

THE BIG IDEA: We'll never change culture by hiding change from culture.

### The Take-Off

Before we launch into Esther chapter 4, let's quickly review what we've learned so far in our series called BRAVE: We need to be brave because we need to deal with bad kings (Xerxes and us), we're affected by bad choices (that we make and others make concerning us), and we'll always encounter bad people (the sharks in the water who want to devour us).

Bad kings, bad choices, bad people, and as we reach a pivotal fourth chapter, we'll start to see even more how much more powerful a sovereign good God is than any of the the bad we've talked about to this point.

On the one hand, we relate to this story because of the humanity in it, and on the other hand we're encouraged by the story because of the sovereignty behind it.

Xerxes, Vashti, Esther, Mordecai, Haman are all making choices and taking action on one level - so do we.

God is taking action at a higher level - and he is never thwarted by bonehead moves we make.

This week, we're going to encounter what many smart theologians call the hinge of the story - this is the chapter that begins to turn the story, and it's all about going public with who we are, allowing others to see change in us

### 1. Is our faith private or public?

- a. As chapter 4 begins, we find Mordecai - you'll remember this is Esther's older cousin who raised her as his daughter - in mourning
- b. The king has sent out the edict calling for the one day purge of all the Jews, and sackcloth and ashes wasn't a fashion statement as much as a disaster statement
- c. Don't know if you've been around many loud and ugly criers, but Mordecai was one of them (v. 1)
- d. Not just him, but Jews everywhere were in mourning
- e. As I said, this is a chapter about going public with our true identity, and let me just say right here that nothing reveal who we really are like a crisis
- f. As long as there wasn't a life or death situation, Mordecai had been able to kind of blend in
- g. But now, the crisis has outed him, hasn't it?
- h. In moments of crisis, we find out who were really are and who others really are
- i. Psalm 86:7 says we should call on the Lord in times of trouble - who do you call?
- j. While Mordecai and all her people are wailing, Esther is secluded in the castle
- k. Isn't that a sad picture of Christianity? While the world is in chaos, we're seemingly safe in our church castle.
- l. 2 things we must guard against: insulation and isolation
  - a. insulation keeps us from the people who need us
  - b. isolation keeps us from the people we need
- m. She tries to get things back to the way they were without even trying to understand the situation (v. 4)
- n. Isn't that just like us? To try and fix culture at a distance from culture? Sometimes we don't want to get messy, and so we keep our new identity in Christ hidden.
- o. When she investigated, she found out what was happening, and suddenly the crisis hit home
- p. Mordecai asks the queen to reveal who she really is so she can plead for her people (v. 8)
- q. This kind of begs the question of whether our faith is private or public, doesn't it?
- r. I mean, is it ok to love Jesus inside the castle without overtly telling people that we do? Absolutely not.
- s. It doesn't mean we have to lead with it, of course ("Hi. I'm a Bible-believing, tv-hating, blood-bought fundamental child of the living God! Want to grab a burger?"), but it does mean we shouldn't keep it secret.
- t. Here's a couple verses to consider:
  - a. Matthew 10:32-33
  - b. Matthew 5:15
- u. Don't hide in a castle what is needed in culture
- v. Jesus makes us different, but crisis reveals the difference
- w. Your faith isn't private; it's personal. And the more personal it becomes, the more public we'll take it.

### 2. There's a risk in going public

- a. After Mordecai asks Esther to come out as one of God's chosen people, Esther responds: "Are you trying to get me killed??"

- b. To understand the risk, we need to understand a few things:
  - a. this wasn't really like a wife talking with a husband like we'd think of it today
  - b. being Queen was more about being his favorite woman - remember how she was chosen
  - c. it wasn't a position of authority (she couldn't say "off with her head!" about anyone!)
  - d. Esther was smart - she knew she couldn't plead for the Jews without revealing herself as a Jew
  - e. Having kept that secret for her entire life, this would be a big move
- c. There are some risks in revealing who you are, aren't there?
- d. It makes us vulnerable to being misunderstood
- e. It makes us vulnerable to being attacked
- f. It makes us vulnerable to being rejected
- g. When I first revealed my true feelings to Wendy, her response floored me!

### 3. Taking the risk leads to relief

- a. I love Mordecai's response in verses 13 and 14: Either you will die, or you might die. Pick one.
- b. This is when he says what is arguably the most famous line in the entire book of Esther: "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"
- c. Let's make a few observations here:
  - a. The risk of revelation leads to the relief of revelation
    - i. If you've ever kept a secret that ate at you and then finally said it, you know what that relief feels like
    - ii. This is why confession is so powerful - getting it in the open takes away the stress of the cover up
    - iii. Is it possible that so many believers are stressed simply because they have yet to truly go public about their identity as followers of Jesus?
    - iv. The implication is that staying silent would keep Esther from relief and deliverance, not the Jews
  - b. "Position for such a time as this"
    - i. position and timing are huge
    - ii. but the real question is will we be the right people in the right places at the right times?
    - iii. that's what Mordecai is challenging Esther about: be who you are - reveal your identity
- d. Esther finds resolution, doesn't she? "If I perish, I perish." (v. 16)
- e. Revealing publicly our identity as the people of God strengthens our conviction to stand publicly for God

### The Landing

Let's try to put some meat on these bones as we wrap up.

First, let's talk about the Big Idea: We'll never change culture by hiding change from culture.

I almost went with a different one, and I'll give it to you in hopes that it helps clarify the takeaway: When we blend in, we end influence.

We have what culture needs, but too often we try not to show it. We're content in a castle - insulated and isolated - complaining about "those" people instead of revealing who we are to them.

And who are we?

- We are God's handiwork (Ephesians 2:10)
- We are uniquely formed (Psalm 139:13-14)
- We are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- We are chosen (1 Peter 2:9)
- We are valuable (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

But most of all, according to 1 Corinthians 6:11, WE ARE CHANGED!

Don't hide it, church!

We'll never change culture by hiding change from culture.

What makes us different is exactly what will make the difference.

Esther learned it, and even if she changed slowly in this chapter, she did change. And as we'll see in the weeks to come, it made all the difference.

It will for you, too.



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**Be Brave: Make the change public**  
**Paul Jenkins**  
**Esther 4**