

MESSAGE BIG IDEA

Comfort can be very good, but comfort becomes a problem when it is seen not as a gift but as a destination. To live out our calling as “sent,” there are times when comfort has to go.

SCRIPTURE

Esther 4:1-17, Matthew 16:24

ICEBREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT

Use this icebreaker to have the group create a list of their favorite comfort foods. Expand the opening conversation to explore why that particular food comes to mind – does it evoke a good memory, gives a sense of warmth, or feels indulgent in some way? Discuss why we tend to seek out so much comfort in our lives.

DENYING SELF

We are called to give up our own will, our own desires. We are to say “NO” to self. And second, “taking up the cross.” This means accepting God’s will and following Jesus’ example. We are to say “YES” to God’s call on our lives. To deny ourselves and take up our cross is to say “NO” to self and “YES” to God. It is a commitment to take up the often-uncomfortable burden of sacrificial service and love perfectly displayed in Jesus. Jesus calls all his followers to do this in every moment of our life: The big moments and especially in the little, everyday moments.

“The really important thing is not the great moments of sacrifice, but a life lived in the constant hourly awareness of the demands of God and the need of others.” - Edgar Poe Symmes, III

LIFE APPLICATION

When reading the passages from Esther, have the group discuss the enormity of the request being made of her. She is being asked to risk her own life for others. Discuss how group members would react to that kind of request if the same were made of them? Why do people think Esther changed her mind and decided to help? Use the story of Esther to have a broader discussion about stepping out of fear and out of your comfort zone. What new reality might God be calling you or your group members into that is scary or new?

Use the verse from Matthew to explore what it means to the group to “deny self” and “take up the cross.” Have people think of real-life examples of each and share. Use the examples and turn the discussion to how applicable this verse is for all of us today. Taking up the cross can be seen in everyday moments and opportunities to help others find their way back to God.

CHALLENGE

Esther probably never imagined that she would be in a position to save so many lives and be the hero. Even she didn’t realize her unique position. First, it had to be pointed out by Mordecai. Could there be areas in your life where you may be in a unique position to make a difference? This week look at your relationships, talents you may possess, positions you may hold, and places of influence you may have in a different light. Is there an area of comfort that you may need to shake things up to step into your calling? Next week, share with the group any examples you may have of times that you were able to step out and make a difference.