TRACK THREE

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS · COMPANION GUIDE

YOUTH MINISTRY

A 60-75 minute youth night for middle and high school students: a hook, a talk, discussion, breakouts, and a challenge for the week.

THE BIG IDEA

God is sovereign and at work, even in places we didn't choose. Staying silent is a choice too. Courage isn't the absence of fear; it's stepping forward and trusting God with the outcome.

NIGHT PLAN

	60 MIN	75 MIN
Arrival and hook	9	11
Watch the film	11	11
Leader talk	14	17
Large-group discussion	8	10
Small-group breakouts	12	16
Reflection	4	6
Challenge and prayer	2	4

THE HOOK: RISK LADDER

On a whiteboard, write five risks: sitting with a new student at lunch; standing up for someone being mocked; telling an adult about something unsafe; saying you follow Jesus when someone asks; admitting you were wrong. Students rank them, on paper, from easiest to hardest. No one has to share. Ask: *What makes the hard ones hard?* Bridge: *Tonight a young queen faces a risk that could cost her life.*

Low-prep option: *Would You Speak Up?* Read two everyday scenarios and ask students to think, silently, what they'd do. (1) *In a group chat, people start posting mocking memes about a classmate who isn't in the chat.* (2) *A new student sits alone at lunch for the third day in a row.* Ask: *What makes speaking up hard? What would one small, kind step be?* If a situation involves real danger, the right step is telling a trusted adult.

LEADER TALK

1 **ONE MAN'S PRIDE.** Haman was promoted above everyone (3:1). When Mordecai wouldn't bow, “Haman was full of wrath.” (3:5), and one man wasn't enough for him: he “sought to destroy all the Jews” (3:6). Wounded pride can turn into hatred of a whole people. Even later, with riches and honor, he said, “Yet all this avails me nothing…” (5:13)

2 **A SEALED DECREE.** Haman cast lots for a date (3:7), offered a vast payment to secure the king's agreement (3:9-11), and sealed a law with the king's ring (3:12). Then “The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was perplexed.” (3:15) Evil often looks calm and official.

3 **SILENCE OR COURAGE.** Esther had a reason to stay quiet: approaching uncalled meant death unless the king held out the scepter (4:11). Mordecai answered, “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?” (4:14) Silence is a choice too.

4 **IF I PERISH.** Esther didn't act alone. She asked her people to fast with her for three days (4:16), then went in, “which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.” (4:16) Courage isn't feeling no fear. It's doing the right thing and leaving the outcome with God.

5 **JESUS.** *(A gospel connection, not a prediction in Esther.)* Esther risked her life to plead for her people, and she lived. Jesus willingly laid down His life for His people: “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11) Now the risen Christ “lives forever to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Because of Him, we never have to wait for a scepter. We can “draw near with boldness to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16).

6 **YOUR SUCH-A-TIME.** The film asks: what is the “such a time as this” in your life? Is there someone who needs you to speak up? You don't have to be fearless. Take the first step and trust God with the rest. Courage can also mean asking for help: if you or someone else is in danger, telling a trusted adult is the brave step.

DISCUSSION

MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. Haman had wealth and honor, yet one man's refusal consumed him (5:11-13). What does his reaction tell us about pride?
2. Why was it so risky for Esther to go to the king?
3. Esther asked her people to fast with her. Who are the people who “have your back” in prayer?
4. Where could you speak up for someone this week?

HIGH SCHOOL

1. Mordecai said relief would come “from another place” if Esther stayed silent (4:14). What does that say about God's plans, and about our part in them?
2. Esther went against the law to save lives. Read Acts 5:29 and Romans 13:1. How do we tell the difference?
3. Haman targeted a whole people because of one man. Where do you see that kind of hatred today?
4. What's the difference between being fearless and being courageous?

BREAKOUT GROUPS

1. When have you stayed silent when you wish you had spoken up?
2. Where has God placed you right now: school, team, family, friendships?
3. Who is one person in that place who needs someone on their side?
4. What's one first step of courage you could take this week?

REFLECTION: TWO OPTIONS

Phones down. Hand each student an index card titled *For Such a Time*. They write where God has placed them, one person there who needs help or a friend, and one first step. Have them keep the card.

Phones out (no social media). Students privately write a note titled *Such a time* with one name and one step, and set a reminder to pray for that person. No one shows a screen or says what they wrote.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

ONE STEP OF COURAGE.

Pray each day for the person on your card. Then take one step: sit with them, stand up for them, or tell a trusted adult if they are in danger. Next time your small group meets, share how it went, if you want to. Anyone may pass.

LEADER NOTES ON HARD QUESTIONS

"WHY WOULDN'T MORDECAI BOW? WASN'T THAT JUST STUBBORN?" The text gives one clue: "he had told them that he was a Jew" (3:4). Bowing to honor a ruler was normal in Scripture (1 Samuel 24:8), so many think the issue was Haman himself, an Agagite (3:1), a descendant of Israel's old enemy Amalek (1 Samuel 15). Others think the homage had a religious edge. Be honest that the text doesn't settle it.

"WAS ESTHER WRONG TO BREAK THE LAW?" She broke a court rule to save lives, and she did it openly, accepting the risk. Scripture calls us to honor authorities (Romans 13:1) and to obey God when the two conflict (Acts 5:29). This is not permission to ignore parents or teachers in ordinary matters.

"DOES HATRED LIKE HAMAN'S STILL HAPPEN?" Yes. Jewish people have faced hatred and violence many times since, and Christians must reject antisemitism and every kind of hatred of a people. Jesus Himself was a Jew. Some students have experienced racism or bullying; listen with care and connect them with a trusted adult.

"DOES GOD NEED ESTHER?" Mordecai trusted that rescue would come "from another place" (4:14). God's purposes don't depend on us, yet He invites us into them. Fear is normal; help students see courage as a next step with God, not a feeling.

SAFEGUARDING. If a child or teen tells you about abuse, neglect, self-harm, harmful drinking or drug use at home, or anything else that makes you worried for their safety: stay calm, listen, and thank them for telling you. Don't promise to keep it secret, don't question them for details or investigate, and don't confront anyone involved. Write down what they said as soon as you can, and report it the same day to your church's designated safeguarding lead, following your church's safeguarding policy and any mandatory-reporting law that applies to you. If anyone is in immediate danger, stay with them and call emergency services. Telling a church safeguarding lead does not replace any report the law requires you to make directly to child-protection authorities or police.

PRAYER

Give students a moment of silence to pray Psalm 31:15: "My times are in your hand." Then close: *Father, You are at work even in places we didn't choose. Give us courage to speak up for others and to trust You with what happens next. Thank You that Jesus laid down His life for us and that we can come to You anytime. Amen.*