

SERMON SERIES: Responses: The Queen of Beauty and Courage

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Key Line

Making a difference requires moving from self-preservation (and concerns about my personal comfort) to courage.

Introduction

Up til now, which of these two things would you say your life has been mostly defined by: comfort or courage? Why do you say that?

Seek the Word

Skim / review Esther 1:1-4:12. Have group members summarize the story (eg, King Xerxes gets rid of his queen; Esther [who has been raised by her older cousin Mordecai] wins a beauty contest of sorts to become the new queen, but doesn't let anyone know she is Jewish; Mordecai uncovers an assassination plot against the king, which is recorded in the official record book; Xerxes' assistant, Haman, hates Mordecai, and decides to destroy both him and his people; Mordecai tells Esther to do something, but she tells Mordecai she could be killed if she approaches the king uninvited).

Read 4:13-16. So Esther was at a crossroads in her life, where she had to choose between "comfort or courage." When have you been faced with a similar fork in the road, either in the past or present?

Verse 14: "for such a time as this" How can you see God's sovereignty in your current season of life, where God has purposefully placed you somewhere to accomplish something for Him?

Talk About It

Scott shared this quote from Erwin McManus: "We all want miracles and then spend our lives avoiding the context in which miracles happen." What does that statement mean? (eg, miracles usually happen in tough, even fearful, situations, the very ones that require courage to see them through, but we often shy away from those to protect ourselves and our comfort)

Verse 16: courage requires prayer, both my own and others praying for me. How has this played out in your life? How could it play out in the lives of our group's members?

Verse 16 again: "If I perish, I perish." We are prone to say "If _____, then _____", where the first blank is a fear or a scary choice, and the second blank is some bad outcome.

- What are some negative if-then statements you have felt?
- Instead, we could say "If [scary choice], then God." In other words, our courageous obedience during a fearful situation leads to God showing up and doing great things.

Give examples of where you have seen this happen. These could be from your own life, or other people's lives, or biblical characters.

In Esther's case, she didn't perish.

- Have people summarize the rest of the story (eg, Haman is ultimately found out by the king, who then executes Haman using the means that Haman had planned for Mordecai; and the Jewish people are delivered from their enemies).
- God didn't promise deliverance to her, nor does He for us. Hebrews 11 lists many people who courageously obeyed God. In many cases they were delivered and won great victories; in other cases, they weren't rescued (you may wish to read verses 32-38). To revisit our Key Line, our ultimate goal can't be our self-preservation. It must be seeking God's plan above all else. So... what does all of that do to you? Be honest.

Scott shared 2 Corinthians 4: 8-9. What encouragement can this passage give us? (eg, that even in the midst of traumatic, fearful situations and decisions, we are not alone.)

What other passages support this? (eg, Hebrews 13:5 , Matthew 28:20 , Joshua 1:9)

Of course, Jesus is the ultimate example of someone whose courage trumped self-preservation. Discuss what that example means to you, in your life right now.

Apply It

There are numerous situations in our lives that require us to be courageous rather than comfortable...including marriage, parenting, the workplace, school, neighborhood. Beyond examples that might have already been shared in our discussion thus far, what are you faced with right now that requires the courage to do the right thing?

What might be some steps in your spiritual journey that require courage? (eg, getting baptised, volunteering to lead a small group, giving of my finances, etc)