

The Gathering Community Group Guide

Brave // Week 4 // Make the change public

Paul Jenkins

May 3, 2015

Esther 4

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN MEMBERS COME PREPARED. TAKE TIME BEFORE GROUP TO GO OVER THIS GUIDE.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

Sometimes, we try to live in the shadows. There can be lots of reasons for that – and some might not be as bad as others – but every now and then, we find ourselves in situations that demand us to go public about our true identities. In Esther 4, the new queen faced just such a situation. A crisis called her out, and she finds herself struggling with whether or not to reveal her true identity as one of God's chosen people. In week 4 of our Brave series, Paul helped us talk through 3 important points:

1. **Is our faith private or public?** As the Jews faced almost certain annihilation, Esther felt safe in the castle. Sometimes that's how we are, too. We insulate ourselves from problems on the outside and isolate ourselves from people who could help us. We are never called to keep our faith private, and even though faith is extremely personal, it's also intended to be very public.
2. **There's a risk in going public:** If you've ever shared a deeply held belief or conviction, then you know what it feels like to take the risk of sharing a part of who you are. For Esther, the risk of fully disclosing her identity wasn't embarrassment, but possible death. Let's not sugarcoat it; there is a risk of rejection and ridicule when we stop trying to hide the changes that Jesus has made in us.
3. **Taking the risk leads to relief:** The risk, of course, is worth it. At the end of the chapter, Esther has grown from a timid Queen living in the castle to a bold revolutionary willing to risk her life in order to bring relief to her people. Revelation of true identity always leads to relief. It was true for Esther, and it will be true for you and me.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- What, if any, is your takeaway from this week's message?
- We saw early in chapter 4 that crisis often reveals who we really are. Have you ever experienced a crisis and been surprised at how you responded? What did you learn about yourself?
- In America, we aren't likely to experience imminent death like the Jews were facing in Esther (at least not yet). Can you give some examples of what kind of risks we do face in America for going public with the changes in our lives?
- Read Romans 12:2 and discuss the following: What does it look like to conform to the pattern of the world? How do we transform (change)? Which do you think is easier, conforming or transforming? What are we able to do when we are changed (the last part of the verse)?
- The ONLY reason Esther was able to help was because of who she was – a Jew. Why do you think our being different could be the very thing that makes the difference?
- Paul listed a lot of scriptures at the end that reveal how we're different because we're God's children. Take the time to read each of these out loud and talk about how the change it describes could be used to point others in culture toward Jesus. Read Ephesians 2:10; Psalm 139:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20