

ELEVATE: Join With What Is Good

Session 2: Stepping Up

Session Objective: The objectives of this session are to:

1. Demonstrate how God can use one life to make a huge difference
2. Overcome our fears and recognize our privileged position and
3. Begin to think through possible actions to join with what is good.

Minimum Prep: Read through the entire session outline. Prepare an environment where discussion can occur.

- Following the session outline is an 11 act script outlining the book of Esther. Be prepared to assign individual acts for reading or roles (i.e. Esther, Mordecai, King, Haman, and Narrator) to various students. You can choose to have students act this out before the large group or in small groups at times marked in the small group questions. Make copies accordingly.
- Add the details for next week's group experience to the Leader Preamble section.

Session Outline

Leader Preamble: Last week, from Nehemiah's vision and the response of the people to join with what is good, we saw a community transformed. This week we are going to look at how God used two other people – Esther and Mordecai – to work together for what is good. We are going to start focusing our eyes outward to what we can join with – and next week we are going to...

Optional Large Group Dramatization of Esther: To fast forward us through the book of Esther – a story of irony – we are going to have an impromptu dramatic reading...

Small Group Questions:

Read Scenes 1 and 2

1. How did Esther's background make her a unique queen?

Beautiful but parents had died, taking in by relatives, poor, as a Jew in that day, Esther would have been seen as lower class

Read Scenes 3-6

2. Read Mordecai's response to Esther in Esther 4:12-14. From this passage, what were Mordecai's challenges to Esther?

Your royal position may not be just for your benefit, but for a divine reason – to save her people. Also, Esther was reminded that her own life could be endangered – kind of a reminder to ‘do unto others’. God is going to act – will you be part of what he is doing?

3. In Esther’s situation, the consequences for joining what is good and speaking to the King could have been death. What are some of things that prevent us from taking a stand and joining what is good?

Fear, Overwhelmed, See Our Limitations, Sceptical About Improvement

Read Scene 7

4. What steps of action did Esther take?

She prayed. Step of courage by speaking to the king. “If I perish, I perish.”

5. Although we may not be royalty like Esther, how do we have we have ‘privileged’ positions relative to many people in the world?

- *Freedom – Religion, Speech, Expression, Vote, Choose*
- *Basic Essentials – health care, clean water, healthy and unhealthy foods, shelter, electricity, support services, relative public safety*
- *Opportunities/Choices – School, travel, work/career*

Read Scenes 8-11

6. What are the issues facing people in our local community (your school, workplace, and neighbourhood)?

7. Can you think of any people groups who are often overlooked or marginalized in our community or world?

International students, refugees, immigrants, the poor, the elderly waiting quietly in nursing homes, prostitutes, etc.

8. Select a few people groups and brainstorm answers to the question: What are their needs?

9. If you could really make a difference in the world, what difference would you make? To whom? Where? Why?

10. When you look at the lives of Esther and her cousin Mordecai, what do you admire about their character?

Esther – Courageous in taking action for the oppressed. Prayerful.

Mordecai – Bold and relentless in standing for justice.

Lead your group in a time of prayer. Pray specifically for some of the qualities of Esther and Mordecai. Pray for some of the people groups you discussed. Pray against some of the excuses or reasons that keep you on the sidelines. Ask God to guide your actions in joining what is good and making a difference.

Act #1

Long, long ago – about 500 years before Christ, a man named Xerxes was king in Persia. For 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom to his people. He also held a 7 day long banquet for all the people. However, when he asked for his wife to appear so he could display her beauty to the people, she refused. The king, who was known for his bad temper, consulted his advisors and decided that his wife, the Queen should never enter his presence again.

Act #2 – The Beauty Queen Search

From all across the land, beautiful young women were rounded up and prepared for the king's selection of a new queen. One of these young women was a young Jewish woman, named Esther. Her cousin Mordecai took her in and raised her after her parents died. Esther was lovely in form and features and won the favour of everyone who saw her. She also won the King's favour and approval, and he crowned her his Queen. Under direction from Mordecai, however, the King did not know of her Jewish heritage.

Act #3 – Mordecai

A couple of the King's security guards began to plot his assassination. But, Mordecai found out about the plot and told Esther, who told the King. The plan was uncovered and Mordecai had saved the king's life.

Act #4

One of the King's top officials was named Haman and everyone paid him great honour – everyone except Mordecai – he wouldn't bow down or pay him honour. Day after day he refused to comply and this enraged Haman.

Having learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he not only wanted to kill Mordecai, but all the Jews in the land. Haman then approached the King and got permission to kill all the Jews the next year.

Acts #5

When Mordecai found out about the King's order, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes and went out into the city wailing loudly and bitterly. When Esther heard about Mordecai's actions, she sent someone to find out what was going on. Mordecai told the messenger to urge Esther to go into the King's presence and beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

Act #6 - Mordecai Answers Back

"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 the 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 4:12-15

Act #7 - Esther Responds

Esther replies to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews 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."

Act #8

Esther goes before the King and he accepts her approach. He even asks her what she needs and promises up to half the kingdom to her. Esther then says she'd like to throw the king a banquet and asks him to invite Haman.

- *Haman was very happy he was invited to the banquet, but when he saw Mordecai he got really upset – after all, he was wealthy, the King's high official and the only one Queen Esther had invited to the banquet. At the suggestion of his family, he then orders a 75 foot tall gallows to be built in preparation for Mordecai's execution.*

Act #9

That night, the king couldn't sleep – so he began to read through the history of his reign and he came to the part about Mordecai foiling the assassination attempt. He then realized that nothing had been done to reward Mordecai. So, the next day he asked Haman what should be done for someone who the king delights to honour?

Haman thought the king was talking about him, so he suggested the king put his royal robe around the man and that the man be led on the King's horse throughout the city – to the cries of "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honour."

(The king thought that was a great idea and he told Haman – "Go at once, get the robe and horse, and do just as you have suggested – for Mordecai the Jew who sits at the King's gate." Haman obeyed – but was totally humiliated).

Act #10

At the banquet a short time later, Esther shares her distress about her people and asks the king to spare them. The king asks who dared to do such a thing?

She answers, "The adversary and enemy is the vile Haman".

The King gets very angry and goes outside. Haman then begins to beg the Queen for his life but then falls onto where she is lying just at the moment the king comes in. Seeing Haman lying on his wife doesn't make the King any happier and he ordered that Haman be hanged on the 75 high gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

Act # 11

The King rescinds his order against the Jews, gave them more rights and freedoms and made Mordecai a top official wearing royal robes and a crown - received 2nd rank from the King. "For the Jews it was a time of happiness, joy, gladness and honour." Feasting and celebrating took place across the Jewish regions. A special day was set aside for feasting and joy - giving presents to each other.

