



I refuse.

Throughout history, a minority of men and women have refused to go with the crowd. How do we know when to dissent and go against what is asked of us?

This school year, as a follower of Jesus you are going to be faced with some very difficult decisions. There are going to be times when you are going to need to say no.

I think of the series *The Chosen*. [\[Slide\]](#)

How many of you have ever been white water rafting? [Salmon migration explanation] [\[Slide\]](#)
God wants you to be a part of His family.

Following God's laws doesn't get you into Heaven, but we are called to be holy.

For such a school year as this.

Have you read the book of Esther in the Bible? [Share historical and culture background of Israel, Judah, Babylon, and Persia.] [\[Slides\]](#)

Can you imagine if our presidents had terms as long as they wanted? [\[Picture of Putin\]](#)

We often don't talk about Queen Vashti.

Esther 1:1-22

Historical background on Vashti and her choice.

So, who was Esther? How did God use Vashti to get Esther into a place where she too could risk her life to save the Jews?

Esther 2:1-2, 5-8

Share what Esther had been through and her attitude.

What principles can we learn from this true account?

1. God is sovereign in your story

Sovereignty means God is in control. Think about a 1,000-piece puzzle.

2. This year you will need to say no

God is calling you to ask, “does this honor God?”

The world is swimming downstream. But remember the salmon—they are going home no matter what it takes.

3. Stay dependent on God’s wisdom to navigate difficult decisions and circumstances.

The difficulty of Esther being forced into this marriage.

Esther 2:10

Esther and Mordecai decided not to tell anyone about their nationality or family background. We often think we should be loud and proud about our faith.

Esther 3:1-4

Again, we need to depend on the Holy Spirit in our everyday decisions, choices, and actions.

Esther 3:5-6,9-12

Esther 3:13-16

Prayer and fasting.



- Start off your discussion by sharing highs and lows from the week and any personal prayer requests.
- Someone share a memory you have about a river! White water rafting, fishing, swimming, etc.
- Someone else talk about a time when you didn't go along with what everyone else was doing. You went "upstream."
- What's something new you learned about the Bible today from our message in Esther?
- [Have a student read **Esther 3:14.**] What is God calling you to this school year?
- [Have a student or a few students read **Romans 8:1-17.**] What sticks out to you from this letter the apostle Paul wrote? How does it relate to what we learned about the book of Esther?
- What is going to be the hardest thing to "refuse" this year?
- How has God redeemed some of the hard things in your life for good?
- How can we hold each other accountable? What will that look like?
- How is God not only calling you to *not do* certain things this year—but what kingdom work is he wanting you *to do*? How has he uniquely positioned you to share the Gospel?
- How did God speak to you when you heard Jesus is the better Esther—who gave up His palace so we could be with Him for eternity?
- What is the Good News? Why did we need Jesus to die for us?
- What is your next step?

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