



## The Discipline of Celebration

Session Ten

### Look Back at Last Week

- Pastor Emmanuel in his sermon on Esther 9 said that God's plan is always for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and that plunder was used to incentivize war. What kind of restraints were put on the Jews to promote peace and reconciliation in the edict drafted by Mordecai and the royal secretaries? How effective were they?
- Pastor Emmanuel said that to not take plunder is to have faith that God will provide. When we face challenges, how do we respond? Discuss how difficult it is to be patient, trust God's response, and have a long obedience in the same direction.

### Read Aloud

Passage for this week: **Esther 9:20-28**

### Head (15–20 Minutes)

#### OBSERVE THE TEXT AND THE AUTHOR'S MAIN POINTS

1. Mordecai recorded the events and sent letters to all Jews, instructing them to celebrate Purim annually (v.20-21). Throughout the biblical narrative, the Israelites have been a people of remembrance. Why was it significant for Mordecai to record these events and send letters to all the Jews?
2. The month turned from sorrow to gladness and mourning to a holiday (v.22). What does the transformation of sorrow to joy and deliverance indicate about God's covenant faithfulness toward the Jews in the biblical narrative?
3. The Jews undertook to celebrate these days, which became a custom for all their descendants and allies (v.23-28). In what ways does the Feast of Purim correlate with what is to come, the feast of new creation?

### Heart (15–20 Minutes)

#### ENVISION HOW THE TEXT—WHEN APPLIED—MIGHT TRANSFORM YOUR INNER LIFE IN TERMS OF YOUR THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS

1. In what ways have you personally experienced God's transformative faithfulness in Jesus' deliverance of your life, transforming your sorrows into joy?
2. How can the story of Purim inspire you to celebrate and remember God's faithfulness in your own life or the life of the Church?

3. How does the act of giving portions of food to one another and gifts to people experiencing poverty enhance your sense of community and compassion?

## Hands (10 Minutes)

APPLY THE TEXT BY MOVING FROM INWARD REFLECTION TO OUTWARD ACTION LOOKING FOR WAYS TO LIVE THE TEXT OUT IN OUR LIVES TO SERVE OTHERS

### Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God

- Discuss with your small group how the study of Esther increased your awareness of God working behind the scenes for your good.
- Discuss other things you have learned about God and about yourself through this study of Esther.
- Discuss what you celebrate and what it reveals about your values. Pray that God would guide us to celebrate the right things.

### Reaching Outwards: Investing in Your Neighbors

- July 28 - Aug 3 - Middle School Adventure Trip to Buena Vista, Co - Pray for logistics, safety when traveling, camping, hiking, and that all who participate grow in their relationship with God as they interact with His beautiful creation.
- August 4 - 5:30-7:30 PM - Fellowship Hall - Charles Alford Summer Celebration - Come learn and celebrate highlights from Middle School and High School Mission and Adventure trips. Dinner provided. All members of the FPC community welcome!
- August 8 - 12-2 pm - Open Door Mission Monthly Lunch - Visit FPC Local Mission Priority Partner Open Door Mission for a lunch hosted by their President and CEO, Tommy Thompson, catered by their Mission Kitchen with entertainment provided by the Open Door Mission Ensemble. Come find out about Open Door Mission, take a tour, and learn how you can give back to an organization that transforms men's lives. Register at [www.opendoorhouston.org/events](http://www.opendoorhouston.org/events) or contact Madi Weir, Missions Coordinator, at [mweir@fpchouston.org](mailto:mweir@fpchouston.org).

### Reaching Beyond

- Participate in community service projects or charitable activities, mirroring the Jews' act of giving portions of food and gifts to people experiencing poverty. For information about FPC Mission Partners volunteer opportunities go to [fpchouston.org/serve/ways-to-serve/upcoming-opportunities](http://fpchouston.org/serve/ways-to-serve/upcoming-opportunities).
- For those experiencing spiritual poverty, pray for the success of post-Alpha nights (the last one was July 25) to deepen relationships and interest in Jesus Christ. Also, pray for and invite friends to come to the August 10 Movie Night. For more information contact Pastor of Evangelism, Emmanuel Paulpeter at [epaulpeter@fpchouston.org](mailto:epaulpeter@fpchouston.org).
- August 16-26 - FPC staff and covenant partners will be traveling to Gaba, Uganda to speak at and attend a conference, visit a sister village in Namutamba, and connect with friends from Africa Renewal Ministries (ARM). Would you pray the following as they prepare for this trip:
  - For the team members' visa applications because the online application process has been frustrating.
  - For team preparation and for cross-cultural information and training to be completed. Hurricane Beryl interrupted the sequence of meetings.

- For each team member as they prepare for the trip, ie. visa application process, travel medicine appointments, packing preparation, and for hearts to be softened through prayer and reflection.
- For our partner, ARM, while they prepare for the Renewal Summit that the FPC team will attend.