

Faith in Real Life: Stories of Hope for a Messed-Up World

Part 6: What If God Put You Right Here, Right Now, on Purpose?

Esther

Summary: Even in the most ordinary moments, God is working behind the scenes. You are placed right where you are, right now, on purpose.

Main Ideas:

We want significant lives, but most of life seems so insignificant.

God created each of us on purpose for a purpose,

Faith redefines significance.

Sometimes God's presence is most powerful in the silence.

Even when we feel lost or insignificant, God is at work behind the scenes.

It's often in the very places that seem most ordinary that God works most powerfully.

Faith is trusting God with your ordinary and your unknown.

Faith redefines significance because with God, no act of love is wasted or unseen.

God is always orchestrating for our good behind the scenes.

Faith in real life makes every ordinary day significant.

Invitation:

Pray this every day this week: God, thank you for putting me right here right now. Show me my significance and show me my next step.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think we often struggle to see significance in everyday tasks and routines?
2. How does Esther's story challenge the way we define "important" or "significant" in life?
3. God's name isn't mentioned in Esther—yet his presence is felt. Can you think of ways God might be at work in ways we don't notice?
4. What might it look like to live each day with the belief that God can use your ordinary life for extraordinary purposes?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

ME: What chore do you hate most?

- For me... folding laundry
- When my kids were littler, nothing filled me with more dread than a laundry basket full of tiny socks and onesies.
- Turning them all right-side out... knowing they'd be dirty again by tomorrow.
- It's endless.

Not what I pictured when I dreamed about what my life would look like...

- Day dreamed about being a knight

- Then a fighter pilot
- Then a rockstar
- Then megachurch pastor.

We want significant lives, but most of life seems so insignificant.

- We spend our hours cleaning up after others,
- Working jobs that seem to go in circles
- and pouring effort into relationships that feel like two steps forward, one step back.

Sometimes, it feels like life is just about getting through today, so we can do it all again tomorrow.

In the middle of all this... we can wonder where is God?

- Does he even care about the ordinary, boring stuff?
- At times, it feels like he's a million miles away.

But here's what Jesus actually shows us: God isn't distant.

- God created each of us on purpose for a purpose, even if it's hard to see it through the piles of laundry or the weight of our daily routine.
- Jesus' life, teaching, death, and resurrection prove that God is actively involved, even in the "normal days."

To finish this series, I want to look at one of the BW's most dramatic stories, a story that's still celebrated as a holiday.

But if you look closer, it actually starts out as a story of wasted potential and injustice.

The Story of Esther: was a young Jewish woman, an orphan, taken from her home and forced into a system where she was objectified and had little control over her life.

But, she didn't let her circumstances define her.

- She trusted God right in the middle of her everyday, unwanted reality.

And as we walk through her story, we'll discover... Even when God seems hidden, he's still working behind the scenes.

- If we trust him, even in our "normal" days, our faith redefines significance.

GOD: Before we jump into the story, we need to set the scene... Esther's story takes place around 483-473 BC

About 100 years after Jerusalem and Israel were conquered and many Jewish people were taken into exile by Babylon.

- Then Babylon itself fell to the Persians, led by Cyrus the Great.

By Esther's time, Persia was the most powerful empire the world had ever seen, stretching from India to Ethiopia.

- Jewish communities were scattered throughout the empire
- Including the city of Susa, where King Xerxes had a palace.

Xerxes, the grandson of Cyrus, was known for his enormous wealth and power, and for his obsession with military glory, including his famous (and disastrous) invasion of Greece... Think Battle of Thermopylae... the 300 Spartans.

But as mighty as Xerxes seemed, his story (like ours) is messy.

One day, during a banquet, he commands Queen Vashti, his wife, to appear and display her beauty.

- She refuses... so Xerxes banishes her.
- Advisors urge him to an empire-wide beauty contest, bringing young women from all over Persia to audition for queen.

One of them is Esther... a young Jewish woman, raised by her cousin Mordecai, who serves at the king's gate.

On the surface, Esther's circumstances are tragic: forced into impossible situations by people with power.

- The story is full of drama, danger, and questionable decisions.

And interestingly: God's name is never mentioned in the entire book. Not once.

- Yet, Sometimes God's presence is most powerful in the silence.
- As we read, I want you to look for God's fingerprints... even when he seems most hidden.
- Because the same may be true in your own "ordinary" life.

Esther 2:15–17 NLT *Esther was the daughter of Abihail, who was Mordecai's uncle. (Mordecai had adopted his younger cousin Esther.) When it was Esther's turn to go to the king, she accepted the advice of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. She asked for nothing except what he suggested, and she was admired by everyone who saw her. Esther was taken to King Xerxes at the royal palace in early winter of the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther more than any of the other young women. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti.*

Esther became queen... but not by choice or ambition.

- The king can take her title or her life at a whim.
- On Mordecai's advice, she keeps her Jewish ethnicity a secret.

Can you imagine what she felt? Fear, disbelief, relief, guilt?

- Had to be confusion. Why me? How did this happen? What does any of this mean?

Have you ever found yourself asking, "Why am I here? Is there any meaning to this situation? What is God doing?"

Sometimes, God's plan in our ordinary days can feel like the back of a tapestry: tangled, confusing, random threads.

- But if you look at the other side and you see an intricate, beautiful, purposeful design.

Even when we feel lost or insignificant, God is at work behind the scenes.

God already knew something Esther didn't... a crisis is brewing.

Xerxes made a man named Haman his prime minister... the highest official in the empire

Haman expected respect and honor from everyone, but Mordecai, Esther's cousin, refused to bow

- Haman was furious and, instead of targeting just Mordecai, he planned to kill all the Jews in Persia.

Esther 3:5-6 NLT

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage. He had learned of Mordecai's nationality, so he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Instead, he looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes.

Jews in Persia were “stateless”... living at the mercy of local rulers, vulnerable to being scapegoated or targeted by prejudice.

Haman manipulates Xerxes, painting the Jews as a threat, and gets the king to sign an order that, on a set day (March 7th) every Jew in the empire, young and old, rich and poor, will be annihilated.

Mordecai sends word to Esther, urging her to beg the king for mercy.

But Esther is terrified.

So she replies...

Esther 4:11 NLT

All the king's officials and even the people in the provinces know that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days.

She's caught in a system she didn't choose, surrounded by pressures she can't control, and facing a decision that feels way beyond her.

- Her new “significance” as queen doesn't keep her from feeling powerless and unseen.

Her experience might be unique, but we face similar situations all the time.

- We all have moments when we think, “What can I do?”
- Why would God use someone like me?
- Don't I have enough going on already?

But... It's often in the very places that seem most ordinary that God works most powerfully.

- He uses who we are, where we are, and even what little we have to impact lives around us.

So Mordecai gives Esther a choice...

Esther 4:13-14 NLT

Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: “Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?”

She can use her one asset, access to the king, to do something significant, or she can stay safe, stay in the background, and hope for the best.

And it's Esther's response that shows why her story is a story of faith...

Esther 4:15-16 NLT

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die."

Esther realizes maybe God put her here, now for this very reason.

- She's willing to risk everything for others... not knowing what will happen.
- That's faith: Faith is trusting God with your ordinary and your unknown.

Most of us won't face a life-or-death choice,

- But according to Jesus, living by faith, in real life, always means giving up yourself for others:

Luke 9:23 NLT *If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me.*

Sometimes "taking up your cross" is dramatic.

But most often it looks like folding laundry for the hundredth time, sitting in another meeting, caring for kids or parents, sending emails, paying bills, or doing the unnoticed work of loving others... right where you are.

- Faith isn't about doing something flashy or famous.
- Faith is showing up... loving when it costs you, trusting God in the routines nobody sees.
- Faith redefines significance because with God, no act of love is wasted or unseen.

Esther's story continues...

Esther 5:1-3 NLT

On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her and held out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter.

Then the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

Esther's risk pays off.

She invites the king and Haman to two banquets.

- At the 2nd one she finally speaks up... not for herself, but for her people.

She exposes Haman's plot, and Xerxes is furious... executes Haman and promotes Mordecai.

The king gives the Jews the right to defend themselves.

- On the day their enemies planned their destruction, the Jews are protected and delivered.

That's why, to this day, the festival of Purim celebrates the unseen hand of God behind every twist and turn.

But think about it... Esther never had all the answers...

- She didn't know why she was queen.
- She didn't know if her gamble and risking her life would work.
- She didn't know if exposing Haman would save her or destroy her.

She just kept taking one faithful step after the other...

Trusting that maybe, in the confusion and pressure, she was where she was "for such a time as this."

God was weaving her ordinary obedience into a story of rescue and redemption.

God is always orchestrating for our good behind the scenes.

Esther's story points us to a bigger story.

- A story where another seemingly insignificant person, born in poverty, misunderstood, and eventually executed by an empire...
- Chose not just daily faith, but gave his entire life to rescue his people.

Jesus didn't just give his ordinary days to love those around him... he gave his life to rescue us.

God himself entered our ordinary world, became one of us, and died.

- Life itself invaded death. And death couldn't contain true life.
- Jesus defeated sin and death for us, so we can have real life and true, lasting significance.

When we trust Jesus, God gives us a new purpose

- Not just to live, but to join his work of healing and reconciliation in the world.

2 Corinthians 5:19-21

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

YOU: So think for a moment... have you ever looked back on your life and thought, "That couldn't have just been a coincidence?"

- Did something work out, or a relationship form, or help show up just when you needed it, and you think, "If there's a God, that had to be him"?

It WAS him... orchestrating things behind the scenes

- Because he loves you,
- Because he made you on purpose for a purpose

He's inviting you to trust him, to step out in faith, and to discover what he can do through your life

- Right in the ordinary, even when you can't see the whole picture.

If you've never made a conscious decision to trust Jesus... there's no pressure, just an invitation

- When you're ready, you can say something as simple as... *Jesus, I choose to trust you with my life. Thank you for loving me and dying for me. Use my life to show your love.*

And for all of us here are some questions to chew on...

- Will you trust God to use you, right where you are, for such a time as this?
- Where has God placed you, what ordinary place, what relationship, what opportunity, for just this moment?

If you're willing and have the courage, every day can be an opportunity to exercise faith in real life.

Invitation:

Pray this every day this week: God, thank you for putting me right here right now. Show me my significance and show me my next step.

Remember, even the most ordinary day can be the place where God's extraordinary story shines through you.

WE: So imagine....

What if we really believed that God could use our ordinary days?

What if we stepped into each task, each conversation, each interruption, trusting that God placed us where we are, even if we don't see the reasons yet?

Imagine what would change if we lived with that kind of courage.

- Stress and fear would lose their grip.
- We'd find unexpected joy in the daily routines.
- Our families, our communities, our workplaces would see something different in us... a quiet strength, a contagious joy/hope.

And most of all, we would become living invitations for others to discover the love, freedom, and significance that Jesus offers.

So let's have the courage to trust God with our story,

- to look for his hand in the ordinary and the unseen,
- and to step out in faith... knowing even our smallest acts, done in love, matter in God's big story.

Let's be people who live with faith in real life... right here, right now, for such a time as this.

Faith in real life makes every ordinary day significant.