TRACK FOUR

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS · COMPANION GUIDE

Bible Study & Small Group

A complete session for small groups, classes, and Bible studies, with leader preparation and notes. Plan on 45 to 60 minutes.

Leader Preparation

THE BIG IDEA

When a decree of death falls on God's people, Esther must choose between safety and solidarity. Silence is not neutral. God's purposes do not depend on us, but He places His people where they are "for such a time as this," and calls them to step forward in faith.

> *"For if you remain silent now, then relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*
>
> ESTHER 4:14, WEB

BACKGROUND

- **Setting.** Susa, about five years after Esther became queen. The lot is cast in the first month of the king's twelfth year (3:7), about 474 BC if he is Xerxes I.
- **Haman the Agagite.** Many link "Agagite" to Agag, king of Amalek (1 Samuel 15:8). See the Deep Dive track.
- **The decree.** Sealed with the king's ring and sent in every language (3:12-13). The day set was almost a year away (3:13).
- **The scepter.** Approaching the king uncalled meant death unless he held out the golden scepter (4:11).
- **The series.** Part One: *A Queen in Persia* (Esther 1-2). Next: *The Gallows and the Reversal* (Esther 6-10).

SESSION PLAN

	45 MIN	60 MIN
Welcome and opener	4	7
Watch the film	11	11
Read Esther 4:1-5:8	4	6
Discussion (choose 4-5)	18	24
Application and prayer	8	12

BEFORE YOU MEET

Read Esther 3-5 in full. Preview the film: Haman's decree (3:13) is read aloud, including its words about children, and Haman plans a gallows (5:14). No violence is shown. Read the leader notes on page 3.

The Session

1 **Open.** When have you had to choose between staying safe and speaking up?

2 **Watch.** Play *For Such a Time as This* (phillacolla.com/biblestories, about 11 minutes). Ask the group to notice what Esther does before she goes to the king.

3 **Read.** Read Esther 4:1-5:8 aloud together. Notice that God, prayer, and the temple are never mentioned, even during the fast.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 What image or moment from the film stayed with you?

2 Haman's anger at one man became a plan against a whole people (3:5-6). How does pride grow into hatred?

3 "The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was perplexed." (3:15) What does this contrast show?

4 Esther first explains why she can't go (4:11). How is her hesitation understandable?

5 Read Mordecai's reply (4:13-14). What does he say about deliverance and about Esther's responsibility? What does he leave unstated?

6 Esther asks for a community fast before she acts (4:16). What does that teach about courage and dependence?

7 Esther doesn't make her request at once, but invites the king and Haman to two banquets (5:4-8). Why might she wait?

8 Haman has wealth, family, and honor, yet says "all this avails me nothing..." (5:13). What does his complaint reveal about what matters most to him?

APPLICATION

- **Name your place.** Write down where God has placed you, and one person there you could serve or speak up for.
- **Don't go alone.** Ask one or two people to pray with you before a hard conversation, as Esther did.
- **Draw near.** Thank God that in Christ we can "draw near with boldness to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16).

PRAYER

Pray together through Psalm 31:14-15, which begins, "But I trust in you, Yahweh." Pray for persecuted believers and for people anywhere targeted for who they are, and ask God for courage to speak for those who cannot (Proverbs 31:8).

Leader Notes on the Questions

Q2, PRIDE AND HATRED. Haman "scorned the thought of laying hands on Mordecai alone" (3:6). His accusation to the king is vague and slanted: "a certain people," with laws "different from other people's" (3:8). He never names them. Watch for how prejudice works by generalizing.

Q3, THE CONTRAST. The king and Haman celebrate while the city is "perplexed" (3:15). The text doesn't say how different groups in Susa reacted, only that the city was troubled. Indifference in high places is part of the story's evil.

Q5, MORDECAI'S FAITH. Mordecai is confident that "relief and deliverance" will come (4:14), but he does not say from where, and he never names God. Many read this as quiet trust in God's covenant promises; others read "another place" more generally. Let the group notice what he says before drawing out what he may believe. Either way, he holds deliverance and Esther's responsibility together.

Q6, THE FAST. In Scripture fasting usually accompanies prayer (Ezra 8:21-23; Joel 2:12), but Esther 4:16 doesn't mention prayer. Don't claim more than the text says; it's fair to note what fasting meant elsewhere in the Bible.

Q7, TWO BANQUETS. The text gives no reason for the delay. Some see wisdom and timing; others, hesitation. The delay sets up the sleepless night of 6:1.

Q8, HAMAN'S COMPLAINT. Notice the contrast the chapter sets up: Esther's people fast (4:16) while Haman feasts and still is not satisfied (5:12-13).

IF SOMEONE ASKS ABOUT THE DECREE'S WORDS (3:13). The text is stark: the decree targets children too. Acknowledge the horror honestly and briefly, without dwelling on it. Some in your group may have family histories of persecution; be gentle.