



Pick up your privilege

**A Bible study on Esther about using
our privilege to challenge injustice**

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Introduction

Pick up your privilege is part of a series of resources we are producing as a follow-up to [Tearfund's racial injustice guide from 2020](#).

This Bible study explores the story of Esther from the Old Testament. It can be used by your church, in small groups or with your family to help you explore power and privilege.

It offers the opportunity for you to reflect on how you can 'pick up your privilege'. And how, by doing so, you can help play your part in bringing an end to extreme poverty. At the end is a prayer inspired by the words of Rusty Pritchard, from Tearfund USA.



Bible Study

What privileges do you have? You could be the most favoured child or perhaps you are popular among your friends. You may have an advantage at school or maybe people look up to you at work.

One thing we don't always realise is that other people usually see our privilege before we do. We don't often know how privileged we are, so we can't use our privilege for good.

Privilege is generally seen as a negative thing, something people dislike. It's something that can be at the expense of others.

But in the biblical story of Esther, we see how privilege can be a force for good. While it is often used as a tool for terror and hurt, it doesn't have to be that way. We can use our privilege to transform, heal and bring justice.

Privilege is defined as a 'special right', a 'benefit or advantage' or 'favour'. It is a power that many have, and it's either given or earned. But all power comes with responsibility.

The book of Esther is an account of a young girl who becomes a queen. During her reign, Esther's cousin, Mordecai, tells her of a plot to destroy her people, the Jews.

Mordecai wants Esther to use her newfound influence as queen to speak up for her people and ask the king to save them. At first, Esther is reluctant because she feels that it might make her vulnerable.

In reply, Mordecai says this:

'Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?'

Esther 4:13-14

These words are a challenge to Esther to pick up her privilege and use it to bring justice. Esther was given a position of authority and she gained two advantages: access and influence. She was in a privileged position to speak to the king and could sway his decisions.

After listening to Mordecai's advice, Esther begins to realise that her privilege is power and that it comes with responsibility. So she picks up her privilege and uses it to convince the king to save the Jews. This is an example of what can happen when privilege is used wisely to bring about justice.

We need to understand what privileges we have and to pick them up – whether that's at school, at work or in the community. When faced with injustice, we need to pick up our privilege and use it to bring about what is fair and right.

If you use your privilege well, you can bring about healing and transformation for good, while seeking to challenge and dismantle unfair privilege.



Questions for reflection

1. Where can you see privilege in your own life? Where or in what places do you have privilege?
2. Where do you think other people are privileged over and above you? How does this make you feel?
3. How can privilege lead to injustices, such as poverty?
4. How can you use privilege to bring about justice like Esther?
5. Esther is one example. Can you think of other examples in the Bible when people used their privilege for good?
6. How have people across history used their privilege to fight against injustice?
7. As a Christian, what privilege do you have, and is it positive or negative? If negative, how can you change that to help bring about justice?



Prayer

Lord, help us to understand ourselves better. Reveal the privileges that we hold, whether it is our race, gender, nationality, wealth or age.

Show us where we are in a position that gives us influence and power.

Help us to leave everything we hold, including our privilege, at the foot of the cross.

Show us how we can use our power and authority to serve others.

For those of us with privilege and power, keep us from being blind to it.

Let us not wallow in guilt, but show us how we can use our privilege to bring about justice for others.

Release us from greed, and help us to share or give up our power when needed.

Help us to pick up our privilege and use it courageously like Esther did.

When we find it hard to acknowledge our own privilege, help us to take our eyes off ourselves, and fix them on you. Lord Jesus, you didn't cling to power but gave up everything; show us how to be more like you.

Let us be your agents of change as we continue to be transformed ourselves.

Amen.

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