Lesson Four
For Such a Time as This
Esther 4

For Such a Time as This
Life Lessons from the Book of Esther

Last Week in Review
Esther 3 brought us to the central crisis of this book. We saw that Haman, the second in command of the Persian Empire, had convinced Ahasuerus to order everyone to bow to Haman as he passed by. Of course, the people did so in fear for their lives. All except one: Mordecai, who alone stood up against compromise in doing homage to man rather than to God. Haman was furious as a result. Just getting back at Mordecai wouldn’t be enough. Instead he wanted to destroy all the Jews and remove them from getting in the way of his self-seeking plans. Haman first cast lots (pur) to decide when the destruction was to take place. He craftily fooled Ahasuerus into authorizing the destruction of these people by playing on Ahasuerus’ greed, superstition, and ego. Copies of this decree were distributed throughout the land via the Persian Pony Express. The chapter ended in an unusual way: “So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed” (Esther 3:15, NKJV).

So we come to Esther 4, in which the crisis begins to reach its peak. Being Jewish, Esther was in just as much danger as her people, although she was now the queen. She and Mordecai will discover in this chapter the hand of God’s sovereignty at work in arranging all of these things, and they would have vital decisions to make that would effect the survival of Judaism and the people of Israel.

Day One: Mourning and Sackcloth
Please carefully read Esther 4:1-4 and answer the following questions.

1. Jews throughout the Persian Empire received word that their day of destruction had been decreed under the wicked supervision of Haman. What was Mordecai’s reaction to this edict, not just for himself, but all of the people (v. 1)? How did the other Jews throughout the Empire similarly react to this news (v. 3)?
2. This was no light mourning or sadness. When Mordecai “cried out with a loud and bitter cry,” literally he shrieked out in a bitter, sad, wild display of heart-crushing grief; it was like a distress signal, a cry for help. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, which needlessly attempted to bring God more directly into Esther, adds to verse 1 that Mordecai wailed, “An innocent people is being condemned to death.”

No doubt Mordecai’s next thought was about his beloved cousin Esther. What prevented him from having access to her (v. 2)?

4. Probably one of Esther’s servants saw Mordecai in such a state, and reported it to her. What was Esther’s reaction to this (v. 4)?

5. Esther was evidently unaware of this edict. The news that her cousin was in such a state which prevented him from coming to her greatly upset her. In fact, “deeply distressed” means she turned around in circles, writhing like a woman who is in the midst of childbirth, and trembled at this.

Our Western culture has wrongly minimized and squelched the display of emotions. Even in times of grief we feel pressured to just “pull ourselves together,” and “get over it.” This was not so in the Jewish culture, nor elsewhere in the Eastern world, as we have seen in video of peoples’ graphic mourning of the tragic disasters in Southeast Asia. We need to understand that if we are grieving, there is no reason to “just snap out of it,” but to express our grief and burdens and give them over to God. There is “a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Ecclesiastes 3:4, NKJV). God wants us to seek Him honestly, and to know that He loves us anyway. How will He bring healing in our lives as we take our burdens and cares to Him?

Matthew 11:28-30

1 Peter 5:6, 7
**Scripture Memory:** This week we will be memorizing Esther 4:14. Review the passage several times throughout the day each day this week, and by the end of the week, you should have it memorized completely.

For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14, NKJV

**Day Two: A Cry for Help**

Please carefully read Esther 4:5-8 and answer the following questions.

1. Esther had to find out what was going on. Since she couldn’t leave the palace, she sent a trusted eunuch named Hathach to convey a message to Mordecai. Interestingly, the name Hathach means a gift, and his unwitting involvement in the deliverance of the Jews was truly a gift to them! What did Mordecai tell him was going on (v. 7)?

2. What else did Mordecai give to Hathach to explain to Esther (v. 8a)?

3. What was Mordecai’s hope that she would do to help save the people (v. 8b)?

4. Mordecai commanded (urged, NIV) via Hathach that Esther should go to Ahasuerus, supplicating (to implore, seek mercy like a weaker person from a stronger one) and pleading that he would save their people. What a blessing we have as Christians that we have direct access to God, and a far superior Intercessor to help us in our prayers! What are some ways God assists in our very prayers to Him according to the following passages, especially when we are weak and struggling?

   Romans 8:26, 27
Hebrews 4:14-16

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Hebrews 10:19-22

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Scripture Memory: Try to fill in the missing words in the blanks below, by memory if at all possible, and then review the passage several times today.

For if you remain completely _____________________ at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will ________________. Yet who knows whether you have come to the __________________________ for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14, NKJV

Day Three: Danger and Death
Please carefully read Esther 4:9-11 and answer the following questions.

1. Hathach delivered this message. The shocked Esther sent a reply. What fearful thing did she relate to Mordecai, and why was this a particular concern at that time (v. 11)?

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2. We shouldn’t be too hard on Esther for her fear. After all, she was still young, and even the most seasoned have a natural reaction of fear of danger and death. But too often we allow concerns for our own personal safety to cause us to lose sight of faith in the Lord’s ability to see us through what He calls us to undertake. What are some of the things Paul said to his young disciple Timothy about handling fear-provoking and other situations that may have been hampering him from serving effectively, and what to do instead (1 Timothy 4:12-16, 2 Timothy 1:6-12)?

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3. We too faced a fate we could not escape, for the Law said we are all doomed to die because our sin. Just as King Ahasuerus would have to extend the golden scepter of acceptance and forgiveness to repeal the death sentence, so God had to reach out His “golden scepter” of forgiveness to mankind, because nothing we could do in trying to cover our sin would make any difference, for there is “but one law: put all to death” otherwise. Read the following passages and record how God has offered us His “scepter” and made us His own.

Romans 5:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:21

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Ephesians 1:3-9; 2:1-10

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Hebrews 9:24-28

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**Scripture Memory:** Try to fill in the missing words in the blanks below, by memory if at all possible, and then review the passage several times today.

For if you remain completely ________________ at this time, relief and deliverance will ________________ for the Jews from another ________________, but you and your father's house will ________________. Yet who knows whether you have ________________ to the ________________ for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14, NKJV
Day Four: For Such a Time as This
Please carefully read Esther 4:12-14 and answer the following questions.

1. Whether Mordecai was grieved at Esther’s response we are not told, but he bluntly responded to her concerns. What did Mordecai first remind her of (v. 13)?
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NOTE: The Amplified Bible puts the beginning of his message, “Do not flatter yourself” that she would escape because of her position. Again, we don’t know what Mordecai’s tone was, but to assume it was angry like this is not necessarily so. He knew his cousin and how she would react to his words. The phrase “do not think in your heart” more literally means to not think in her soul, the life principle, the innermost self.

2. Next, what did Mordecai remind Esther, which indicates he did have faith that God would work in one way or another (v. 14a)?
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NOTE: Relief here means breathing freely, coming from the Hebrew word meaning breath, spirit, or wind.

3. Verse 14b brings us to the most crucial statement of Mordecai in this book to motivate his cousin. What was that statement?
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4. In Esther 4:14 we see the principal theme of the book, which is that God takes care of and delivers His people, but He doesn’t always show us how until the right time. All of the things that Esther had experienced up to that moment (including being taken away from her people), and all that seemed negative as well as positive happening to her, had worked together to place her in such a setting for such an appropriate time and season for her to make a difference.

She now was at the point of having to decide what she would do, what cost she would be willing to pay. The decision was difficult, like some decisions we all face, but it was probably one of those moments where the light bulb came on and made sense to her at
last. How can the following passages help us in trusting God when we face a difficult decision with potential negative consequences if we obey?

1 Samuel 30:6
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Jeremiah 29:11
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Psalm 56:11-13; Hebrews 13:5, 6
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Daniel 3:16-18
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Matthew 6:25-33
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**Scripture Memory**: Try to fill in the missing words in the blanks below, by memory if at all possible, and then review the passage several times today.

For if you _______________ completely _______________ at this time, _______________ and deliverance will _______________ for the Jews from another _______________, but you and your father's _______________ will _______________. Yet who knows whether you have _______________ to the _______________ for such a _______________ as this?

Esther 4:14, NKJV
Day Five: Decision
Please carefully read Esther 4:15-17 and answer the following questions.

1. Esther no doubt took a deep breath, and then gave her response to Mordecai. What did she first request (v. 16a)?

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NOTE: In Jewish culture, fasting was linked with praying, so even though she didn’t directly ask for prayer, it would have been obvious to the Jewish readers of the day. This connection between prayer and fasting is seen in many Old Testament passages.10

2. What bold decision did Esther make (v. 16b)?

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3. How Mordecai respond to Esther’s boldness (v. 17)?

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4. Any crucial decision we make must be bathed in prayer, but do we really embrace the fasting and self-denial that will cleanse us and help us better be prepared to hear God’s will? Jesus seemed to assume that fasting would be a practice of His followers, and gave guidance accordingly:

   Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matthew 6:16-18, nkjv)

Well, how should we fast, in what way, etc.? There is no set formula, and this decision should be between you and the Lord. God did give some interesting guidelines for His chosen fast in Isaiah 58:6-12, the heart of what it should accomplish. What are some of these things He desires of us as we fast?

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5. We are struck by Esther’s bold statement that she would go in to the King, although it was against his law, and “if I perish, I perish!” or “If I must die, I am willing to die” (v. 16, NLT). The potential salvation of her people and fulfilling God’s will for her life far outweighed the cost to herself. Many have died for their faith because they were unwilling to deny God, and boldly accepted His will as supreme. What are some of the ways we see this attitude reflected by the beloved apostle Paul in the New Testament?


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Philippians 1:19-21

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2 Timothy 2:8-10, 4:6-8

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Scripture Memory: Can you write out this week’s Passage by memory here below? Give it a try, and keep reviewing the passage several times throughout the day.

Esther 4:14:
**Day Six: Living in Such a Time as This**

1. As God builds our lives to become more what He wants them to be, we will face difficulties, even mourning and grief, and seemingly negative situations that make it seem like maybe He isn’t in control or has abandoned us. But we have seen that God is at work in our lives in even those things, and He often uses difficult situations to move us into the place He wants us to be to fulfill His plans. God won’t force you to make the right choice, as we saw this week, but when the time comes, He will give us the ability by His grace and His Spirit to make the appropriate choices.

   What are some of the difficult situations that you have faced in your walk with the Lord? What has He taught you through your circumstances and trials? How has He moved you into the place He has desired you to get to so you can accomplish His will? How have the things we learned this week helped you through these times in your life?

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2. Prayer and fasting are crucial in any decisions we face, before undertaking any actions for the Lord. What are some ways you have seen your prayer life increase and become more effective as you have walked with the Lord, or maybe we should ask has it done so? Have you had personal experiences with fasting in different ways? How did that go, and what did you learn? What are some ways you can increase both the quality and quantity of your prayer life, and implement fasting as well?

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3. The main application for us in this passage revolves around Mordecai’s challenge to Esther, as to whether we personally would choose to realize that God had providentially put us into the experiences and place He has, for such a time as this!

   God has always searched for an individual, not necessarily a group, to use to accomplish His plans in His timing, as seen in passages such as 2 Chronicles 16:9; Isaiah 59:15, 16; Jeremiah 5:1; and Ezekiel 22:30. Are you willing to make yourself available to the Lord to stand up and be counted, and to make a difference for God in the place and time He has placed you? You may feel incompetent, unready, or maybe even too much of a failure to make an impact for God and His Kingdom, but that isn’t true in His sight if you are His child. Charles Swindoll well pointed out that it isn’t until we believe we personally can make a difference and be willing to take the risk and go for it that we can be able to do so.¹¹ Satan will try to do all he can to dissuade you from doing this, but you have to step out in faith in what you know is God’s plan for you, regardless of the cost. Keep in mind the following truths about what God has done in your life when you are discouraged in your service to Him:
You are not an accidental fluke of the universe. God specially created you as you are, placing you in the situation, time, and place that He knew would be the one for you to be “for such a time” you find yourself in.

You may be a feeble tool in your own sight, but you are a tool in the hands of an Almighty God, a Master Worker, Who will accomplish His work through you.

When you feel incompetent in view of others around you or see what God has accomplished in and through their lives, you must remember that you have a unique combination of gifts, personality, and experience that no-one else in this world has, no matter how talented and gifted others appear to you.

- You must take the step of faith to believe God’s will and Word, not listening to feelings or little nagging voices of the enemy or your flesh, that you are useless or too polluted to be used by God. “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean” (Acts 10:15, NIV)

Please record your thoughts about these things here, share them with your group, then pray for one another that you would become the person Christ died and rose again for you to be, for such a time as this!

“The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully and wholly consecrate to Him”—Henry Varley

“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”—Thomas Edison

**Scripture Memory:** Hopefully you now can write out this week’s passage completely by memory. Do so now, and keep on reviewing it so you will be ready to share it with others in your group time.

Esther 4:14:
Group Prayer Requests


7 F.B. Huey, Jr., Esther, p. 818.

8 Ibid., p. 818.


10 Some of these passages include 1 Samuel 1:7-10; 2 Samuel 12:16, 17; Ezra 8:23; Isaiah 58:2-5; Jeremiah 14:12; Daniel 9:3; Zechariah 7:3-5.


13 Ibid., p. 819.