

Living Faithfully in a Faithless Culture

Keith Simon | Esther 1-2

Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To shed light on the pull we feel from both sides to either culturally accommodate or isolate, and instead challenge us to navigate our cultural moment with grace.

Icebreaker: Have you ever felt out of place somewhere? Where was it and how did it make you feel?

Transition: In the 1950's, the term "In God We Trust" was added to our U.S. currency and incorporated into the Pledge of Allegiance. The National Prayer Breakfast was also established. Those changes made (white) American Christians feel a level of comfort and encouragement in their faith, whereas in recent years Christians may feel like the minority. The Old Testament books of Daniel and Esther show us what it can look like to neither accommodate nor separate from culture, but instead engage in ways that are faithful to God and his Word.

Discussion:

1. What does it look like for believers to culturally accommodate? To culturally isolate? Be specific (What emotions are felt in either, what types of choices are made, how are relationships changed?)
2. Do you feel more bent toward cultural accommodation or isolation? Where and how has this played out in your life?

Read: [Esther 1:13-21](#).

3. What do you notice about the role of power in this passage? How does it affect King Xerxes?
4. Why is power something humans crave? How does it corrupt?

5. Keith noted examples of Persian values throughout the passage (ie: judgments based on external/superficial characteristics—men on wealth/power and women on physical beauty). What are some of the external ways you feel judged at work and in your circles? What are some of the ways you find yourself making judgements?
6. God's values are not based on the external, but the internal. What are some of Gods values that you want to be increasingly true in your life?

Read: [John 17:13-19](#)

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

7. According to this passage, how does the world feel about followers of Christ? What is Jesus' prayer for us in this?
8. How do we prepare ourselves for navigating the tough situations that come from "being in the world and not of it?" What should we do when we're unprepared?
9. How does it impact you to know that God is at work in the broken systems and broken places in our culture? How does it help you to live faithfully as a cultural exile?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Sharing and Prayer:

Spend time sharing any specific examples that are weighing heavy as they relate to our pull toward cultural accommodation and/or isolation. Pray for wisdom and help in navigating what it looks like to live in the world and not be of it.

Announcements:

- **Night to Shine:** Friday evening, February 10

The Crossing hosts a prom-like dinner and dance for people with special needs for ages 14 and older. It's a really powerful experience loving and serving at this event. The event is still looking for 50 buddies and volunteers.



- **Discovery Class for Students:**

Sun, Feb 5 - Sun, Mar 5, 2023 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Here at The Crossing we believe that parents and guardians are the primary spiritual influence in the lives of kids. The Discovery for Students class gives you and your child an opportunity to have spiritual conversations together while learning what it is like to be part of a church. This class is held on Sunday mornings starting February 5. Sign up on [The Crossingchurch.com](https://TheCrossingchurch.com) under events. *Can't make it? You'll have another opportunity to take this class with your child as a 6th grader.*