

Life Group Discussion Questions

April 29, 2012

Series: Esther

Sermon Topic: What A Difference A Day Makes - Esther 5 & 6 - Dr. Matt Cassidy

Introduction: In our 3rd week on the book of Esther, Matt led us through a review of the main characters of this book in light of an ancient near east mindset that valued honor above all else and despised shame. We learned what happens to the man that does not honor Haman and the importance of fasting and prayer that preceded Esther's faithful actions.

Sermon Questions:

- 1) At the end of chapter 4, Esther gives her instruction to Mordecai for the Jews to "go, assemble and fast". As a group, do a word study on the word "fast" using a concordance to see how fasting was observed and practiced in the OT and how it carried over into the NT. Discuss amongst your group the context (people, purpose and process) of fasting that you learned from this word study and what your views are or have been concerning fasting as a Christian today. Can you share a time in your life that fasting and prayer led to a supernatural event?
- 2) Based on your word study and our sermon, discuss and if so led and agreed upon...commit, with your group the idea of fasting for a set period this week. Discuss the following:
 - Purpose - why are you fasting, what are you hoping to achieve?
 - Commitment - how long, what is being fasted? (Remember, start simple if this is your first fast)
 - Preparation - what spiritual, emotional and physical items need to be addressed prior to fasting? Repentance of sin? Altered plans? Etc?
 - Celebrate - plan to share with your group and others next week the experience plus outcome of your time of fasting.

Read Esther chapter 5 & 6 and discuss the following questions with your group:

- 3) After fasting and praying for three days, Esther walks forward into the king's presence with great faith, faith like that recorded in Hebrews 11. Yet, twice in chapter 5 (vs. 3 & vs. 6) as Esther has King Xerxes attention, she holds off on presenting her request. Why? Fighting fleshly fear or spiritual discernment? Have you been in a situation that you prayed for only to hesitate when the opportunity presented itself? What was your motive...fear or discernment? What role did fasting or prayer play in your outcome?
- 4) In chapter 6, what are the odds that: a) That King Xerxes wouldn't be able to sleep? b) He'd choose to read historical records about Mordecai? c) Mordecai's good deeds hadn't been rewarded? d) Haman happened to enter the king's court at exactly the right moment? e) That King Xerxes would speak before Haman's request for Mordecai's death?

- f) That King Xerxes would frame the question in such a way that Haman would think it was for him and not Mordecai? g) That Haman would not only be the one that chose the honor for Mordecai, but also carried it out? In light of these events, who is quickly and quietly becoming the hero of this story? Has this hero shown himself in similar ways in your life? Share an event that defies the odds.
- 5) After these events, Haman's wife and friends change their advice (see 5:14) and proclaim that Haman will not prevail against Mordecai the Jew (6:13). Why? What changed?