

The Gathering Community Group Guide

Brave // Week 3 // Sharks in the water

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Esther 2:19 – 3:15

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN MEMBERS COME PREPARED. TAKE TIME BEFORE GROUP TO GO OVER THIS GUIDE.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

All good stories have plenty of plot twists and turns, and it is usually the presence of a villain or impossible situation that makes the climax of a movie so powerful. Esther is no different, and this week, we meet the biggest villain of the book: a Jew-hating official of King Xerxes named Haman. He is one of the "sharks in the water," and as Paul pointed out, sharks in the water are just another reason why we need to be brave.

1. **One shark, two sharks, red shark, blue shark:** Sharks come in all kinds of shapes and sizes, from tiny nurse shark to the great white shark. The book of Esther has a variety of sharks, too, and while they may look different, they all have the same objective: devour. 2 of the king's officials wanted to kill him, and Haman wanted to kill Mordecai and all the Jews. That is the nature of sharks, and we need to remember that we have an enemy that is looking to devour, too.
2. **Blood in the water:** One thing that we'd probably never do would be to swim in the deep ocean with an open wound because all of us know that sharks are attracted to blood. It's true spiritually, too. In fact, the more we proclaim the blood of Jesus and its power to redeem, the more likely we are to attract sharks that are intent on trying to destroy us and the work we want to do for King Jesus and his kingdom. The good news for us is that the blood that may attract sharks is same blood that will protect us from sharks.
3. **Unleash the Lion:** It's funny how humans keep trying to develop safer ways to get closer to sharks intent on devouring. We think that if we build a better shark cage, then maybe we'll be safe. But the best shark cage is an empty Lion cage! When we allow a risen Jesus to have full reign in our lives, we'll find that he is able to protect us from the attacks that are sure to come. (James 4:7)

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- What, if any, is your takeaway from this week's message?
- Mordecai saved the life of a king who didn't deserve it, and was never thanked or rewarded. What do you think he felt? What should we do when we do good but aren't noticed? How does Matthew 5:16 and 6:1 speak to this? Whose glory should be our motivation for good deeds?
- What types of sharks do you think most followers of Jesus will encounter at some point? What are some examples of sharks in our culture today that are trying to devour the people of God?
- Read 1 Peter 4:12-16 and discuss this statement from the message: "It's time to stop being surprised by sharks and to start being wise about sharks." According to 1 Peter 5:6-9, what are some ways that we can "be wise about sharks" and be ready for inevitable attacks?
- This week's Big Idea says that the best shark cage is an open Lion cage. How can we be brave with sharks in the water? By unleashing the Lion of Judah, another title of King Jesus. Read the following passages and talk about the power of God to protect and the comfort that gives us. John 16:33; 1 John 5:18; Psalm 34:7; Psalm 125:2; Isaiah 54:17; Psalm 91:1-16