



The Practice – Lesson 3

Preparing to Be Used By God...For Such a Time as This

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Read Esther 4

The unpredictable, winding, drama-filled road of the book of Esther is a reflection of the Christian life. Though we know how the story ends, we also know that final victory doesn't guarantee a life filled with ease. Early on in our walk with our Savior, we experience an excitement and an overwhelming joy. We are hopeful and willing to risk the things of this world in order to elevate the name of the One who gave His life for us. But then, somewhere, somehow, in the midst of the effort of *living*, things get too complicated, and those risks – *the sacrifices we were once willing to make* – suddenly seem too much to bear. We are made "for such a time as this," so why do we waver? God hasn't changed. He hasn't become less sovereign or less trustworthy or less worthy of our all. We are just failing to see Him as we once did. In our humanness, often our default is often to limit God before He even has a chance to act. We want to know how it's all going to turn out before deeming the risk worthy of the sacrifice. But when we limit God from working through us, **we're the ones who are missing out**. You see, saying, "*Not me, not now...*" doesn't limit God's fulfillment of His plan, *it just limits our participation in the greater story He's writing that we can't yet see.*

So how do we prepare ourselves to be used by God? Consider these lessons from Esther, Chapter 4:

- 1. Invest wisely now, because it will matter later.** Esther's influence didn't begin with one risky decision in the palace that day. A series of right choices (powered by Sovereignty) led her to a position of royalty and respect, which was crucial to her effectiveness when the time came to stand up for her people. What you do now matters. Whether you're sixteen or sixty, investing intentionally today can lead to open doors for you to be used by God tomorrow.

2. There is a time to mourn, but don't stay there. Esther begins with an intense scene where Mordecai deeply mourns for his people, and understandably so: they have just been condemned to death. Think of how different, though, the outcome of this chapter might have been had Mordecai continued in that defeated role. At some point, Mordecai made the choice to transition from someone in bitter despair to that of key initiator in the action plan that would save the Jewish nation. Mourn for the appropriate amount of time, but don't let your mourning take away your hope in God and linger to the point where God can't use you. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.* Psalm 30:5, NKJV

3. Prepare for battle by first being still. Though prayer is not specifically mentioned in this chapter, it is paired with fasting in the Old Testament. Before rushing into a risky decision hastily, Esther and others spent three days fasting and in prayer. How many times have I acted quickly, making rushed decisions before even consulting the Lord, only to look back and regret my haste? When we humbly submit to God's authority, wisdom and strength in our weakness, bowing before Him in reverence and submission, only then are we properly prepared for battle.

4. Recognize the potential of your position. God placed Esther in a specific place for a specific time. Her answer wasn't, "Maybe later," or "I'm not as equipped as some," or, "My life is in a pretty great place right now, and I really don't feel like messing it up." Instead, she took ownership of her influential role and didn't back down when it meant that the road wouldn't be easy. God places us in relationships at the workplace, the home, the church, the soccer field, the courtroom, the hospital room and thousands of places in between, and gives us each unique spheres of influence where we can live boldly for Him. Do you recognize the potential of your position, or are you spending your time just desperately wishing God would pick someone else?

5. Be ready to take the right risks. Risk is a tricky thing, because there is a profound difference between foolish risk and God-exalting risk. That said, there are plenty of stories in the Bible where ordinary people took God-exalting risks, which led to God using them in extraordinary ways for His Kingdom. In the words of John Piper, "It is right to risk for the cause of God," and in the words of Esther, sometimes – as risky as it sounds – it is right to say, "If I perish, I perish."

6. Remember to Whom you belong. When risky decisions arise, the end of the story – more often than not – won't tend to be clear. Outcomes aren't promised in this world... only the final victory that we have through Jesus over sin and death. But with God on our side, we can obediently say "yes" to where He leads us, because His sovereignty always leads to our good and His glory. When we spend time in God's Word, remembering who Jesus is and what He has done for us, we are once again reminded that we are safe in His arms, that He is more than capable to accomplish His will, and that He is more than worthy of our lives...

- *Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.* 2 Corinthians 3:5, 12, NIV

Conclusion:

Your life has been mapped out by a good and sovereign Savior, and He is working all things for your good and His glory. You are called to impact His Kingdom for such a time as this, and God will be faithful to prepare you for your next step just as He has been faithful to lead you this far. When we remember who God is and what He has done for us, we can intentionally and boldly say yes to His calling. Praise God for the opportunity to be used by Him, and for the sure victory we have in Jesus!

Reflect:

- Are you in a season of trial or waiting? What is God teaching you during this time?
- Reflect on a time when God asked you to be faithful in little, so that He could prepare you to be faithful in much. Spend time thanking God for His wisdom in that preparation period.
- Are you spending daily time in the presence of the Lord or do you struggle to be still? If needed, take steps to restructure your schedule so that you can nurture your relationship with God and properly prepare for battle.
- Where has God placed you in positions of influence (don't forget that we are influencers every day in our homes and families!)?
- Is God calling you to step out of your comfort zone for the cause of Christ? What is one obedient step you can take towards that call today?