



The Chosen Life Studies in Esther

Session 15 – A Date with Destiny | Esther Chapter 4

News of Haman’s wicked plan is sent to every province in the empire. In eleven months, the Jews will be slaughtered and all their possessions confiscated.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover how Mordecai persuades Esther to do the right thing.
- Consider the vital connection between prayer, fasting, and courage to act.
- Pray honest prayers that boldly trust and wholeheartedly obey.

Ice Breaker

Share your recollection of a time when our nation experienced crisis. What was your reaction? What was the collective mood in our nation?

Breaking News

Esther 4:1-17

The Persian Empire was home to several million Jews, including everyone who returned to live in their own land of Israel. It’s difficult to imagine or exaggerate the anguish being felt in towns and territories all across the empire.

1. When Mordecai *learned all that had happened* it was unthinkable. How did he express his shock and sorrow?
 - a. Jews in every province had the same overwhelming response. They knew that the king’s edict could not be revoked. What does this imply they were doing, and who were they looking to?

Good to Know

Sackcloth is a coarse cloth made from goat’s hair, quite uncomfortable and abrasive against the skin. Ashes on the head signified desolation and ruin.

Wearing sackcloth and ashes was a public sign of grief for personal or national disaster. It was an outward expression of repentance and humility—a plea for God to intervene and deliver.

2. Persian law demanded that the king never be exposed to sorrow or mourning. He was to be insulated from the troubles and daily burdens of his subjects (Nehemiah 2:1-2). Mordecai was required to keep his grief outside the gates. According to God's Word, how different is it for us?

Isaiah 53:3-4

Matthew 11:28-29

Hebrews 4:15-16

3. Meanwhile, Esther (who is insulated from the realities of life outside the palace) hears about Mordecai's behavior at the gate. Trace Esther's reaction as the crisis begins to dawn on her.

Note: Up to now, we've only seen Esther's unspoken example. In this chapter, her own words are recorded.

- a. **Esther's distress** (vs. 4-5). At this point, what does Esther know *and not know*? How does she respond and why?

- b. **Esther's dilemma** (vs. 6-11). Esther is stunned by Mordecai's news and instructions to her. Her first answer could be summed up in two words: ***I can't***. It wasn't that she didn't care, but she couldn't see how her actions might make a difference. And at what cost?

Recall a time when you have been in a tough position and wanted to say *I can't*. Did you act, or not? Looking back, what, if anything, would you do differently?

- c. **Esther's decision** (vs. 12-16). Mordecai persuades Esther that she is in a unique position to make a difference. We can sum up her second answer in two words: ***I will***. Mordecai put things in perspective for Esther. The choice still wasn't easy, but it was clear.

Recall a situation when taking action was hard and you chose to say *I will*. What factors made it difficult to act with courage? Was someone a *Mordecai* for you? In what way?

Memory Verse

As you memorize this verse, make it part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10 NIV

Think About It . . .

Like Esther, sometimes we need the crucible of crisis to remind us what is true. We are a work in progress and He is writing us into His story. For your part, will you trust Him? In what way?

Reluctance and Resolve

Esther 4:9-17

Esther's hesitation to do what Mordecai asked is understandable. Going into the king's presence, unbidden, was risky to say the least.

1. **Esther's reluctance.** Give more thought to Esther's predicament and what might reasonably have been going through her mind.

... Besides breaking protocol (an offense punishable by death) Esther would be putting the king in an awkward position. Look what happened to Vashti. The king might feel that Esther was defying his authority.

... Xerxes was temperamental and notoriously unpredictable.*

... After five years of marriage, the king is not nearly so infatuated with her (she hasn't been summoned by him for thirty days).

... Esther will have to reveal her Jewish identity.

All things considered, the odds didn't look promising. Esther had two options and neither one was ideal. Describe Esther's options and the probable outcome for her and others.

Remain silent:

Make an uninvited visit to the king:

* Herodotus tells the story of Pythias, an ally of King Xerxes who hosted the king and his army on their way to Greece. He gave a huge sum toward the war effort, but Xerxes refused it and instead generously rewarded Pythias for his loyalty. But when Pythias asked for one of his five sons to remain home (so that he might have an heir to take care of him in his old age) Xerxes viewed it as a sign that Pythias doubted his ability to win. Xerxes removed his son from the ranks, cut him in half, and laid both sections of his corpse on either side of the road for his army to pass through as they marched off to war.

2. **Esther's resolve.** What specific instructions did Esther send back to Mordecai? What did she say she would do?

a. Esther waited for three days to act, even though her decision was already made. What was the purpose for those three days, and what can we learn from her example?

Good to Know

Fasting involves abstaining, usually from food or water, for the purpose of seeking God. There are many reasons to fast, and for Esther it was a matter of life and death. Esther's call for a fast implies that she and her supporters would engage in earnest prayer, pleading for God to intervene and give her favor with the king.

3. Esther was fortified by waiting on her unseen, ever-present God. He put iron in her soul to rise up and confront the situation with wisdom and confidence.

Bold moves call for bold prayers. Like Esther, let's resolve to obey and trust God to give us courage under fire. From God's Word, what can you confidently pray for such a time as this?

Romans 8:31, 37

Psalms 138:3, 7-8

Isaiah 41:10

2 Corinthians 4:7, 16-18

2 Timothy 1:7

4. **What time is it for you?** We don't need the drama of a defining moment to know that God has called us to make *the best use* of our time (Ephesians 5:15-16). So, don't wait. He has placed you right where you are for a purpose—how will you cooperate with Him?

Name at least one area for each category and how you can be faithful to fulfill that call. Be practical and specific.

Roles/Responsibilities

This job has been given to me to do.

Therefore, it is a gift.

Therefore, it is a privilege.

Therefore, it is an offering

I may make to God.

Relationships

Skills/Resources

Elisabeth Elliott

Service/Ministry



Gospel at a Glance: A Choice to Die | Esther's defining moment came when she responded to Mordecai's refrain, "*Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" In anguish for the peril of her people, she put her own life on the line to save them. She chose to die, if need be, to bring relief and deliverance to her people. "*And if I perish, I perish.*" In the Garden of Gethsemane, the defining moment came when the fate of the world for all eternity rested on one man. In anguish, Jesus prayed, "*If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will but as You will*" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus chose to die, knowing that if He remained silent, relief and deliverance would **not** come from another.

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” Ephesians 6:18 NIV

In each session, we will take time to pray—for others and for ourselves, for our church, our communities, and our nation.

As a focus for prayer, you can use the memory verse, another Scripture, or simply what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Record your simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

Group Prayer Requests
