



Esther EXPERIENCE

Our Inspiration

The biblical story of Esther is a familiar one to many; how she was used by God in the most miraculous way to save the Jewish people from annihilation. Here one of our team shares our inspiration for this initiative...

On a visit to Pakistan, a Release Women colleague and I were able to share Esther's story with a group of young Christian women, many of whom know the daily threat of persecution and the harsh reality of marginalisation because of their faith in Christ. Some work at the dusty brick kilns, stooping for long hours under the hot sun to make bricks by hand; others learn how to sew and develop their literacy at one of the skills centres run by Release partners. Hearing their responses after sharing Esther's story with them confirmed it had helped them to grow in their understanding of God's faithfulness to them and to appreciate how, despite the harshness of their situation, they can remain faithful to Him – just as Esther did.

Esther was a refugee, an orphan and she and her people faced the threat of extinction. Hers was a story that the young women we met in Pakistan could identify with. The brick kilns and skills centres are far from glamorous situations in which to live, work and learn and are a distant cry from the lavish Persian palace which Esther found herself in. Her earliest memory would have been living as one who had been taken into exile with few rights or social standing. As a naturally beautiful girl she probably would have endured the unwanted advances from men trying to take advantage of her, a girl with so little status or power. Most Pakistani Christian women know exactly what that feels like. They are nothing, only young girls, with little or no money spent on their education or health. Yet, the girls we met are beautiful young women, inside and out, just as Esther was.

In Pakistan we would have loved to have honoured those special girls and to have taken them some gifts; for them to have shared in Esther's experience of beauty treatments – maybe perfume, bubble bath, scented soap to wash away the grime of the dust at the end of a hard day's work. Not so they could be chosen as queen and save a nation, but to show them how much they are valued and cared for as sisters in Christ.

Practically it is not possible to provide these enjoyable experiences for the girls we met or for the many others in different countries around the world just like them. However, there is something that we can do to help to show our suffering sisters that we value them and to help to bring about change. We would like to encourage you to use this Esther Experience pack to organise and host an Esther Experience event to raise funds for persecuted Christians, specifically for the projects we have highlighted in this pack. These will provide an opportunity for women in Pakistan and Egypt to learn more about their position before God, to see the value He puts on each of them and to be part of God's transformation in each of their communities.

There are several different ways in which you could host an Esther Experience and we are sure that you will have your own ideas in addition to the ones we have shared in this pack.