

# **BUILD-A-BELIEVER WORKSHOPS**

## **Ezra Nehemiah Esther**

---

*People say to me, "How do you build a church?" You don't build a church, you build a believer. As a result, the church will build itself. (John MacArthur).*

### **Esther** Chapter Five

#### *"Leading Lady"*

#### Introduction

Proper training is crucial. I've seen the difference it can make as I've worked alongside law enforcement and emergency services personnel. Those of you in the military, or the families of those who courageously serve, also understand the importance of proper training.

You train and train and train. You sit through classes; you participate in drills and role-plays. You do it because you know that, once the real thing happens, you will fall back on your training.

The emphasis and the trust we place on proper training stands in contrast to the lack of training that often accompanies a call to serve the Lord. Christians are pressed into important service with little or no time or training as disciples.

1. The Old Testament judge Gideon is one good example. He had no time or training as a disciple; he was hiding from the Midianites when the angel of the Lord came to press him into service as the one who would deliver Israel from her enemies.
2. Even in the New Testament little or no time or training transpired in most cases. Think, for example, in the Book of Acts of the first seven men chosen as deacons - just shortly after they had gotten saved.

What compensated for the lack of time or training? Concerning Gideon you read that [the Spirit of the Lord came upon him](#);

concerning the seven deacons you read that they were men [full of the Holy Spirit](#).

Esther had little time or training as a disciple. She was pressed into service immediately. The Holy Spirit was upon her and He would lead her through it.

We want to take a look at the Holy Spirit leading this lady to learn how we can be more aware of, and dependent upon, His leading in our lives. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Discover The Holy Spirit's Leading When You Perish, and #2 You Discern The Holy Spirit's Leading When You're Patient.

### #1 You Discover The Holy Spirit's Leading When You Perish (4:16 – 5:2)

The Bible reveals one God existing in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The term we use to describe this is **trinity**. The word *trinity* means “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness.” It is used to summarize the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons yet one God.

The word *trinity* is never found in the Bible, though the idea represented by the word is taught everywhere on its pages. For example: All three persons of the trinity are mentioned together in the opening sentence of First Peter: [According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood](#) (1 Peter 1:2 NASB).

The Doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery that we will never be able to understand fully. We can understand something of its truth by summarizing the teaching of Scripture in three statements: God is three persons; Each person is fully God; There is one God.

The Holy Spirit is God. He is a person – *not* a force. When we talk about His leading, we are talking about a person who is God guiding and directing our lives.

I don't play golf. I'm lousy at it. But for one glorious round, many years ago, I wasn't half-bad. I was even able to shoot par on the 18th hole. It's because Pete Gallo was in my foursome. He was a scratch golfer. As we played, he gave me a lesson. He told me how to approach the ball; how to stand; how to swing. He chose my clubs for me. He talked me through every aspect of the game.

What I lacked in training and preparation, Pete made up for, and I was able to play at a level way beyond my preparation and training.

It's not the greatest example, but you get the idea. The Holy Spirit, Who lives within me and Who comes upon me, can enable me to serve at a supernatural level way beyond my preparation and training.

I'm not against training or discipline in the Christian walk. We should be studying God's Word; spending time in prayer; sharing our faith; fellowshiping with one another. But there is a danger – a grave danger – of trusting our own preparation and training over the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul warned us about it when he wrote to the Galatians and asked, [having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?](#) (Galatians 3:3).

The more mature we get as believers, the more we tend to rely on ourselves rather than on the leading of the Holy Spirit. It's a pitfall we must recognize and avoid.

So: How do you discover this supernatural leading? We can get some insight from Esther.

A decree had been issued in Persia that all Jews anywhere in its provinces were to be exterminated on a certain day. Mordecai was urging his niece Esther to plead for her people before King Ahasuerus. To go before the king uninvited could mean death.

[Esther 4:15](#) Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai:

[Esther 4:16](#) "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast

likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

Esther 4:17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Esther had not been walking with God; not by a long shot. But now, in a moment's time, she was fully up to spiritual speed. She declared, *if I perish, I perish*.

With those words Esther offered herself a living sacrifice to her Lord. She had been living *in* the world and *for* the world; now she would be living *in the Lord* and *for the Lord*.

In one of the most popular verses of the New Testament, Romans 12:1, **we** are told to do the same:

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

It doesn't say you should live sacrificially. It says you should **present** yourself **a living sacrifice**. There is a difference.

1. Living sacrificially is great; but you remain in control of your life. You decide when you're going to sacrifice, what, and for how long.
2. If you are instead a **living sacrifice**, you've given up control. God is the one in control, telling you what to do, when, and for how long.

Esther's famous phrase is a sort of commentary on what it means to be a living sacrifice. You must be willing to perish; in fact, you must perish!

I submit to you that the moment she determined to go before the king, she perished. Her hopes; her dreams; her plans; her priorities; everything that was Esther, perished. Even if the king decided to spare her life, it would never be the same afterwards. She was God's to do with as He saw fit – a real live **living sacrifice**.

To be led by the Holy Spirit requires that you perish. Your independent hopes... dreams... plans... and priorities... Must be sacrificed in favor of God's. You must perish on God's altar.

Lying on an altar seems a little scary. But there is a good scary, isn't there? Don't we like to be scared? Why do people watch scary movies? Why do we ride scary rides? The kind of spiritual scariness that comes with lying on the altar and giving your life to God is in that category. It's a good scary; an exciting scary; it's an adventurous scary.

Esther's leading began when she perished. She immediately began practicing Christian disciplines. She was strengthened by fasting and prayer. She did so in fellowship with others who were likeminded.

There are important spiritual disciplines we should engage ourselves in. We should pursue all the spiritual training we can. Just be careful to keep it in perspective. Esther would undoubtedly grow deeper in her knowledge of and love for God. But she was just as spiritual right then as she ever would be in terms of discovering God's leading.

She perished; and she was faithful to perish by going through with it:

Esther 5:1 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her* royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.

Esther 5:2 So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, *that* she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that *was* in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

Follow-through was important. Willingness is not faithfulness. Faithfulness is what puts your spiritual life in motion.

The Holy Spirit is in you to lead you. You are His Esther today. All you need do is perish and go through with it and you'll discover His leading.

#2 You Discern The Holy Spirit's Leading  
As You're Patient  
(5:3-8)

God kicked-open a great door for Esther to plead for her people:

Esther 5:3 And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What *is* your request? It shall be given to you - up to half the kingdom!"

*"Thank you, Lord!"* All Esther had to do was lay-out her request and everything would be over. She took a deep breath and said,

Esther 5:4 So Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

Esther 5:5 Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

*Great idea!* Get Haman in the king's dining hall – **then** drop the bomb. Fabulous plan.

Esther 5:6 At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What *is* your petition? It shall be granted you. What *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"

Esther 5:7 Then Esther answered and said, "My petition and request *is this*:

Esther 5:8 If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

Don't act like this makes sense. Esther's request *only* makes sense because you have read chapters six and seven! There you find out that Haman builds a gallows to hang Mordecai on; but Ahasuerus ends up promoting Mordecai instead. Once Esther busts Haman, Ahasuerus ends up having him executed on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai!

But you don't know this yet in the story... And neither did Esther. Her request makes no sense at all from a strategic point of view. She had the king's ear; he had promised to grant her any request. It seemed the perfect opportunity to plead for the Jews. A delay in pleading for the Jews might prove disastrous. Ahasuerus was fickle, and could easily change his mood; Haman had the king's ear, too, and might discover Esther's plans, heading her off somehow. Now seemed the time to speak.

But Esther **didn't** speak... She delayed, inviting the king and Haman to another banquet the next day. Why? It was the leading of the Holy Spirit.

He knew what was going to happen in chapters six and seven, and He led Esther accordingly.

The one lesson we want to draw-out from Esther's example is that of learning to be patient. She waited for the Lord to tell her what to do. It's the only explanation that makes any sense.

We often are not willing to wait. We get involved with the Lord, and begin to sense His leading us. Then we step in and take over based upon our own wisdom or training. We do what makes sense to us.

The leading of the Holy Spirit doesn't always make sense at the time. It makes sense later – after you see the whole plan unfold.

Probably the most obvious example of this in the life of our fellowship has to do with the purchase of these facilities. We were finally able to buy land – a beautiful, perfectly situated 5-acre parcel on Fargo. We quickly paid it off. It made sense to us to begin our building project.

Only once we did, *nothing made sense!* All of our efforts to draw an affordable but adequate building were dismal failures. We had many meetings in which we kicked around many ideas. They were creative ideas... But they were our ideas – ideas that made sense to us based on our assumption that owning land meant that God wanted us to build on it.

He did not. My wife kept asking me, "Are you praying about this?" We were; and we weren't. We were praying; but we were leaning on our own understanding.

God graciously led us to a Scripture we all knew:

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it* -

Luke 14:29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him,

Luke 14:30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

It was only obvious we could not and therefore should not build. It was a time (in my life at least) when we had to perish. Our hopes; our plans; our dreams; our priorities; they perished.

Soon after we perished, the Holy Spirit began to lead us in a new direction. The ownership of the land would be the means by which we could afford to buy this building.

He has continued to lead. If our escrow closes as expected, the sale of the land will be the means by which we will be debt free with no mortgage.

Perish; then patience.

### Applying God's Word

I do not want to have begun in the Spirit only to continue in the flesh. I want to discover and discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. I want it for you as well.

We must maintain a healthy fear of trusting our own training and our own wisdom. We should mature and grow in the Christian life and its disciplines – but never to a point where we lose the dependency on the Holy Spirit.

- being changed to bring change -  
If you're not being led, *maybe you're not dead!* God's leading requires daily that we offer ourselves a living sacrifice; and moment-by-moment that we patiently wait on the Lord.

If you're not a Christian – You're dead, but in a very different way. The Bible describes you as dead in trespasses and sins. Before you can experience this wonderful leading, you must be born again.