



ESTHER

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS
STUDY GUIDE

A CALL TO ACTION

FOCUS PASSAGE: ESTHER 3-4:14

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: When was the last time you were challenged to prioritize your faith and obedience to God over something else?



HEAR THE WORD

Pause for a moment of prayer before reading today's focus passage.

CONTEXT

Haman was a man of unique standing thanks to the king's command that all officials and people in Persia should hold him in the highest regard and honor. We soon find that this becomes a cause of conflict between Haman and Esther's uncle Mordecai. As a result of Mordecai's refusal to honor Haman's authority, Haman's anger is fueled and his plan to destroy all the Jews in Persia is spurred into action. Haman even manages to convince the king to give him the power to wipe out an entire people without having to specify the actual target "ethnic group" (Es. 3:8). Consequently, the date for which Haman casts a lot (Es 3:7) to decide when to execute his plan lines up with the Jewish Passover strongly suggesting that God had some sort of influence upon this decision.

Mordecai's refusal is reminiscent of former Queen Vashti's defiance against the king's commands and points us to a major reoccurring theme in the book of Esther: obedience versus disobedience.

The Jews' response to the news of their coming persecution is fitting (see Joel 2:12-16), but Mordecai chooses not to dwell in his mourning and acts. The Jews in Persia have entered a time of crisis and only someone in a position of authority could have the power to turn the tides. Mordecai's words reach Esther and call her into action.

SEEK THE WORD

Spend the next 5-10 minutes seeking to understand more about the passage. What are the key events, characters or themes that stand out? Which parts of the passage draw your attention? Express these in questions, observations, and reflective response.

ENGAGE THE WORD

Continue to reflect and discuss today's focus passage using the following questions. Feel free to address any questions or observations brought up in the previous section.

- We may be able to name other historical figures in our world who, like Haman, used their power to persecute and even destroy a group of people. Nelson Mandela once said that "no one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." What are your thoughts in response to this quote and today's focus passage?
- Recalling last session's theme that God can work "behind-the-scenes" in the lives of his people, we can observe how He has gathered all the persons to the right place for the right time. What does this tell you about God's timing? Does this remind you of any stories you've heard about being in the right place at the right time?

LIVE THE WORD

Whenever we encounter the Word of God on our own time or with other believers, we are called to understand its message with not only our heads, but with our hearts.

- How might we pray for those in our society who hold power and authority over us whether in our workplaces, our nation, or the world?
- While we are called to pray, we are also called to act. The next time you are faced with a situation that calls for urgency but also thoughtful action, how will you go about it?

BIG IDEA: There will be situations in our lives when the demands of those around us will challenge us to prioritize obedience to God over obedience to people.

