



Week 4

FASTING and PRAYER

Start

Welcome to group session 4 of Pathways.

We're halfway through our study of Esther. What's one key takeaway you have thus far that you'd like to share?

What's your experience with fasting and prayer? Do you regularly practice these spiritual disciplines? Would you like to grow in these areas? If so, why?

Before we begin, read aloud Esther 4:15–5:14 together as a group. The passage is summarized below.

In response to the news from Mordecai, Esther requested a communal fast by all of the Jews as they petitioned God. She replied to Mordecai with courage and confidence in God's will: "If I perish, I perish" (4:16).

The prayers of God's people were answered when King Xerxes received Esther without incident. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet where she would make her request known. Once the guests had enjoyed their fill, Esther wisely paused and delayed her request for another day of feasting, no doubt at the Holy Spirit's leading. Haman left in a happy mood, but it was tempered by his fury for "Mordecai the Jew" (5:13).

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Watch

Complete this viewer guide as you watch video session 4.

God has given us a point of contact with Him where earth can touch heaven and heaven can respond to earth. It's called prayer.

Throughout the Bible when there is a crisis, you will find men and women fasting along with their prayer.

Fasting is a deliberate abstinence from physical gratification of some kind for a period of time because of a greater spiritual need.

When you eat, you eat for the physical. When you fast, you're fasting for the spiritual.

God uses the Spirit to connect us with heaven, to bring the thinking of heaven down to the realities of history.

Don't miss out on the thinking of heaven because you're limited to the thought processes of earth.

While you may need a change in the physical, you need to make contact with the spiritual.

Sovereignty: God is in control.

Providence: God is manipulating the details to bring about His divinely ordained result.

Fasting and Prayer

Discuss

Discuss the video with your group, using the following questions.

What's your experience with prayer and fasting? Do you excel in practicing these disciplines, or would like to see growth? Explain.

At what points in your life have you been more drawn to fasting and prayer? What results did you see as you fasted and prayed?

Most people are more comfortable with prayer than with fasting. Why do you think that's true? Why don't we fast more?

Read Esther 5:7-8. The national fast caused Esther to be so sensitive to the Holy Spirit that she was able to adjust in the middle of her plans. Why would this ability be important to have in our lives?

Has the Holy Spirit ever led you to do something in a particular moment? What happened, and how did you see God work?

On the video Dr. Evans gave an example of the national news versus the local news. Fasting gives us the local news. Why is it so easy to become satisfied with the national news and never look for the local news?

What would it look like for us to fast together as a group? What's going on in our community that could benefit from a group fast?

If you fasted, what would you would abstain from? What would you hope to learn by abstaining from that item or practice in particular?

Read week 4 and complete the activities before the next group session.

Fasting and Prayer

If you've ever watched high jumpers in the Olympics, you probably realize there are two kinds. The regular high jumpers jump about seven feet by running and throwing their backs over the bar. But there's another kind of high jumper called a pole-vaulter, who jumps about eighteen feet. Pole-vaulters back up and look down the runway with the pole in their hands. They start running down the track, plant the pole in a hole in the ground, put all of their weight on that pole, and use the pole to lift them to a level they couldn't attain on their own.

Some of us have mountains—challenges we face that we see no way around, over, or under. These challenges have a crossbar we've tried to high-jump in the flesh. We've seen that mountain, backed up, and said, "Mountain, you aren't going to keep me down any longer." We grit our teeth with the power of positive thinking, New Year's resolutions, and vows not to repeat our mistakes. Then we take off and jump two feet when the bar is eighteen feet high.

Some of us have been jumping that same two feet for fifty years, and the bar is still up there. In fact, it keeps getting higher every year. Maybe what you need is a pole vault. You need something you can lean on as you approach your problem so that you can go higher than you could ever lift yourself. Maybe you need a pole that will help you jump over the mountain.

The pole vault for the bars in your life are fasting and prayer. Esther demonstrated this truth for us as few biblical figures have ever done. If you'll learn how to apply the principles she modeled, you can overcome anything and everything on the path to your destiny.

◉ DAY 1 ◉

OUT OF LUCK

You may not notice how many times you hear the word *luck* in a day, but you probably hear it more than you may think. Our society seems to fixate on luck. People, even believers, regularly state, “You were lucky today!” Or if something goes wrong, they chalk it up to bad luck. Some people even hang a rabbit’s foot on the rearview mirror of their car for good luck. Now that’s always confused me. Obviously, if that rabbit lost its foot, it wasn’t very lucky.

In contrast, the Book of Esther dismisses this concept of luck altogether, instead emphasizing the sovereign hand of God. Sure, sovereignty might look like luck, feel like luck, or even smell like luck. But it’s not luck at all.

Sovereignty is the reality of God, who’s always at work behind the scenes, ordering and aligning details and circumstances for His intended outcomes. God takes the good, the bad, and the ugly and makes them look as though they happened randomly. On the contrary, He either causes or allows events to happen that will ultimately usher in His will.

Read Proverbs 16:33. Do you ever find yourself chalking things up to luck or fate? What does this verse say about that idea?

Read James 4:13-15. In what areas of your life do you need to intentionally include God and His perspective more in your planning and decisions? Why is it important to do so?

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Review Esther 4:16. In what ways does Esther's call for national fasting and prayer reflect the principles found in James 4:13-15?

Providence places God behind the scenes of most things. He's like the ghostwriter of a book or the director of a movie. The results of His hands are seen far more than He is. While this fact is good in many ways, it can lead us to forget the level of His involvement in our lives. Then we make decisions based on our own understanding rather than relying on the One who knows best.

Esther knew who was in control. As we saw last week, she requested that her people fast with her for three days before she went to the king. On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robe and entered the inner court of the king. This was the moment of decision. This was the time that would tell all. Would the king allow her to live, or was this the final curtain on her life?

Why do you think God usually works behind the scenes rather than being more direct and visible?

What are the dangers of forgetting that God is in control?

I imagine Esther's heart pounded within her as she quietly stepped into the inner court. Her knees may have felt weak beneath the weight of her worry. Where did she look? Did her eyes dart around in fear, or did she remain steady in confidence? What did her body language say before she ever opened her mouth?

Scripture doesn't give us the details about Esther's entrance, but Esther was human. Most of us would feel fear in a time like that. This reality makes Esther's action even more extraordinary. It also makes the king's response even more gracious.

Fasting and Prayer

Read Esther 5:2. What was the king's response to Esther's entrance?

Describe how Esther must have felt when the king touched the scepter.

Identify a time in your life when you faced a situation that could have gone really badly but didn't. How did you feel when you realized it was going to be OK?

The first part of Esther's challenge was done. She had stepped into the most dangerous situation of her life and had received a warm welcome. The king had graciously accepted her by extending the golden scepter. No doubt Esther felt relieved. But the plight of her people, including herself, still hung in the balance.

This had only been the first step. It wasn't the solution. A large portion of the pathway was still left to travel. Esther probably took a deep breath at this point, but then her mind probably raced forward to what she would say next. Every word matters when lives are on the line. That's why the three days of preparation by the people had been critical. By fasting and praying, the Jews had acknowledged God's ruling hand over all and had appealed to His great mercy. Now they were about to find out what He had in store for them next.

✧ PRAYER ✧

Lord, thank You that there's no such thing as luck, chance, or happenstance.

Thank You that my life isn't a random occurrence without meaning or protection. Your guidance gives me the grace I need to pursue my purpose. Show me each step to take as I follow You. When I face fears or risks along the way, remind me to fast and pray. Remind me to ask others to join me in seeking You because we're united in Your body and intricately connected to one another. When we join together, give us wisdom and courage to face spiritual battles well. In Christ's name, amen.

◉ DAY 2 ◉

GROCERY SHOPPING ON AN EMPTY STOMACH

In yesterday's lesson we watched as Esther approached the king, no doubt full of fear. But placing her fear underneath God's rule and authority, she moved forward in faith. We also saw that the king responded to her in favor. What he said to Esther revealed a sentiment toward her of kindness and trust. He asked:

What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you.

ESTHER 5:3

Half of the kingdom? That's a lot of favor. Those thirty days without seeing each other obviously didn't reflect the state of the king's heart toward his queen.

I wonder what most of us would do if we were offered up to half of the kingdom by someone who had the power to give it. What would you do? Would you start making a list of all your favorite locations, activities, and merchandise throughout the kingdom? Would you lean back a little, put your hand on your hip, and say, "Well, OK, then. I'll take it"? Or would you, like Esther, let the greatest blessing of personal provision that's ever been offered to you slip away so that you could seek the welfare of someone else?

Have you ever been offered something that appeared to be great, but you turned it down for a spiritual reason? Describe what happened.

Did you have any regret for forgoing that blessing? Why or why not?

Fasting and Prayer

We get a peek into Esther's wisdom, restraint, and character in her response to the king's offer of up to half of the kingdom. Rather than go for broke, essentially taking the money and running, Esther considered the long-term play and exercised self-discipline. Rather than blurt out what was bothering her or even demand that her husband do something about the bully in the land, Esther chose wisely. She invited the king and that bully to dinner.

It's been said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Esther seemed to know this maxim as well as anyone, so she decided to go straight for the heart of her king by going straight for his stomach.

Read Isaiah 55:8-9. How do God's ways differ from our ways? Why is it wise to trust in His ways over our own?

According to Psalm 27:11, how are we to know and understand God's ways in order to follow them? How often do you pray this prayer?

Identify a time when God's ways were clearly different from your own, yet you chose to follow Him. What was the result?

If you were having someone over to your house for dinner this afternoon, would you start preparing this morning? Sure, if it were a good friend or a family member. You might even skip the preparation and order pizza. But if it were a person of distinction from whom you needed a favor, you would probably start preparing at least the day before. Meals for distinguished guests require some forethought. Each dish has to be well planned out and prepared in advance.

Therefore, while the Jews and Esther had been fasting for three days, Esther simultaneously planned a feast. People say it's unwise to shop for groceries on an empty stomach because you buy too much food, but in the Esther's case it may have

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been very wise. No doubt the meal was carefully prepared and presented with the utmost attention to flavor and detail.

How did preparing the feast reflect Esther's faith that God would move the heart of the king?

Read James 2:18. How is faith displayed through action?

Esther needed divine insight for approaching a challenging situation. Her choice to fast and pray didn't mean she would lock herself in her closet and not come out. Rather, fasting and praying prepared the way for her to move forward in obedience.

The banquet was served on the very day Esther entered the king's inner court. The banquet Esther invited the king and Haman to attend had already been prepared by the time she invited them. The menu had already been chosen. Esther had done more than fast and pray. She had followed God's leading by taking action along the way. Her invitation to the king was couched in confident faith.

As you seek the Lord in fasting and prayer, be sure to couple those disciplines with actions that reflect His leading. Whatever you're facing right now, ask Him what He wants you to do as you continue to seek Him through prayer. Then, as you continue to pray, go ahead and implement what He directs you to do.

★ PRAYER ★

Father, increase my courage and faith so that I can move forward as You lead me. Help me overcome my fear of failing or of losing something I value as I obey you. Help me reflect my faith in my actions. In Christ's name, amen.

◉ DAY 3 ◉

HOW BADLY DO YOU WANT IT?

One reason we miss the so-called coincidences of God in our lives is that we don't have a raised antenna toward Him. We don't set aside the cravings of the flesh to seek answers in the spiritual realm. Then, when we fail to pick up spiritual signals and directions, we can't act on them. As a result, we operate according to our human viewpoint and our natural perspective.

Fasting and prayer lift our antenna into the spiritual realm so that we can pick up the picture from heaven we need to see in order to know what to do on earth.

**Have you ever spent a significant amount of time in fasting and prayer?
What were the results?**

**Why is fasting *not* an effort to manipulate God to give you the answer
you want?**

How can fasting change you or your perspective on what you're fasting for?

It's happened to me, and I'm sure it's happened to you. You're at work in a meeting, in a church service, or on the phone. All of a sudden your stomach growls, literally crying out for food. Not only do you hear it, but everyone around you also hears it. The message is clear: your body wants food, and it wants it now. Your body is trying to get your attention. The body's desire for food can be very strong.

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Yet some things in life are more important than food. Some situations require a more-than-normal level of spiritual intervention. In these times it's not your hunger that cries out. It's your soul. God has given us resources for times of crisis like those Esther faced. God has given each of us the opportunity to fast and pray.

Fasting is deliberately refraining from physical gratification to achieve a greater spiritual goal. Throughout Scripture God's people fasted when they were in crises. When they desperately needed a breakthrough in their circumstances, their emotions, their relationships, their future, or their direction, they fasted. Fasting shows God that our need for Him is greater than our need for food.

Read Ezra 8:21-23. Why did Ezra ask his people to fast?

Read Luke 2:36-37. What's one reason to fast, according to these verses? Why should we consider fasting as a service to God?

Probably the greatest scriptural example of fasting occurs in Matthew 4, when Jesus went into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. After Jesus had prepared by fasting for forty days and nights, the devil came to Him and tempted Him to eat, but Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, declaring that man doesn't live "on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Eating is one of the fundamental components of our humanity. We eat several times every day to satisfy our hunger and to obtain the nourishment and energy we need to survive. Yet occasionally, a situation arises that's more important than our next meal.

For example, when businesspeople are working on a major project, many professionals have a working lunch. They don't leave the office, because their work is more important than the meal. And if it's the last minute and they're rushing to meet a deadline, they skip lunch altogether because the task at hand is more important than food.

Fasting and Prayer

It's not just that way at the office. In many homes, caring for kids and running the household are nonstop jobs. Sometimes there's no time for the parent on duty to sit down and eat. For them, taking care of the kids' needs is more important than food, and the parent may not even realize they haven't eaten anything all day.

When we choose to fast, we deliberately show God that we're serious about getting His attention and that we're intently listening for His voice. We show Him that we're caught up in the priority of the spiritual realm. Fasting is intentionally choosing to place our hunger for God and our need for His intervention above any other need we have in the physical realm at that time.

Remember what Jesus said to the devil? We can't live just on food, because we need the Word of God even more. Fasting shows God and our stomachs that His Word is more important than food. When we fast, we give the Holy Spirit our full attention.

Read Zechariah 7:5-6. Record these verses in your own words.

What happens when we fast but don't focus on God?

How does this passage expand your thinking about what it means to fast and seek God?

What can you do to put these principles into practice this week?

Fasting sounds spiritual and holy, but it's hard for many believers to do. Whether it's fasting from food, an activity, social media, shopping, or talking too much or whether it's practicing the principles of mercy and compassion we just read about, fasting requires that you look beyond your own needs. Food is a great example of the way fasting takes your mind off yourself. If you're like me, you don't just enjoy food; you love it. When we eat, we're not thinking about God, our neighbor, or our

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loved ones. We're especially not thinking about anyone in need. We're thinking about how good our food tastes, whether we should have another serving, or whether we need to leave room for dessert. Zechariah 7:5-6 says when we eat, we do it for ourselves. When we fast, we do it for the Lord.

Fasting demonstrates our great need for God. It leads to a brokenness that shouts, "I can't do this!" A self-sufficient man or woman won't fast, but a desperate one will. The truth is, you can't live the Christian life in your own strength. You can't make things happen. You can't call on the flesh to defeat the flesh. By fasting, you demonstrate a true desire to grow closer to God and align yourself under His rule.

What challenges might you face if you fasted for an extended period of time?

Fasting makes your flesh weak because your body doesn't have the energy it regularly depends on. It's caught off guard; its defenses are down. But when you use the time you'd normally spend eating or doing another activity to read God's Word and pray, your spirit will grow stronger. When your flesh is weak and your spirit is strong, huge spiritual breakthroughs can occur in your life.

The question isn't whether fasting makes a difference. The question is, How badly do you want it? Maybe you're not desperate. Maybe you're not in a situation that has forced you to your knees in prayer. But if you are, I encourage you to fast, pray, and cry out to God to act on your behalf.

★ PRAYER ★

Loving God, give me the strength to fast, whether it's through giving up something in order to seek You or serve You or whether it's showing others a greater level of mercy and compassion. Give me the self-discipline I need to fast well. As I fast, Lord, reveal to me Your presence and enlighten me with Your guidance. In Christ's name, amen.

◉ DAY 4 ◉

STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

As we've seen this week, the first thing Esther did after she committed to move forward in a difficult situation was to admit that she needed God. She needed to talk to and hear from God because she didn't know how to overcome the obstacle ahead of her. From her example we've learned the important spiritual principle of fasting and prayer.

A second spiritual principle we glean from Esther's dinner invitation to the king is that she didn't rely on past victories or past strategies for present situations. Early in Esther's story we saw that she took very little into the king's presence on the night she was chosen to spend with him. She decided not to go all-out and create an atmosphere with trinkets and charms but rather to rely on the simplicity of her own sincere spirit to cultivate trust.

In contrast, when Esther invited the king to dinner, she prepared an elaborate banquet fit for a king—a king who knew well how to party and dine. His dinner-party standards were high, and Esther knew that.

Has there ever been a situation in your life when God has led you to change course? Did you make the change, or did you rely on the past approach?

Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What does it mean to “lean not on your own understanding” (v. 5, NKJV)?

One impediment that can keep you from witnessing a new experience of God's activity in your life is relying too heavily on His previous acts. Just because God does something one way the first time doesn't mean He will do it the same way the second time. In fact, He rarely repeats a method in the way He works. Yet far

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too many of us find comfort in seeking the repetition of past victories through past strategies rather than developing new areas of trust and faith in following the Lord.

Read 1 Samuel 30:8 and 1 Chronicles 14:14. What were God's answers to David in these verses?

What do these two situations demonstrate about the importance of seeking God for every decision?

Esther sought God because she needed His wisdom in that very moment for that particular circumstance. Then, when she heard from Him, she stepped out in faith. Literally. She walked into the king's inner court uninvited. Her step of faith brings us to an important point. Far too many Christians are waiting for God to do something, change someone, open a door, or defeat a challenge prior to doing anything themselves. Yet when God was getting ready to do something big for someone or for a group of people, He often asked them to do something first. After the exodus Moses held out the rod before the Red Sea opened (see Ex. 14:16,21). Later when the Jewish people were ready to cross the Jordan River into the promised land, the priests stepped into the water before it dried up (see Josh. 3:13). Essentially, God wouldn't move until His people moved in faith.

God wants to see that you believe Him, not just hear you say you believe Him. Faith is measured by footsteps. It's measured by your feet. Faith shows up in your walk, not just in your talk. It manifests itself through your life, not just through your lips. Faith makes itself known through your movements, not just your mouth. When there are no footsteps to back up your faith, it's not faith.

Read Hebrews 11:6. What's needed in order to please God? How would you define *faith*?

Has God ever asked you to take a step of faith? Describe what you did and what the result was.

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Taking a step of faith always involves risk. If it didn't, it wouldn't be called faith. What would you think about a football player who bragged about his prowess during the week leading up to the game but chose not to actually play? What would you think if he conducted interviews or posted comments on social media about what he was going to do to the other team, but when the time came for the game, he chose to sit it out? You wouldn't think much of him, because he had made himself irrelevant. And you certainly wouldn't think twice about what he had said earlier in the week, because what truly matters is what's done on the field.

God isn't impressed by spiritual-sounding noise. He doesn't applaud the lofty words we say about believing Him, following Him in faith, and sacrificing for Him. The bottom line is that your faith is measured by the steps you take. The level of your faith is evident only by what you do, not by what you say.

Did it take greater faith for Esther to enter the king's inner court or to refrain from asking him for immediate action to help the Jews when he offered her half of the kingdom? Why did you answer this way?

Esther did more than offer the Jews mere sentiment about their predicament. She didn't offer them sympathetic words and a shrug of compassion. Nor did she passively place all the responsibility on God. Instead, Esther moved forward in faith. She saw a need, recognized that she could help meet that need, and took the risk necessary to become involved in the solution.

When God reveals a need to you, how will you discern what step of faith He may be asking you to take to bring about a solution?

★ PRAYER ★

Lord, I want to live with great faith. I realize this starts with a single step. Show me something to do that will demonstrate faith. Then meet me on the journey as You build this spiritual quality in me. In Christ's name, amen.

◉ DAY 5 ◉

GOD'S LEADING

Let's take a moment to review what we've covered so far in this Bible study. First, we've learned the lesson on sovereignty—that God is ultimately in charge of all that takes place. There's no such thing as luck, chance, or happenstance. We've also seen the power of courage in the face of fear. And we've observed that even during times of fasting and prayer, we need to move forward in faith. As God reveals what we're to do, we're to obediently take action.

Esther's dignified restraint when the king offered her up to half of his kingdom has taught us about the importance of self-discipline. We've also learned that God doesn't always guide us the same way in each situation, so to follow Him fully, we need to seek Him by asking for wisdom at all times. When we ask, He promises to give us wisdom (see Jas. 1:5).

Name some personal insights you've gained so far in this study.

In what specific ways do you plan to apply these insights or have you already begun to apply these insights in your life choices?

Read the following verses.

As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done." So Esther replied, "My petition and my request is: if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says."

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How do we see God guiding Esther in these verses? How do we see Esther following His direction?

One way God guides us as we seek Him through fasting and prayer is by placing thoughts in our minds. Because God knows the end from the beginning, He can see a pathway when we can't. When Esther didn't know what to do, God gave her an idea. The second dinner would turn out to be more strategic than the first, but Esther wouldn't have known that when she entered the king's inner courts to invite him to the first banquet or while sitting with the king at that dinner. When the king asked her to state what she wanted—up to half of his kingdom—surely she must have been tempted to make known her appeal for her people. However, Esther refrained from revealing her true request because God guided her to invite the king and Haman to a second banquet (see v. 8).

Like Esther, we can see only the present and the past. We can't predict the future or people's responses to what we say or do. That's why it's absolutely critical to stay tethered to God, or abide in Christ (see John 15), in order to know the path to take.

Read Daniel 1:8-13. Describe what happened and the way God intervened to provide Daniel a way to overcome his circumstances.

God gave Daniel an approach that worked. After ten days the overseer saw that Daniel and his friends were more vibrant, strong, and healthy than the others, so the overseer allowed them to continue following their kingdom values. But God didn't give Daniel the idea until he had stepped out in faith and appealed to the overseer about his diet. Many of us are waiting for God to show up and do something in our lives, but God is waiting until we show up and step out in faith.

God doesn't always make sense, because we're finite and He's infinite. In Daniel 6 God didn't show up for Daniel until Daniel refused to pray to the king's statue—contrary to the king's command—and was cast into the lions' den. The Bible is replete with examples like this.

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The reason many of us aren't seeing God maneuver and intersect the details of our lives in our favor is that we're not acting in response to God's leading. Instead of employing faith in action, based on what He has directed us to do, we're trying to manipulate the details of our lives ourselves. As a result, God's ideas aren't coming into our minds for dealing with the seemingly impossible situations we're facing.

In what ways does God call us to take risky moves in our culture?

How does God's guidance sometimes differ from our own cultural ideals of security and safety?

Describe a time when you wanted to move forward and act on something you were facing, but God encouraged you to show restraint. What was the result?

It's a good thing Esther had prepared the banquet, because the king didn't hesitate when he got her invitation.

Read Esther 5:5-6. What was the king's response to Esther at her first banquet?

Now review Esther 5:7-8. There's a pause between verses 7 and 8. Why is this significant? What might God have been doing during that pause?

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Esther once again followed God's leading, continuing the strategy God had placed in her mind. There's a colon at the end of verse 7 in most English translations. In the original language of Esther, there's a distinct halt in the conversation. In other words, Esther started to make a request, then paused before continuing.

Rather than state her ultimate request, Esther asked the king and Haman to come to a second banquet to be held the next night. Keep in mind that Esther wasn't asking them to come back for leftovers. Elaborate preparation would normally be required for a banquet of this importance, yet Esther would have virtually no time to prepare. She put a plan in place to invite the king and Haman for dinner, not knowing what God was going to do between the first and second banquets.

Obedience doesn't require full knowledge of the way God is going to resolve a circumstance. Obedience means doing what God has asked you to do while leaving the unknown details in His hands.

In what area of your life could God be asking you to pause and consider Him? Are you listening?

★ PRAYER ★

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your wisdom. You say if I need wisdom, all I need to do is ask You for it. Lord, I'm asking now. Give me wisdom to know how to follow You more obediently and fully on the pathway You've set before me. Help me become a greater blessing to others in all I do and say. Show me the purposes for which You've placed me here. In Christ's name, amen.