

## Desperate People (Might) Take Bold Action

This summer we've been considering how to rightly respond when we find ourselves in desperate circumstances.

So far we've learned that our first, primary response when we suffer from desperation is to take the proper stance before God. We won't experience the grace or the help we need if we're not people of faith: persistent in prayer & able to lament; willing to be humble and be humbled; understanding our need for repentance and people who experience God directly.

Sometimes doing the difficult work of placing ourselves in the proper stance before God is all we should do -- sometimes it's all we CAN do. But there are other times when the necessary ***response to our desperate circumstances might be to take bold action.***

**Opening Question:** Why might we find it hard to take action when we are desperate? When we experience hardship what might cause us to be hesitant to change or fearful to act?

### Read Esther 4:1-3

*Review the Context of the Book of Esther*

*The story begins with the Persian King Xerxes (or Ahasuerus) getting upset with Queen Vashti for refusing to be shown off as an object before a drunken Xerxes and his equally drunken friends, resulting in Xerxes' ill-advised decision to remove her from her position. This leaves Xerxes needing a new queen. (Esther 1)*

*That's where Esther comes in. Esther is a Jewish orphan girl, raised by her cousin Mordecai, living in Persia along with all the other Jews after having been exiled for Israel. King Xerxes demands that all of the most beautiful virgin young women in the Persian Empire be gathered up and brought to his palace for his pleasure. Esther has no choice but to go...and then something rather unbelievable happens: Xerxes picks Esther to be the new queen. Mordecai instructs Esther to keep her Jewish identity a secret, and Esther goes to live in the palace in the capital city of Susa. (Esther 2)*

*So things don't seem so bad...and then we meet a guy named Haman. Haman is the chief advisor, the right-hand-man, to Xerxes. His ego is HUGE. He gets Xerxes issue a decree that all must bow before Haman. Mordecai, who works as a civic leader at the king's gate, refuses to bow to Haman, on account of his Jewish heritage and beliefs -- Jews bow only to God. This really irks Haman, who in response to Mordecai's refusal manipulates the king through half-truths and a big bribe into allowing Haman to create a royal decree calling for the empire-wide extermination of every single Jew. (Esther 3)*

1. In what way(s) did Mordecai and the others Jews respond rightly to their desperate situation? Have you ever experienced similar responses to hardship and terrible circumstances?

### Read Esther 4:4-11

2. What are the contributing factors to Esther's desperate situation? How do you think she felt? What were her concerns and fears?

3. Sam said:

*At the end of Esther's story she becomes the savior of her people -- she overcomes this moment of fear. But the moment shouldn't be ignored, and it shouldn't be belittled. God will end up using Esther even though she had a moment of doubt. The point is this: **when things are desperate, it's okay to be afraid. Fear and doubt do not disqualify or discredit your faith.***

*If you're struggling through your desperation with some hesitancy, unsure as how to move forward, know this: you're not alone and God understands your fear. **He wants you to be free of it**, but he is patient, and **will not cast you aside or abandon you because of it**. The love of God made perfect for us in his son Jesus Christ is so good that it can listen to the cry (seen in Mark 9), "I believe -- help me with my unbelief" and understand it not as cowardly weakness, but instead as a vulnerable confession. God will be patient with in you in your times of uncertainty, and will not abandon you.*

Do you believe that God's love for you means he will be patient and not abandon you during your times of desperation, hesitancy, and doubt? How might such a truth impact the way you react to your desperate circumstances?

### Read Esther 4:12-17

4. Sam said that Mordecai's message to Esther was, in part, to remind her **who God is and how God works** -- that he is a God who saves his people and often accomplishes his purposes through his people. How might these reminders help you take action in your desperation?

5. Do you think there might be any desperate situation or circumstance in your life through which God might be extending you an invitation to take bold action? How might you pray for this? What steps might you take to begin taking action?