It's tough being a woman

BETH MOORE
The Background of Esther in the Hebrew Bible and Tradition

The Book of Esther is also known as the _________________.

Historical Background

Like the Book of Daniel, Esther is a ______________ story.

The Uniqueness of the Book of Esther

1. The total _______________ of any ________________ to ______

   Why study the Book of Esther?

   • It’s part of __________ ________.

   • Based on Psalm 138:2b God’s name may not be _____ _____,
     but _____ _____ _____ _____.

   • It offers tremendous ________________.

   • It extends a vital perspective on the ________________ __ __.
     Merriam Webster’s definition of providence: “God conceived as the
     power _______________ __ __ ______________ __ __________
     ______________.” Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary adds, “In so
     doing [in His providence] God attends not only to apparently
     momentous events and people but also to those that seem both
     _____________ and ____________ ... Indeed, so all encompassing
     is God’s attention to events within creation that nothing ... __________
     by __________.”
Ephesians 1:11—Even when we’re blind to the evidence, God “_________ _______ _____________ in conformity with the _____________ of His will.”

Philippians 2:13—God “_________ ___ _______ to will and to act according to His good ________________.”

2. The title bears a ______________ _____________.
   Throughout the next nine weeks we’ll consider different scenarios to underscore the concept captured in our study’s title.

Scenario #1
It’s tough being a woman ___ _______ _______ ________.

3. The God-ordained emphasis on ______________ ________________
   According to Word Biblical Commentary, the inspired author of Esther “lays all the stress on the _______ ________________ to the divine-human _______________” [combined or shared energy].
Today’s session introduces our protagonist and most vital supporting actor. We will use these important “first mentions” to help us draw character sketches of each based on what we know and what we also might imagine.

Part One

A Character Sketch of Mordecai

• He was a _______ (6:10; 8:7; 9:31; 10:3; 5:13).

   “Its significance is indicated by the fact that this is the _________ _______ in the whole Old Testament that a _________ _______ of the community of Israel is named and identified by a gentilic.”

• He was an __________.

   Esther 2:6 “employs the root of the word for exile (glh) in four distinct constructions, lest the full measure of the Jewish plight be overlooked.”

   View the repetition in the King James Version: “Who had been _______ _______ from Jerusalem with the _________ _______ which had been _________ _______ with Jeconiah king of Judah whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had _________ _______.”

• He was a __________ ___________ to his ____________.
Part Two

A Character Sketch of Esther

• **She was named** ___________________.
  
  This Jewish name comes from the word for “_________” and means “______________.”

• **She was** ________________.

• **She was** ________________ _______ by her male ____________.

• **She was** ____________.

Scenario #2

It’s tough being a woman in a ______________ __________
__________ is a ________________.

• **She was also** ______________ as ________________.
  
  *This Persian name means “__________.”*

Perhaps even more significantly, “the name Esther comes from the verbal root in Hebrew str, meaning ‘to ____________.’ ”
Scenario #3

It’s tough being a woman ______ __ ______ _______ ________.

1. __________________ always has a __________________.

Consider the history of these two rivals.

Mordecai,
a __________________ from the tribe of Benjamin and a descendant of __________ ______

Haman,
a presumed Amalekite and descendant of __________, their king during __________ reign

The __________________

instruction:
1 Samuel 15:10-23,30

The revealed _________________:
Deuteronomy 25:17-19
(Referring to Ex. 17:8-16.)
Exodus 17:16—“_______ _________ will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.”

2. ______________ perceives a _________ (2 Cor. 10:12).

3. ______________ catches like a __________.

- The word Agag is believed to be related to an Assyrian term (agagu) that means “to be _______________, vehement, ___________.”

- The name “Haman” sounds similar to the Hebrew word for _________ (Hebrew, heman). (Compare Prov. 22:24-25.)

Consider the following quote

“Surely as Christians we must recognize the ‘_____________ ______ _______’ not only in our world but ______________ ________________.”

4. ______________ is ______________ (Rom. 12:17-21).
The Human Dilemma of Destiny

Many of the biblical figures who fulfilled their God-appointed destinies shared some of Esther’s basic inner conflicts.

Consider the dilemma of destiny from a human perspective:

1. The ______________. Reflect on Esther 4:11b.

2. The ___________________.

Scenario #4

It’s tough being a woman ______________ ___
____________-____________________________.
3. The _______ ___________________.

• Remember, destiny appoints _______ but affects _______.

• The ____________________ of a person’s destiny always demands a revelation of the _____________. Consider the wording “if you remain silent at this time.” The Hebrew word translated silent in this verse can also be translated ________________.

4. The ________________ ________________.

(See verse 14.)

“The sentence contains a figure of speech known as aposiopesis—a sudden ____________ ____ of what was being said or written so that the mind is more impressed by what is ______ ________, it being too wonderful, solemn or awful to verbalize. In English this figure is sometimes called the ‘sudden ________________.’”
Part One

Our protagonist made three shifts that moved her from self-preservation to brave determination.

1. Esther had a ____________.

“She [Esther] had to ____________ __________ in order to do what God had created her and positioned her to do.”

2. Esther ____________ _______ __________.

Consider general fears, then our context’s specific fear:

• Facing any __________

And if ____________________________, then ____________.

[your answers here]
Scenario #5

It’s tough being a woman in the __________
_________ ___ __________.

- Facing fear of __________

Hebrews 2:14-15 from The Message: “By embracing death, taking it into himself, he destroyed the Devil's hold on death and freed all who __________ through life, __________ ___
________ ___ __________.”

Recall a quote we discussed in week 3 of our homework:

“Living perpetually in the shadow of immanent catastrophe, the Jew was threatened not only physically but psychologically. Walking in the _____________ ______ _____________
was as _________________ as ____________.”

3. Esther _________ _____ _______________

she was offered.
Sometimes God ___________ the issue of _________.

Amazingly, other times He seems to __________ it.

Reflect on the importance of knowing …

1. When it’s ________.


2. When it’s _______ ____ ________.

   Ecclesiastes 3:1,7 say, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven … a time to be _________ and a time to _________.”

   • Sometimes we need to be _________ even when man invites us to _________.

Consider the idiom, “Even up to half the kingdom.”

(Compare Mark 6:17-28.)

   • Sometimes the _________ _________ _________, but they don’t _______ _________.

   See Job 34:2-4. (Compare 2 Cor. 6:1-2.)
3. When it's time to __________ for __________________
   __________ time.

   • The time wasn’t __________ _______ ____________.
     (Recall Mark 6:23.)

   • The time wasn’t __________ _______ ____________.

Commentator Adele Berlin suggests the delay is “a clever move on Esther’s part to disarm Haman and make him think he was the center of attention. This plays to Haman’s ______________
   ______________.”¹¹ Similarly, J. Gordon McConville explains that the delay allowed time “for Haman’s misguided ________________
   _______________.”¹²

4. When the ________________ is ________________.
   (See Isa. 40:31, KJV.)

Scenario #6

It's tough being a woman who can balance ___________ with ________________.
The sixth chapter is “the hinge of the story of Esther.”

God appoints or allows circumstances (often crises) in our lives to redirect our paths. Today we explore the unexpected pivot point of Esther by giving a name to an important concept in the book: _____ _________ __ ___________ also called _____ _________ __ ___________. Review Esther 6:6-11.

These reversals are part of a literary tapestry that will open our eyes to see …

1. The beauty of the book’s __________________.

   Am I willing to do the _________ to see the _____________?

Two literary devices are employed magnificently in the Book of Esther. The first is called “________________ ______________.”

What in the world is it? In its tightest form, chiastic structure is ______________ ______________. In other words, it is a ______________ of structures to emphasize an ______________ ______________.

What’s the best way to picture it?

- The “_______” that begins the word chiastic is the 22nd letter of the ______________ ______________.
It is written like this: ____. The letter itself represents the ___________ literary structure of a chiasm (literally in Greek, a crossing).

What’s the best example of it in the Book of Esther? Chiastic structure is deliciously illustrated in the repeated occurrences of __________ _____ ____________.

2. The beauty of the book’s _________________.

Esther’s best theology is in its _____________. To offer a perfect example, we’ll consider a second literary device called “__________.”

What in the world is it?

• “Peripety: a ____________ ___________ of events that ____________ the expected or intended outcome” particularly in a literary work.¹⁴

Scenario #7

It’s tough being a woman _____ ________ responsible ___ _____ “______.”

“A peripeteia swiftly turns a routine sequence of events into a ________ __________ ____________.”¹⁵
Esther 7–8:2 shows the impact of the climactic events on all four major players.

Every _______-_________ starts with ____ _________.

1. Esther __________ ___________.
   (See Esther 7:3 and 8:1.)

   “Literally, ‘________ _____ _____ _____ ______.’ The author probably intended to convey more than is being suggested by the translation ‘that he was __________ to her.’”16

2. Haman __________ ________.
   (See Esth. 7:10. Compare Ps. 7:15-16.)

3. Xerxes __________ ________.
   (See Esth. 8:1. Compare 2 Cor. 8:9.)

4. Mordecai __________ ________.
   (See Esth. 8:1-2.)

Now see the “Turn It Around!” page and fill in the appropriate blanks.*

*Editor’s Note: This form is available in the leader guide and online at www.lifeway.com/bethmoore.
Turn Around Scenario #7

It’s tough being a woman who feels responsible for the “how.”

“The _______ _______ ______ to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.”
(2 Pet. 2:9, HCSB)

“For ____ _________ _____ we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.” (Ps. 103:14)

Turn Around Scenario #6

It’s tough being a woman who can balance passion with patience.

“Yet the LORD _________ to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who _________ for him.” (Isa. 30:18)

“The Lord _________ … blessed are all those who _________ for Him.” (ESV)

“That same day,” Esther 8:1

“Rather than love, than money, than _________ give me _________.

— Henry David Thoreau (Walden, 1854)
Today’s chapter explicitly states the Book of Esther’s most pronounced theme—the reversal of destiny. We will glance ahead to Esther 9:19-22 and then focus on verses 1-4. Esther 9:1 says, “but now the tables were turned.” The Hebrew transliteration for “the tables were turned” is hapak which means “to overturn, to overthrow, to tumble.”

Premise for Today’s Session

God can't ________ ______ _______ that was _________ ______ ______ ________.

Seeing purpose in tough scenarios increases the trust required for a turnaround.

Turn Around Scenario #5

It’s tough being a woman in the tight fist of fear.

• The Jews weren’t just ______________, they were ______________.
  (See Deut. 33:29; compare Neh. 4:10-14.)

• See Esther 9:2: “The Jews assembled in their cities.” The power wasn’t just ______________. It was all of ______________.

• Every time you’re in a __________ ______ of fear, remember you’re in something much ______________. Isaiah 49:16 says, “See, I have ______________ _____ on the __________ ____ ____ ________.”

Turn Around Scenario #4

It’s tough being a woman thrown a giant-size weight.
• God always has the _______________ _____________. Exchange the _______________ for a _______________ (1 Pet. 5:7; see Deut. 23:3-5).

“However, the LORd your God … turned the _____ into a ______ for you, because the LORd your God _____ ___ ” (Deut. 23:5).

Ahab—“Implies an ardent and _____________ inclination of the mind and a _______________ of _____________ at the same time.”

Consider the unique metaphor in Hosea 7:8

“Ephraim is a _______ _______ not __________ ________.”

Turn Around Scenario #3

It's tough being a woman in a mean world.

• In a ____________ world, New Testament believers are called to a _______________ ____________.

“I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may _______ ____ ______ __ _____, holding on to _______ and a _______ _______________. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith” (1 Tim. 1:18-19).

Consider the following excerpt from The Queen and I:

“When, because of your ________, your life too becomes perceptibly different; when your reactions are quite _______________ to what the situation seems to call for and your activities can no longer be explained in terms of your _______________; that is when your neighborhood will sit up and take notice. In the eyes of the world, it is not our ________________ with Jesus Christ that counts; it is our ________________ __ __________!”

Video sessions are available for download at www.lifeway.com/women
As the inspired writer puts the finishing touches on the book, we will put the finishing touches on our approach to its overarching theme—reversals of destiny.

Interestingly, a book called by Esther's name and showcasing her beauty and courage begins and ends without her. So, who is the Book's real hero? Who is the truest protagonist?

Consider the following thoughts:

Neither Esther nor Mordecai had the power or position alone to deliver their people. It was only as they acted in ___________ ___________ and ___________ that they were able to lead God's people through the crisis of death and into deliverance. Neither of them ___________ to the role; perhaps neither of them ___________ it. It was thrust on them by a series of improbable circumstances largely beyond their control. Nevertheless, their ___________ ___________ accomplished God's ancient promise, and the Jewish race was preserved until in the fullness of time, God entered history through this people as the ___________. How marvelous are God's inscrutable ways!

Recall Scenario #2

It's tough being a woman in a world where ___________ ___________.

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Before we locate and record our “turn around” Scripture, consider some of the possible implications of Genesis 3:16. Two different Hebrew words are translated “man.” They are \textit{adam} and \textit{ish}.

When a distinction exists between the two, \textit{ish} denotes “man as the \underline{___________} of woman and/or \underline{______________} in his \underline{____________}.”

The word is first used in Genesis 2:24. In the KJV, \textit{ish} is translated “husband” 69 times and “man” or “men” 1212 times.

**Turn Around Scenario #2**

**It's tough being a woman in a world where beauty is a treatment.**

“He has made \underline{_____________} \underline{_____________} \underline{____} \underline{____}” (Eccl. 3:11).

In man’s realm, \underline{_________} \underline{_____________} \underline{__________}.

In God’s realm where we will spend forever, \underline{________} \underline{________} \underline{________}.

**Turn Around Scenario #1**

**It's tough being a woman in another woman’s shadow.**

“He who dwells in the \underline{___________} \underline{___} \underline{____} will rest in the \underline{____________} \underline{____} \underline{___________}” (Ps. 91:1).

On the “Turn It Around!” page, write concise descriptions of each scenario over the top of each corresponding box.