

I N S I D E O U T

Transforming the Way We Think, Feel and Act

Lesson Five — Tuesday, July 28

Live Your Calling

Purpose-Driven Identity

Esther 4 — For Such a Time as This

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Romans 12:2 — Series Spine Verse

S E S S I O N O V E R V I E W

Esther is a Jewish girl who has been living with a hidden identity in a foreign palace. She did not choose her circumstances. She was taken from her home, raised by a cousin, selected for a king's harem, and elevated to queen in a kingdom that does not know what she really is. And then the moment comes. The moment that her entire story — every displacement, every loss, every layer of hidden identity — has been building toward. And Mordecai sends her a message that reframes everything: perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this.

Tonight we close the series. We have talked about knowing yourself, governing yourself, seeing others, and telling the truth. All of it has been building toward this: living your calling. Discovering that the life God has given you — with all its wounds and detours and seasons that made no sense — is not a random sequence of events. It is a purpose being assembled by a God who wastes nothing.

“And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

— Esther 4:14

Five weeks ago we opened with Joseph, who spent years in situations that made no sense before he could say: you intended evil, God intended good. Tonight we close with Esther, who spent years living a hidden identity before she was asked to step into the fullest expression of who she was. Both of them discovered the same thing: the story God is writing is bigger than the chapter you can currently see.

TEACHING — ESTHER 4

Haman has issued a decree. All Jews in the Persian empire are to be destroyed. Mordecai mourns publicly and sends word to Esther: you must go to the king. Intercede for your people. And Esther sends back a message that is strikingly honest: anyone who approaches the king unsummoned faces death. Even the queen. She has not been called in thirty days.

She is telling the truth about her fear. She is not performing courage she doesn't have. She is naming the real cost of what Mordecai is asking. And Mordecai's response does not minimize the cost. He says: if you remain silent, deliverance will come from another place. But who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Sit with that. Who knows? Mordecai does not claim certainty. He offers a reframe. He says: I cannot prove to you that your entire life has been building to this moment. But what if it has? What if the displacement, the hidden identity, the years in the palace, the position you did not seek — what if none of it was random? What if all of it was preparation?

Purpose-driven identity does not require you to understand the whole story. It requires you to trust the Author. Esther could not see all of it. She just had to take one step. And that step changed everything.

Esther's response is one of the most powerful sentences in Scripture: 'And if I perish, I perish.' That is not resignation. That is the declaration of a person who has resolved the question of identity. She knows who she is. She knows whose she is. And she knows that the calling is more important than the comfort. Go, gather all the Jews in Susa. Fast for me. And then I will go to the king. Which is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.

She has moved from fear to purpose. Not because the fear is gone. But because the purpose is bigger than the fear.

THE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE CONNECTION

Purpose-driven identity is where all the EI components we have studied over five weeks converge. Self-awareness: Esther knows who she is beneath the queen's crown. Self-regulation: she does not act impulsively — she calls a fast, she prepares, she chooses her moment. Intrinsic motivation: her decision is not driven by external pressure alone but by an internal conviction about what she is for. Empathy: she feels the weight of her people's suffering and lets it move her to action. Social intelligence: she navigates a complex relational and political landscape with extraordinary skill.

Viktor Frankl, who survived the Nazi concentration camps, wrote that a person who has a why can survive almost any how. Esther's why — her people, her God, her purpose — is what makes the risk of the king's court bearable. The why is bigger than the fear.

Inside Out means this: the transformation of your life from survival to purpose is not an external event. It is an internal realization. The moment you understand that God has been assembling your story — that the pit was not abandonment, the cave was not failure, the well was not exposure, the wound was not the end — is the moment the declaration becomes possible.

A FRAMEWORK FOR LIVING YOUR CALLING

Esther did not wake up one morning and suddenly know her purpose. She moved toward it through a specific sequence. And that sequence is available to everyone in this room.

Step 1 — Receive the Reframe

Mordecai did not tell Esther what to do. He asked her a question: who knows whether you have come for such a time as this? That question is a reframe — an invitation to see her displacement, her hidden identity, and her unlikely position not as accidents but as preparation. Before you can step into your calling, you have to be willing to receive the reframe. To look back at the seasons that made no sense and ask: what if none of this was

random? What if the pit, the cave, the noon-time well, the wounds — what if all of it was God assembling something I could not see from inside it? You cannot live your calling while you are still grieving your detour. The reframe does not minimize what the detour cost. It repositions what the detour produced.

Step 2 — Name the Fear Honestly

Esther did not perform courage she did not have. She named the cost before she made the commitment. Anyone who approaches the king unsummoned faces death. She said that plainly. And Mordecai did not shame her for saying it. He heard it, acknowledged it, and kept extending the invitation. Purpose-driven identity does not require the absence of fear. It requires honesty about the fear alongside the willingness to move anyway. The person who pretends the fear is not there is not operating from courage — they are operating from denial. The person who names the fear and moves anyway — that is courage. That is what Esther modeled. Name the fear out loud. To God. To a safe person. And then take the step.

Step 3 — Resolve the Identity Question

If I perish, I perish. That sentence is only available to a person who has settled the question of who they are. Esther knew she was a Jew. She knew she was Mordecai's daughter. She knew she was placed in that palace for a reason larger than her comfort. And because she knew those things — because her identity was settled at a level the palace could not reach — the threat of death did not have the final word over her decision. This is the deepest work of the series. You can know yourself, govern yourself, see others, and tell the truth — but until the identity question is resolved, the calling will always feel optional. When you know who you are and whose you are, the cost of the calling becomes secondary. Not easy. Secondary. Resolve the question. Then step forward.

Calling is not the absence of fear. It is the decision that the purpose is bigger than the fear. Esther made that decision. She did not know the outcome. She knew the Author. And that was enough.

FIVE TAKEAWAYS

1. God does not waste a single season.

Not the pit. Not the cave. Not the noon-time well. Not the palace years that made no sense. Not the wounds that went unnamed for decades. Every season you survived was preparation for

something you have not yet fully seen. The evidence is in the text — Joseph, David, the woman at the well, Esther — and it is in your own story if you are willing to look.

2. You do not need the whole story to take the next step.

Esther could not see the outcome. Mordecai could not guarantee it. What made the step possible was not certainty about the future. It was trust in the God who had been writing the story all along. You do not need to understand everything God has been building before you step into what He is calling you toward. You need enough trust to take the next step. That is all He is asking for right now.

3. The displacement was preparation.

Esther did not choose the palace. She did not choose the hidden identity. She did not choose the years of waiting. But every single one of those unchosen seasons positioned her for the moment that everything depended on. What in your life have you been grieving as a detour that God has actually been using as a corridor? The displacement you did not choose may be the exact preparation for the assignment only you can fulfill.

4. Calling requires the identity question to be settled.

If I perish, I perish is only possible when you know who you are. If your identity is still being defined by what was done to you — by the compound, the family, the relationship, the internal voice that has been running your self-talk for decades — the calling will always feel too costly. Settle the question. You are not what they made you. You are what God built through it. From that foundation, the step forward becomes possible.

5. You are the announcement.

The series declaration is this: you are not the sum of what was done to you. You are the announcement of what God built through it. Joseph's brothers meant evil. God meant good. David's cave was not failure — it was formation. The woman's shame became her street declaration. Esther's displacement became her destiny. Your story is not finished. And the part that is still being written — the part you step into when you walk out of this series — is the announcement. Live it.

D I S C U S S I O N

1. *Mordecai says: who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Looking back over your own story — the displacements, the seasons that made no sense, the positions you did not seek — can you see the preparation now that you could not see then?*

2. *Esther names her fear honestly before she acts courageously. She does not perform bravery she doesn't have. Is there a calling in your life that you have been avoiding because the fear is real? What would it look like to name the fear honestly AND take the step anyway?*

3. *Esther says: if I perish, I perish. She has resolved the identity question before she acts. What is the identity question you are still wrestling with? What would it mean to resolve it —*

to know so clearly who you are and whose you are that the cost of the calling becomes secondary?

4. Over these five sessions we have studied five EI components: self-awareness (Joseph), self-regulation and intrinsic motivation (David), empathy and social intelligence (the Samaritan), emotional honesty and shame resilience (the woman at the well), and purpose-driven identity (Esther). Which of these five is the area where God is doing the most work in you right now? Why?

5. The series has been called *Inside Out: Transforming the Way We Think, Feel and Act*. What is one specific transformation — in how you think, feel, or act — that you are leaving these five weeks with? And what is one step you will take this week toward living your calling more fully?

CLOSING DECLARATION — SERIES FINALE

We have known ourselves — like Joseph in the palace, who remembered who he was in every room they put him in. We have governed ourselves — like David in the cave, who chose the robe corner when he could have chosen the kill. We have seen others — like the Samaritan on the road, who crossed every distance to close the gap. We have told the truth — like the woman at the well, who left her jar and ran back to declare. And now we live our calling — like Esther at the gate, who said: if I perish, I perish. And stepped forward. We are not the sum of what was done to us. We are the announcement of what God built through it. Speak this aloud, wherever you are: I think differently. I feel honestly. I act purposefully. I am being transformed — from the inside out. For such a time as this.

A WORD FROM PASTOR HARRIS

I want to close these five weeks by saying something directly to you. I designed this series for this sabbatical season not because I thought you needed to fill the time while I was away. I designed it because I believe what we have studied together is the most urgent work any of us can do.

The world is full of people who survived something. People who look fine and are not fine. People who have been in rooms where no one asked if they were okay. People whose drive has been suppressed, whose empathy has been buried, whose shame has been keeping

them at the well at noon for years. That is your neighbor. That is your congregation. That is, perhaps, the face looking back at you in the mirror.

God is building something in that person. He has been building it through every season that felt like silence. And what He is building is not just for them. It is for everyone they will one day serve. What was intended for evil, God intended for good. That is not just a verse. That is the story of this series. And I believe it is the story of your life.

Go live it.

Pastor Edwin Harris

Servant Harris

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