

4. In her time of desperation, Esther turns to her faith community. Reflect on your own practice or avoidance of turning to your brothers and sisters in Christ in times of need or on being available when your brothers and sisters in Christ turn to you in desperation.

5. What is your experience with fasting?

6. Read Matthew 6:1-18 and Acts 13:1-3. What do you learn about fasting from these passages?

7. Reflect on Jesus as your mediator before God and then write a prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

**Finding Our Way Back to God (The Book of Esther) - Part 6**  
"What We Desperately Need in a Time of Desperate Need" (Part 2)  
Esther 4

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

1. A vision of how things actually are.
2. A courage born in conviction.
3. A new or renewed \_\_\_\_\_ toward God.

A journey toward God is often \_\_\_\_\_ in desperation.

"Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."  
(C.S. Lewis)

"At times like these we can no longer pretend to serve God and our idols. Now we must choose which refuge we will take in the midst of the storm. These are the defining moments that both uncover and shape who we are at our deepest levels. Without them, we might have been able to persist in our comfortably compromised ways, just as Esther may have hoped to live out her life comfortably concealing her true identity. In the harsh light of hard problems, however, we need to choose whose we are and whom we serve—and the nature of those choices cannot but be public." (Iain Duguid)

4. A community praying and \_\_\_\_\_.

When Esther calls for a fast, it's counter-intuitive and an act of \_\_\_\_\_.

Fasting is also an act of faith on our part when we fast as an \_\_\_\_\_ to prayer and as an act of worship.

- Fasting as an \_\_\_\_\_ of worship (Matthew 6:1-18)
- Fasting as a response to our brokenness over \_\_\_\_\_
- Fasting and \_\_\_\_\_
- Fasting as an \_\_\_\_\_ to prayer (Acts 13:1-3)

## 5. A mediator to stand in the \_\_\_\_\_.

The Bible is clear that we need a mediator between us and \_\_\_\_\_.

1 Timothy 2: <sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

2 Corinthians 5: <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Romans 3: <sup>25</sup> God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

## 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. How have you observed that a journey toward God is often born in desperation?
3. Read Esther 4. Esther is a lot like the story of the prodigal sons. Jesus tells this story because the religious leaders are angry because Jesus is eating and drinking with prodigals instead of shunning them (see Luke 15:1-3). You can only imagine how the pious Jews in Susa felt about having to depend on the compromised Esther, a prodigal to her faith. Read the end of the prodigal sons story and reflect on how we as Christians (and maybe you in particular) are tempted to be righteous prodigal like the elder son.

Luke 15: <sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

<sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"