

Leaders 4Life – April 2025

A newsletter from Y4Life

A Lot Like Esther

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life

Worry and fear. Esther knew them well.

Okay. I admit it. I'm a lot like Esther. I'm guessing you are, too. And not like the brave, triumphant Esther we see at the end of her story in the Old Testament. No, I find myself able to relate to the other Esther—the one whose first responses are worry and fear—more often than I'd like.

Perhaps you've felt a kinship with her, too. Perhaps that kinship began with a transfer to a new school. Or an unexpected pregnancy. Perhaps it took root when your beloved pastor announced he was taking a call. Or when your father received a cancer diagnosis.

Worry and fear. They're often bedfellows. And Esther knew them well.

How can I be certain? Because when Esther was asked to speak on behalf of her people, when she had the chance to save them from certain death, she wavered. She came up with excuses not to do so. She reminded her cousin Mordecai that entering the King's presence without being called into it meant certain death. And Esther didn't want to die. Esther was both worried and afraid.

Can we blame her? Esther's fears were, after all, valid. Married to a spoiled, self-centered ruler who took pleasure in his power and didn't mind abusing it, Esther knew all too well what could befall her: **Shame. Banishment. Death.**

King Ahasuerus was not a man to meddle with.

Add to his temperament (his proclivity for making decisions based on emotion rather than logic) the reality that he had not called Esther into his presence in over 30 days, and we have to admit that she found herself in a fearsome situation. Their marriage was certainly not a love match. She was part of a harem. What confidence, what certainty, could she have had that she would be received by him? None whatsoever.

And that reality filled her with worry and fear.

But Esther was blessed with a cousin who knew the answer to fear and worry, a cousin who reminded her of God's promises:

*"Here are the facts," Mordecai said, "You are a Jew. The verdict applies to you as well. Whether you speak or not, God will deliver His people. **And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**" (Esther 4:14).*

For such a time as this. Those were powerful words centuries ago, and they are powerful words today. Mordecai used them to point out the obvious: Esther was perfectly placed to uphold the lives of her people. God had brought her to this time and place to speak for them.

It's true, Mordecai's words didn't take Esther's fears away completely. She fasted and asked for prayers, and I'm guessing her knees still wobbled when she entered the courts. But Mordecai's words reminded Esther that she was not alone. God would deliver His people. And He would be with her, too.



Mordecai's words moved Esther to compassionate action. For the sake of others, she would risk shame, banishment, and death. For the sake of others, she would find a way to speak for life.

For such a time as this. Those six little words affirmed that Esther's life was not an accident. She was planned. She was placed. And Yahweh, the one true God, was working in and through her for good.

And those six little words still apply today. God has planned you for this time and place. And Yahweh, the one true God, is working in and through you for good, too.

Just like He did for Esther, God has placed you in relationships. He has given you vocations—son, daughter, husband, wife, friend, coworker, classmate—where you are perfectly placed to serve and uphold the lives of others.

It's certainly true that sometimes the time and place He brings you to can be scary. You might be asked to speak the truth in love when you know it won't be received well. It could require carrying a cross you're certain you can't bear. And it might even involve facing rejection, shame, and banishment.

But like Esther, God promises to go with you, too. For the sake of others, He strengthens you to speak for life. God stands with you when you march for the unborn, and He speaks through you when you comfort the grieving. He holds the hand of the cancer patient, kisses the feverish brow of a child, and provides a meal for the hungry man strung out on drugs because God chooses to work through YOU.

Mordecai and his cousin Esther are long gone. They have received their crowns of glory, and though their lives were short in the great expanse of time, their lives were meaningful. They were loved by God Himself, and through each of them, God loved and upheld the lives of others.

Despite their age, Mordecai's words still speak to us today, encouraging us to remember God's promises. Even if they may not take away all of our fears or worries, may they move us to compassionate action for the sake of others. May they move us to speak and act for LIFE.



The Tenacious Faith of Esther

by Grace MacPherson

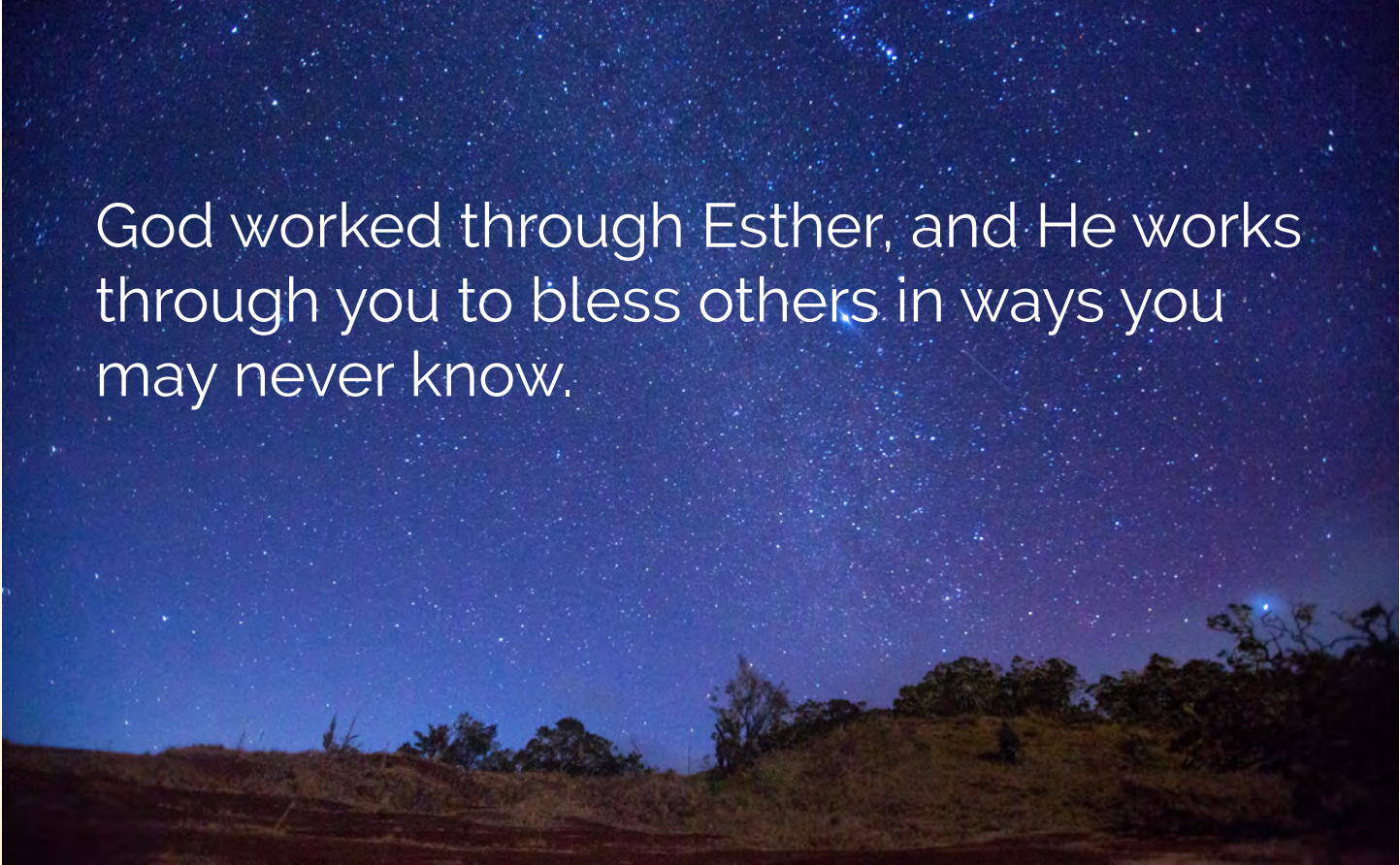
There was nothing extraordinary about Esther.

On the surface, she was an ordinary girl, forced into a political marriage with the king who had conquered her nation and divorced his previous wife, a king so powerful he could have killed her for coming into his presence uninvited. To all appearances, she was completely helpless. She had no hidden skills, no secret talents. Nothing but the beauty that caught the king's eye in the first place and a tenacious faith in the God of her fathers.

Esther was absolutely ordinary, and yet God used her to accomplish extraordinary things. All throughout history, God has worked through ordinary people. He made a barren woman the mother of the nation of Israel. A runaway prince led His people out of slavery in Egypt. A shepherd boy united a kingdom against idolatrous enemies. A hot-tempered fisherman and a self-righteous Pharisee spread the Gospel throughout the world.

All through Scripture and history, God rarely used extraordinary people. Instead, even for the most miraculous deeds, He used everyday, ordinary people.

In one sense, this is deeply, even brutally, humbling. God didn't place us where He did because we have some special talent or ability. None of us is the best at what we do. God created us—we can't awe Him with our extraordinary gifts.



God worked through Esther, and He works through you to bless others in ways you may never know.



But at the same time, this understanding of ourselves and of God is unspeakably comforting. You do not carry the weight of the world—He does. And it is a world He has already died to save.

There was nothing extraordinary about the teenagers gathered in a church basement one hot summer afternoon. Nothing about their hands, sometimes deft and sometimes clumsy as they wove three thousand bracelets to be sold in support of mothers yearning to protect their unborn babies. But God used those teenagers in that humid church basement.

There was nothing extraordinary about the group of college students gathered to hear a professor speak about the value of life. They weren't a collection of star athletes, of scholarship recipients, of anything else extraordinary—just an ordinary group of young men and women. And God used them, too.

There was nothing extraordinary about the first-grade girl on the school playground. Nothing extraordinary in her small arms as she cradled her baby doll as tenderly as she cradles her baby brother every Sunday in church. Nothing extraordinary in her expression as she took off her jacket and bundled it around her baby to shield it from the icy December wind. Just a little girl rocking a plastic doll—yet God will use her to do extraordinary things. Whether that is as a faithful wife and mother or an eloquent writer or a tireless advocate for those with no voice, I don't know.

But God made a shepherd boy a king and a captured girl a queen. He made a harlot and a virgin mothers of the Messiah.

Your story might not look as extraordinary as Esther's. It might not be as exciting as David's or as tumultuous as Rahab's or as terrifying as Mary's. But you don't have to be extraordinary for God to work through you. He can accomplish great things through something as unassuming as prayer or as simple as a meal for a new mother.

Esther did great things not because she was extraordinary, not because she sought out fame and glory, but because of her childlike, tenacious faith in the God who does extraordinary things through ordinary people.

Realistically, most of us will never be more than ordinary, but that doesn't mean we're useless. God works through the ordinary, the mundane, and the commonplace. He worked through Esther, and He works through you to bless others in ways you may never know.

Nothing about Esther was extraordinary. Nothing was special. But God used her to save an entire nation from genocide. How He will use you, I have no idea. But for all of history, what God accomplishes through ordinary people has never fallen short of extraordinary.

Grace MacPherson lives in Casper, Wyoming, with her family. She is the author of the fantasy novels The King's Sword and Domitian. You can read more about her work and stay updated on her writing at authorgracemacpherson.com.

Life Shines in Darkness ... and in Youth

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life

Over 520 individuals came together to support LIFE!

The 2025 Y4Life in Washington, D.C., conference theme, **Life Shines in Darkness**, was based on John 1:4-5: **"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."**

As the Y4Life team wraps up Y4Life in Washington, D.C., I am reflecting on the good, life-affirming gifts God gave us this year, and I can't help but count you in that number. Thanks to donors like you, we were able to welcome a record number of youth at our conference this year. Because of sponsors like you, over 520 participants were able to attend.

That means that over 520 people heard multiple Gospel-motivated presentations. Over 520 energized and passionate attendees marched with us in the March for Life. Over 520 individuals came together to support LIFE!

In addition to participating in the March for Life and making connections with other like-minded youth and young adults, attendees heard from:

- Josh Brahm, a well-known pro-life speaker and the Executive Director of Equal Rights Institute, who spoke on the practice of pro-life conversations
- Pre-march speaker Katy Faust, founder of Them Before Us, a children's rights organization
- Kim Laube, Executive Director of Lutheran Family Service
- Rev. Harrison Goodman, Content Executive of Higher Things; Rev. Simeon Raddatz, Campus Pastor at Concordia Chicago; and Rev. Michael Salemink, Executive Director of Lutherans For Life
- Panel discussion members Deaconess Rachel Geraci, Rev. Tim Pauls, and Rev. Chad Hoover on the topics of Dating, Marriage, and Family

Our event was filled with opportunities to see life shine in the darkness and to equip youth to share it with others.

Thank you for your generosity, your prayers, and your support. Your gift reflected the light of Christ to many. Your gift brought them LIFE! I thank God for your partnership.





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Lutherans For Life National Conference

September 24-26, 2025

Great Wolf Lodge • Colorado Springs, Colorado

Save the Date! Save the Date! Save the Date!

"I praise you Lord for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14)

Get equipped to deal with life issues with Gospel-motivated speakers at the Great Wolf Lodge in Colorado Springs for this three-day national event! The sweeping views of Pike's Peak in the conference center will inspire us as we hear testimonials from courageous For Life speakers.

**Fearfully
and
Wonderfully
Made**



This family-friendly venue offers the largest indoor water park in Colorado, along with dozens of engaging activities for children of all ages. Registration includes access to all conference sessions and breakfast and dinners at the conference hotel. **Note: Lunches and afternoons will be on your own to explore the area!**

Registration Fees

Early Bird – Adult (through June 30, 2025): \$100

Adult (July 1, 2025, and after): \$150

Students and Youth, 13 years old through college-age: \$25

Children, 12 years old and under: FREE



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YA^{For}LIFE

YA For Life seeks to equip young adults in their 20s and 30s to be Gospel-motivated voices for LIFE! Through service, celebration, worship, and education, young adults are encouraged to engage in life-affirming activities and become advocates for LIFE in their families, churches, communities, and world. In this way, their life-affirming work ripples into the future - not only changing lives today but also for eternity.



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