

5. What are some of the ways you can recognize the “for such a time as this” opportunities in your life and bring a positive influence for Christ at work, at school, or in the neighborhood? Consider these additional passages on influence as you compose your answer:

Proverbs 27: <sup>17</sup> As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Genesis 50: <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Matthew 5: <sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. <sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

1 Peter 2: <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

6. What in your life is most likely to erode your courage: competing truth claims, missing the over-arching story, cynicism, or something else?

7. How can you strengthen your convictions?

**Finding Our Way Back to God (The Book of Esther) - Part 5**  
“What We Desperately Need in a Time of Desperate Need” (Part 1)  
Esther 4

**What We Desperately Need in a Time of Desperate Need**

1. A vision of how things actually \_\_\_\_\_

Causes of Insulation from People’s Suffering:

- A \_\_\_\_\_
- O \_\_\_\_\_
- C \_\_\_\_\_ Ignorance
- D \_\_\_\_\_

We have tired, \_\_\_\_\_ brains.

We’re often unable to really \_\_\_\_\_ challenging or deep ideas.

We have more information than ever, but we’re overwhelmed by the number of decisions we need to make so we don’t make good, thoughtful \_\_\_\_\_.

We increasingly hold totally contradictory \_\_\_\_\_.

We tend to jump from one idea or worldview or \_\_\_\_\_ frequently.

We don’t spend time in \_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_ calls for deep reflection about God, about our world, about our guilt, about the story we’re living, about our habits. The apostle Paul says, “be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2). That can’t happen without margin to think and without deep reflection.

The reality of our \_\_\_\_\_.

Wherever you are is where God wants you to be an \_\_\_\_\_  
for good and for his mission.

## 2. A courage born in \_\_\_\_\_

Mordecai is saying, "God's ultimate plan will not be thwarted." He's not saying, "It will all work out for \_\_\_\_\_ even if you don't help us."

The reality is that when we consistently refuse to publicly \_\_\_\_\_  
with God out of fear for ourselves, there comes a point where we have declared a  
new allegiance apart from or contrary to God.

The more we're aligned and assimilated with our culture, the harder it becomes to  
act in courage. Courage requires sacrifice, but...

- We're not likely to sacrifice for truth that is simply truth for \_\_\_\_\_.
- We're not likely to sacrifice when there is no over-arching \_\_\_\_\_.
- We're not likely to sacrifice when we are \_\_\_\_\_.

"Cynicism is so pervasive that, at times, it feels like a presence. Behind the spirit  
of the age lies an unseen, personal evil presence, a spirit. If Satan can't stop  
you from praying, then he will try to rob the fruit of praying by dulling your  
soul. Satan cannot create, but he can corrupt." (Paul Miller)

The kind of courage Esther and Mordecai and we need in a time of desperate  
need will only be born in conviction that God is (that he exists), that he is all  
powerful, that he has a plan, that his plan is good, and that he includes us in his  
good plan. When we claim faith but fail to believe this, our \_\_\_\_\_ dies.

"Esther put herself at risk for the good of the city, the good of God's people, and  
the good of her own soul." (Mike Cospers)

## Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. What are you likely to do when you are feeling bored? (Another way to ask this is, what do you distract yourself with to keep from experiencing boredom?)
3. Read Esther 4. This is a great chapter in the story of Esther and in the story of God. What were your feelings and impressions as you read the chapter?
4. What are some of the things keeping you from seeing how things actually are or how are you counteracting the causes of not seeing how things actually are?