



PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE

LESSON 8 ESTHER 4

1. What touched you from last week's study on **Hannah's prayer** in **1 Samuel**, and how did the study influence your response to something or someone this week?

ESTHER - FASTING

Esther was a beautiful young Jewish woman living in exile in Persia, an orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai, when she was taken by force to join the Persian king's harem. After her "turn" with the king, he chose her as his queen. No one knew that Esther was Jewish; it was her secret.

2. As you read about the unlikely heroine of **Esther 4**, pray that God might open your eyes to the benefits of fasting and the positive effect it may have on your prayer life. What assumptions or ideas come to mind as you consider the topic of fasting?
3. To better understand the situation Esther and her people were facing, read **Esther 3:8-14**. Although Esther did not know it yet, Haman, an enemy of Mordecai and all the Jews, had cooked up an evil scheme. What was his end game and how did he intend to accomplish it?
4. a) According to **Esther 4:1-3**, describe the mental and physical state of Mordecai and the Jewish people when they learned of all that Haman had set in motion.

b) From **V6-11**, what did Mordecai instruct Esther to do and what was the reality that Esther was facing if she carried out his instructions?

5. While few if any of us will be asked to risk our lives for our faith, we are often challenged to step out of our comfort zone and take action. Where are you feeling called to do something “risky” for God and how have you responded?
6. Although Mordecai does not expressly refer to God, what does his response to Esther in **V12-14** reveal about God, His relationship to the Jewish people, and Mordecai’s faith in Him?
7. a) Reflect on Esther’s words as she faces the prospect of losing her life for the sake of her people in **V15-16**. Why do you think she calls for a fast and how did it prepare her to face the king?
- b) How might fasting and prayer give you the courage and wisdom you need to act when you feel powerless and ill-equipped?
8. a) The men and women of the Bible have fasted and prayed for a variety of different reasons. What do you find significant about the discipline of fasting from this sampling of verses:
- 1 Samuel 7:2-6
 - 2 Samuel 12:15-23
 - Ezra 8:21-23
 - Nehemiah 9:1-5

- Isaiah 58:3-7

- Matthew 6:16-18

b) What is your favorite new insight or verse from the above and why?

9. Prayerfully consider what otherwise fills you up or has become a hindrance to approaching God to seek the filling of His power or the joy of His presence. What reason might God be calling you to fast and from what?

10. HEART REFLECTION

Each of us at times will feel hard pressed or squeezed by difficult or unfair circumstances. Read and consider **Psalm 118:4-5** “**Let those who fear the Lord say: ‘His love endures forever.’ When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord; He brought me into a spacious place.**” Write a prayer for what is stirring in your heart as you connect the story of Esther and fasting with these verses.

NAME

PRAYER REQUEST