


TALKING WALKING POINTS

How to Have an Impact
in a Deteriorating Society
Esther: A Woman of Courage

2021-10-24



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 Tell about a situation, small or large, in which you personally witnessed someone taking a courageous stand. What was the unjust situation? What courageous action was taken? What role, if any, did you play?
- 2 Read 1 Kings 18:17-40 (one of the most courageous—and bloody!—stands which has ever been taken). List the intellectual, emotional, and behavioral components of Elijah's courage (see [Sermon Summary](#)).
- 3 Mark the references to "all Israel/all the people" in v. 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 30, 39 and 40. Now, describe their change throughout the course of this event. What do you observe?
- 4 Now read Romans 11:2-4 for another angle on Elijah's situation.
How many godly, faithful Israelites were there during this horrible period of Israel's apostasy?
How many of these godly men and women stood with Elijah against the idolatry?
- 5 Now read 1 Kings 18:13 for one final shocking insight! How many other **prophets** of God existed? Where were they? What impact were they having amid the idolatry?
- 6 With whom do you identify most—Elijah, the 100 true prophets hiding in caves, or the 7,000 rank-and-file Israelites who had not bowed the knee to Baal, yet were fearful to be decisive in their allegiance?
 - As a group, choose **one** aspect of America's moral deterioration which greatly disturbs you. Outline some of the biblical/intellectual issues which this deterioration violates.
- 7 How does this aspect of American moral deterioration injure God and others (rather than yourself)?
What range of behaviors do courageous Christians employ against this moral deterioration?
As a group, decide one action you **will** take, individually or corporately, to make a courageous stand. Plan your action. Get pastoral counsel. Pray for courage and God's blessing. Take your action.
- 8 Tell your pastors how it went and what happened.

Application-Challenge

Let the Word of God infect your mind and transform your heart and change you so that the Spirit of God galvanizes you to help make a permanent difference in our strategic generation.

1 This series of questions just get's the ball rolling, by introducing the subject of "courageous stands". No need for the answers to be "spiritual"—it could be about stopping a bully; speaking up for an unpopular office-mate; choosing not to gossip, etc. You likely will need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)

2 Ask one or two group members to read this account aloud to the group. Then, review the sermon summary, making sure folks understand what is meant by the intellectual, emotional and behavioral components to biblical courage. Then, begin generating your lists. Suggested answers include:

Intellectual components:

- Elijah knew that God is real and Baal was fake.
- Elijah knew that God hates idolatry and acts to restore his name.

Emotional components:

- Elijah loved God, and was unwilling to accept idolatry.
- Elijah had righteous anger against King Ahab and wife Jezebel for corrupting Israel.

Behavioral components:

- Elijah demanded a show-down.
- Elijah constructed the show-down for zero ambiguity and maximum humiliation.

3

- "all Israel" was assembled for this show-down (v. 19 & 20)
- Elijah challenged/rebuked "all Israel" for being double-minded (v. 21)
- "all Israel" was too cowardly to answer (v. 21)
- Elijah designed a situation which would compel folks to choose a side (v. 22-24)
- "all Israel" agreed to Elijah's proposed show-down (v. 24c)
- Elijah called "all Israel" in closer to be fully engaged in his impending victory (v. 30)
- "all Israel" was stunned by Yahweh's awesome display of power (v. 39)
- "they" took action, rounding up the prophets of Baal so that Elijah could slaughter them (v. 40)

4 We sure don't know who they were, but God vouches for the fact that there were 7,000 who had not given themselves over to the worship of Baal. None of them appeared to support Elijah until it became clear that Yahweh had totally shamed Baal. Were they in the crowd, but silent? Not very impressive.

5 100 true prophets of Yahweh—but they sure were AWOL during these dark days of Israel's history. Not much salt and light from them.

6 Time for self-evaluation. Ask folks to elaborate on their answer; **why** do they identify with that group?

7 Time for courageous action. Decide on some issue that your group would like to address with action, then identify some of the biblical/intellectual issues which this situation violates.

Next, identify some of the ways this situation injures God and others, **rather than** yourselves. Why? Because it's too easy to operate out of anger at a personal affront or personal inconvenience. We want to care more about God and others (which are Jesus' Greatest and Second Commandments).

Then brainstorm some of the ways other courageous Christians have responded to this issue. Why? This will suggest to you some possible actions your group could take. Make sure you identify some "low bar" options too, since you'll be choosing an action and committing together to take a stand.

Discuss and decide an action. Remember, not every group member will play the same role in your group's chosen action, but everybody needs to do something. Get pastoral counsel if you're unsure of the wisdom of any part of your plan. Pray for courage and God's blessing...then **do** something!

8 Report back, so we can all rejoice together.

Sermon Outline (Key Text: The Book of Esther)

Physical courage motivated first-responders to enter the World Trade Center towers as they burned, but the Scriptures place a premium on moral courage. Moral courage is always the product of spiritual commitment. Esther is the story of faith working through courage. What kind of a person does it take to make an impact in a deteriorating society? The Book of Esther reveals a truly significant thing taking place through ordinary individuals who lived in the midst of extraordinary circumstances. The Book of Esther divides into two parts: it begins with the Jews threatened by danger and ends with them triumphing through deliverance. In the Book of Esther we find **three components of courage** which God wants to weave into the fabric of your life. There is nothing in our culture that is conducive to the production of this kind of courage. Weak societies do not produce strong leaders.

I. Biblical, moral courage always has an intellectual component. It is not based on ignorance, but on intelligence. In Israelite culture, from the first thing in the morning, to the last thing at night, it was every parent's responsibility to teach their children God's purpose of the nation (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Esther was both disadvantaged and advantaged as a person: she was an orphan, yet she was biblically trained by her uncle. Like Esther, we cannot determine what we receive, but we can determine how we respond. The only thing we can control is whether or not we will move forward in faith. Esther was disciplined by her uncle, Mordecai. Discipleship is the process of cultivating faith in the life of another. Even as queen, Esther continued to follow the instruction she had received from Mordecai. The truths he taught her became her personal property, and she was driven by them. Some people have rich spiritual heritages, but fail to build upon that privileged position. Others, who've had a disadvantaged past, are at risk of becoming cynical, filled with despair and hopelessness. Esther decided to build on her privileges rather than be buried by her challenges. So, what kind of personal commitments have you made in light of what you have been exposed to?

II. Biblical, moral courage always has an emotional component. You need to be emotionally gripped by the implications of that knowledge. In today's existentialist society, people don't know what to get excited about! They get excited over trivia, and the things of eternity are boring. So, what's the answer to apathy? In order to be motivated enough to do something, you have to be gripped by the true value of life. Mordecai told Esther that God is sovereign, and if she was not willing to get involved and pay the price, God would get the job done through others—but she'd miss her moment (Esther 4:13-14). In the same way, Christ's church will not fail—but there's great danger that you will miss the action, that you will be a spectator, watching it happen, rather than having a piece of the action. The key to life is finding out what God is doing in the world, and getting with it. The value of a life is not determined by its duration, but by its donation. But Esther not only knew the value of life, she also knew the value of death—and there's a cause and effect relationship: she knew that the spiritual is far more important than the material (Esther 4:15-16). She valued the spiritual over the material. How about you? Have you come to appreciate the value of life, and the value of death, from a biblical standpoint? That'll give you moral courage.

III. Biblical, moral courage always has a behavioral component. For both Esther and Mordecai, the key to the life was knowing the responsibility of knowledge—and this is a missing ingredient in the church today. Our minds are full of Bible knowledge—we have a grip on the truth, but the truth doesn't have a grip on us. Biblically speaking, to know and not to do is not to know at all. The Bible was not written to satisfy our curiosity but to transform our lives. People know what they should do, but lack the courage to do it! We don't lack knowledge—we're indifferent. Our knowledge has become non-committal, our knowledge has become consequence-free. It's objective. It's detached. It's impersonal. For a French peasant maid by the name of Joan of Arc, this was not the case. Given the chance to recant, or be burned at the stake, she chose the latter, saying: *"I know this now. Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing, yet they give their lives to that little or nothing. One life is all we have, and we live it and thus it is gone. But to surrender what you are and live without belief is more terrible than dying, even more terrible than dying young. But there is a worse fate than living without belief, it is to live with a firm commitment to that which at the end of life, at the portals of eternity, turns out to have betrayed you."*

When you come to the end of your life and have nothing to look forward to except death, and nothing to look back upon except memories, what will it take to give you the confidence that you lived a life of significance ... that you made an impact on your generation, even though it was a deteriorating one? Esther knew the will of God fully, who felt the will of God deeply and who practiced the will of God consistently. Will you?

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage.*
We can use it to learn from Romans how to live courageously...

Monday—Read Proverbs 28:1. What is the connection between righteousness and courage?

Tuesday— Read Proverbs 1:33. Are you living securely? If not, what's the best thing you can do?

Wednesday— Read Hebrews 2:15. Have you escaped this fear yet?

Thursday— Read Psalm 46:1–3. What's the scariest situation you've encountered? How does it compare to this?

Friday— Read 1 John 4:18-19. What do you fear might happen? What is the antidote to fear?

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord with your church family,***
read **1 Timothy**.

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]

Your friends are struggling. Learn how to help.

only two weeks!



The Biblical Counseling Ministry of
Triangle Community Church
invites you join us for

“Biblical Perspectives on Gender Identity”

Saturday, November 6, 2021

9am til noon



Our seminar speaker, **Dr. Jim Newheiser**, is the director of the Christian Counseling program at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte and serves as a board member of both the Biblical Counseling Coalition and the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

For more info: **TCC.org** Keyword: **Gender**