

At a glance

It feels like we get used to one phase of our lives only to find we are moving on to the next. One thing always constant is God. He is unchanging, always the same, perfect in His timing, and ever so gracious! As we struggle to deal with change in our life, may we always hold to God's unchanging hand.



## Characteristics OF A Successful Woman

*“There is nothing more constant than change.”*

*—Heraclitus, 535 B.C.*

The truth of change is a reality, and I agree with this phrase attributed to Heraclitus, with the sole exception that God remains as the only being who is absolute and constant. The Lord himself allows change as part of the process of maturity. If we want to grow as women of God, we must know things are going to change with the passing of years, and we need the grace of God to come out victorious.

As for me, changes—far from being obstacles—have helped me grow as a woman. Even when we have to make difficult decisions, it is wise not to run from changes, but rather to accept them with courage as new opportunities God is giving us.

With the passage of time, I have had to either change many things in my life, or learn in the midst of circumstances to value the process more than the happenings. I have moved to different houses, changed schools, and met new friends. I experienced what it meant to leave behind worldly pleasures to become a follower of Christ. As a young adult, I studied medicine to become a doctor while my husband was studying at the seminary to become a pastor. I worked three years in general medicine until I finally gave up my medical career to serve the Lord full-time in Cuba. This was in

2003 and since that time an avalanche of changes has come into my life. It wasn't easy to give up the medical profession, but even bigger challenges awaited me. Having faced changes in residence, churches, cities, friends, countries (I was born in Cuba, but lived four years in Panama, and now in the United States), cultures, and languages, I am better prepared to serve my King.

Perhaps the biggest change came when I had to face the fact I would never be able to have children. This was perhaps the hardest thing I have faced, but even in this challenge, God has been glorified in a great way.

We must not fear changes; but rather assume them, respect them, and place them in God's hand so His grace will cover us and change our circumstances into victory.

### **List the biggest changes you've faced.**

There is a book in Scripture that offers women an excellent model for the times we face change. It is the book of Esther. It tells the story of a young woman who ascended from rags to riches to save an entire nation, her people Israel.

Esther means, "star." Her Jewish name is Hadassah, which means "myrtle." Myrtle is a bush with flowers, a symbol of love and beauty. The oil from its flowers and fruit is aromatic and used in perfumes. In addition, Olympic champions were honored with crowns made of myrtle. It is probable Hadassah took the name "Esther" when she came into the Persian court.

Her parents had died, and she was her cousin Mordecai's adopted daughter. He was a member of King Ahasuerus' court (Esther 2:5, 7, 15). Both Esther and Mordecai were descendants of the Hebrews exiled when Nebuchadnezzar transported the people to Babylon more than 100 years earlier.

### **Read Esther 2:5-8. What changes did Esther experience?**

Perhaps you can identify with some of these circumstances. Being a foreigner, losing most of your loved ones, and living as an adopted child, among other changes, would certainly test one's character. The way Esther went through the processes of change demonstrates certain characteristics that are fundamental for successful women.



## *Characteristic One*

### A humble character

Read Esther 2:8-15. Her humble character made a great impression on Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the women. Verse 9 states, "And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him." Her humility made her obedient to Mordecai. What we read in verses 10-20 indicates Esther had not revealed her Jewish nationality per Mordecai's instructions, perhaps to protect her from anti-Semitism, which is nothing less than hostility toward the Jews based on a combination of religious, racial, cultural, and ethnic prejudices. Therefore, she remained silent.

When it was her turn to go before King Ahasuerus, she didn't seek anything extravagant (2:15). This is an extraordinary revelation of her humility. She could have demanded expensive jewelry and costly garments, but she was satisfied with what she had. Worldly con-

siderations had not contaminated her mind. There was a period of preparation for six months with aromatic perfumes and six months with oil of myrrh. This completed a year of intense labor and demands. I can imagine all the conversations about clothing, jewelry, beauty, and seduction during that time. It must have been stressful for Esther and the other women who were there. It was something like a modern-day beauty contest. Nevertheless, Esther once more demonstrated her humility, accepting the counsel of her instructor. This resulted in her finding grace in the eyes of all (verse 15).

How different from the clamor of many women today! Women are urged to fight for their rights. They are encouraged not to be satisfied with the status quo, but rather seek for more. We need to learn from Esther that piety should be ac-

accompanied by contentment, and this is better than all the riches of this world (1 Peter 3:3-4).



## *Characteristic Two*

### A wise and valiant heart

Courage is linked to wisdom.

Wisdom is the capacity to think and to consider situations and circumstances, distinguishing the positive from the negative.

Courage is vigor, decisiveness, and the heroic ability to execute an action.

Some women are brave but not wise. However, a wise woman is always brave.

Read Esther 4:15-16. From this

passage, we understand Esther was a woman with a wise heart, and at the same time, brave.

After Haman had crafted his plan to destroy the Jews, Esther prayed, fasted, and decided to intervene before the king on behalf of her people. Yet, the action she contemplated was against the law, which prohibited anyone from coming before the king without previous authorization (4:11).

What was the consequence of coming before the King without proper authorization?

Facing the great need of saving her people, Esther was brave. Again, wisdom is linked to courage. The phrase, "If I perish, I perish," was not a blind act of heroism, but rather came from the conviction of acting with divine wisdom. After hearing of the plot to exterminate

all the Jews, Esther planned in prayer, and presented a strategy to Mordecai before bringing her petition before King Ahasuerus. Her wisdom made her courageous before the imminent danger she and her people faced. She was aware that her proposed course of action

would put her life at risk; nevertheless, she persevered in her efforts to gain deliverance for her people. Daughters of the King give themselves with wisdom and valor to God's will, and God gives the victory.

Finally, Esther won the victory as she persuaded her husband. Once she had obtained the triumph, she never compromised her noble character.

Do you remember a time in which you acted with wisdom and courage? Describe how the hand of God was with you.



## *Characteristic Three*

### **A grateful spirit**

Not only was Esther humble, brave, and wise, she was grateful to those around her. Even after God's enemies were destroyed, she did not seek fame or power for herself. On the contrary, she saw that her cousin Mordecai received the credit he deserved. In chapter eight, after Haman's death, Mordecai went before the king to receive his reward:

"And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her" (8:1).

"...and Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman" (8:2).

Mordecai was someone very special to Esther, and his actions were key in the life of the queen. The last chapter of the book just has three verses but reveals the greatness of this man and why he had so much influence on Esther (read chapter 10).

What has a key person in your life meant to you?

Esther not only knew how to publicly recognize her cousin, but at the same time, she did not forget her people. Read 8:3-6. We must have a thankful spirit toward those who have helped us, and in one way or another have marked our paths. We see this attitude reflected in the New Testament when the Apostle Paul exhorts us to be thankful in our Christian life (Colossians 3:15).

What a difference we see in comparing the attitudes of Esther and Vashti, the former queen. Queen Vashti did not show a correct attitude in facing the challenges of life. We do not see in her prayer or fasting to preserve her right to self-respect. She did not appeal to others to help her in difficulty. She did not have a humble spirit. What we see is pride and arrogance. She was not wise and brave, but rather self-willed, defiant, insisting on her rights and privileges as the wife of the king.

On the other hand, Esther was a woman of change, a model we should imitate in order to grow each day as daughters of the King. God raised her up to the throne for a reason; she knew how to love, and at the same time influence her husband for good. She was outstanding in her ability to reason with men, much like Abigail, the wife of King David. This helps us see how important we are in God's plan, if we act correctly. Esther's crown forged through change and difficulty remained shining, thanks to her humble character, her wise and courageous heart, and her thankful spirit. God is seeking this kind of woman today. Are you one?

**About the Writer:** Ariadna Riesgo and her husband Lázaro, worked with Free Will Baptists in Cuba from the time they married in 1998 until 2011. After serving at the seminary in Panama for five years, they moved to the Nashville, Tennessee, area to work with International Missions. They serve as professors and trainers in Free Will Baptist works in Spanish-speaking countries.