

The Transformation of Esther

Dave Cover | Esther 3-4

Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To take a step in allowing your Christian identity to shape your other identities.

Icebreaker: What are a few of the different identities you have?

- Familial ones?
- Relational ones?
- Occupational?
- Family history or Citizenship?
- Hobbies or interests?
- Religious or denominational?

Discussion:

Transition: Esther had two identities that came at tension with each other. These two identities were represented by her two names: Hadassah, her Jewish name known only to her family, and Esther, her Persian name known to the Persian Court. Let's read how the tension escalated dramatically.

Read:

Esther 3:1-8

¹After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. ²All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

³Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" ⁴Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew.

⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. ⁶Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the

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idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

⁷ In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the *pur* (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

⁸ Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. ⁹ If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury."

¹⁰ So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

Transition: Dave mentioned that we don't know the reason Mordecai refused to bow in respect to Haman, an act that wasn't forbidden in the Old Testament. It could have been a personal conflict between the two. Or, it's possible it was related to the fact that Haman was an Agagite which was an Amalekite, a people group with centuries of tension with the Jewish people. Haman escalates the tension to want to kill every Jewish person in the Persian empire which would include...Esther.

1. Where in your life do you have two identities (your identity as a Christian and another identity) that feel at tension?
2. Why is it that we are tempted to hide our identity as a Christian at times?

Read:

[Esther 4:12-17](#)

¹² When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "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

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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.”

¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther’s instructions.

3. What’s the risk if Esther intercedes for the Jewish people to the Emperor?
What is the risk if she doesn’t?
4. What does v.14 implicitly tell us about God?
5. How does this passage prepare us to know what it can be like to follow God’s will at times?
6. When we have two identities that feel at tension (our Christian identity and...), what are ways that our Christian identity can shape the other identity? (e.g. How does being a Christian affect how I work as a contractor or how I neighbor?)

Sharing and Prayer:

Have everyone share an answer to the question and have the person on his or her left pray as you go along.

- What’s a step you want to take to better live out your Christian identity?

Announcements:

- **Jonah Study Guides:** Being handed out **Sunday, Feb. 19**
The Crossing will start its four-week sermon series through Jonah on Feb. 26. We have made study guides to go along with this sermon series just like we did with Esther. If you and people in your group would like to pick some up, they will be available on the last Sunday of the Esther series, Feb. 19, so that you can study the first chapter of Jonah before the sermon the next week.
- **Real Marriage Class:** Starting Feb. 15 and going through Mar. 22
It’s really easy to just coast in marriage. If we are going to take steps forward or break easily-formed, bad habits, then often we need to make time to think about it or even to get some outside help. John Tinnin and Lynn Roush, counsellors at The Crossing, teach some general topics this class and you get some personalized guidance from a test you take. Sign up under events.