

4

ESTHER'S FAST

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. (Esther 4:16)

This was a crucial time for the Jews in Persia. By God's grace, Esther, a Jewess, had been chosen queen in place of Queen Vashti. But it was also the time when Haman, the king's second-in-command, sought to destroy all the Jews in the entire kingdom because Mordecai, a Jew, did not bow down to him .

He instigated King Ahasuerus to issue a decree to wipe out the Jews and was even willing to pay 10,000 talents of silver into the king's treasuries to finance the work. Refusing the silver, the king nevertheless agreed with Haman and gave him his signet ring to seal the decree (Esther 3:10, 12). This was a very serious matter because even the king himself could not revoke any decree sealed with the king's signet ring.

A death sentence thus hung over the Jews as they waited for the date set by their enemy to kill them.

When Mordecai learnt what had happened, he tore his

clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of mourning for personal and national disaster. Indeed, everywhere the decree was sent, there was “**great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes**” (Esther 4:3b).

Mordecai went into the city, crying with a loud and bitter cry and stood outside the palace gate. Deeply distressed when told of this, Queen Esther sent Mordecai garments to replace the sackcloth. But Mordecai, the cousin who had raised her as his own daughter after her parents died, refused the garments.

So Esther called Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend to her, to inquire of the whole matter. Hathach returned with news about the impending destruction of the Jews, a copy of the decree and a message from Mordecai urging her to appear before the king to plead for her people.

It had been in obedience to Mordecai that Esther had been taken to the palace and had not revealed her Jewish nationality. There the king had chosen her to be his queen. **Now her people were in great danger and Mordecai was asking her to go to the king and beg for mercy on their behalf.**

However, anyone who came before the king without being summoned was in danger of losing his life unless the king held out his golden sceptre. **And the king had not called for Esther for 30 days.** She might die if she appeared before the king without being called. But Mordecai would not take no for an answer. He was determined to save the Jews and sent word to Esther.

Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another

place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (Esther 4:13-14)

If Esther did not act, deliverance would come from another source. She and her family would perish anyway. Do you know why many households are destroyed? Because Christians do not fulfil the will of God in prayer and fasting. **Only the people of God can come before the King of kings and the Lord of grace to intercede and plead for His mercy on behalf of the endangered. We are in God's unique time and place, just as Esther was.**

Esther had not wanted to go before the king but when she received Mordecai's message, she knew that her only help was from God. She had to intensify her prayers with fasting and so she had all her people fasting for her.

Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. (Esther 4:15-17)

Esther was willing to die. Satan knows that if he can threaten you with death, you are of little help to the kingdom of God. But praise the Lord that Jesus has conquered the last enemy, death (Rom 8:11). Once you know God, you are not afraid.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (Rev 12:11)

When Esther said, "If I perish, I perish," she overpowered the enemy by the word of her mouth.

Her fasting gave her the boldness to risk her life and, if necessary, die for her people. So God turned everything around. He wrought a great victory for them. The impossible became possible. Death was turned into life, defeat into victory and mourning into rejoicing.

Armed with the assurance of having fasted and prayed three days without food and water, “Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house” (Esther 5:1).

And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. (Esther 5:2-3)

Because of her fast, the king not only raised the sceptre but he also showed her sudden favour, offering her up to half his kingdom. Now the kingdom of Persia was very big - 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia. Esther did not have to strategise or fight for such a vast kingdom. She merely fasted three days.

However, her interest was not in a worldly kingdom but in her people. All she asked was for the king and Haman to be her guests at a banquet. That evening, the king again offered Esther up to half his kingdom. Again, all she did was invite them to a banquet.

An overjoyed Haman returned home and gathered his friends and wife together to boast about his great wealth, his many children, his honours from the king and his promotion

over all others in the king's service. Why, even the queen invited only him and the king to her banquet.

The only thing that made him angry was that his enemy, Mordecai, was still around. So his wife and friends suggested that he make a gallows, and in the morning ask the king to hang Mordecai on it before going to the banquet. At that time, Haman was so powerful that the king allowed him to do whatever he said. Even when he asked to kill all the Jews in the kingdom, the king had said yes.

But Haman did not know that God was working out something.

That night, God intervened. The king could not sleep, so he asked for the historical records of his kingdom to be read to him. He discovered the report that Mordecai had saved him by exposing a plot by two of his eunuchs to kill him. Just as the king was wondering how to reward Mordecai, Haman arrived to ask the king's permission to hang Mordecai.

The king consulted Haman on how he could honour a man who pleased him. He thought to himself "who else would the king honour but me?" So Haman suggested what he personally wanted. He recommended that one of the king's most noble princes dress the person in one of the king's royal robes, seat him on one of the king's horses with a royal crest on its head and lead him on a parade through the city square.

Haman was so happy. Then the king asked him to do for Mordecai exactly what he had suggested. He had come to tell the king to send Mordecai to the gallows. Instead, he now had to organise the honouring of Mordecai.

So fasting can bring you a lot of surprises. It makes your life a pleasure to God and, who knows, it may even save your life. Mordecai did not know about Haman's plot to hang him. His good work had been forgotten but fasting brought it

back to the king's remembrance. **Fasting saved him from the gallows.**

As a Jew, Mordecai would not bow down to Haman. He chose to fast rather than compromise. Because he honoured God, God honoured him. **Fasting puts your enemy to shame and puts you in God's favour.** A lot of Christians live in disgrace because they do not know how to fast. To them, it is always food, food, and food. **Fasting brought Mordecai honour.** He was the focus of a city parade.

Dejected and humiliated, Haman went home to tell his wife and friends what had happened. But soon, the king's eunuchs arrived and he had to go to the banquet.

This time around, Esther pleaded for her life and for the lives of her people. The king demanded to know who would do such a thing as to plot their annihilation. When Esther revealed that it was Haman, the angry king strode out into the palace garden. Haman was terrified. He knew that his time was up and pleaded with the queen for his life.

In his despair, Haman fell on the queen's couch just as the king came back in from the garden. The king was furious, thinking that Haman was trying to molest the queen in front of him. Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai because he had tried to destroy the Jews (Esther 8:7). His ten sons later came to the same end.

Because the earlier decree sent out by Haman could not be revoked, the king gave Esther and Mordecai permission to write another decree as they pleased, in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring. Effective on the same day as the earlier decree, this new decree was sent to every level of authority under the king, giving the Jews the right to defend their lives and to destroy all those who would try to destroy them.

Instead of a day of great mourning, it was for the Jews a day of great rejoicing. Instead of their living in fear, their enemies were in fear and many became Jews themselves. Instead of being destroyed, the Jews had the opportunity to destroy their enemies.

It had been an impossible situation. The decree to annihilate the Jews in Persia had been sealed with the king's signet ring. It could not be revoked. **Just three days of fasting turned everything around. God intervened, just as Haman came to ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai, the Lord had already stirred the king to honour Mordecai for saving his life.**

God worked individual miracles for Esther and Mordecai - the very details of their lives, things they never imagined could happen. Why did God do it? **Because they laid their lives down and chose to fast and pray.** God did powerful things that no man could do. He intervened.

Do you know why God cannot intervene in the details of our lives? Because we give Him only part of our lives. After that, we try to find an earthly solution. There is no better solution than God's. **There is no trouble, sickness, disease or difficulty that we cannot overcome through fasting.**

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8), and He can do the same for us if we would fast and pray like they did.

How To Protect Your Marriage

Today, many wives are at their wit's end as to how to keep their husbands away from the snare of "the other woman". They try all sorts of methods yet many still fail. Why? Simply because Satan is going all out to bombard marriages especially Christian marriages. But I thank God that we are not ignorant of the

devices of the enemy.

Wife, instead of living in fear of your husband being snared, here is good news for you: **God has given us one of the most effective weapons against Satan - fasting and praying.** Don't give Satan any chance to attack you. Attack first. If you fast and pray, you will see your husband turn around. If you want your husband to love you more, fast more often.

Husband, you too need to fast and pray for your marriage because women too are open to enemy attack. Do not think that this message is not for you.

I have counselled many a woman who thought her marriage had come to an end but with God, it was only the beginning. When a woman is desperate to preserve her marriage and heeds the counsel to earnestly fast and pray, seeking God for help instead of man, we see great results. **Fasting and praying restores broken marriages.** Our God is a wonder-working God. When we are serious with Him, He is serious with us.

While studying Esther's fast, I realised that God wrought a personal miracle for Esther when she chose to fast and pray to save her people. He not only answered her prayers for her people but He also restored her relationship with the king.

Esther was supposed to be the king's favourite but at the time, he had not summoned her for 30 days. That spelt danger. If a man loved a woman, he would want to see her every day, even every moment of the day. He would have eyes only for her. Remember, the king had many concubines and harems, and he had not called for Esther for one month.

Fasting broke the silence. After the three-day fast, Esther put on her royal robes to appear before the king, not knowing if she would live or die. Suddenly, the king's love for her revived. Esther found favour in his sight and he held out his

golden sceptre, sparing her life. He was even ready to grant her any request, including giving her up to half his vast kingdom.

In these last days, marriages are being much attacked. Rise up, women. Learn to fast and pray more to protect your husbands and children. Get the whole family to fast and pray together as frequently as possible to raise up a standard for God. **If fasting and praying saved the Jewish race, how much more will fasting and praying save families?** If God is on your side, who can be against you?

Take up the challenge. Don't wait for disaster to happen before you start to fast and pray. Start now. Make fasting and praying your lifestyle.

Fasting & Prayer Restored My Marriage

Esther Lee

At the age of 12, I accepted Jesus as my Saviour. However, I was reluctant to attend church and, in short, never began to have a relationship with this Saviour. Life went on for me but deep in my heart, I knew He was watching over me.

At 24, I was married to the love of my life. He was an unbeliever, but I thought it shouldn't be a problem to get him to believe in Christ. How could he accept Christ when I, the closest person to him who claimed to be a Christian, wasn't living like one. I totally forgot God. My husband was the centre of my life. He was everything.

My relationship with my husband began to slowly turn sour. We had small quarrels, then fights. The fights started to get violent. Many times, I was so scared that it would be the last day of my life. Only then did I begin to scream for Jesus in my heart, wanting Him to intervene during our fights and to take control of us. I believe He did or else I wouldn't be here to testify today.

In 1993, aged 26, I was blessed to have a personal experience with Jesus. I attended a miracle rally and, on my way there, challenged the Lord to show me a miracle.

As the evangelist began the healing ministry, he called out, “The Lord wants to heal someone who has been suffering from a back pain for 20 years.” Many people went forward but no one had suffered for 20 years. His call became more specific, “Someone here, your leg is short due to an accident. The Lord wants to heal you.”

Since I met with an accident at the age of 6, my right leg had been shorter than my left leg by 2cm! My heart was pounding quickly as I walked forward although in my mind, I was thinking the call must be for someone else. I was so shocked as I stood alone. No one else had come forward. The evangelist made me sit and instructed me to lift both my legs up. He then called out, “In the name of Jesus, be healed!” In a split second, my legs came to be the same length.

Many people would feel ecstatic to receive a miracle from the Lord Jesus but I was sad instead. I felt I was not worthy of His healing, His kindness and His goodness. There were other faithful Christians who were more deserving than I was. As I look back, it was His call for me to “come home to Him”. I didn’t.

After having our first child, I thought my relationship with my husband would become better but it didn’t. Both of us love each other but we would always end up hurting one another physically, emotionally and mentally. I was truly crying out to God for help but how could He intervene as I never re-dedicated my life to Him and always blamed my husband for everything? How was I to receive an answer when I wasn’t obedient and pleasing before God?

We sought help from a Christian counselor but she couldn’t

counsel based on Biblical values as my husband wasn't a believer. This went on for three months. I believe that both of us had so much hurt, bitterness, anger and unforgiveness that it was difficult to move on. Somehow, within my heart, there was a voice saying that the "counselor" we needed was Jesus.

The final blow came in July 1995. My husband had enough of the marriage. Everything was over just within that one night. Seven years of relationship and with a toddler - all was supposed to end. I couldn't accept it. I felt that it was the end of everything and what was the point of continuing to live. Many suicidal thoughts came into my mind but I couldn't do it. Again I heard a voice telling me, "I am with you, trust in Me." **I was awokened and realised that the voice I heard was indeed the voice of the Holy Spirit.**

My husband left home. It was hard to see him leaving. The first month was tough as I had to humble myself before God. **I had to ask God to forgive me of my sins and to cleanse me from all filthiness and unrighteousness.** Due to the stress, I sprained my back and was unable to walk. I had to be admitted to the hospital. Even though my husband came to visit me, I could see that there was only hatred for me in his eyes. I never blamed God for all this but I took it in two ways: it was God's judgment, and it was Satan out to destroy my marriage. Of course, I had initially asked God, "Why me?" Later, it was, "What do You want me to do now, Lord?"

The break-up affected many people, including my mom. She brought me to the Prayer House in Persiaran Duta as she knew of Pastor Jean's healing and deliverance ministry. Our first visit was during the Monday night Praise & Worship. I was so nervous and felt so uncomfortable. The worship seemed endless because I was still unable to face the reality of losing my husband.

Somehow, I was prayed for. I couldn't remember for what but I kept crying and crying. The crying was of many mixed feelings. One was, "Lord, do You still want me? Lord, am I still worthy to You?" **Surprisingly, I felt peace, love and joy.** It was the best assurance I had since the split-up. What better gift than having Jesus himself redeem me.

My mom then came to me, looking happy as she whispered to me, "Ask Pastor Jean to pray for you and your husband." I told her that she had already done so. Anyway, she looked so "fierce" that I was afraid to go see her again. My mom was excited as she told me that someone had returned to his wife three days after Pastor Jean prayed for her. I was of course thrilled to hear this latest news!

I began to look for an opportunity to speak to Pastor Jean. After waiting awhile and as Pastor Jean came towards our direction, we approached her. She gave us a soft, gentle smile. My cousin told her of the circumstances I was going through. **Instead of praying, Pastor Jean gave me a precise advice which I had not expected.**

"Don't blame your husband. FAST and PRAY instead," she said.

Fasting and praying were like new vocabulary to me. My mom and I were disappointed and confused by her reply. Deep down in my heart, I knew that I needed to obey her advice. I began to repent from all my wrongdoings and started to read and meditate on the Word of God, to understand more about fasting and prayer. I had the strong conviction that my goal should be to seek God first and not seek Him to repair my marriage.

Matthew 6:33 became real to me: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Besides meditating on the Word of God, I started reading Christian books to know Jesus more and discover how I could connect with Jesus through fasting and prayer.

I began to fast an average of five days per week, from sunrise till sunset only drinking water. During lunch hour, I took the opportunity to spend more time with my Lord. **The fasting and prayer gave me the strength to completely let go of my husband.** I could have used worldly ways to divorce or destroy him but instead, I had more love and compassion for him because I had received so much from the Lord.

When my husband left our home, I needed to start anew. I was so blessed to have my family and friends support me and mainly, my Jesus Who never forsook or abandoned me. Jesus was and is always with me. **As I continued to fast and pray, my faith level grew higher and, for the first time, I began to have a real relationship with my Lord.**

I never had any contact with my husband for the first five months. It was just so amazing that fasting and praying every day for hours gave me hope and the strength to put my trust in the Lord 100%. My faith just built up and I would declare Matthew 7:7, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

I simply believed in every word of God. At times when the enemy brought doubts, I immediately went before the Lord to ask for forgiveness. In my prayers, I would always declare God’s word. Now as I look back, His word is full of power and authority just as He has promised.

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:19)

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem,

and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

I continued fasting and praying for seven months, persevering and believing that my Lord will never fail to bring healing, reconciliation and restoration to my marriage.

Towards the end of January 1996, my husband called to ask for forgiveness and for me to take good care of our daughter. That was when the Lord told me to show him love. This time, my love for my husband was God's love. On the 17 February 1996, my Lord gave me a double blessing: my husband accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, and we took our marriage vows with God as the centre of our life.

Today, I can stand to testify that Jesus can do all things. The God we serve knows no limit. He is limitless. Jesus truly changed me; He began changing me from within. I was a person full of anger, hatred, bitterness, etc., but Jesus could transform all of that. I know the Lord has yet to finish His work in us. He is still changing us because He has a higher and better plan and purpose in our life. At times, His work in me comes with pain but I have also tasted His goodness that comes with it and I am looking forward to many more experiences with Him.

Fasting and prayer has given me the revelation that it is the “final weapon” in defeating the powers of darkness over our lives.

All glory, honour and praise unto Jesus!