

MOVING TOWARDS COMPASSION

Esther 4



SYNOPSIS

One of the best tutors for growing in compassion is when we have gone through suffering that is out of our control. In Esther 4, we see a satire that the author wants us to know: Mordecai, because of what he's wearing, is not able to enter into the king's palace. He's on the outside looking in. The irony is Esther is inside the palace, but because she's inside, she's completely unaware of what's happening on the outside. In Esther and Mordecai's interaction, we learn three postures on how we can move towards compassion.

The first posture we need to pick up: learn what's going on and why is there such an outcry from this person, from this community - rather than flippantly judging and coming to a conclusion, we need to learn what is causing this anguish and pain - why there is an outcry of the suffering.

The second posture we need to pick up: listen to the outcry of those who are in anguish. Esther listens to all that Mordecai shares. And she becomes aware of what is causing the outcry. But she has a dilemma. Everyone knows you are not allowed to enter the king's presence without being summoned, so she would risk her very life by going in to the king's presence.

But in this, Mordecai brings up three things to appeal to Esther that she should go into the king to advocate for the Jewish people. First, her identity (because of her Jewish background) would not be exempt even though she felt safe within the palace walls. Second, he points out missed opportunity (that God would raise up another source for deliverance if she did not go), Third, her position of privilege (where she had resources that could be used for the benefit of the Jews). And he points out that there is a divine orchestration in her origins as an orphan exile to one of the most prominent positions as the Queen of the Persian Empire.

The last posture that we need to pick up is lament. Esther ultimately agrees and laments with her people, standing with her people in anguish. She prepares herself to go into the king's presence, and if she perishes, she perishes.



OUTLINE

1

LEARN

As followers of Jesus, when we hear the outcry, protest, anguish of people - whether individuals or collectives, we need to pause to learn. We should never stop learning, learning what is causing the pain and anguish, why there is such an outcry of the suffering.

2

LISTEN

We also need to listen to the outcry of the anguish. We need to be aware of what is happening and what is truly causing the suffering or injustice. We need to listen incarnationally, putting ourselves in the shoes of those that are hurting.

3

LAMENT

Lastly, we need to lament and stand in solidarity with those who are hurting. "When you come upon the marginalized and vulnerable, until there is solidarity, excuses will always be found to avoid any involvement and risk." [Karen Jobes NIV Application Commentary](#)



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Do you struggle with practicing compassion? (As defined by listening instead of trying to fix)

2

How can we learn to better listen, instead of always trying to fix and give advice?

3

How often do you make effort to learn and understand what's going on to those who are in anguish, distress, public protest?

4

When was the last time you sought solidarity with the marginalized and vulnerable?

5

Is it difficult for you to sit in the pain of others in silence? Is it difficult for you to sit in your own pain? When was the last time you sat down to lament in pain, instead of searching for solutions?



BIG IDEA

If we are to grow in compassion and deal with those who are in pain, deal with those who are suffering, we need to learn, listen, and lament. And as the Holy Spirit fuses us with those who are hurting, the words that come out of our mouth will really be able to minister in a powerful and tangible way. Let's be like Jesus, who "being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross"

