

perhaps  
YOU WERE  
born for  
Such a time  
as this

ESTHER 4:14

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YOU WERE MADE FOR  
THIS MOMENT

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YOU WERE MADE FOR  
THIS MOMENT

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For  
Such a  
time  
as  
this

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YOU WERE MADE FOR  
THIS MOMENT

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For



Such  
a time

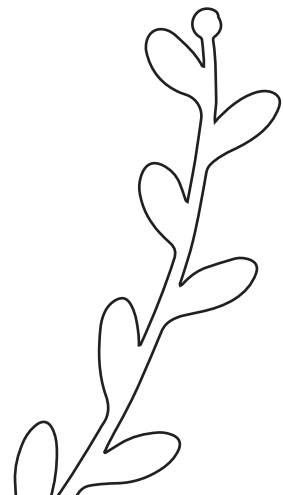
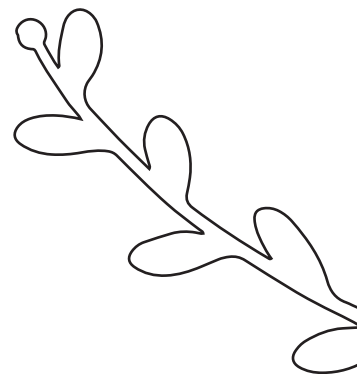
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YOU WERE MADE FOR  
THIS MOMENT

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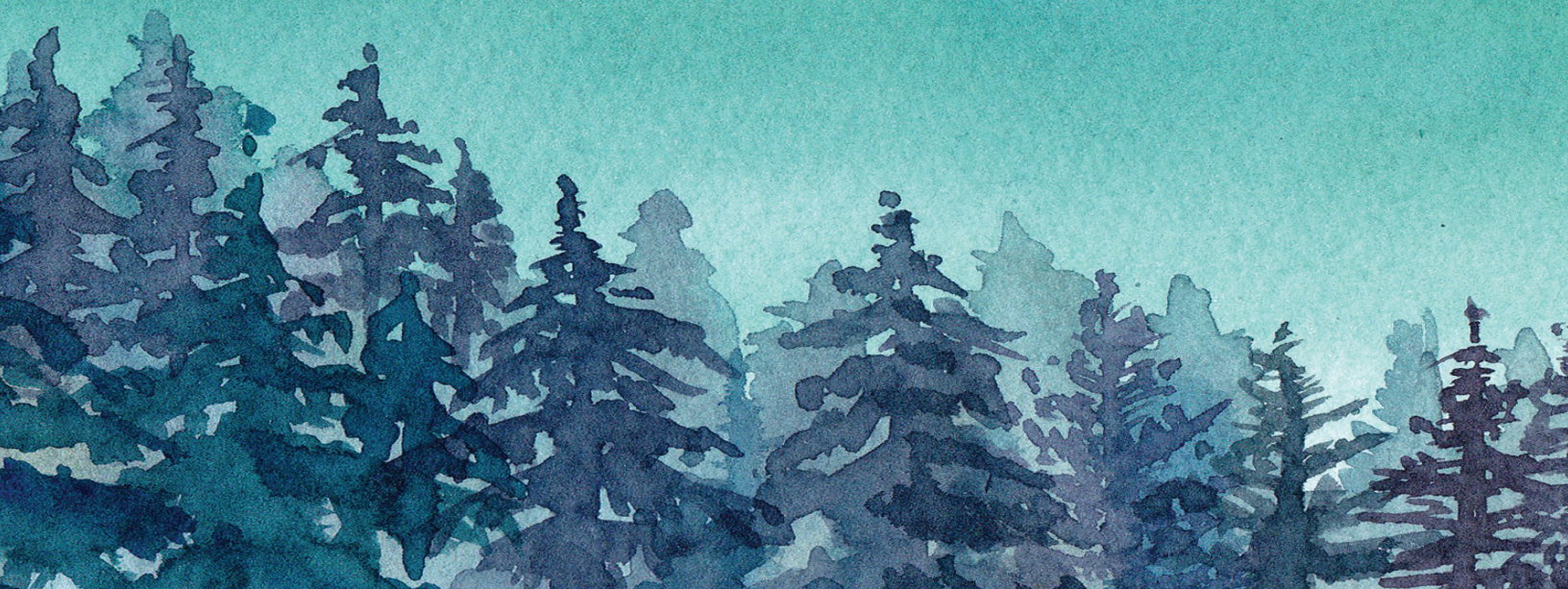


What we  
can learn about

*Fasting  
&  
Prayer*

from

*Esther* 





# 3 lessons we can learn from Esther

- wait on the Lord's guidance before taking action.
- pray about it for a period of time  
(Esther fasted and prayed for 3 days)
- gather your people to pray with you and for you.

“Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ‘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,’”

- Esther 4:15-16.

*Chapter Six*

# TWO THRONE ROOMS



Several films have been based on the story of Esther. In the ones I have seen, she is ravishingly gorgeous. Eyes shaped like crescents, unblemished olive skin. A Hollywood heartthrob, this lady. And, indeed, she must have been. Selected as the queen of Persia out of a harem of lovely contenders.

The movies are equally unanimous as to the moment of high drama: Esther and her unsolicited visit to King Xerxes. She stands at the throne room entryway, robed in elegance. The camera can hardly bear to turn away from her splendor. When it does, we see Xerxes wide-eyed with mouth open. “What can I do for you, my beauty?” The implied message of the movies is clear: the good looks of Esther softened and swayed the hard heart of Xerxes.

Yet Scripture tells a different story. Yes, she appeared before the king. Yes, she did so at great risk. And, yes, Xerxes lowered his scepter and invited her to enter. But it wasn’t her beauty that made the difference. Look at the text, and see if you agree.

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “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 attendants 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.” (Est. 4:15–16)



She realized, perhaps for the first time, that silence is a form of acquiescence. Her people, the Jews, had been declared worthy of mass murder, and she has done nothing. Either she was too oblivious to know or too afraid to act. Either way, her apathy was inexcusable.

But what could she do? The king had made his decision. The vizier had declared the death penalty. Neither had any interest in a change of mind. Just the opposite. They were making a statement: don't mess with Xerxes. Esther faced an immovable wall and the possibility of death for making the wrong move. She responded, not with a call to her hair stylist, but with a retreat into the prayer chamber.

Rather than rush into the throne room of Xerxes, she humbled herself and stepped into the throne room of God.

In the movie I wish someone would make, Esther reads the words of Mordecai and crumbles into a heap, face-first on the floor of her bedroom. Her nation is about to be led to slaughter. It's going to be a bloodbath, and she sleeps with the king who ordered it. Her handmaids see her fall to the ground and rush to her aid. She waves them away. "Just get word to Mordecai: I'll go to see the king. Even if it costs me my life. Tell everyone to pray."

This is a new Esther. Until this point she had relied on her good looks. Now she casts herself upon her God.

She will soon stand before Xerxes. She will soon risk her life. She will seek the reversal of an irreversible law that has been sponsored by the most powerful man in the empire and endorsed with the king's own signet ring. She knows that God's intervention is their only hope. This is a prayer of desperation.

Three days. No food. No water. Fears took her sleep. Hunger gnawed at her gut. Dehydration dried her skin and hollowed her eyes. She prayed a prayer of tears.

You know what happened next. When Esther entered the king's throne room, she was once again a head-to-toe picture of Persian

perfection. One look at her and the jaw of Xerxes hit the ground. The scripture says, “he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand” (5:2).

Pleased with her? How about “unraveled by her”? “Overwhelmed by her”? “Reduced to ice cream on a July sidewalk by the sight of her”? “I’ll give you half of the kingdom,” the king gulped. He was a middle schooler; she was a college-age cheerleader. I get that.

But it wasn’t her glamour that opened the throne room door. It was her prayers. She came before the king in beauty only after she lingered before the King of kings in humility. Aren’t we called to do the same?

Don’t think for a moment that you have what it takes to weather this winter. Yet don’t think for a second that God won’t give you what you need.

Many years ago when our family lived in Brazil, a new Christian came to one of our church leaders with a question. He’d been reading his Bible (good for him), and he discovered this promise: “Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (Matt. 21:22 NKJV).

“Does our church believe this passage?” he wondered.

What is a missionary to say? “Yes, of course.”

“Then,” he posed, “why do we work so hard and pray so little?”

Good question. Why do we? What if the only thing between you and a season of refreshing is prayer? I don’t mean a shallow tip o’ the hat to the “man upstairs.” I’m talking about heartfelt prayer. I can’t think of a more simple—or more important—way that we can partner with God in bringing about a reversal.

Searching for springtime? You don’t need more advice from your fishing buddies. You don’t need the ten easy steps to happiness as advertised on the cover of a tabloid. You don’t need another psycho-babble talk show. You need the tool that Esther found, that Daniel found. You need to pray.

Daniel was a young man when he was taken into Babylonian

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captivity in 605 BC. Later in his life he came to an understanding of the future of his people. He realized that the seventy years of prophesied captivity were coming to an end. He took the matter to the Lord.

So listen, God, to this determined prayer of your servant. Have mercy on your ruined Sanctuary. Act out of who you are, not out of what we are.

Turn your ears our way, God, and listen. Open your eyes and take a long look at our ruined city, this city named after you. We know that we don't deserve a hearing from you. Our appeal is to your compassion. This prayer is our last and only hope. (Dan. 9:17–18 THE MESSAGE)

What word describes the tone of Daniel's prayer? *Eloquence*? *Authority*? *Lofty poetry*? I don't think so either. How about this word: *humility*?

"Have mercy," he begged.

"Act out of who you are, not out of what we are."

"We don't deserve a hearing from you."

"Our appeal is to your compassion."

Daniel threw himself on the mercy of the highest court.

If any person deserved to be heard by God, it was he. Scripture portrays him as a man beyond reproach. There is no hint of adultery, rebellion, or infidelity. In Scripture he was a holy man. Yet in the presence of God, this holy man offered a brokenhearted prayer.

The prayer so moved the heart of God that an angel was sent with a message.

From the moment you decided to humble yourself to receive understanding, your prayer was heard, and I set out to come to you. But I was waylaid by the angel-prince of the kingdom of Persia and was delayed for a good three weeks. But then Michael, one of the chief



angel-princes, intervened to help me. I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia. And now I'm here to help you. (Dan. 10:12–14 THE MESSAGE)

The angel came to help when Daniel knelt and prayed.

The moment you bow your head to pray is the moment God lifts his hand to help. Your heavenly Father wants to hear from you. Desperate? Without options? Without solutions? By no means. Now more than ever is the time to get down on your knees and plead for mercy.

That's the situation I found myself in during the summer of 2020. The year had taken its toll on us all. The world was whipsawed by the presence of a pandemic, the absence of a vaccine. The White House was in turmoil, and the job market was in shambles. And, as if we needed another tsunami, a Black man in Minneapolis died at the hands of a White police officer, and the rage erupted. Anger poured into city streets from New York to Portland.

In San Antonio, the city where I have pastored since 1988, a group of us chose to call people to prayer. We rented the city's largest parking lot. We designed banners and organized a prayer service. We decided to follow the example of Mordecai and Esther and pray for God's help. We also resolved to repent. "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and *turn from their wicked ways*, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14, emphasis mine).

The moment you bow your head to pray is the moment God lifts his hand to help.

There must be a turning from wicked ways, a repentance of sin.

*But what sin, Lord?* we wondered. *There are so many.* Then, in as clear a word as I have ever heard from God, the answer came: the sin of racism. Our nation needs to repent for the

centuries of oppression that we have imposed on our Black brothers and sisters.

As it turned out, I oversaw this citywide prayer. I was unenthused at the idea of leading a prayer of repentance for this transgression. My excuses were abundant, and I made sure heaven heard them all. “But I’m not a racist. I’ve done nothing wrong against the Black community. I’ve never spoken against African Americans.”

*But you’ve never spoken up for them, either.* Another clear word from the Father.

I recalled how Daniel made his appeal, how Mordecai went public with his lament, how Esther refused to speak to the king until she had spoken to the King.

I asked a Black pastor to join me on the platform. With thousands watching in person and tens of thousands online, I knelt at the altar and repented as he stood beside me.

*Father, you have made from one blood every nation of men and women to dwell on the face of the earth. We are all of one blood. There is no Black blood. There is no White blood. There is no Brown blood. There is no Asian blood. There is only one blood.*

*When you died, you shed your precious blood so all people of all nations could be saved. This was, and is, your plan. They are all precious in your sight. Yet they have not been precious in ours.*

*For that sin, O Lord, we are sorry.*

*I, Max Lucado, am sorry. I am sorry that I have been silent. My head has been buried in the sand. My brothers and sisters are hurting on the side of the road, and I have walked a wide circle to avoid them. I have made them feel less than. I did not realize their trauma.*

*I am sorry.*

*We are sorry. Our ancestors were wrong. When they bought and sold people, that was wrong. When they claimed superiority over Black people, that was wrong. When they refused to share water fountains, city buses, and restaurants with your children, that was a sin.*

*For the occasions that your church has broken your heart by refusing entrance to your children of color, we beg your mercy. We agree with you: that was wrong.*

*Heal this land, O Lord. You can do what policies and politicians cannot. You can break down the walls of bias and prejudice. Please, in the name of Jesus, do so today.*

Did the prayer prompt a national renewal? I can't say that it did. But the prayer prompted a young African American woman to say to me, "That's all I needed to hear to keep from giving up."

Are you, like Esther, facing an impossible challenge? Then imitate the queen.

Esther could have remained hidden and done nothing. Or she could have rushed into the presence of Xerxes. But she chose the wiser recourse. She chose prayer. Her story urges us to do the same.

This is the time for a no-nonsense, honest, face-on-the-floor talk with the Lord of All. Garments need not be ripped, but veneer must be removed. Three days of fasting is optional, but the prayer of genuine humility is not.

What is your version of Xerxes? What Haman-sized challenge are you facing? Is your job in jeopardy? Is your loved one in hospice? Is your family under attack? Is your faith in tatters? Retreat into your prayer closet.

The queen could enter the throne room of Xerxes because she had spent time in the throne room of God. The same is true in your story and mine. Once we've spoken to the King of heaven, we are ready to face any king on earth.