

Pleasing the King By Anne Richardson

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. [James 1:22-25]

I don't know about you, but I definitely consider God's Word to be a looking glass or mirror for my life. I don't mean one of those mirrors that distort your image and make you appear as you are not. You know...like the one they put in dressing rooms. You try on the clothes in the store and the mirrors all make you look like a slim fashion queen. But when you get home and look in your own mirror-those love handles and rolls are back in plain sight!

Only the mirror of God's Word lets us see ourselves as we REALLY are. The neat thing is-it doesn't just reflect our flaws-it shows us what we can be IF we not only listen to but obey God. If we do things His way.

My great revelation today about the mirror of God's Word, is that the person looking back at me is my greatest potential enemy. Yes, that's right. In myself or in my flesh I cannot, nor will I ever reflect the glory and image of God to the people around me. In fact, if I allow my deceiving emotional heart to guide my thoughts and actions, I will lose the favour of the King. King Jesus that is.

Please bear with me as I share my observations.

The story of Esther begins with the account of another Queen. Queen Vashti. The Bible says that she was "fair to look upon". Obviously the king was proud of Vashti's appearance because in the midst of a grand banquet he was hosting, he called for his 7 officers "to bring Vashti the queen before him with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty" [Esther 1:11]

Vashti, who was at the same time hosting a banquet of her own for all the women- refused the king's command. And boy did the king get mad. Really mad!

Let's digress for a moment and ask ourselves-you know...as women...what we really think about what Vashti did. There she was, the hostess of a large banquet. Obviously her presence there was important. She was overseeing the event, after all. When suddenly, in march seven men who inform her that the king demands her presence immediately. The Bible doesn't say why Vashti refused, but any red-blooded woman can take a wild guess. She may have thought something like this, "How absolutely rude and inconsiderate of the king-my husband-to take me away from my banquet. All he wants is to parade me around in front of his friends for the sole purpose of showing off my beauty. He doesn't care about my feelings at all. He's treating me like an object, not a person."

I believe that Queen Vashti was feeling like her "right" to respect, and to love and consideration had been violated by her husband. And so she said "no" to the king.

Consider with me the reactions of those who witnessed the Queen's refusal. They told the King that she had not only done wrong to him- but that her actions would affect "the princes, and all

the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.” [Esther 1:17]

Why would her refusal have such a strong and far-reaching effect, and in what way?

Read on in verses 17 and 18:

"Women everywhere will begin to despise their husbands when they learn that Queen Vashti has refused to appear before the king. Before this day is out, the wives of all the king's nobles throughout Persia and Media will hear what the queen did and will start treating their husbands the same way. There will be no end to their contempt and anger.

When I read this, I immediately began to think about what these verses imply. If the women in the kingdom could be so readily or easily incited to wrath and contempt against their husbands (cuz them are fight'n words!) -it implies to me that these men did not always treat their wives with the love and consideration they felt they deserved.

Welcome to the real world.

The Apostle Paul did say that in marriage we would have trouble in the flesh. (1 Cor. 7:28) Two HUMAN beings-each with their own perceived needs and rights-each with their own flaws and weaknesses-living together until death do them part. Expectations are bound to be dashed. Feelings hurt and hearts broken.

There has to be something in place to get us through these times.

A code of conduct. Like soldiers in the midst of battle-and marriage does have some tough battles-we must honour our commitment and behave in a way that will cause others to want to do the same.

Queen, Vashti was to be an example to all the women in the kingdom. In other words, she was called to submit even at the expense of her personal feelings.

Is this ringing a bell for anybody?

Ladies, our King has called us. He has issued to us a code of conduct which is also based upon our willingness to submit.

1 Peter 3:1-6 says.....*you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.*

Our godly conduct is for the purpose of being an example to and teaching the women who are younger than we are. If the aged (older) women are doing their part, then these powerful godly principles will be at work in all of the generations following.

Now...back to Vashti. Because Vashti reacted to the violation of her perceived rights instead of responding to the higher command of the king- it cost her his favour. When the king summoned her-she had been presented with an opportunity to show the women at the banquet what it means- in spite of any personal cost-to submit graciously to our husbands.

Ouch!

The Titus 2 command that older women teach the younger to love their husbands is not a reference to romantic love. It isn't talking about making him his favourite meal or writing him little notes or planning a cozy evening alone. The Apostle Paul is talking about a love that is committed to respond and act in a kingdom pleasing way even when it is inconvenient. Even when you don't "feel" like it. Even when you have been hurt. He is talking about a love that is not self-seeking and does not demand its own rights.

Queen Vashti was called to the king-but she wouldn't come.
Queen Esther was not called but she went anyway.

Two queens. Two different responses.

Vashti was concerned about and looking out for herself.
Esther looked away from her self to the welfare of others.
Vashti was motivated by a desire to protect and preserve her own honour, while Esther was motivated by a desire to protect and preserve the Jewish people.

God's calling on our lives as individual women –irrespective of our gifts and talents must always work in submission to our King and for the common good of the saints the ministry and the body of Christ.

As married women, how we respond to our husbands determines whether or not we will receive the favour of the King.

The Scriptures indicate that Esther's approach to her husband was in all humility.

Then Esther went again before the king, falling down at his feet and begging him with tears to stop the evil plot devised by Haman the Agagite against the Jews. Her desire was to please the king, to find favour with him. And she did. The king held out his golden scepter and the Bible says that Esther arose and STOOD before the king.”[Esther 8:3]

God is always true to His Word.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.
[James 4:10]

Who knows when our call from the king will come? A call up higher- to a place we've never walked before. A call that may seem unreasonable or unfair. That may come in the form of a betrayal or crisis. A call that will send our emotions into violent protest, causing them to shout loudly and demand their rights. A call that doesn't look like a call at all. Not at first.

Like Vashti we might refuse the invitation.