

## Session 4

June 25, 2023

### MORDECAI AND ESTHER

Esther 2:5-7; 4:8-17

Mentoring is a very inexact science.

To some, it's an informal "following in someone's footsteps." To others, it's a more formal relationship. Some follow the philosophy that solid character traits are better "caught than taught." Others need more structure and create "teachable moments" to instill those traits.

In addition, when we think of mentoring, we almost always conceive of it as an untrained student receiving instruction from an older, wiser, and more mature teacher. Rarely do we think of "mentoring" family members (we normally call that parenting!). But in this week's lesson, we see more than simply acting as a role model. We see some pretty strong "give-and-take" between two family members. Three main points stand out.

**Mentoring should be personal (2:5-7).** These verses may be confusing to the casual reader but are simply meant to establish the relationship between Mordecai and Esther. Verses 5 and 6 establish Mordecai's *ancestry*, carefully pointing out that he was a Jew, not a Persian; and was of the captivity, not the nobility. Verse 7 establishes Mordecai's *authority*. He was Esther's guardian legally; but morally he acted as her surrogate father, since both her parents had died (v. 7). The part about Esther's beauty serves as a reminder of how Esther ended up in the royal household (see 2:2 ff). As well, it was a fact that no doubt kept Mordecai on his toes! All of this is recorded to establish Mordecai's *legitimacy* in Esther's life. For reflection: *To avoid any impropriety, mentoring should normally be done man-to-man and woman-to-woman. But here, family is involved. What lessons can we derive from this example?*

**Mentoring should be purposeful (4:8-14).** There were times when my students would come to me and ask if I could be a mentor for them. I was certainly humbled and flattered. Unfortunately, my early attempts at mentoring were disastrous! I wasn't always properly prepared, and they weren't always properly engaged. I realized that we needed some structure. *Mentoring needs to be purposeful!* So rather than sitting around and chatting, I assigned some reading that would lead to meaningful discussion. For the new believer, I recommended Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* (regardless of what you think of the man, his material is still excellent). For others, I recommended Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. In any case, things improved.

Mordecai and Esther didn't have Warren or Whitney, but they did have a copy of the decree Haman had drawn up calling for the Jew's destruction (see Esther 3). They were facing a life-or-death situation, and Mordecai knew that Esther was in the unique position to thwart Haman's evil efforts. But without Mordecai taking the initiative, Esther may have never known about the decree until it was too late. As it was, Esther was clearly reluctant to get involved. (vv. 10-12). That's where Mordecai's maturity, wisdom, and experience came in. His renowned pronouncement, "Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" was purposeful. In it, he emphasized God's divine sovereignty while challenging Esther to

put her position to good use. For reflection: *What do you think God has for you to accomplish in your life? Have you ever considered that God put you where you are for a reason?*

**Mentoring should be prayerful (4:15-17).** It's noteworthy that Queen Esther didn't allow her *position* to supersede her *prayers*. This reminds us that no mentor is greater than God, and no one's counsel is more important than His. Notice as well, the prayer time was both *intercessory* (all the Jews that Mordecai could enlist in Susa) and *personal* (Esther and her lady friends). Once her course was set, Esther showed tremendous courage in sticking to it. Her statement, "If I perish, I perish" (v. 16), was not a sign of resignation, but submission. While the outcome was not guaranteed, her faith in God was steadfast. For reflection: *What do you think about the role-reversal in verse 17? How or when should the teacher submit to the student?*