

# For Such a Time as This

By Scott Benken

## Introduction

When I read God's Word, I am always amazed and inspired by many things; but two things often stand out. First is the profound sovereignty that the Lord demonstrates over space, time, and events. It's mind-boggling to see the way that He places the right person in the right place to accomplish His right purpose at the right time. Psalm 33:11 (NIV) says *"the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."* Second is the remarkable demonstration of faith seen by so many heroes of the Bible, as described in Hebrews 11 – often called the "Hall of Fame" chapter. The absolute emptying of one's self-confidence and the placement of total control into the hands of our God is truly inspiring. As readers of God's historical Word now, it is easy to see these two observations in action and to see the wonderful outcomes that resulted from the intersection of the Lord's timing and a faithful response. The reality of such examples in our own lives is sometimes difficult to see, but it's such a blessing when the Lord reveals the purposes behind the scenes!

One such Bible story typifies this intersection: the story of Esther.

The story of Esther begins with King Ahasuerus (also known as King Xerxes) of Persia dismissing Queen Vashti for her refusal to submit to his command (Esther 1:12-19). To find a replacement Queen, he held a Miss Persia beauty contest; and Esther, a beautiful Jewish orphan raised by her Jewish cousin Mordecai, was chosen (Esther 2:7-17). Initially, Esther kept her Jewish heritage (and her relationship to Mordecai) a secret from the King and his court.

Mordecai uncovered a plot to assassinate the King and he informed Esther, who told the King, saving his life (Esther 2:21-23).

The villain of the story is Haman, the King's advisor. Mordecai had refused to bow to him, resolving to bow only to the LORD (Esther 3:2-6). Upon discovering that Mordecai was Jewish, Haman plotted to exterminate all the Jews. Haman persuaded the King to issue a decree for the destruction of the Jewish people, neither of them knowing that the Queen was Jewish (Esther 3:8-13). Mordecai urged Esther to intercede with the King, warning her that she too will perish if she remains silent (Esther 4:13-14). Esther, risking her life by approaching the King unannounced, invited him and Haman to a banquet (Esther 5:1-8), where she revealed her Jewish identity and Haman's evil plot against the Jews (Esther 7:3-6). The King was enraged and ordered Haman to be hanged on the gallows (Esther 7:9-10). Esther and Mordecai then gained the King's favor, and he issued a new decree favoring God's people (Esther 8:8-11).

Esther's courage and faithfulness saved her people, but this story also showcases God's providence. The story captures an incredible intersection of God's plan and Esther's willingness. The "moral of the story" could be summed up in Esther 4:14 (NIV) where Mordecai encouraged Esther: *"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"* We see that God placed Esther in that royal position to

protect His chosen people, but Esther's faith is also part of the story.

## Personal Introduction

I am a critical care pharmacist by education and training, and many would consider me a "critical care person" through and through. The Lord has given me a passion to be present for the sickest of patients and to be amid turmoil during the most acute times. Naturally, I find critical care to be a perfect fit. I have been very blessed to serve in this role in Chicago for the past 14 years, caring for countless numbers of critically ill patients. Beyond patient care, I have worked tirelessly to further research in this field, which has positioned me to educate others nationally and internationally on topics such as cardiac arrest, targeted temperature management, and renal replacement therapy. While I have educated thousands on these topics, I have also received tremendous benefits positioning me to understand these complex topics to a level I could not have imagined.

## My Mom's Story

At 3:26 a.m. on October 24, 2018, I received a devastating phone call. It was my father calling from Ohio in great distress, saying that my mother had just suffered a cardiac arrest, needed renal replacement therapy, and was being transferred to the intensive care unit (ICU). My dad handed the phone to the doctor who explained what I already knew: my mother would need targeted temperature management, was in critical condition, and her anticipated outcome was grave.

In a single moment, my life came to an unexpected intersection: the intersection of my personal life and

my professional expertise. Within a few hours, our family of 5 was on the road to Ohio. Few words were spoken on the 4½-hour drive from Chicago to Cincinnati, other than taking turns praying for the Lord's hand of healing and grace to be in this situation.

When we arrived at the hospital in Cincinnati, I walked into a very familiar scene. We were led to the

ICU where my mother lay in her ICU bed. The head of the bed was 45 degrees, she was intubated on the mechanical ventilator requiring multiple sedatives, low dose vasopressors, and continuous renal replacement therapy. She was pharmacologically comatose, her temperature at goal per the American Heart Association guidelines at the time; she was wearing her pneumatic compression devices and had

multiple intravenous lines coming from different parts of her arms, legs, and neck. She looked like every patient I take care of every single day. At the same time, I could see mom – and just mom – as if all the equipment was not even there. It was truly a shocking intersection.

During her brief time in the ICU, the Lord positioned me to know minute-by-minute exactly what was





happening from a pathophysiologic and pharmacotherapeutic standpoint with my mother. Because of this, I was able to converse with the doctor and nursing staff as though we were colleagues. And because of this, I was able to inform my father, my sister, and my mother's siblings (all non-medical folks) exactly what was happening now and exactly what was going to happen next. Of course, this did not deter our prayers as we gathered around her often during that 36-hour stay, asking the Lord for a miracle... but always trusting that He knew the best trajectory for my mother. It was through those prayers that the nursing staff was touched by our faith. It was through those prayers that my mother's siblings decided they needed to get right with God. It was through those prayers that my mother's friends were inspired to know the Lord after hearing the unwavering trust we had in our Savior Jesus.

As per God's sovereign plan, my mother did not survive.

It was many months later when I realized how blessed I was for this radical intersection in my life. First, my mother suffered a cardiac arrest secondary to expedited coronary disease likely related to her breast

cancer and its treatment. Through her battle and victory over breast cancer, she came to accept Christ as her Savior. That serious illness gave her a chance at redemption... and the faith she acquired during that illness is the reason she is celebrating eternal life with our Savior now. In John 3:14-15 (NIV), Jesus said, *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."* Because of our shared faith in Christ, I know that while mom did not survive her cardiac arrest, I will see her again in paradise where she will not have pain and suffering... where *"there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"* (Revelation 21:4, NIV). Second, there are few people who know exactly what is happening to a loved one moment-by-moment from life to death. The Lord positioned me to have this knowledge and it was such a comfort to fully understand what was transpiring. As Schoolhouse Rock made famous, "knowledge is power." But I recognize that this wisdom came from the Lord's providence. *Proverbs 2:6 (NIV) says, "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."* In a very real way, I believe that the Lord used my interest, education, training,

and expertise to prepare me for those last moments of my mother's life. If all my professional work was intended just for her last moments, it was all worth it. And I praise the Lord for it. Lastly, I realized how to live my faith out loud and how I would respond to tragedy in my life. Through the loss of someone so dear, I was never more affirmed in my hope, faith, and trust in Jesus. Christ made His presence known and it was unmistakable and unshakable. As Paul declares in Romans 8:38-39 (NIV): *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

While we won't always know the exact reasons why the Lord orchestrates what He does, we can respond by seeing life through a lens of faith and trusting the Lord with all our heart: as we are instructed in Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV): *"Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."* We can prepare ourselves for **such a time as this**.



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*in health professions education (MHPE) in 2022. While he carries various titles, the title that has truly defined his life is one given through John 1:12-13 (NLT): "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." As such, he strives to live out his Christian faith in every aspect of his personal and professional career.*

