

Queen for A Day Such as This

Studies in the Book of Esther

“Leading a 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 stark contrast to the lack of training that often accompanies a call to serve the Lord. Christians are pressed into service with little or no time or training as disciples.

- Gideon is one good Old Testament 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.
- In the New Testament, little or no time or training transpired in many cases. The first seven men chosen as deacons were themselves recently 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 no time or training as a disciple. 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.

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'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 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.

The leading of the Holy Spirit is not a reward for holiness; it is not reserved for super-saints. It is the inheritance of every believer, for each of us all the time.

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 we can say that Esther offered herself a living sacrifice to God. 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.

- Living sacrificially is noble; but you remain in control of your life. You decide when you’re going to sacrifice, what, and for how long.
- If you are 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 had previously been Esther, perished.

Even if the king decided to spare her life, it would never be the same afterwards. He would know she was a Jew. She was 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.

It's not crazy; it's scary. There is a big difference. Sometimes people do the craziest things, then blame them on the Holy Spirit.

Esther's leading began when she perished. She immediately began practicing at least two Christian disciplines.

- She was strengthened by fasting.
- 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.

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.

God broke-down a door; busted it wide open; 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."

Let's not pretend that this makes sense. Esther's request only makes sense if 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... 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 might prove disastrous. Ahasuerus was fickle, and could easily change his mind and 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.

It's the only explanation that makes any sense.

We often are not patient 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 public 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 solid, 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.

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 independent 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.

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.

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.