. Help me trust you when the outcome is uncertain and choose faithfulness even when I cannot control everything. Amen.

"For faith rests not primarily upon promises, but upon character."

A. W. Tozer, "Our Faith Reflects Our Concept of God"

#faith





08 Believing the story is not finished

#hope

KEY IDEA

Hope trusts that a difficult moment does not have to be the end of the story.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 8:1-17

Fear begins to turn into hope.

Earlier in Esther's story, the Jewish people received terrible news. Their future appeared hopeless. By chapter 8, everything begins to change. Esther and Mordecai are able to act, a new decree is issued, and people who had been living under fear begin to experience relief, celebration and hope. What looked like the end of the story was not the end.



What matters? Hope is not pretending difficult things are not real. Biblical hope recognises that darkness exists while trusting that darkness does not have the final word. Esther's story moves from uncertainty and fear towards rescue and celebration. When life is difficult, hope reminds us: this moment is real, but it is not necessarily the whole story.

#hope





Q1 How did the story change from fear to hope?

Q2 Why do people need hope during difficult times?

Q3 How can you help someone else experience hope?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Encourage someone this week who may be having a difficult time. You do not need to solve their problem. Simply remind them that they are not alone.

PRAYER

God of hope, help me trust you when life feels uncertain. Give me hope and help me become someone who brings hope to others. Amen.

"Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present."

N. T. Wright, Surprised by Hope, p. 29

#hope





09 Using what we have for the good of others

#servanthood

KEY IDEA

Servanthood uses our influence and opportunities for the good of others.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther's wider story Esther's wider story and role as queen.

Esther receives an extraordinary position. She becomes queen. She could have used that position simply to protect her own comfort and security. Instead, when the moment comes, Esther uses her access, influence and position to help people who are vulnerable. Her influence becomes a tool for service rather than self-promotion.



What matters? We often think influence belongs to famous or powerful people. But everyone has influence somewhere. You influence friends, classmates and siblings. You also have influence in teams and online spaces. Servanthood asks: How can what I have be used for someone else's good? Esther's position mattered because she eventually chose to use it for others.

#servanthood





Q1 How did Esther use her position to serve her people?

Q2 Why can it be difficult to put another person's needs before our own?

Q3 What influence, ability or opportunity do you have that could help somebody else?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Find one practical way to serve someone at home, school or in your community this week without needing recognition.

PRAYER

Jesus, teach me to look beyond myself. Help me use my time, abilities and influence to make life better for the people around me. Amen.

"Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve."

John Stott, "The Call of Christ to Leadership"

#servanthood





10 You are here for a reason

#god'spurpose

KEY IDEA

God's purpose can begin with using what we have to do good where we are.



ESTHER'S STORY

Esther 4

"For such a time as this."

Mordecai asks Esther one of the most important questions in the whole story. Perhaps she has come to her position "for such a time as this". Esther did not plan the circumstances that brought her to the palace. Yet the place where she finds herself becomes an opportunity to do something that matters. Her gifts, position and circumstances give her an opportunity to serve a purpose much bigger than herself.



What matters? Purpose does not always begin with knowing exactly what you will do with your entire life. Sometimes purpose begins with asking: Where am I right now? Who has God placed around me? What abilities has God given me? What good can I do here? Esther could not see the whole story when it began. But she eventually recognised that where she was could become an opportunity to serve God's purposes. Being formed by what matters means becoming ready to respond when those moments arrive.

#god'spurpose





Q1 What do you think your purpose might look like in your life right now?

Q2 What gifts, abilities or opportunities could you use to help others?

Q3 What might it mean for you to live “for such a time as this”?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Ask God one simple question this week: “Where can you use me?” Then pay attention to the people, needs and opportunities already around you.

PRAYER

God, thank you that my life has purpose. Help me recognise the opportunities you place in front of me and give me courage to use what I have for good. Amen.

“Our high and privileged calling is to do the will of God in the power of God for the glory of God.”

J. I. Packer, Rediscovering Holiness, p. 69

#god’spurpose





Esther

WHAT IS GOD FORMING IN ME?

Bring your whole life to God
and let him shape who you are becoming.



Mesotes
WHOLE EDUCATION