

# Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

## Lesson 80 – Take Care How You Treat Others

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It always saddens me when I hear a husband referring to his wife as “my old lady” or a wife referring to her husband as “my old man”. Is that how God wants us to treat humankind, His highest form of creation? I think not!

**Genesis 1:26-27 (NKJV)** – *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” ...So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

Consider the creative power of God. Consider His very essence. God Almighty bestowed His unique characteristics upon both male and female, creating them in His own image, in his own likeness. The creation of human beings was God’s crowning work! Men and women have been given the awesome responsibility to have dominion over the earth; to be given the honor and privilege to reflect God’s characteristics as good stewards over His creation.

Men and women were created to love, honor, and support one another as equals inside the sphere of God’s authority. Men and women were not created to dominate one another; to tarnish God’s image through sin.

In the Book of Esther, we discover the evil that arose when King Xerxes (Ahasuerus in Hebrew), demeaned his wife, Queen Vashti. Though we typically put our focus on Esther and her courageous role in saving the Jewish nation from total annihilation, Queen Vashti got my attention as someone whose story needed to be told.

It was the third year of the reign of King Xerxes of Persia (486-465 B.C.); who was emperor of Media-Persia (now known as Iran). He was ruler over 127 provinces which stretched from India to Ethiopia. In his honor, he declared a six-month period of celebration, and he invited all his governors, officials, princes and military officers to a long series of royal regalia.

### The King’s Banquet

Toward the end of this celebration, the king gave a special seven-day banquet for the palace officials and servants, which was held in the beautiful courtyard of the palace garden. The self-absorbed king wanted to make sure everyone basked in his wealth and status.

**Esther 1:7 (NKJV)** – *And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.*

At the same time the men were being entertained by the king, Queen Vashti was giving a banquet for the women in another part of the royal palace.

On the seventh and last day of the feast, when King Xerxes was in high spirits, half-drunk from wine, he sent his seven eunuchs who served him, to bring Queen Vashti before him wearing her royal crown. For what purpose? The king had spent months showing off, flaunting his great wealth, now he wanted to bring in the Grand Finale – the fireworks! He wanted to end the feast with flair by displaying his greatest treasure, Queen Vashti. For, he wanted to parade his wife as his possession; perhaps even in a lewd manner.

**Esther 1:10-11 (NLT)** – *“...he told the seven eunuchs who attended him...to bring Queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head. He wanted the nobles and all the other men to gaze on her beauty, for she was a very beautiful woman.”*

The king’s desire backfired on him! Queen Vashti refused, catching him off-guard!

**Esther 1:12 (NLT)** – *But when they conveyed the king’s order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come. This made the king furious, and he burned with anger.*

The palace celebration was brought to an abrupt close. The king’s pride was crushed. His honor had suffered a public blow when Queen Vashti refused his command. Even though King Xerxes had control over 127 provinces, he was stunned he could not control his wife, the Queen. King or not, is that the role of a husband, to control his wife? Absolutely not! The Word of God stipulates the moral standard of conduct between husbands and wives.

**Colossians 3:18-19 (NLT)** – *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.* [underlined emphasis mine]

In a spiritually mature marriage it is not surprising when you see a husband loving and honoring his wife. It is quite refreshing to witness such a marriage. You see it as the husband goes out of his way to treat his wife with care, kindness, tenderness and compassion. It is also refreshing to witness the actions of a wife who receives that kind of loving care. With ease, she graciously returns that same kind of love and tenderness in *willing* submission to her husband. The reason? Christian husbands will not ask or demand that their wives do anything that is not, “*fitting for those who belong to the Lord.*”

The Word of God makes clear, that a wife’s *submission* is never to be forced on her by a harsh, demanding husband. To respond out of force (against one’s will) is not being submissive; that is being dominated! God did not create men and women to dominate (control or manipulate) one another.

The reason for Queen Vashti’s refusal to appear before the king, is not recorded in the Bible, but it is obvious it had everything to do with the inappropriate nature of the command. She refused to be a spectacle, to degrade herself before the king’s drunken guests; to be used as a mere object to be put on display – to be treated as nothing more than mere chattel, as was common practice in the ancient world. Sadly, this treatment of women still exists in various parts of the world today. The king’s anger could not be

quenched, so he called his wise men, counselors who knew the law, to consult with them.

**Esther 1:15 (NLT)** – *“What must be done to Queen Vashti?” the king demanded. “What penalty does the law provide for a queen who refuses to obey the king’s orders, properly sent through his eunuchs?”*

By studying Esther 1:10-22, the king’s issue became quite clear. It was the fear of women gaining equality with men, if they were not forced into submission. Memucan, one of King Xerxes’ wise men, came up with the legal way out of the king’s dilemma.

**Esther 1:19-20 (NLT)** – *“So if it please the king, we suggest that you issue a written decree, a law of the Persians and Medes that cannot be revoked. It should order that Queen Vashti be forever banished from the presence of King Xerxes, and that the king should choose another queen more worthy than she. When this decree is published throughout the king’s vast empire, husbands everywhere, whatever their rank, will receive proper respect from their wives!”*

The king and his nobles were un-righteously pleased with the law; Queen Vashti was deposed.

**In summary:** God cares deeply how we treat one another. We should never take each other for granted, but truly value and respect one another.

**I John 4:7, 11 (NKJV)** – *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God...Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

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### Questions for personal or group study

1. What is wrong with the lavishness of the king’s party? (see I John 2:16)
2. What is the difference between godly submission and domination?
3. What was the objective of the king’s meeting with his counselors?
4. How have you been dominated or manipulated by someone? How did you feel?