

PRAYER: regularly talking with God and interceding for ourselves and others.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4.6-7

BEST SUMMER EVER – *GROWING SPIRITUALLY*

STARTER QUESTIONS:

What has God done to grow your Faith lately?

What does a truth-telling friend mean to you?

How has a crisis in your life shaped who you are?

MAIN IDEA:

We are currently in a series titled “Best Summer Ever,” looking at the life of Esther and how we can relate to his story. This week we are studying how to Grow Spiritually.

In the story that that we discussed this week, Esther was asked by a good friend, Mordecai, to talk to the King on behalf of the Jews. The king just made it legal to kill Jews and Mordecai knew that Esther was put in the position as Queen to stop this. Problem was that Esther was putting her life on the line by even talking to the King as being uninvited to talk to the king was a capital offense.

Why do you think Esther was put in this situation?

NOTE: Have a good discussion among your group about different ways God uses to grow our faith.

Read John 16:33

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

When you have crisis or difficulty in your life, is your first thought to be glad? If not, why?

Read James 1:2-4

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

In this story, Esther responded to the crisis by placing her faith in God. She was going to pray and fast for three days and nights and gave instructions to Mordecai for all the Jewish people to do the same. When Esther was faced with difficult circumstances, she brought her problems to God.

Read Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

In the story of Esther, Pastor Hank points out that unlike the other times the Jewish people were in trouble in this story God doesn't do anything miraculous. God does ordinary things, but that we can look back through the story and see all the ordinary things that God did. Pastor Hank points out that in order for the story to even get started, the King had to get drunk and get rid of his first wife in order for Esther to become queen.

The point here is that much like our everyday lives, God is at work in them. Often times, we aren't going to see the Red sea be parted or plagues happen to those who do bad things, but we can be confident that God is at work in our lives.

In Esther's story, God used the crisis in Esther's life to bring her closer to Him. God didn't make the law that allowed killing Jews legal, but He sure did use it to strengthen Esther's faith!

If you look back a certain time in your life, are you able to see how God was at work to strengthen your faith?

Read Ephesians 2:10:

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Esther's life may not have worked out the way she envisioned when she became Queen, but God was able to use every event that happened in her life for the glory of His kingdom. Esther's faith was tested, but she made the choice to rely on God and not her own strength.

Read John 5:17 (NRSV)

“Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.”

CLOSE IN PRAYER

BEST SUMMER EVER

"Growing Spiritually"

May 20, 2018

Things God uses to Grow us Spiritually:

1. Godly, truth-telling friends

"Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 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 royal position for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:13-14 (NIV)

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

2. Difficulty and Crisis

Jesus: *"In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous... I have conquered the world."*

John 16:33 (NJB)

Esther: "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 maids 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." So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions."

Esther 4:16-17 (NIV)

1. The silent sovereignty of God.

"Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." John 5:17 (NRSV)