

the WORD among us

simply ESTHER

faithfulness to God and her people
while married to a pagan king

a leader's guide.

simple church
a very old new idea

TM



simplifying life
re-prioritizing life
cultivating a deeper walk with God

All Bible verses are taken from the New Living Translation unless otherwise indicated.

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You may copy this resource, or any part of it, to build up God's Kingdom.
Please include the following reference information:

More studies available at
www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com

the WORD among us
simply ESTHER

Outline

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the WORD among us

“the WORD among us” series is different. These leader's guides capture real group life, where secular and unchurched people's lives are being changed.

People need the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ.

People also need safe and authentic friendship with Christians. Most unchurched people will not seek you or your group's friendship. You will have to intentionally seek their friendship.

May God bless you as you simplify and re-prioritize your life, creating time to "spend" with unchurched people.

how to use this leader's guide

This Leader's guide assumes you have:

1. read through the www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com web page.
2. completed the online Phase One and Phase Two Simple Church training.
3. printed the business card for your group to use to invite people to come. These cards are found at: <http://www.simplechurchathome.com/Downloads.html>

title

outline

Bible story reference

Message of Hope: Have this idea crystal-clear in your mind. This is what you want people to remember for the rest of the week.

Leader's Tip: These tips show up here and there.

Planning Ahead: These include items coming in future weeks that you may need to plan for ahead of time.

Needed for Today: Additional items that you will need.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. In other words, this group does not exist for us. Someone invited you, and now it is your turn to invite others.

Before we introduce ourselves, let's remember:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people—new Christians, long-time Christians, and people who are thinking about becoming Christians. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Please be sensitive so that everyone has opportunity to share and contribute.
- Please turn cell phones off, or on “vibrate.”

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Rotation Questions: Rotate through the following three questions: (Check-In is not used in Growth Groups)

Week 1: How are you simplifying your life?

Week 2: How are you re-prioritizing your life?

Week 3: What would it take to cultivate a deeper relationship with God.

Week 4: How are you simplifying your life?

Week 5: etc.

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments: *(This part is hard for church people. They will have to learn how to be comfortable with "quiet space." People will need time to think and encouragement to share. Learn to let Jesus be the leader of your group and see how and where He leads. This time is often a mixture of sharing, singing, praying when people share prayer requests, reflection, praise, joy, and thankfulness to God. This is body-life.)*

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)* text

page 2 of a typical leaders guide for a given week

Bridge: This transitions the group from the Kick-Off Question to opening their Bibles.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Bible story reference

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible during our discussion.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

Some helpful pointers:

1. Remember, there are no "right answers" to relational Bible study questions.
2. You DO NOT have to "accomplish" all the the questions listed. Use them as a resource to select from during your discussion.
3. Spend a maximum of 50% of your Bible study time on Listening & Learning Questions.
4. Affirm each answer, no matter what is said, by saying something like, "Excellent, someone else;" "Thanks for sharing, someone else;" "Good, someone else;," "How about the rest of you, what do you think?"
5. Did you catch the common denominator, "someone else"? You are always affirming and always

inviting others to give input.

6. If someone gets off-focus, I will say (after they have stopped talking), "Thanks. How about someone else?" then restate the question to refocus the discussion.

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

Some helpful pointers

1. Spend a minimum of 50% of your time on Heart Questions.
2. These questions are designed to invite people to share portions of their life story as it engages with the Bible study.
3. This is not a doctrinal study. This is not a life application study. It is a relational Bible study. There is a big difference.
4. At appropriate times, affirm confidentiality and offer reassurance that this is a safe place to share and grow spiritually.

Wrap Up:

1. Remember, "this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here."
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

1. Keep it simple.
2. Taco Salad (Mexican Haystack).
3. Hostess (one of the CORE 4) provides the beans.
4. During lunch have Taco Salad sign-up sheet available.

replaced

[outline](#)

Esther 1:1-22

Message of Hope: Chapter 2 comes next week.

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Setting the Context:

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- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

What is one of the biggest parties you have attended? Who else attended?

Bridge: Today we start a new story in a new book of the Bible. The book is called “Esther,” and this story describes events during the reign of King Xerxes of Persia some 1500 years ago. During Xerxes reign, the Persian empire was near its peak, and his military had accomplished great things which brought excessive amounts of wealth to Persia. Esther is chosen as Xerxes's new queen. Her challenge was to faithfully serve God during a crises while still being the faithful wife of a pagan king. We begin our story by learning what happened to the old queen.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 1:1-22.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. What do you think drove King Xerxes to throw a six-month long party followed by a seven-day feast?
2. Read verse 9 again, why do you think Queen Vashti threw a separate party?
3. Why do you think Queen Vashti said, “NO”?
4. If Xerxes had not followed the recommendation of his advisers, what would have happened?
5. How do you think Xerxes should have responded?
6. Read verse 22 again. What is right with this decree? What is wrong with this decree?
7. Most likely King Xerxes and Queen Vashti do not believe in God. Is it possible for God to work in the lives of people who do not believe in Him? If so, where do you see God working in this story?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. With which person in this story do you most identify? Why?
2. Queen Vashti was replaced. Have you ever been “replaced” in a relationship, work environment, or any other area of life? How did you survive?
3. Queen Vashti took a stand. When was a time when you took a stand? What was the cost?
4. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt someone wanted to exploit you for selfish reasons? How did you handle that situation?

Leader's Tip: This is NOT a time to “rag” on someone else. It is a time to talk about how you handled the situation.

5. Who are some of the people in your life upon whom you can call for advice or help when facing difficulties?
6. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
7. Remember, **this story may seem hopeless, but chapter two comes next week.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember “this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here.”
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

chosen

[outline](#)

Esther 2:1-18

Message of Hope: Whether you know it or not, you have been chosen by God.

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
When was a time when you were chosen above others?

Bridge: Everyone likes to be chosen. It makes us feel good, especially when someone chooses us from among several options. Today's story will bring up a mixture of thoughts and feelings, but at the foundation of this story we will be reminded that each one of us has been specially chosen.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 2:1-18.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Go back to verse one. As King Xerxes is thinking about what has happened, what variety of thoughts do you think are going through his mind?
2. As the king's plan to find a new queen spreads throughout the country, what thoughts do you think were going through the minds of the eligible ladies?
3. Read verse 7 again. Why would Mordecai, Hadassah's uncle, give her another name?
4. What nationality is Esther? Why might this be important to this story?
5. Read verse 9 again. What causes Hegai to treat Esther with special favor?
6. In verse 10 Uncle Mordecai instructed Esther not to reveal her nationality, Why?
7. Verse 18 records that another banquet was given, this time in Esther's honor, but we are not told much about that banquet. How might have this banquet have been different from the one we read about last week?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. How is today's world for women different, or similar to, Esther's world?
2. Like Uncle Mordecai did for Esther, when was a time when someone took you in when you did not have a place to go?
3. Like Hegai did for Esther, when was a time when someone went the extra mile to help you and show you kindness?
4. Hegai also became an important mentor for Esther. In your life, who has taken you under his/her wing and provided guidance at a key time in your life? What kind of guidance did he/she give?
5. We love to be chosen, but how have we passed on the blessing by choosing to help, mentor, or take someone else under our wing?
6. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
7. Remember, **whether you know it or not, God has chosen you.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember "this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here."
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

dependent

[outline](#)

Esther 2:19 – 3:15

Message of Hope: There are times in our lives when God's miraculous intervention is our only hope.

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

Which word describes you best—“dependent,” “independent,” or “interdependent”?

Bridge: Today's story is about dependence. Many people think that dependence is for children, and the older one gets, the more independent he should become. In most cases, people don't even think about what "interdependence" means. But, as we will see today, whether we like it or not, we are 100% dependent on God. Sometimes it's painfully obvious, as we will see in this story today; other times we are tempted to think we have it "all together."

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 2:19 – 3:15.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Why do you think, in verse 20, Esther is still following Mordecai's directions?
2. Is it dishonest not to say all that you know? Or, to say it another way, is honesty saying all that you know?
3. Read verses 21-23 again. What does this add to the story?
4. Are there any clues in this story as to why Haman is promoted, making him the most powerful official in the empire?
5. What are the possible reasons why Mordecai does not bow down or show him respect?
6. If Mordecai has told Esther to keep her identity a secret, why, according to verse 4, has he revealed his identity as a Jew?
7. Read verses 5-6 again. Does Mordecai cause this problem? Why or why not?
8. Look at verse 8 again. How do you think people would respond today if a group of people chose to obey God's laws above the government or and employer's laws?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. When have you been asked by an employer or government to disobey one of God's laws? How did it go? How do you wish you would have responded?
2. In what ways do you still follow the directions of your parents?
3. When was a time when you tried to get revenge on someone? What happened?
4. When you do not get the respect that you think you deserve, how do you typically respond (now let's be honest)?
5. How do you try to live out honesty in your life?
6. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
7. Remember, **there are times in our lives when God's miraculous intervention is our only hope.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember "this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here."
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

deeply hurt

outline

Esther 4:1-17

Message of Hope: God can heal your hurt.

Needed for Today: a couple boxes of Kleenex. It is good to always have it around for every simple church gathering, but make sure you have it today.

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
What do you think are some of the top things that bring hurt to people?

Bridge: In today's world, everyone has been hurt; many have been deeply hurt. It takes time to recover when we have been deeply hurt – sometimes a long time. Let's be honest, we often carry the scars of deep hurt with us throughout our lives. Today's story is about being hurt. Sometimes we are tempted to gloss over hurt and pretend it does not exist. But as we spend time with our hurt, healing begins. So today it is okay to share as little or as much as you wish, and it is okay to cry. This is a safe place. As we will see in this story, crying is part of healing.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 4:1-17.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Let's review, why is Haman picking on the Jews?
2. In verse 5, why do you think Esther sends Hathach to find out why Mordecai is mourning instead of going to Mordecai herself?
3. Read verses 10-11 again. Why do you think Esther responds this way? What is she really trying to say?
4. What are the different ways that Mordecai's reply in verse 13 and 14 could be interpreted?
5. Are there any clues that Mordecai has “additional” information, especially in light of what he says in verse 14?
6. In verses 15 and 16, what does fasting have to do with praying?
7. Why does Mordecai, in verse 17, take on the “follower” role, where in past weeks we have seen Esther following Mordecai's instructions?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Who are some of the people in your life that influence you? Who are some of the people you are influencing?
2. Given the conditions you are currently facing in life, who in this story do you most resonate with? Why?
3. What is a hurtful experience from which you have healed?
4. When you experience deep hurt (Mordecai), how do you go about surviving? Then how do you go on to recovery?
5. When you experience life's crises (Esther), how do you go about surviving? Then how do you go on to work through the crisis?
6. Which hurt would you like God to heal?
7. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
8. Remember, **God can heal your hurt**. How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember “this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here.”
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

the secret of happiness

[outline](#)

Esther 5:1-14

Message of Hope: You control your happiness, and nobody can take it away from you.

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3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: (*short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first*)

How would you complete this sentence: “ The secret of happiness is _____.”

Bridge: Today's story is about the secret to happiness. But today's story is not about what you think it will be. We will discover the “secret to happiness” in this story by learning about a guy named “Haman” who never found it. This may seem like an odd way to learn about this secret, but often we can learn from other people's mistakes – if we are willing.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 5:1-14.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

Leader's Tip: For new people who are present, assume they do NOT know anything about the Bible. Give a 60 second summary of the Esther story so they know what has happened so far.

1. What feast is happening in verse 1?
2. Read verse 3 again. Why do you think the king responds this way before even knowing why Esther has come, which according to 4:16, was against the law?
3. Is there any special reason for including Haman in the special invitation to the banquet?
4. There are two banquets. Is Esther stalling, or is there some other reason why she invites both the king and Haman to a second banquet before making her request?
5. Read verse 9 again. Does happiness come from an internal choice, or from an external circumstance? Why?
6. This is the first time we meet Haman's wife. From what we are told, what kind of woman do you think she is?
7. Without reading ahead, what do you think happens the next morning?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Was there a time when you went against the laws of the land for a good reason? If caught, how did the law respond?
2. When was a time, like Esther, that you were given a “blank check” to request or do whatever you wanted?
3. When encountering an “enemy” (either physically, or in your mind), what could you do to avoid responding like Haman?
4. What have you found helpful in choosing happiness when your surrounding environment tempts you do otherwise?
5. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
6. Remember, **you control your happiness and nobody can take it away from you.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember “this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here.”
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

waiting for God's timing

[outline](#)

Esther 6:1-14

Message of Hope: God's timing is always the best time for you, even if you must wait.

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- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
What do you do when you cannot sleep at night?

Bridge: Today's story begins with a man who couldn't sleep. What he did sets in place an amazing turn of events. As we read the story, notice the unlikelihood of these happening by chance.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 6:1-14.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Read the last verse from last week's story, 5:14. Was it by chance that today's story begins by telling us the king couldn't sleep? Was it by chance that he asked for the "book of history" to be read? Was it by chance that he learned how Mordecai had exposed the plot to kill the King? If it was not by "chance," what other explanations could there be for these turn of events?
2. Read verse 10 again. What thoughts do you think are going through Haman's mind?
3. Read verse 11 again. What thought do you think are going through Mordecai's mind?
4. What do these turn of events do in the eyes of the city?
5. Read verse 13 again. What was Haman's wife, or what were the advisers, trying to say? And what does being a Jew by birth have to do with it?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. When was a time when you were honored?
2. Who is someone to whom you would like to show honor? How do you think you might go about showing him honor?
3. When was a time when you had hoped something good would happen, but your hopes were turned upside down?
4. You might have noticed that, so far, the book of Esther has not mentioned the name of God. However, what does today's story tell you about the way God works?
5. Mordecai has learned the important lesson of not rushing ahead, but to wait on God's timing. How do you recognize God's timing in your personal life?
6. What is an area of your life where you sense God may be leading you; but, you find you are having to wait on His timing?
7. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
8. Remember, God's timing is always the best time for you, even if you must wait. How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember "this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here."
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

boldness

[outline](#)

Esther 7:1-10

Message of Hope: God honors you when you boldly do what is right.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. In other words, this group does not exist for us. Someone invited you, and now it is your turn to invite others.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
When was a time when you saw somebody stick up for the under dog?

Bridge: Today's story is about boldness to do what is right. There is something that feels good when evil loses, and truth wins. But, as we will soon see, truth wins because one person is willing to be bold at doing the right thing.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 7:1-10.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Verse 2 says, "The king again said to Esther." Let's try to summarize the story that has led up to this second special banquet?
2. Read verses 3-4 again. Do you notice anything unique in the way Esther makes her request?
3. When do you think the king began to realize that Haman was plotting to kill the Jews?
4. In verse 9 how did Harbona know that Haman had set up a sharpened pole that was intended to be used for Mordecai?
5. What character qualities do you see in Esther?
6. What evil "qualities" (if you can call them "qualities") do you see in Haman?
7. What wisdom qualities do you see in the king?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. If you were Esther, what would you have done? How might it have been the same, or different?
2. Of the character qualities we see in Esther, which ones would you like to see incorporated more into your own life?
3. How do you generally respond in a crisis?
4. When have you, like Esther, stepped out in faith? What were the risks of stepping out in faith? And what happened?
5. What enemy threatens you when you want to boldly do what is right?
6. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
7. Remember, **God honors you when you boldly do what is right.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember "this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here."
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

vindicated

[outline](#)

Esther 8:1-17

Message of Hope: God will vindicate you in His time.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
When was a time when you did the right thing, even though it was hard?

Bridge: Today's story is about doing the right thing even when it is hard. Sometimes in this life we are vindicated for doing the right thing, and sometimes nobody ever knows how hard it was to do to the right thing. Today's story is the kind we all like – when the good guy wins. But today we will also wrestle with the question of how to live our lives when it seems that evil is winning.

Read the Bible Story [from a modern translation](#): Esther 8:1-17.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Let's summarize last week's story so this continued story makes sense. What happened to Haman in the previous chapter?
2. Read verse 1 again. So far in the story of Esther, Mordecai has told Esther not to reveal that she was a Jew. When do you think the king realized his queen was also a Jew?
3. Is the emphasis on the fact that Esther and Mordecai are related, or is the emphasis on that they are both Jews? Why?
4. Read verses 3-6 again. Why do you think Esther did not present this request to the king at the second banquet she had held for the king, at the time when he asked her what was her request?
5. Why was the king not able to reverse the decree to destroy the Jews? After all, he the king?
6. The last verse said that many people became Jews. How does one become a Jew if you were not born a Jew?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. You may not have been given a king's signet ring, but when was a time when someone gave you some great responsibility? What was it? What happened?
2. When you have an important request to make of someone, how do you typically go about making your request?
3. The Jews had about nine months to prepare for possible attacks. If you know that a life or death event will be happening nine months from now, on what priorities will you focus during the next nine months?
4. In today's story, evil loses and good wins. But life is not always like this. How do you make sense of life when it seems that evil is winning and good is losing?
5. In verse 17, fear may not be the best of reasons to make a change. What kind of healthy motivations would inspire you to move closer to God?
6. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
7. Remember, **God will vindicate you in His time.** How can this group pray for you?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember “this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here.”
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

underdogs

[outline](#)

Esther 9:1-19

Message of Hope: Someday things will be made right.

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
When was a time when you saw someone stick up for the underdog?

Bridge: There is something that feels good when abusers of power become powerless, and those who had been abused are vindicated. Today's story is about the underdog – people in life who are powerless and of whom others have taken advantage. But notice how the tables are turned.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 9:1-19.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. In verse 1, what are the two decrees that were put into effect?
2. If everyone is afraid of the Jews (verse 2), it would seem that nobody would attack them. Then why does verse 5 seem to suggest that the Jews go beyond what the decree allows (8:11) by purposefully seeking out and killing their enemies?
3. Why do you think the Jews do not take any plunder in verse 10?
4. Read verse 12 again. What do you think is going on in the king's mind when he calls Esther?
5. Why does the king ask Esther if there are any other requests?
6. It could be said that Esther's second request is going too far. How do you make sense of this?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. When have you seen “a good thing” taken too far?
2. When powerless people become powerful, what keeps them from oppressing those who are now powerless?
3. What is the difference between “fear” and a “holy fear”?
4. When was a time when you did something out of fear?
5. When was a time when you did something out of a “holy fear”?
6. Who are the underdogs in today's world?
7. In every day life, how do you stick up for the underdog?
8. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
9. Remember, **someday things will be made right**. How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember “this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here.”
2. Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
3. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

party with a purpose

[outline](#)

Esther 9:20-32

Message of Hope: Having a party with a purpose can strengthen your faith in God.

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

What is a personal or family event that you remember and celebrate each year?

Bridge: Today's story is about a party – a big party that became an annual holiday. But this party is not your typical party. It is a party with a purpose, to remember something very specific. Let's read our story.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 9:20-32.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Of what Godly intervention was this party to remind the people?
2. Why do you think Mordecai, in verse 22, includes instructions to give presents to the poor? What kind of presents were these?
3. The Jews turned this event into the annual celebration of Purim. What deeper meaning of this celebration did the Jews hope future generations would remember?
4. Once Queen Esther endorsed the Festival of Purim, how might this have effected people who were not Jews?
5. What are the pros and cons of a government mandating religious practices?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. When was a time when you received “relief” from an enemy?
2. How do you try to help the poor on a regular basis?
3. What is an event that turned your sorrow into joy?
4. Where have you seen God step into your life, then turn a bad situation into a good situation?
5. What other “God events” in your life do you remember to try and help strengthen your faith that God is still with you, especially when you are unsure of the future?
6. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
7. Remember, **to party with a purpose will strengthen your faith in God.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember “this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here.”
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4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

credit

outline

Esther 10:1-3

Message of Hope: Even though God may not be given the credit, He is working for your good.

Planning Ahead: *This is the last study in the book of Esther. Which book of the Bible does the group want to start next week. Possible Options*

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight of your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (or they can answer the adult questions)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize, and accept, God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

When was a time when someone gave you credit for something you had done?

Bridge: Today's story is only three verses long; they are the last three verses of Esther's story. These three verses will give us much to think about and reflect upon as we continue to live our lives in today's world. And hopefully today's story will give us some pointers on how to live life so that we can finish it well.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Esther 10:1-3.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. You may have noticed that this entire book of Esther did not even mention the name of God. How have you seen God's activity in this story, even though He was never given credit?
2. With King Xerxes giving Mordecai national recognition and honor, what temptations does he face?
3. Read verse 3 again. Which do you think comes first—recognition and greatness, or humble service? Why?
4. If we could ask Mordecai how he remained humble and faithful to God in spite of the glamor, what do you think he would tell us?

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Where are you seeing God's activity in your life, even though you may have not given God the credit?
2. When your life is done, what do you hope people will remember about you?
3. Read verse 3 again. How are you living a life that works for the good of other people?
4. Let's go around the circle and share one thing we admire and/or appreciate about someone in this group.
5. As we wrap up, what is a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear from this story?
6. Remember, even though God may not be given the credit, He is working for your good. How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. Remember “this group does not exist for us. We are blessed by being part of this group, but it exists for those who are not yet here.”
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4. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch