

THE GATHERING OF THE INLAND VALLEY

EPIC VALUES; ESTHER: CELL CURRICULUM

EPIC VALUES: FROM THE BOOK OF ESTHER

EPIC VALUES: THE GATHERING OF THE INLAND VALLEY

ENCOUNTER Encounter the living God and never be the same!

PARTICIPATE Accelerate and deepen your spiritual growth through participation; learn to hear the voice and wisdom of God in your daily life by participating in His nature, life, grace & gifts!

IMAGINE Allow God's wisdom, love, beauty and power create your personal destiny of more than you can ask, think or imagine!

CONNECT Connect to God and his people by developing a network of vital relationships; this is key to spiritual and ongoing growth!

I. ESTHER'S ENCOUNTER: BECOME A HISTORY MAKER!

A. The vacuum of leadership will always be filled. Vacancy will always create opportunity. Before there could ever be a Queen Esther [unknown orphan Jewish girl] there must always be a Queen Vashti.

B. The EPIC lifestyle will elevate you from a low place to a high place.

C. Esther grew in favor with God and man during her twelve months of preparation to come before the King. God's grace and favor position us for greatness to be of service in His kingdom and accomplish His purposes.

GQ? How do you think Esther prepared herself to come before the king of Persia [mentally, physically, emotionally]? How can this be an example of how we are to prepare to meet our King?

C. Esther was uniquely positioned by God to deliver her people from being destroyed. Become aware of your unique position in order to leverage your influence to make history or advance God's purposes.

GQ? Currently what is your unique position? Who has God uniquely positioned you to minister too?

Esther 4:14 "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

D. Notice in 4:16 the quality decision Esther makes regarding going into to see the King unannounced (notice her Christ likeness in this moment).

GA? Split up into pairs and share a time when you sacrificed something for someone else's benefit. Come back together as a group and have a few share

GQ? Part of Esther's encounter included calling a fast herself and all of her people before she was to come before the King of Persia unannounced. How do you think fasting relates to encountering God? Why do you suppose Jesus fasted for 40 days prior to starting His public ministry [see Luke 4] What voice did Jesus hear on his fast? Why do you suppose this was?

II. ESTHER AND MORDECAI'S PARTICIPATION:

A. Mordecai's principled life set him in opposition to the ruling authorities. Ultimately this led to him not paying homage to Haman [The King's #2] and sets in motion Haman's plan to have all the Jews extinguished. A principled life in Christ will eventually lead to conflict and creating enemies.

B. Participation with God means sometimes NOT participating in other things.

GQ? Recount a time when your principles went against the grain and created conflict; How did you handle this [good or bad]? What did you learn? How do you pick your 'spots' when it comes to living by principle and managing conflict?

GQ? What does Jesus say about how we are to treat our enemies [see Matt 5:44]? What do we think we are going to lose if we follow Jesus' command here?

B. Esther chp 5-7 recounts her tact and strategy [I believe she received this strategy during her personal and corporate fast].

GQ? What makes this so wise and what does this say about God's wisdom? What current situation are in where you need this kind of wisdom from God? Is it time to encounter God on a fast?

III. ESTHER'S IMAGINATION: BECOME A PERSON OF VISION & PURPOSE!

A. Courage sets the imagination free. When Esther made her own decision to stand on principle after Mordecai's exhortation [4:14-16] she made a decision to sacrifice herself if she had too. The life of self denial allows courage to rise up; if a person is already dead [see Rom 6:4, Gal 2:20] then they become courageous and a dangerous element towards the kingdom of darkness.

B. In chapter 6 the King cannot sleep and asked for the Chronicles of the Kings [books containing the detailed activities of the kingdom-historical record] where he discovers what Mordecai had done for him prior to the plot being hatched by Haman to kill all the Jews.

GQ? How does this 'tid bit' demonstrate God's providence to keeping covenant with His people? Share a way where God proved trustworthy to act on your behalf when you weren't aware of his movements?

IV. CONNECT: BE A CULTURE CREATOR!

A. In chapter 7 Haman is hanged on his own gallows meant for Mordecai. Chapter 8 Mordecai get promoted to Haman's place of the King's #2 and in chapter 9:16 the Jews [by the King's reversal of policy-Thank you God for keeping your covenant (Gen 12:1-3)] route their enemies killing 75,000.

B. 9:20-32 The Feast of Purim was instituted to memorialize what God has done for His people when He had the death decree reversed and routed their enemies. The practice of remembrance is an ancient practice which keeps God's greatness before his people.

GQ? What practices can you institute in your own communal life with Christ? What ancient markers can/do you have as a family which honors the Lord's faithfulness?

[Mark & Joana-We both journal and record dreams and we go away on annual prayer retreats/getaways where we take some time to go through them and read them to one another, worship, and thank the Lord together for all He has done]

C. Sometimes principled people get killed but sometimes they get promoted into positions of greater authority and have even greater influence. Mordecai and Esther two unknown's God raised up into positions of vast influence in a pagan kingdom.

1 Cor 1:27...but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong...