

# If ever there's a time to mourn, it's now

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EAGAN, Minn.—Ecclesiastes 3:4 says there comes a time to mourn.

We often associate mourning with the loss of a loved one. But mourning is biblically encouraged at other times as well, such as when staring into the face of a disaster or realizing we have strayed from our Eternal God.

For a brief period our country did mourn and somewhat turned to God after Sept. 11, 2001. Unfortunately, that was short-lived. I do, however, believe now is the time to sincerely and deeply mourn.

## **Such a time**

On a recent Sabbath morning I opened to 2 Chronicles 20 and began to read the prayer of Jehoshaphat. I didn't get far before tears began to stream down my face.

After months of growing sadness about the state of our country, the sorrow and dread I feel came flowing out. There are times in our life when only God can spare us. I believe we are at such a time now.

In the book of Esther, when the evil plot of Haman to exterminate the Jews of his day became known, Mordecai followed the direction of his heart.

"When Mordecai learned all what had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly" (Esther 4:1).

Mordecai didn't care what people thought of him or how he appeared. He just knew that it was time to mourn before God.

## **Mordecai's example**

Mordecai was not alone in this reaction. There was "great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes" (verse 3).

Evil Haman had a mandate to exterminate the Jews in all the land. Things looked bleak.

But the Jews decided to neither eat nor drink for three days and beseech God to spare them. Our Father God, being the merciful God that He is, heard and answered them. The wicked Haman was hanged on his own gallows, and the people of God dwelled safely for many years.

We must be wholehearted in our mourning if we expect God to hear us.

Notice in Hosea 7 God tells us why He does not hear the cries of some.

"They did not cry to me from their heart when they wailed upon their beds" (verse 14).

God insists on sincerity and truth. In the call to repentance in Joel 2:12-13, the Lord demands: "'Return to me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning; so rend your heart and not your garments.' Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate."

### **Indifferent leadership**

Yes, there are times when we simply must mourn and turn to God, even if our leadership does not.

In Amos's day God condemned the leaders for not mourning when they should have (see Amos 6:6).

In Ezekiel 9 He instructs His obedient angels to place a mark on the foreheads of all who "sigh and grieve over all the abominations which are being committed in the land" (verse 4).

Jesus taught that "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

Jesus Himself mourned when He overlooked Jerusalem and knew the trouble that would come upon it. He wept openly (Luke 19:41-44).

Yes, there is a time to deeply mourn for our country and genuinely turn towards God. For our generation, I believe that time has arrived.