



Sermon Series: More Than a Sidekick: Serving Alongside Others

To be used with Session 5: Haman

Sermon Title Possibilities: "You Got a Big Ego!" "Too Inflated" "The Enemy Called Ego"

Scripture: Esther 3:1-9; 6:10-14

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible Study, "More Than a Sidekick: Serving Alongside Others," this sermon will help the congregation understand why it is crucial to monitor our egos. The audience will discover how easy it is for successful leaders to become consumed with public affirmation and adoration. Therefore, leaders must practice self-reflection, honesty, and discipline consistently. By examining the life of Haman, congregants will learn how he allowed his ego and pride to cause him to expect and demand honor. Additionally, the audience will discover how Haman's ego-driven actions caused him to shrewdly and diabolically plot an act of genocide on all Persian Jews as punishment for Mordecai's refusal to bow down and reverence Haman. The congregation will leave the sermon fully aware of the grave impact of mismanaged egos.

Introduction: Have you ever driven a car when the tires were too inflated? If so, you know how bumpy of a ride that can be. More than the discomfort, overly inflated tires can be hazardous: they can cause the car to swerve and cause tires to explode, resulting in a terrible crash. This is why it is essential to do regular tire pressure checks to ensure the tires are never too inflated. Similarly, egos that are too inflated can cause us to crash our lives and the lives of others. This is why we should examine ourselves frequently to ensure we never become too inflated. Scripture is clear that God hates pride and arrogance (Proverbs 8:13). The responsibility of managing our egos is even greater for leaders who receive public praise somewhat regularly. Today we will learn how failing to manage egos can cause leaders to fall from celebration to shame.

1. Cease From Rage (Esther 3:1-5)

Esther 3 opens by detailing the promotion of Haman by King Ahasuerus. Haman's promotion elevated him above all the officials who were with him. Certainly, faithfulness should initiate promotion. However, elevated positions necessitate elevated responsibilities. Indeed, God increases our responsibilities whenever God elevates us. According to verse 3, King Ahasuerus commanded all his servants to bow down and honor Haman, and they obeyed. There is nothing wrong with receiving due honor from

people. However, receiving too much praise can potentially create large egos. Therefore, managing our egos is a critical responsibility for those God has elevated. Consequently, frequent, honest self-reflection, balance, and discipline are critical. Esther 3:2&5 reports that Mordecai refused to bow down and honor Haman, and Mordecai's refusal infuriated Haman. Why was Haman so enraged by Mordecai? Perhaps Haman became drunk with the wine of public praise and assumed that he deserved praise from everyone. We must be careful when pursuing, expecting, and demanding glory from people. Even Jesus—the only one who deserved all praise—rejected glory but pointed followers to give glory to God—The Father (John 8:49-50, 54-55). Haman's anger reminds us that entitlement and egotism are dangerous influences that can initiate unwarranted anger and irrational decisions. This is why Scripture admonishes us not to think of ourselves more highly than we should (Rom. 12:3).

2. Cease From Racism (Esther 3:6-9)

Esther 3:6-9 confirms that Haman's ego-driven anger drove him to irrational action. According to verse 6, Haman desired to kill Mordecai. Here, we are reminded that ego-driven decisions are always the most destructive. Moreover, most ego-driven decisions are rooted in low self-esteem and deep insecurities. It is worth noting that Haman desired to move to murder without any consideration or conversation with Mordecai. A Latin phrase encapsulates the dreadful plight of Haman, "*Damnante quod non intellegunt*," which translates as "they kill/condemn what they do not understand." Indeed, countless people have condemned and killed people that they just did not understand. In fact, Jesus was murdered by people who simply failed to understand Him. However, Haman's actions confirm that those controlled by hubris never seek nor desire to understand those who disagree. Haman, just like most insecure, ego-driven leaders, lacked the courage to execute his plan to kill Mordecai entirely, so he plotted to destroy all the Jews—the people of Mordecai (Esth.3:6). Esther 3:7-9 captures Haman's diabolically strategic plan to murder all the Jews in Persia, which included: lies, bribery, graft, murder-for-hire, and hate crime. Haman was so enraged that he strategically plotted to commit genocide. In one split decision, Haman moved from a man seemingly worthy of honor to a horrendous murderer driven by rage and racism. Undeniably, Haman's rage could have claimed countless innocent lives. Here, we are reminded that there are always innocent casualties in the war of egotism. To this end, we must ask ourselves: *How many innocent people have been negatively impacted by our ego and emotionally driven actions?*

3. Cease From Ruthlessness (Esther 6:10-14)

Haman's devious conniving plan seemed to have worked; he was able to successfully gain clearance from King Ahasuerus to move forward with the genocide of the Jews in Persia. In fact, Esther 6:10-11 reports that the king gave Haman his ring, money, soldiers, and complete approval to "do with [the Jews] as it seemed good to him." Can any of us truly fathom what we would do with that type of opportunity—that type of power—one where a king says, "You have my blessings to do whatever you want?"

Haman was fully aware of that power and leveraged it in his favor. Power, privilege, and influence are three potent entities that must be managed with great maturity and immense discipline. Unfortunately, Haman chose to use those entities as weapons to ruthlessly enforce his own agenda to completely annihilate all Jews in Persia. How many other countless leaders can we conjure that fit the same profile? Hopefully, no one in our community today does so. You see, those who operate in that fashion do not display strength but exude weakness. Real leaders do not lead by force, fear, and domination; conversely, authentic leadership is best displayed through compassion, service, and love—all qualities personified and emanated by Jesus. We must, therefore, strive to serve and lead in the way that Jesus taught: free from egotism, pride, selfishness, and hate, bearing in mind that every decision we make has the potential to either develop and deliver or destroy.

Conclusion: Haman's fall in this narrative explicitly details the tragic impacts of ego-driven actions. Haman's ego was built by the public praise of others. However, Haman failed to monitor his ego level. Haman's immensely inflated ego drove him to manipulate, lie, bribe, and plan genocide as acts of retaliation. Perhaps if Haman spent time monitoring his ego pressure, he would have acted differently. Tires have set air pressure guidelines that must be followed through regular observation to ensure safety and mitigate harm. Similarly, God's Word gives us clear guidelines concerning the management of egos, and the gift of the Holy Spirit helps us monitor our ego levels. If we faithfully adhere to both, we will increase our chances of avoiding the same mistakes as Haman in this pericope.

Author Bio

Dr. TERRENCE CHANDLER-HARRISON serves as the Lead Pastor of The Liberty Church—Clarksville, TN. He is a graduate of Morehouse College and Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Terrence earned a Doctorate of Education from The University of Southern California and his research was awarded the dissertation of distinction merit. He is a professor of Bible and Theology and Dean at The Historic American Baptist College—Nashville, TN. Terrence and his wife Anjelica are the proud parents of Ellie Grace and Timothy James. Check out Terrence's latest work, *Spiritual Cross Training: The Book of James* on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.