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Stand with Farm Workers Against Gender Based Violence

Harvest of Justice 2019

Power and Control Bible Study: Understanding power and control in the workplace

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Leader's Guide

The goal of this bible study is to:

- explore the dynamics of power and control for women in a 'workplace', the implications of personal relationships and community relationships and values.
- learn lessons from the first chapter of Esther that can help in understanding current realities.
- consider how changing the realities of gender based violence requires all parts of the community working together.

Supplies:

- Print out Esther Chapter 1 (below) and/or have Bibles for each person.
- Handouts: Outline of Events of Vashti's Story (below), Power and Control Wheel (from NFWM website) and Litany of Commitment (from NFWM website).
- Projector, Speakers, Laptop/Computer to show video: "Maricela's Story: Standing with Farm Workers Against Gender Based Violence" (found on NFWM's youtube channel or available for download from the NFWM website).
- Writing utensils.

Task 1: Explore Esther Chapter 1.

- Read chapter one of the Book of Esther.
- Review the handout Outline of Events of Vashti's Story.
- If time permits have the group put themselves into the role of the following groups/persons in the text: the king, the powerful men and advisors, the queen and the powerful women around her so they can reflect more deeply on how personal and community dynamics and narratives influence events.

Task 2: Put ourselves into the story to think about gender dynamics.

- Hand out the power and control wheel.
- Consider the categories of the power and control wheel that we can identify as being involved in Esther chapter one. For example: male privilege, coercion and trust, blaming, economic abuse, intimidation, etc.
- Ask members of the group to make a list of examples from their own lives.

Task 3: Making connections to present realities of the lives of farm worker women.

- View the video from NFWM: Maricela's Story: Standing with Farm Workers Against Gender Based Violence.
- Look at the power and control wheel again and identify its elements in Maricela's story; for example: the need to be silent in the face of abuse, the presence of abuse, community responses, etc.

Task 4: Brainstorm ways to make a difference.

- Select next action steps by reviewing Harvest of Justice Activity Ideas and Current Campaigns on the NFWM website

Close with the Litany of Commitment

Esther 1 (The Message)

1 ¹⁻³ This is the story of something that happened in the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled from India to Ethiopia—127 provinces in all. King Xerxes ruled from his royal throne in the palace complex of Susa. In the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his officials and ministers. The military brass of Persia and Media were also there, along with the princes and governors of the provinces.

⁴⁻⁷ For six months he put on exhibit the huge wealth of his empire and its stunningly beautiful royal splendors. At the conclusion of the exhibit, the king threw a weeklong party for everyone living in Susa, the capital—important and unimportant alike. The party was in the garden courtyard of the king's summer house. The courtyard was elaborately decorated with white and blue cotton curtains tied with linen and purple cords to silver rings on marble columns. Silver and gold couches were arranged on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and colored stones. Drinks were served in gold chalices, each chalice one-of-a-kind. The royal wine flowed freely—a generous king!

⁸⁻⁹ The guests could drink as much as they liked—king's orders!—with waiters at their elbows to refill the drinks. Meanwhile, Queen Vashti was throwing a separate party for women inside King Xerxes' royal palace.

¹⁰⁻¹¹ On the seventh day of the party, the king, high on the wine, ordered the seven eunuchs who were his personal servants (Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas) to bring him Queen Vashti resplendent in her royal crown. He wanted to show off her beauty to the guests and officials. She was extremely good-looking.

¹²⁻¹⁵ But Queen Vashti refused to come, refused the summons delivered by the eunuchs. The king lost his temper. Seething with anger over her insolence, the king called in his counselors, all experts in legal matters. It was the king's practice to consult his expert advisors. Those closest to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven highest-ranking princes of Persia and Media, the inner circle with access to the king's ear. He asked them what legal recourse they had against Queen Vashti for not obeying King Xerxes' summons delivered by the eunuchs.

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Memucan spoke up in the council of the king and princes: "It's not only the king Queen Vashti has insulted, it's all of us, leaders and people alike in every last one of King Xerxes' provinces. The word's going to get out: 'Did you hear the latest about Queen Vashti? King Xerxes ordered her to be brought before him and she wouldn't do it!' When the women hear it, they'll start treating their husbands with contempt. The day the wives of the Persian and Mede officials get wind of the queen's insolence, they'll be

out of control. Is that what we want, a country of angry women who don't know their place?

¹⁹⁻²⁰ “So, if the king agrees, let him pronounce a royal ruling and have it recorded in the laws of the Persians and Medes so that it cannot be revoked, that Vashti is permanently banned from King Xerxes’ presence. And then let the king give her royal position to a woman who knows her place. When the king’s ruling becomes public knowledge throughout the kingdom, extensive as it is, every woman, regardless of her social position, will show proper respect to her husband.”

²¹⁻²² The king and the princes liked this. The king did what Memucan proposed. He sent bulletins to every part of the kingdom, to each province in its own script, to each people in their own language: “Every man is master of his own house; whatever he says, goes.”

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Understanding Power and Control in the Workplace

Esther Chapter 1

Outline of Events in Vashti's Story

Verses 1-9: Xerxes throws a party for the powerful. The women have a separate party.

Verses 10 – 11: Xerxes orders queen Vashti to show “off her beauty – wearing only her crown”.

Verse 12: Vashti refuses.

Verses 13-15: Xerxes loses his temper and consults with his counselors about legal recourse for her refusal.

Verses 16-18: the men agreed that all men would be insulted by this behavior and that other women will copy her – “angry women, don’t know their place”.

Verses 19-22: Vashti is banished. “Every man must be master of his house”.