

Small Group Guide: For Such a Time as This

Based on the Book of Esther & the Celebration of Purim

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: What is your favorite annual celebration or holiday in your family, and why does it hold special meaning for you?

Sermon Overview (5 minutes)

This sermon explored the Jewish holiday of Purim, which celebrates the events recorded in the book of Esther. We learned about how God worked behind the scenes through unlikely people—Mordecai and Esther—to save the Jewish people from genocide. Even though God's name is never mentioned in the book of Esther, His presence and providence are evident throughout the entire narrative.

Key Theme: God is always working behind the scenes, even when we don't see Him, and He invites us to step into His plan rather than step out of it.

Key Takeaways

1. **Holidays (Holy Days) are meant to be rare and set apart** - They help us remember God's provision and faithfulness
2. **God uses unlikely people** - Esther and Mordecai were flawed individuals who hid their identities, yet God used them powerfully
3. **God works in the hidden things** - Even when God seems absent, He is orchestrating events behind the scenes
4. **We must choose to step in or step out** - God's will is going to be accomplished, but we get to choose whether we'll participate
5. **Our decisions affect those closest to us** - Especially our families

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Story (15 minutes)

1. **Before this sermon, how familiar were you with the story of Esther or the holiday of Purim?** What new insights did you gain?
2. **Why do you think God's name is never mentioned in the book of Esther?** What might this teach us about how God works?
3. **Esther and Mordecai are called "anti-heroes" in the sermon.** What made them unlikely choices for God to use? How does this encourage you?

Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

4. **The sermon asked: "Are you going to step in or step out?"** Share about a time when you felt God calling you to step into something, even when it was uncomfortable or risky. What did you do?
5. **Esther said, "If I perish, I perish."** What did it cost Esther to step into God's plan? What might it cost you to fully step into what God is calling you to do?
6. **The sermon emphasized that "stepping out doesn't stop God's will, but it affects those closest to us—especially our families."** How does this truth challenge or convict you? How have you seen this play out in your own life or family?

Recognizing God's Hidden Work (15 minutes)

7. **Share about a time when you couldn't see God working in your situation, but looking back, you can now see His hand clearly.** How does remembering these times strengthen your faith?
8. **The sermon mentioned that God "equips the called rather than calling the equipped."** When have you felt unqualified for something God called you to do? How did He equip you?
9. **Mordecai told Esther: "Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"** What "position" has God placed you in (work, neighborhood, family role, stage of life, etc.)? How might God want to use you right where you are?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Remember God's Faithfulness

- Take 15 minutes to journal or share with someone about 2-3 times God showed up in your life when you didn't initially see Him working
- Create a "memorial" of some kind (like the Jews did with Purim) to help you remember God's faithfulness

Option 2: Step In

- Identify one area where you've been "stepping out" or staying on the sidelines of God's plan
- Take one concrete action this week to "step in" to what God is calling you to do
- Share your decision with one trusted person for accountability

Option 3: Family Faith Leadership

- If you have a family, initiate one spiritual conversation or activity this week that you've been putting off
- This could be praying together, reading Scripture, or talking about how God is working in your lives

Option 4: Serve Others

- Following the Purim tradition of giving food to the poor, identify one practical way to serve someone in need this week
- Consider volunteering at LIFE Food Pantry or bringing donations from the list mentioned in the sermon

Group Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Break into groups of 2-3 and pray for each other, focusing on:

1. **Eyes to see** where God is working behind the scenes in your current circumstances
2. **Courage to step in** to what God is calling you to do, even if it costs you something
3. **Faith to trust** God's providence when you can't see Him working
4. **Wisdom for family leadership** and the impact your faith decisions have on those closest to you
5. **Our military members** mentioned in the sermon (Jacob Perry and Jacob Ponchot) and all those serving in dangerous regions

Closing Thought

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance 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 4:14

God has placed you exactly where you are, with the people around you, for such a time as this. Will you step in?

Before Next Week

- Read the entire book of Esther (it's only 10 chapters!)
- Look for the ways God worked behind the scenes throughout the story
- Come prepared to share how you "stepped in" this week

Additional Resources

- Consider watching a video overview of the book of Esther (The Bible Project has an excellent one)
- Research how Jewish communities celebrate Purim today
- Stop by the table in the foyer to pick up a donation list for LIFE Food Pantry