

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. - Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. - Acts 17:26 NIV

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. - Galatians 6:10 NIV

God has plans for each of our lives (Jer 29:11). Not only for our own good, but also to involve us in His mission to save the world. Acts 17:26 says He marked out the time in history and the place where we would live. But just as Esther had a choice to step into God's calling, we have choices to make as well.

There are so many opportunities for you to do God's work right where God has placed you. Where is your sphere of influence- the place and the people you are closest to and regularly interact with? How do you think God might use you to bring light, rescue and hope into that community?

It is tempting to play it safe and avoid the risk of doing God's work. But God calls us to have the courage to step into our mission and recognize that He has put you just where He wants you for such a time as this.

WRAP-UP

Esther's story reminds us that God is always at work behind the scenes, placing people where they need to be for His purposes. Though Esther and Mordecai lived far from Jerusalem in a foreign land, God used their unique positions to protect His people at a critical moment. Faced with a risky choice, Esther found the courage to step into God's calling, trusting Him no matter the outcome. Like Esther, we each have opportunities to make a difference right where God has placed us, and we're invited to trust His timing, choose courage over comfort, and embrace the possibility that we are here "for such a time as this."

MEMORY VERSE

14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" - Esther 4:14 NIV

Challenge –

Ask God to open your eyes to opportunities you have to join Him in doing good to those He has placed in your life.

The Oldies- Week 6 Esther

INTRODUCTION

Esther's story takes place in Persia during the time that some of the Jewish exiles had returned to rebuild Jerusalem (as told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.) Meanwhile many Jews remained scattered as was Esther and her uncle Mordecai. But God was watching over His people no matter where they were. As we find in this story, His providence is evident no matter where we find ourselves. He emboldens us to have courage and the faith to step into our calling.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever had someone come to your rescue when you least expected it? (like when your car broke down and a stranger stopped to help)

Key Passage

12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" 15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." - Esther 4:12-16 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Recognize God's Hidden Providence

Let's look at the way God strategically positions people and orchestrates circumstances long before a crisis hits.

10 Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. ... 17 Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. - Esther 2:10, 17 NIV

Esther was a foreigner living in a pagan country. Although the Jews had been allowed to return to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem, they had lived as a conquered people in the land of the Babylonians and Persians for seventy years.

Why do you think Mordecai forbid Esther to reveal her nationality and family? Do you think she would have been made queen if that had been made known?

21 During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. 22 But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. - Esther 2:21-22 NIV

Mordecai was in possession of information critical to the king's safety. Do you think he would have had access to the king if Esther was not queen? If not, what might we presume would have happened?

Even though Mordecai had kept his nationality secret, when he had to choose whether to bow down to Haman or not, he remained true to God and refused. And not unlike Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, it put his life in danger.

2 All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor. ... 4 Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew. ... 8 Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. - Esther 3:2, 4, 8 NIV

Haman was not content to kill only Mordecai. His rage was turned toward all of God's people. Why do you think he reacted that way? How had the Jew's distinguished themselves while in captivity?

God's providence had brought Mordecai to the city gates and Esther into the King's court at just the right time to change the direction of destruction aimed at God's people. With the stage now set, it was time for God's people to respond to His call on their lives.

2. Count the Cost of Courage

13 Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews--young and old, women and children--on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. - Esther 3:13 NIV

When the order was issued to annihilate the Jews, the reaction was widespread grief and mourning. This irrevocable edict gave permission for anyone to murder the Jews and take their goods on the 13th of Adar. The Jews, including Mordecai, wept and wailed and dressed in sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads. It would be a genocide of epic proportion. But God had placed an unlikely hero in position to avert this disaster. Mordecai's expression of mourning was made known to Esther, as they communicated through her attendant. Mordecai instructed her to go to the king and beg for mercy for her people. But Esther hadn't been summoned to the king in a month and to go in without being asked risked a death sentence.

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Mordecai's response in v. 14 was both a warning and encouragement. It implies that God will save His people without Esther's involvement if she refuses, and it challenged Esther to consider if she had been made queen for this purpose. Have you ever felt that you missed an assignment from God? Do you believe that God is able to accomplish His purpose even when we fail? Why do you think God chooses to involve imperfect people in His plans?

Esther was faced with a terrifying choice - Compromise to save yourself or risk your life to do the right thing. God is never mentioned in Esther's story, but despite some questionable choice God has given her the courage and the opportunity to save His people.

When have you been faced with a choice to compromise and stay safe or have courage to do the right thing? What did your decision cost you?

Our lives are filled with choices. The way we decide what to do reflects what we truly value. If you value your safety and comfort most highly you won't make choices to jeopardize it. But if you value honoring and serving God most highly, your choices to honor and serve Him will always be worth the cost.

3. Embrace Your "Such a Time as This"

As we examine the story of Esther, we see the fingerprints of God are everywhere. The actions of the pagan King Xerxes and his official, Haman threatened the survival of God's people. Yet God intervened by placing Esther and Mordecai strategically in the King's path to rescue His people.