



Week 3: Not Your Average...Faith **January 18-19, 2020 | Tim Harlow**

This weekend, Pastor Tim walks us through the story of Esther and what "a time such as this" means to each of us.

CELEBRATE

At the beginning of your small group time, it's good to share about your week and share with each other how you're doing. So, spend some time, right now, connecting before jumping into the discussion questions. You can use the *Connect* section as a guide. If you're doing this Study Guide on your own, take a moment to focus your mind on God and what He might want you to hear today.

CONNECT

1. Talk about your favorite story: maybe from a book, movie, or premise of a TV or streaming show. What is it about that story that you enjoy or connect with?
2. Talk about a time when a problem came up and you knew you were the best person to solve it. What helped you have the confidence to step in and do what you could to help?

Before watching the sermon, or moving on in this study, take a minute to remember that God is always with you. Pray as a group for God to bless your conversation and open your

eyes and hearts to what He wants you to hear.

REFLECT

Before moving forward in your study, take a moment and review the key points from this weekend's message.

1. Esther's story highlights that even when we get caught up in the little details, God is at work on a much bigger story for us.
2. God has been preparing all of us for "such a time as this." What is your "such a time as this?"

SCRIPTURES USED IN THE MESSAGE: Esther chapters 1-7, Matthew 10:39

RESPOND

1. Talk about a thought, phrase, or moment from this weekend's message that resonated with you. What made it stick out to you?
2. Talk about a time when you found yourself in a situation where you were given the choice between two equally challenging options. In Esther, we see this when she can either risk losing everything by going to the king or risk perishing with the rest of the Jewish people. What wisdom did you gain from your situation?
3. Read Colossians 3:12-17. Read slowly and out loud, if possible. In last week's study, we read the passage that precedes this one. In this letter, Paul is helping the church at Colossae figure out how to live as followers of Jesus while combating the influence of people who said Jesus was just a spirit and that life on earth had to be "escaped" - that was salvation. Paul (and the rest of Christian history) would say that God calls people to be faithful in the life and body they're in here and now.
4. This passage begins with the invitation to "clothe yourselves" with various things like compassion, humility, and patience. (3:12) Talk about what it means to "wear" these characteristics in your family, work, and personal life. How could these elements be part of the bigger story God is telling with your life here and now?
5. Esther couldn't have known the bigger story going on all around her, but her responses were made in love: love for Mordecai and her people, specifically. Talk about how love, when we live with it and learn to work with it, could bring together God's big story with our smaller stories (see Colossians 3:14). When have you seen a loving approach help to make sense of a really complicated situation?
6. For Esther, much of her life just "happened" to her. In fact, the word "taken" was used several times to talk about how Esther moved from an orphan to being queen. Talk about how easy it is for you to believe that life is just "happening" to you right now. Talk about how your life could change if you followed Paul's direction to do everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (3:17) Talk about how this could help us take on our "time such as this."

7. This week we celebrate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King often said that the biggest enemy of overturning systemic racism wasn't the Ku Klux Klan, but white political moderates who didn't want to upset others by saying anything - or, in today's terms "getting political." In terms of the Esther story, this would be like Esther knowing the Jewish people were going to be destroyed, but deciding it was too inconvenient or painful to say anything to the king. Talk about ways that you and your group could speak up for black and brown individuals in your community, workplace, and city. How could you become "anti-racist" in the ways you approach everything you do?

Closing Prayer:

God, thank you that you love justice. You take every day people and turn them into heroes simply by revealing the power of their "time such as this." We pray today that you destroy the foundations and systems of racism in our time, and that you prompt us to act in humility, love, compassion, patience, and kindness in our everyday life. That is how we we find the "time such as this" right in front of us. We love you.

Amen.