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**Dear heavenly Father, we worship You this morning with our tithe and offerings. We pray for the courage to put You first in our lives. In the name of Jesus, amen.**

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**FEBRUARY 27, 2021**

## **When Esther put God First**

Putting God first can be difficult. What can we learn from Esther that will help us put God first in our lives today?

When Esther agreed to join the selection process that would eventually make her queen of the Persian empire, many doubts must have rushed through her mind. Her people were exiles and their prospects were dim. It looked like God had abandoned them to the Persian rule, while still demanding obedience. But Esther was beautiful and this was an opportunity to rise above every woman in the empire.

Esther was beautiful, both inside and out. Even a ruthless king could see that. Xerxes chose her, above all others, to become his queen. Esther enjoyed her own palace and privileges she could have only imagined in previous years.

It is difficult to put God first when we struggle with poverty and the lack of resources. Yet, wealth and power often also lead people away from Him. How do you put God first when you have more wealth and influence than those around you? You follow the example of Esther and remember those who need protection.

King Xerxes was deceived by an advisor when he issued a death decree against all Hebrews. When challenged to beg the king for mercy, Esther was afraid. In her own words, Esther 4:11 reads:

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

Esther was not immune to fear. But she was as courageous as she was beautiful. After asking all the Hebrews to fast and pray, she risked her life by entering the king’s presence uninvited. At that moment of great risk, she puts God first and proclaims some of the most unforgettable words in all history: “If I perish, I perish.”

Esther put God first. Her example compels us to do the same. As the deacons collect the tithe and offerings, we are challenged to put God first.