

An Unusual Competition

Esther 1, 2; Prophets and Kings, pp. 598-601

Have you ever entered a competition? Did you win? Today's story is about a beauty competition with a very special prize. It may have happened like this:

Cousin Mordecai," said Esther. "Did you hear? King Xerxes is sending his men to bring unmarried girls to the palace. He's looking for a new queen."

"I heard," said Esther's Cousin Mordecai. "But he's not sending for all the unmarried girls. Just the pretty ones. I'm sure you'll be chosen." He smiled.

"Oh, Cousin Mordecai," said Esther. "I can't leave you. You've taken such good care of me since my parents died."

"Don't worry about me, Esther," said Cousin Mordecai. "It will be a good opportunity for you. Remember everything that I've taught you. But no matter what happens,

don't let anyone know you are a Jew or that you are my cousin."

"But why, Cousin Mordecai?" asked Esther, looking puzzled.

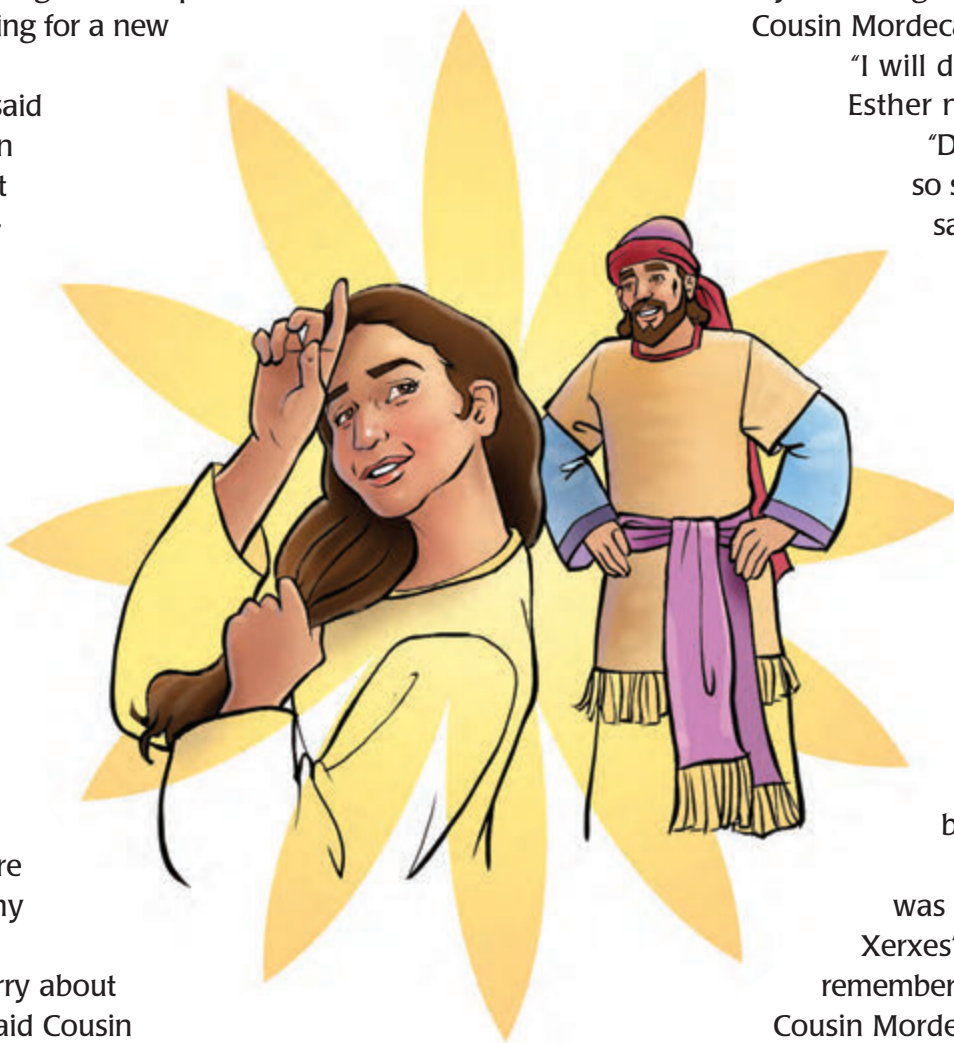
"Because this is not our home. We are Hebrews. Although our people have lived in Persia for a long time, a lot of people don't like us. They want to get rid of us," said Cousin Mordecai quietly.

"I will do as you say," Esther nodded.

"Don't look so sad, Esther," said Cousin Mordecai. "A lot of other beautiful girls will be at the palace. But remember, beauty is as beauty does. Be kind to everyone. That's the best kind of beauty."

When Esther was taken to King Xerxes' palace, she remembered what her Cousin Mordecai had told

her. There were a lot of beautiful girls at the palace. Some of them were not very nice. But Esther was kind to everyone.



The Message

God can use my life to influence others for good.

Memory Verse

“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:16, NIV).

The king's eunuch, Hegai, noticed Esther. (Eunuchs were chosen to watch over all the women at the king's palace.) Hegai noticed Esther's kindness to others. He quickly chose her to begin beauty treatments. He also gave her special food. Then he gave her seven servant girls and moved them all to the best part of the women's quarters.

For a whole year, Esther received beauty treatments at the palace. She was bathed, oiled, and perfumed every day.

The beauticians fixed her hair. The designers made new clothes and shoes for her. Hegai gave her anything she asked for.

Meanwhile, Esther's Cousin Mordecai walked back and forth near her rooms every day. He couldn't talk to Esther. And she couldn't talk to him.

But they could see each other from far away. Cousin Mordecai wanted to make sure she was all right. But he didn't want anyone to know that they were related. If they did, they would know Esther was a Jew.

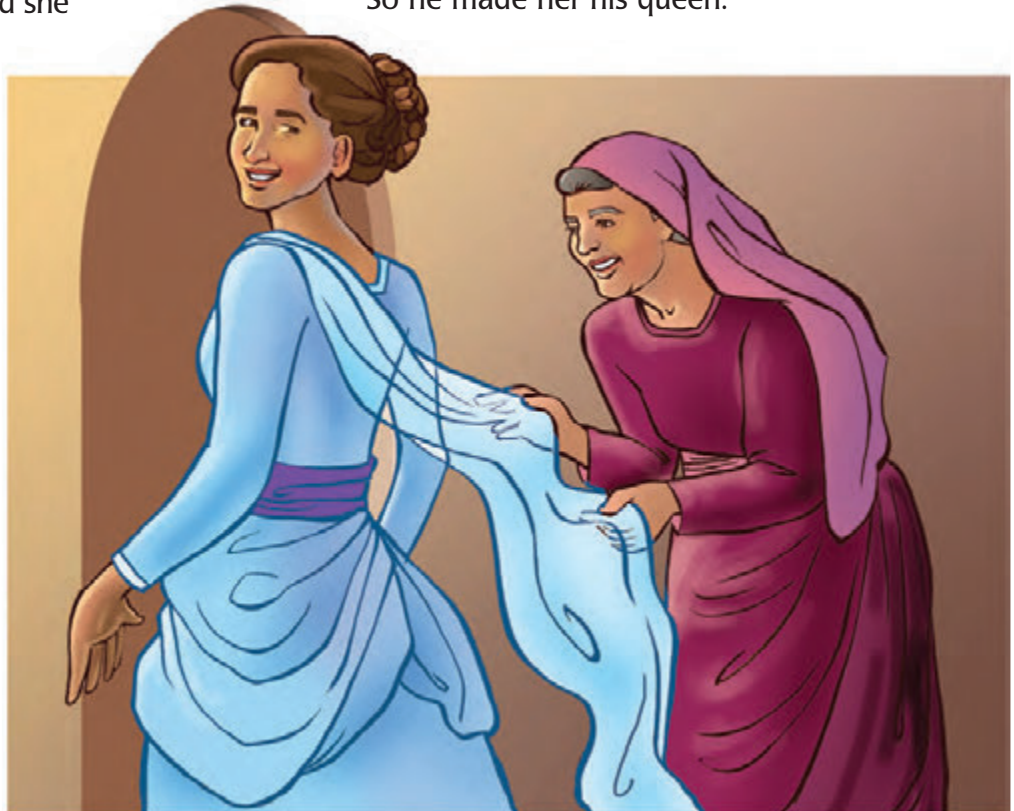
One day Hegai came to Esther, smiling. "Esther," he said. "The king wants to see you."

"Really? Oh, my. What shall I do?" asked Esther. "What shall I talk about?"

"Whatever you want," said Hegai, smiling. "I'm so nervous," said Esther, excitedly. "I can't even think right now."

"Esther, don't worry," said Hegai. "I think the palace people and the king are really going to like you."

Hegai was right. Everyone liked Esther, especially the king. He liked Esther more than any of the other young women he had seen. So he made her his queen.



S A B B A T H

DO With your family, collect sweet smelling flowers or pine cones. Place them on newspaper to dry. When they are dry, put them in a pretty bowl as potpourri.

READ Read your lesson story together. How many Bible stories can your family think of that are connected with things that smell?

PRAY Thank God for our sense of smell.

S U N D A Y

MAKE Make a crown for Queen Esther. On the crown write the memory verse. Place the crown where you can see it every day. During worship, teach the verse to your family.

DO Ask your family to name some countries that have kings and queens today.

PRAY Who is your country's leader? Ask God to bless that person.

M O N D A Y

READ During worship, ask if someone in your family has a passport. If so, ask to look at it. Read Esther 1 and 2 together. What nationality was Esther? What nationality are you?

PRAY Pray that God will guide the leaders of your land.

T U E S D A Y

DO During family worship, ask your family to name something they like to smell.

THINK Think of one thing that makes each person in your family beautiful inside. Tell them what you think. Why is it important to be beautiful inside? Read 1 Samuel 16:7 together for a clue.

PRAY Thank God for making us beautiful inside.

W E D N E S D A Y

READ With your family, play follow the leader. Then read 1 Corinthians 11:1 to discover whom we should follow in order to be a good influence.

DO Ask your family to help you find the kingdom of Medo-Persia on a Bible map. Then find the area on a modern day map.

SING Sing a song of praise. Then ask God to help you be a good influence.

We do not know who wrote Esther's story, but the person knew a lot about the palace and the government of Persia.





THURSDAY

DO With an adult's help do a secret service for someone in your family today.

DO During worship, give each person a small piece of paper. Ask them to write the name of someone they can influence. Fold the papers in half and put them in a dish. Pick one, and let the person tell one way they could be a good influence on that person.

PRAY Review your memory verse together. Then ask God to help you make right choices.

FRIDAY

READ During family worship take turns reading from Esther, chapters 1 and 2. Act out the story with your family. Say your memory verse together.

PRAY Talk about ways your family can serve others. Ask God to help your family be better servants.

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PUZZLE

Directions: Color in the areas with dots to find out who entered a competition and later helped the Jewish people.

