

Risky Business

By Shari Miller

[For Bible study leader helps, click on the *Quarterly* icon at www.lwml.org or contact the LWML Office.]

Before the study, read the entire Book of Esther *or* read **Esther 1–7** as a group to begin. After reading the story, share with a partner (or the group) the name of an actress you would choose to play the part of Esther and why.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, Bless our study of Your Word. With the Psalmist, we declare: *Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* Send Your Holy Spirit to give us insight and guide our discussion. We pray in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

The Book of Esther has all the makings of a good movie: a heroine, a villain, wealth and decadence, political intrigue, and suspense. Esther learned that living at the heart of the Persian Empire as an exiled Jew was indeed risky business. She risked her **security**, **rejection from the king**, and yes, her very **life!** She became an **advocate** for the Jewish nation living on the brink of annihilation.

Esther Risked: Her Security

Read **Esther 2:5–9, 15.**

In verse 15a, how is Esther identified?

What do we know about her from verse 7?

Read **Esther 2:8b** again. Did Esther (or Mordecai for that matter) have any choice in her life's direction? How do you know?

Whose favor did Esther win (vv. 9, 15b)?

Hegai gave Esther the “royal treatment” so to speak! What did he do for her?

Read **Esther 2:10–14.**

What secret did Esther keep and why? (See also v. 2:20.)

Before she went to the king, what did a harem girl do?

How secure do you think the life of a harem girl was?

For additional discussion if time allows: God used Esther's beauty to place her in a position of influence with the king, and she used the opportunity to serve her people. What resources has God given you? How can you serve God with those resources?

Esther Risked: Rejection from the King

Read **Esther 1:4–12, 19; 3:8–11; 6:1–3; 7:7, 10.**

What personality traits did King Xerxes display?

Would you have enjoyed being a citizen in this unstable king's country? How about being his wife? Why or why not?

Esther Risked: Her Life

Read **Esther 4:11; 5:2; 7:3–4**. After Haman devised the plan to destroy all the Jews, what risks did Esther face?

Read **Esther 4:12–14**. What counsel did Mordecai give Esther?

Read **Esther 4:15–16**. How did Esther prepare for her first unannounced visit to King Xerxes?

For additional discussion if time allows: Esther was chosen by the greatest king of the day to be his queen. She seemed to handle that honor gracefully. How can a person gracefully handle being chosen for a special honor? How can we honor God when we are honored?

Esther: Advocate for Her People

Read **Esther 8:1–8**. King Xerxes' irrevocable decree of annihilation was still a threat to the Jews, even after Haman's death. Esther once again risked her life to appear before the king. Why?

Skim the rest of **Esther 8 – Esther 10**. How was the situation resolved?

Jesus Christ: Our Example

How is Esther's willingness to serve her people a foreshadowing of the life of willing obedience Jesus would live for us? Look at the following passages to review what Jesus gave up, endured, and accomplished for our sakes.

Security: John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:7

Rejection: Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 27:46; Mark 6:1–4; Luke 23:11; Acts 4:11

Life: Isaiah 53:5–7; Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24

Jesus Christ: Our Greatest Advocate

Read **Acts 2:32–33; 1 John 2:1–2; Hebrews 4:14–15; Romans 8:34b; 1 Timothy 2:5**. Who is the Advocate between God and man? What does that mean for you personally?

Be a Risk Taker!

Because of the saving work of Jesus our Advocate, what "risks" are we privileged to take?

Luke 9:23–25

Hebrews 4:16

John 15:1–8

Hebrews 10:23–25

2 Corinthians 3:4, 12

Hebrews 12:1–3

Ephesians 3:12

James 1:2–4

Ephesians 6:10–18

Identify the risk takers, the risks, and the results in the following passages:

Risk Taker

Risk

Result

Matthew 14:25–29a

Mark 5:25–34

Acts 15:25–27

Romans 16:3–4

Philippians 1:12–14

For further discussion if time allows: Can you think of other Biblical risk takers? What can we learn from their example?

For discussion: "The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you." Discuss this quote as it relates to Esther's "risky business". How does it apply to *our* "risky business"?

For discussion: Through the Holy Spirit, each baptized believer in Christ is made a daughter/son of God the King. What responsibilities come with that honor?

We *can* make a difference, even though we might have to take risks. Our faithful God promises to be with us. We are privileged to boldly proclaim with Paul in **1 Corinthians 9:23:**

I do all this for the sake of the Gospel.

Closing Prayer: Dear God our King, We praise and worship You for Your greatness and majesty. We confess that we are not always ready to risk all for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of the salvation that Jesus won for each of us on the cross, we are bold to make a positive difference in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Help us in our risky endeavors so that all we do be done to Your glory. We ask all this in the Name and for the sake of our Advocate Jesus Christ. Amen.

Suggested Hymn: "Fight the Good Fight" (*LSB* 664; *LW* 299; *TLH* 447)

[Creative activities to enhance this study might include reading a book about Esther or watching a DVD and comparing them to the Biblical account. Visit the LWML Web site for a list of possible books or DVDs included with the online Leaders' Notes. For a more in-depth Bible study on Esther, use *Radiant in His Love* (a six-session study) available from the LWML *Catalog*.]

Shari Miller, wife of Rev. Larry and mother of Joshua and Johanna, is a former News Editor of the Lutheran Woman's Quarterly. She lives in Helena, Montana, and has written various articles and studies for the LWML.