



Message Guide

FOR AUGUST 31, 2025

STORYTELLER- 4: STORY OF COURAGE IN THE FACE OF FEAR (ESTHER 4:1-17)



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We are in the fourth week of our series called, “Storyteller”, based on the third part of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. In our current teaching series, we’re following the stories of those in Jesus’ family tree which Matthew divides into three parts—Abraham to David, David to the Babylonian Exile, and the Babylonian Exile to Jesus. Why are we going over this? Because it’s a great way for us to learn more of the history of the OT leading up to the birth of Christ. And we’re connecting these stories to our stories, which helps us connect to God’s story. And this is especially relevant with what we’re looking at today—**A story of courage in the face of fear.**

1. When was there a time in your life where you experienced life-altering, traumatic-encountering fear? Not the type of fear that the Colts will have a losing season this year. Or fear that getting back into school or sports or a new job will be difficult. But the type of fear that you literally might die.

In our current study, we’ve been looking at the historical period of when the Jews were deported to Babylon in what became known as the Babylonian Exile. The last three weeks, we’ve looked at the Babylonian Exile through the lens of the book of Daniel, and today we shift to the book of Esther. Quick recap to help us make sense of the historical timeline of Daniel, Nehemiah, and Esther:

- Daniel: Taken to Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonian Empire (605 B.C.)
- Nehemiah: Intersects with King Xerxes, Persian Empire (485 B.C. – 465 B.C.)
- Esther: Intersects with King Ahasuerus, Medo-Persian Empire (464 B.C. – 424 B.C.)

Esther:

Esther was a young, Jewish woman who was raised by her cousin, Mordecai (Esther 2:7, although some believe he was her uncle), in a city called Susa in the middle of the Persian Empire. The king at the time was Ahasuerus whose queen was Vashti. Without going into detail, the king vanquished the queen (Esther 1), and he was on a national quest for a new queen (Esther 2). Through a series of God-ordained events, this young Jewish woman becomes the new queen, and she is placed in a position of great royal influence. Esther



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3 reveals the main plot of the story where Haman is elevated to second in command of the entire empire. Everyone pays homage to Haman and bows before him...except Mordecai, Esther's cousin/uncle. This infuriates Haman, who learns that not only is Mordecai a Jew, but he is also the relative of Esther, who is also Jewish.

So, Haman devises a plot "...to destroy, kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods" (**Esther 3:13, ESV**). When word spreads of this coming genocide, Mordecai, along with all the Jews, fast, weep, and lament (Esther 4:3). Mordecai sends word to Esther that she has to "...go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people" (**Esther 4:8, ESV**).

But Esther responds by saying, "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days." (**Esther 4:11, ESV**)

This does not dissuade Mordecai, however, and he responds:

"Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him. (**Esther 4:13-17, ESV**)

The rest of the book, then, details how Esther is finally granted an audience with the king. She chickens-out the first time but goes back a second time. The king grants a reprieve, the Jews are spared, Haman is killed, and from that day forward TO THIS VERY DAY, the Jews celebrate the holiday of Purim, which means "lots" in ancient Persian. It gets its name from Haman casting lots to determine when he would carry out his diabolical scheme to annihilate the Jews.

Interesting story? For sure. But what does it have to do with us? It's a story of courage in the face of fear. It's a story about how someone who didn't see herself as a strong person of courage and valor rises up to the occasion in spite of her fears. And it's a story that can guide us through our own times of deep-seated, soul-gripping fear. How so?



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1- You don't gain courage because of who you are but because of who God is.

Esther was a “nobody”! A young, Jewish girl. A female in a male-dominated culture. An ethnic minority which was such a minority then when the king signed a decree to wipe out all the Jews, no one (except the Jews) batted an eye. In other words—the Jews didn't have prominence, position, or power. So, courage didn't emerge because Esther was some highly acclaimed, highly educated, highly trained Ninja warrior.

COURAGE CAME BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD DID IN HER LIFE. GOD PLACED HER IN A POSITION OF INFLUENCE, BUT EVEN THEN, SHE DIDN'T BELIEVE SHE COULD DO IT. SHE HAD TO STOP BELIEVING IN HERSELF AND START BELIEVING IN GOD.

2. When have you gained courage because of what God was doing in your life? Did you need to let go of trying to rely on your own strength and ability for courage?

We live in a culture that says you have to believe in yourself. Oh, aren't you so wonderful. You're so smart. You're so strong. You are the master and commander of your destiny! Be true to yourself! That idea does not come from God. Now, that does not mean you should the opposite about yourself that you're a horrible person, dumb, weak, trash. But the focus of Scripture is that our identity comes from God, not from our ability, looks, talents, smarts, or athleticism.

So, we need to spend less time thinking about ourselves and more about Jesus. Our identity is in Him. *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come* (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV). This is where we gain courage in the face of fear—not because of who we are, but because of who HE is.

When Mordecai, Esther's cousin/uncle, told her that she has to appeal to the king, notice again what she said:

“All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.” (Esther 4:11, ESV)



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In order to find courage, Esther had to get over herself. You know how we say to someone who's too full of himself— "You need to get over yourself"? Same thing applies to all of us who think we CAN'T do this or that or have courage or stand up in the face of fear, because we're not _____ (and you fill in the blank—smart enough, strong enough, talented enough). If that's you, you might need to get over yourself.

2- Another important takeaway to look at is, how do you view yourself?

Do you run from fear, because it overwhelms you, because you think there's no way you can make it? Well, guess what? You're not alone. Esther felt that way! And how did she muster up courage to face her fear and approach the king? It wasn't because all of a sudden, she said, "I know I'm smart, I'm strong, I'm a godly woman!" No, it was because she believed that God would give her the courage, and, as she said, "Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish" (**Esther 4:16, ESV**).

3. When have you been so overwhelmed by fear that you ran from it? How did you run from it

Now, there is a second part of the application, the "connecting part." How did Esther connect not with her own inner power to have courage in the face of fear, but how did she connect with the true power to have courage in the face of fear?

Two things: Fasting and Community. Let's look at it again.

"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." (**Esther 4:16**)

- Connection to the Spirit of courage comes through spiritual practices/disciplines. Esther and the people FAST. We don't talk a lot about fasting, but the Bible sure does. Fasting is the practice of dis-engaging from the filling of the body in order to re-engage in the filling of the Spirit.
- Connection to the Spirit of courage comes through the community of the Spirit. Over and over and over we discover in Scripture that we simply CANNOT make it on our own. This is why we need the church—the community of the Spirit of Jesus. This is not about a Sunday morning show, and which church has the best performance, and that's where we go. The wrong question to ask people is,



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"Where do you go to church?" The right question is, "Where do you BELONG?" We need to connect. And when we do connect to the community of the Spirit of Jesus, and when we connect through practices to be filled with the Spirit, we are connecting to the Spirit of courage. Then we are able to say, "If I perish, I perish. If I get that job or not. If I marry that person or stay single. If I have cancer or not. If I make this money or lose it...I HAVE THE COURAGE TO FACE MY FEAR, NOT BECAUSE OF WHO I AM BUT BECAUSE OF WHO GOD IS!"

4. So, how are you facing your fears? What step is God telling you to take to have courage because of who He is, the next time you are faced with fear?