

**This is Your Time: Esther Enters the Courtyard**

In times of crisis, we often find ourselves questioning our purpose and place in the world. But what if we were born for such a time as this? The story of Esther provides a powerful example of how God can use us in unexpected ways, even in the face of great danger and uncertainty.

Esther, a young Jewish woman living in ancient Persia, found herself in a position of influence as queen to King Xerxes. When a plot to annihilate her people was uncovered, she was faced with a critical decision: remain silent and safe, or risk everything to speak up for her people.

This pivotal moment in Esther's life teaches us valuable lessons about purpose, preparation, and the power of humility. Let's explore these themes and how they can apply to our own lives today.

**The Tether of Prayer and Fasting**

Before taking action, Esther called for a time of prayer and fasting. This spiritual discipline became the tether between her crisis, her conviction, and her courage. Prayer and fasting allowed her to align her heart with God's will and discern the right course of action.

In our own lives, we often face challenges that seem insurmountable. How often do we turn to prayer and fasting as our first response? This powerful combination can help us strip away distractions, focus our hearts on God's purpose, and find the courage to act in alignment with His will.

As we navigate our own crises, big or small, let's remember that prayer and fasting can be the tether that keeps us grounded in God's purpose. It's not just about starting with prayer – it's about maintaining that connection throughout our journey.

**Using What God Has Given Us**

Esther used the position and resources God had given her – her title as queen, her royal robes, and her access to the king – to serve a greater purpose. This challenges us to consider: what has God given us that He can use?

We may not have royal titles, but each of us has been blessed with unique gifts, talents, and opportunities. Perhaps it's your wit, your hospitality, your listening ear, or your professional skills. Whatever it may be, God can use it for His glory if we're willing to offer it up.

The question we must ask ourselves is not "Do I have enough?" but rather "How can God use what I already have?" Remember, Jesus sent out his disciples with nothing more than sandals and a staff, assuring them that God would provide. We, too, have been given more than enough to fulfill our purpose.

**The Disarming Ministry of Hospitality**

Esther's strategy involved inviting the king and Haman to a banquet. This reminds us of the power of hospitality as a disarming ministry. Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus using meals as opportunities for ministry, connection, and transformation.

In our modern world, the simple act of sharing a meal or a cup of coffee can open doors for meaningful conversations and relationships. Hospitality creates a space where barriers can come down, and hearts can open up. As we invite others into our homes and lives, we create opportunities for God to work in powerful ways.

### **Pride vs. Humility: A Tale of Two Paths**

The story contrasts Esther's humble approach with Haman's prideful attitude. While Esther sought God's guidance and acted with discretion, Haman was blinded by his own ego and desire for power. This stark difference illustrates an important truth: humility opens doors, while pride opens pitfalls.

Proverbs 16:18 reminds us, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Haman's pride not only blinded him to the consequences of his actions but also led to his ultimate downfall. In contrast, Esther's humility allowed her to navigate a dangerous situation with wisdom and grace.

In our own lives, we must be vigilant against the creep of pride. Are there areas where we've become so focused on our own desires or opinions that we've lost perspective? Are we surrounding ourselves with people who will honestly point out our blind spots and untied shoelaces?

### **Healing Our Unhealed Places**

Haman's extreme reaction to Mordecai's refusal to bow reveals something deeper – unhealed wounds in his own life. This serves as a mirror for our own reactions. When someone or something consistently brings out the worst in us, it may be pointing to areas in our own hearts that need healing.

Instead of lashing out or seeking to eliminate what bothers us, we can use these moments as opportunities for self-reflection and growth. What is God revealing about our own hearts through our reactions? Where do we need to invite His healing touch?

### **Living Out Our Purpose**

The story of Esther challenges us to consider our own purpose in the world around us. We may not be facing life-or-death situations like Esther, but we all have spheres of influence where God has placed us "for such a time as this."

Are we aware of the invitations God is extending to us? Are we willing to step out in faith, even when it's uncomfortable or risky? Remember, we've been grafted into God's family, just as Esther was welcomed into the king's presence. This gives us the authority and responsibility to act on behalf of God's purposes.

As we go about our week, let's carry the spirit of Esther with us – humble, gracious, dignified, and adorned in the robes of divine royalty. Let's be aware of the opportunities around us to shine God's light and love to those we encounter.

In the words of Isaiah 60:1, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." May we rise to the occasion, allowing God's glory to shine through us as we live out our divine purpose in this world.

## Here's a 5 Day Devotional Based on This Weeks Teaching

### Day 1: Discerning God's Purpose

**Reading: Esther 4:12-17**

**Devotional:** Esther found herself in a position of influence "for such a time as this." Like her, we are called to discern God's purpose in our lives. What unique opportunities or challenges are you facing right now? How might God be positioning you to make a difference? Reflect on your current circumstances and pray for wisdom to see how God might be calling you to act. Remember, your position, talents, and experiences are not coincidental - they are part of God's plan for you to impact His kingdom.

### Day 2: The Power of Prayer and Fasting

**Reading: Matthew 6:16-18, Acts 13:2-3**

**Devotional:** Esther called for prayer and fasting before approaching the king. This spiritual discipline helped her discern God's will and gather courage. In our busy lives, we often neglect these powerful tools. Today, consider setting aside time for focused prayer and perhaps fasting from something (food, social media, etc.). Use this time to seek God's heart for a specific situation in your life. Ask Him to reveal His will and grant you the courage to follow through, just as He did for Esther.

### Day 3: Humility in Service

**Reading: Philippians 2:3-11**

**Devotional:** Esther approached the king with humility and respect, even though she held a royal position. This mirrors Christ's example of humble service. In what areas of your life might pride be hindering your effectiveness or relationships? Ask God to reveal any areas of pride and to cultivate a spirit of humility in you. Consider how you can serve others today with a humble heart, putting their needs before your own.

### Day 4: Using Your Gifts for God's Kingdom

**Reading: 1 Peter 4:10-11**

**Devotional:** Esther used her position and gifts - her beauty, wisdom, and influence - to serve God's purposes. What gifts has God given you? How are you currently using them for His kingdom? Take time to inventory your talents, experiences, and resources. Ask God to show you how He wants you to use these gifts to bless others and further His mission. Remember, no gift is too small when placed in God's hands.

### Day 5: Courage in the Face of Opposition

**Reading: Joshua 1:6-9**

**Devotional:** Esther faced potential death by approaching the king uninvited, yet she moved forward with courage. We too often face situations that require bravery to stand for what's right. What situation in your life requires courage right now? It might be standing up against injustice, sharing your faith, or making a difficult decision. Meditate on God's promise to be with you always. Ask Him for the strength to act courageously, trusting in His presence and power rather than your own abilities.

**Practical Applications:**

1. Commit to a specific time of prayer and fasting this week, focusing on an area where you need God's guidance or courage.
2. Practice intentional hospitality by inviting someone (perhaps someone you find challenging) for a meal or coffee.
3. Identify one area in your life where pride might be hindering your perspective or relationships. Ask God for humility in that area.
4. Reflect on your current roles and responsibilities. How might God be using you "for such a time as this" in these situations?
5. The next time you have a strong negative reaction to someone, pause and ask God, "What might this be revealing about areas where I need healing?"

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are our peace. Help us to find our security and identity in you alone. Give us the courage to break down walls of offense and to be agents of your reconciling love in this divided world. May we lead by example in showing grace, just as you have shown us immeasurable grace. Empower us to be peacemakers who reflect your heart for unity and reconciliation. In Your name we pray, Amen.