

C¹ onechurch

bigIdea



Both Mordecai and Esther had a painful past. Mordecai in captivity, and Esther was an orphan. What do you do with painful memories and a painful past? Should be consumed by our past and be held in bondage to it, or should we pretend that it never happen and repress it? Or is there a third option—allowing God to use your past and turn it into a wonderful plan for your future.

BIG IDEA: You cannot separate your past from God’s plan.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Esther 2:5, and contrast how Mordecai is described with Ruth (Ruth 2:2) and Uriah (2 Samuel 11:6). This is the first and only time in the Old Testament that a person of Jewish decent is given the tagline “a Jew.” Why is that?

The Jews living in Persia could have gone home to Israel but chose not to. The Jews in Persia have done everything they could to try to fit in—to not be foreigners. So much so that they had compromised their very beliefs and morals, and are a people who are almost assimilated and secularized.

2. What hope does that give you and me that God used Esther and Mordecai, even though they had compromised their lifestyle and beliefs?
3. Read Esther 2:6. What one painful thing defined Mordecai’s past and story? Read Esther 2:7. What one painful thing defined Esther’s past and story?
4. What one painful thing (being held captive to something or experiencing the loss of something or someone) defines your story? Share this with the group.
5. We have two tendencies in dealing with pain and trauma in our past—to be consumed by our past and to be in bondage to it, or to pretend like it never happened and repress it. Why are both of these unhealthy?

Just like Esther, **God wants to use your story to change the stories of others**, but you can’t separate your past—however painful it may be—from God’s plan. You cannot become the person God has planned for you without your history. God’s plan for your future is tied to your past. You may hate your past and would do anything to forget it, but God wants to use it for an amazing plan for your future—just like Esther.

6. Read Esther 2:1-4. What process did Xerxes agree to find another wife? How would this be scandalous today?
7. If you were one of these women who were forced to be a part of this beauty pageant, what positive reactions might you experience?
8. What do you imagine some of the negative reactions might have been? Knowing what you know about Esther’s past (she suffered the lost of both her parents), how might this experience be doubly difficult for her?
9. Read Jeremiah 29:11. The word *future* at the end of verse 11 can mean *after*, *later*, *behind*, and *following*. What is behind and what is future have the same source. What painful parts of your past can God use in your future?

THINK ABOUT IT

Your pain and your past aren’t just to forget; it is to learn from and for God to use. There may be a horrible experience of loss and pain and even abuse. And though God didn’t cause it, He can use it, because God is setting you up to influence others. God wants to use your story to change the stories of others. Because only people who have walked down some roads can help people walk down those same roads.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

What are you going to have to start doing to allow God to help others with your same story? (Options: Stop being held captive to a sin. Stop running from your past and start facing it. Start telling your story to others.)

CHANGING YOUR MIND

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11