

Queen Esther Beneath the Lemon Tree

Julia Bettencourt

We've all heard the old saying, "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade". Sometimes it seems such a trite saying, especially if someone quotes it to us when we are in a great dilemma in our life. There are things such as a health situation or something traumatic happening with our family members that we may not be able to make lemonade out of or change the situation. However, God does give us the strength to deal and handle even the most trying of circumstances. So even though we can't stop the lemons from falling or make something better of a situation, we can determine to better the way in which we handle those 'lemons'.

I've never had a lemon tree before until we recently moved and our new yard has a large lemon tree. When we first moved in, that tree was just loaded with large beautiful lemons. I kept hearing these thudding noises upon moving in and I finally figured out it was the ripe lemons dropping off the tree. When those lemons are at the peak of ripeness, they just fall unexpectedly with such force and hit the ground with such a pop. Isn't that so like the lemons in our lives? Our trials and adversities hit us at such a force. They drop and thud into our lives when we least expect them to fall.

When I think about Queen Esther, I think how she must have been standing right beneath her own lemon tree at the peak of ripeness. The lemons in her life kept falling. First of all she had lost her parents, and her uncle had raised her. The bible doesn't give any details, but we all know that growing up without one of your parents can be devastating. Esther was without both of her parents. Then out of the blue, comes a decree from the king that all the maidens should be gathered together, Esther among them, so that the king could choose a new queen. My! What must have ran through Esther's head. What a predicament to be in. Then here comes an evil man in her life, Haman. Next, the Jews, Esther's people were in danger of being destroyed. I'm sure she never expected to be in the situation she was given, but it was all in God's working and God's timing.

So how did Esther deal with her 'lemons'?

1. She didn't make enemies.

Have you ever noticed when we are hit with a 'lemon' we want to make enemies of everyone around us? If you are in close proximity to us, watch out! We tend to lash out at others with such ease when we are faced with a trial. We spew out bitter and angry words, especially to those who are closest to us. Esther apparently didn't go out of her way to make enemies. In chapter 2:9, talking about the keeper, who took care of the maidens while they were in the palace, it says, "**And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him...**". On down in verse 15, it says, "**And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.**" It also says in verse 17, "**And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins...**" No matter how beautiful she was, I don't think she could have had so many people like her if she was lashing out hurtful things to those around her when she found herself in her unexpected circumstances.

2. She determined to make the best of the situation.

Esther didn't take her 'lemons' lying down. When word came that her people were going to be destroyed, she tried to do all she could to prevent it, even if it meant her own life. She was willing to go before the king without an invitation from him, which was against the custom and law.

"...so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16

3. She had courage.

Esther had to have courage when she went before the king without an invitation. She could have been killed for doing so. When we are faced with 'lemons', we have to trust that things are in God's hands. There are so many verses of Scripture from which we can draw strength.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose." Romans 8:28

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5,6

4. She didn't think she deserved something more.

Ever notice that when we go through trials, we somehow think we should be dealt some extra privileges? Sometimes we think we are even entitled to more understanding when we don't receive it from others. Esther didn't even want more when the king was willing to give Esther anything she requested.

"Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." Esther 5:3

5. She knew what she did affected other people.

Whatever we do with our 'lemons' has the ability to affect other people. It may be your own family that it affects, or someone you don't even know. Our actions and reactions trickle down to others. We may hinder someone's salvation with how we handle a 'lemon' in our life. Also how a Christian responds to something could hinder another Christian's spiritual growth. Esther had all of her family and her entire people riding on what she did and how she handled the things that came into her life. She cared what happened to them.

"For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" Esther 8:6

Lemons are going to fall into our lives. There may be circumstances arise that we can't change, but we need to do our best to make the most of them and to deal with them. Sometimes we forget that God is still in control. Even though things weren't easy for her, Esther was right where she needed to be at the right time. Esther's Uncle Mordecai, reminds her of this in Esther 4:14, **"...and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"** That phrase **"for such a time as this"** always comes to my mind when a 'lemon' drops on me. We just don't know what God's outcome is or what **"time as this"** we are weaved into the history of making. Esther was weaved into the history of saving a great nation. I am so glad God does things in His plan and timing and not ours.

So, what do you do when the 'lemons' fall from your tree?