

Esther's Intercession

September 23, 2012

ESTHER 5:1-8

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Core Competency:

Personal God- I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2)

Using This Study

❶ EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? The words God uses to communicate matters so pay close attention to the details emphasized or repeated in the passage.

❷ DISCOVER His Word

What does God MEAN? Answer the questions and then bring to your COMMUNITY GROUP to discover and discuss with others.

❸ LIVE His Word

How does this truth FIT? God's word is lived in real life so engage with truth in your LIFEGROUP.

Introduction

The story of chapters 1–4 of Esther is this: Through a series of God-ordained events, the queen of Persia was deposed after defying the king. After a beauty contest of sorts was held in order to find a new queen, a young Jewish girl named Esther was the surprise winner.

When Esther's cousin Mordecai offended a high-ranking government official, that official, Haman, vengefully enacted a plan to exterminate the Jews. Only Esther, humanly speaking, was in a position to influence the king to rescind his decree. She must somehow intercede for her people. And given the king's willingness to impulsively replace any queen who displeases him, Esther faced very real risks.

Following the counsel of her uncle, Esther bravely agreed to do what she could. Esther 4:16 says: "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

Esther was concerned whether the king would acknowledge her presence and grant her an audience. If he didn't, it could mean her immediate execution; and she knew how unpredictable his moods were. The Jews had been fasting and praying for three days, asking God to intervene and save them from annihilation; and now Esther had to act

This Week

Unlike Esther, when we come to the throne of grace, we don't have to wonder what our Father thinks about us because He always loves His people and welcomes them into His presence. One of the greatest needs in the church today is for intercessors who will pray faithfully for a lost world and for a church that desperately needs revival. "And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor" (Isa. 59:16, KJV). When the needs are so great and the privilege of prayer is so wonderful, well might the Lord wonder that His people neglect the throne of grace.

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? The words God uses to communicate matters so pay close attention to the details emphasized or repeated in the passage:

Esther 4

1 On the third day, Esther dressed up in her royal clothing and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace facing it. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the royal courtroom, facing its entrance.

2 As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, she won his approval. The king extended the gold scepter in his hand toward Esther, and she approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

3 “What is it, Queen Esther?” the king asked her. “Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be given to you.”

4 “If it pleases the king,” Esther replied, “may the king and Haman come today to the banquet I have prepared for them.”

5 The king commanded, “Hurry, and get Haman so we can do as Esther has requested.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

6 While drinking the wine, the king asked Esther, “Whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be done.”

7 Esther answered, “This is my petition and my request:

8 If the king approves of me and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and perform my request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet I will prepare for them. Tomorrow I will do what the king has asked.”

Notes

Won approval (5:2), *Chen*, means grace, kindness, beauty, charm, pleasantness, or affectionate regard. The root *chanan* means “to act graciously or mercifully toward someone; to be compassionate, to be favorably inclined.” Thus, it places emphasis on the recipient. As Esther stood at the edge of the inner court, she literally “rose in grace” in Ahasuerus’s eyes.

What is your request? (v. 3)—Esther deferred her real wish until 7:2–3.

up to half the kingdom (vv. 3–6)—royal hyperbole that was not intended to be taken at face value

the banquet (v. 4)—the first of two (see 5:4–8; 6:14–7:1) that Esther prepared; God would providentially intervene between the two (6:1–2).

② DISCOVER His Word

What does God MEAN? Answer the following questions and then bring to your COMMUNITY GROUP to discover and discuss with others.

1. Esther was obviously favored by the king—he had hand-picked her from among the most desirable women in Persia. What do you think made her afraid (or at least timid) to intercede for her people?
2. Read Exodus 32:7–14. Why did Moses intercede for the people of Israel in this passage? What happened as a result?
3. Read Ephesians 6:18–19. How and why should we intercede for other believers? (verses to consider: 1 Samuel 12:23; Colossians 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:1)

4. How does Esther dress to appear before the king? What advantage might this dress bring? (5:1)

5. In what ways is Esther's request surprising? Diplomatic? Discerningly wise? Appealing to the "male ego"? Effective? Faith-filled? (vv. 4, 5)

6. To invite Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to the banquet may appear dangerous or even foolish on Esther's part. How is it evident that this wisdom was from God? (v. 4, 5; see 5:9a, 12)

7. Why do you think Esther invited the king and Haman to elaborate back-to-back banquets, rather than just coming right out with her petition? Why the second banquet?

8. Can you think of a recent situation in which you needed courage to do something difficult or risky? What happened?

9. Who in your sphere of influence needs your intercessory prayer today? How can you use your position with the King of kings (Hebrews 4:16) to make a difference in another's life?

Sermon Notes:

3LIVE His Word

How does this truth FIT? God's word is lived in real life so engage with truth in your LIFE GROUP.

Esther hid her Jewishness for five years (Esther 2:10, 20). During that time, unlike Daniel (Daniel 1:8-16), she did not avoid food offered to idols or other non-kosher food (Esther 2:9; Esther 5:4-6), nor did she openly worship the God of Israel. As queen, she must have had to attend events in honor of the Persian gods. Was she right or wrong to do this? Why?

30 CORE Competencies

10 Core Beliefs

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9* I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I live life with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away God's Money *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away God's money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians 6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 Core Virtues

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, me, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I demonstrate loyalty in my relationships with others in response to God's loyalty to me.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ

10 Core Practices

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33* I focus on God and His priorities for my life.