

Bible Time Guide

Esther

Introduction

The Bible is clear that parents are to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). God's people were commanded long ago to teach God's commands diligently to the next generation (Deut 6:7) so that they remember the faithfulness of God always. Whether you are a father, a single mother, or a grandparent, the Bible Time Guide resource is designed to help you lead children through the Bible intentionally and diligently. We have created this resource to be simple to use so that it's not burdensome, allowing the Word of God to do the heavy lifting while you gain momentum in your home with good, godly disciplines that will hopefully bring favor to generations. So many parents or grandparents want to get into the Word of God more consistently with their children or grandchildren but they don't always know where to start. Our prayer is that this resource provides a "track" to run on, helping you to implement "Bible Time" in your home as a part of fulfilling Ephesians 6:4 and Deuteronomy 6:7.

So, how do you use the Bible Time Guide? The Bible Time Guide is broken up by books of the Bible so that you can go through an entire book of the Bible as a family at your own pace. You simply open up the Bible Time Guide along with your Bible. You then read the Bible passage and follow the question prompts in the guide. You, as the leader, may desire to read the Bible Time Guide for that evening before starting the family discussion to review some of the "Parent's Help" if needed.

We've broken up the questions into three categories so that each time you use it, the children can: 1) Learn the Word 2) Apply the Word 3) Pray the Word. If you can't implement "Bible Time" every night of the week, will this guide still be helpful? Absolutely! The reason we designed this guide to be broken up by books of the Bible is so that you can go at your own

pace. If you can't get to every question for that night's passage, will this guide still be helpful? Absolutely! Every family is different, with children of different ages and maturity presenting different dynamics. You might need to break up one passage over several nights if necessary. And many of the questions have more than one right answer, so be encouraging when your children give good, biblical answers even if they don't exactly match the "Parent's Help" answer that's provided.

We've written this guide to be deep enough for a teenager to engage with, while still simple enough for young children to track with. Feel free to use this guide in a way that suits your family best. Remember, this is just a guide but you are the leader and raising children requires flexibility! Also, each Bible Time Guide starts with an overview of that book of the Bible to help set the context for you as the leader as well as for your family. You may choose to spend a night going through the overview with your family or simply dive into the daily guide.

We hope that this guide will accomplish several things: increase consistency, instruct the next generation, unite your family, grow your faith and minister to your heart as the leader, and glorify God through obedience and discipline as you seek Him in the Scriptures. We are prayerfully anticipating the fruit that will come from your discipline to implement this guide in your home. Be encouraged, lean in, trust the Lord, and be the guide that God has equipped you to be.

The Book of Esther Overview

The author of this book is not known, but it's suspected that he was a Jew who witnessed the events described in this book. Some people believe that Mordecai wrote the book but others disagree, claiming that he wouldn't have written such praise for himself in chapter 10. Even though we can't know the author for sure, the date of this book is around 475 B.C.

The book of Esther never mentions God by name, but it showcases God's providential hand as He cares for His people. The covenant that God made with Abraham ensures that His people will not be exterminated.

Esther 1:1–22

Understand the Word

1. Esther is the only book of the Bible that doesn't contain a specific word, do you know what that word is?
 - **Parent's Help:** This book of the Bible does not mention God once.
2. Even though this book doesn't mention God, God's hand is seen all throughout this story. Have you ever heard of God's providence? Can you describe it?
 - **Parent's Help:** The word providence comes from the Latin root word *provideo* which means "to see beforehand, a prior seeing, a foresight". The word provision in our English language is probably the closest word to the root *provideo*. The provider of a home is to foresee the coming needs of a family and work to meet those needs within his God-given strength and opportunity. So, how does this relate to God's providence? We can understand His provision as: God sovereignly providing for His people's needs. Encourage your children to listen closely to see how many times God's providence shows up in the book of Esther.
3. Why do you think Queen Vashti refused to follow the King's order?
 - **Parent's Help:** Although it's not clear as to the specific reason, it is clear that he intended to show off her beauty, thus objectifying her in some way.
4. Why is it providential that Queen Vashti will never be allowed in the presence of the king again?

- **Parent's Help:** Now the king needs a new queen! This is God already working to provide a way for Esther to become queen and save the Jewish people.

Apply the Word

1. How have you seen God work providentially in your life? Can you think of one example where God brought something good out of a bad situation?
2. Parents, now would be a good time to have your kids create a "Providence Journal" to use throughout this entire study of Esther. Have them write down every time that they see God's providence on display as you read through each chapter. You could also create one journal all together. There will be a time during the last chapter to share the results together as a family.

Pray the Word

1. Lord, help us to be on the lookout for Your providential hand, not only in the life of Esther, but in our lives as well!
2. Lord, we pray that You would use our study of this book to grow our faith in You.
3. Lord, help us this week, no matter what happens, to trust that You are in charge and You are good!

Esther 2:1–23

Understand the Word

1. We read that Mordecai's great grandfather, Kish, was carried away from Jerusalem.

How far away is Mordecai from his native land of Jerusalem?

- **Parent's Help:** This is a great opportunity to get out a map and show the distance from Jerusalem to Susa. Although Susa is not currently occupied, the closest large city is Shush in the Khuzestan Province of Iran. The distance is about 927 Miles and if you walked for 10 hours a day, it would take about 35 days to walk between this location and where Mordecai was currently living!
2. In this chapter we learn that Esther pleased Hegai and won his favor. How do you think she pleased him and won his favor? Do you think it would have been tempting for Esther to be frustrated and behave poorly among people that were not her own?
 3. Why do you think Mordecai commanded Esther to not reveal that she was Jewish?
 - **Parent's Help:** Later in the story we will see Haman's anti-semitic nature. Perhaps Mordecai already knew of Haman's character. Or there may have been other people who hated the Jews as well. We'll see by the end of the story that God provides the perfect moment for Esther to reveal that she is a Jew. Feel free to encourage the kids to look out for that moment so that they can watch God's providence unfold!
 4. Mordecai overheard a plot to harm the king and used his relationship with Esther to warn the king. Where were the details of this event recorded? Be sure to remember this detail because it will be a big part of how God providentially works in this story.

- **Parent's Help:** The event was recorded in the book of the chronicles.

Apply the Word

1. Have you ever had to be away from your home for a long period of time? Did you ever get home sick? Describe how that felt. The next time that you are home sick, remember Esther and pray for God to comfort you!
2. Mordecai helped to save the king's life even though the king wasn't a Jew and wasn't righteous. Have you ever gone out of your way to help someone in need even though it might have been easier not to?
3. Matthew 5:16 says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." How can you live in such a way that you win the favor of those around you like Esther did?
 - **Parent's Help:** Of course, we're not talking about "people pleasing" but rather living in a Christ-like way, serving those around us with a godly attitude and disposition.

Pray the Word

1. Lord, help us to have such a close relationship with You that we never feel alone, even when we are away from those we love.
2. Lord, give us the strength to help others even when it costs us greatly.
3. Lord, help us to live in such a way that it wins the favor of those around us. Help our love for Christ come out in our actions, thinking of others as more important than ourselves.

Esther 3:1–15

Understand the Word

1. Why don't you think Mordecai bowed down to pay homage to Haman?
 - **Parent's Help:** It's possible that he wasn't bowing down in order to obey the second commandment (Ex 20:4–6). It's also likely that Mordecai refused because of a long-standing feud between the Benjamites and the Agagites. Mordecai was a descendant of Saul, so he was a Benjamite. Saul at one point was ordered to kill all of the Amalekites, including their king Agag, but he disobeyed (1 Sam 15:2–9). Samuel finally killed Agag. Haman is a descendant of Agag and therefore probably lives with hostility toward the Jews because of these historical events.
2. Why do you think Haman was able to convince the king to destroy the Jews?
 - **Parent's Help:** Most likely because he played into his pride and arrogance when he said in verse eight, "Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them."
3. In verse 14 it says that the document was to be issued as a "decree". Do you know what a decree is? And why would this decree be such a big deal?
 - **Parent's Help:** Another word that can be used for decree is "law". This was a big deal because it meant that the king's orders for the annihilation of the Jews was irrevocable, keeping in alignment with Persian law (See Daniel 6:8).

Apply the Word

1. Mordecai doesn't pay homage to Haman in this chapter. Romans 13:1-2 says that we are to obey our authorities but is there ever a time when we shouldn't obey those who are in authority over us?
 - **Parent's Help:** God is our ultimate authority so if an earthly authority asks us to do something that God forbids or to not do something that God commands then we can disobey their command.
2. At the end of this chapter we read that the city of Susa was "thrown into confusion" because of the decree that went out to annihilate the Jews. When something happens in your life that causes confusion and fear, what should you do to find peace?
 - **Parent's Help:** Pray to God with thanksgiving as you trust His promises (Phil 4:6-7)!

Pray the Word

1. Lord, help us to obey the authorities that You have placed over us and please give us discernment to know if we should ever disobey them.
2. Lord, when things happen in our life that cause confusion and fear help us to pray to You with thanksgiving so that we may have the peace that surpasses all understanding.
3. Lord, help us to have a high view of You! When the odds seemed stacked against us, help us to trust that You are still in control.

Esther 4:1–17

Understand the Word

1. Why do you think Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes?
 - **Parent's Help:** This was something of a Jewish custom to show an outward sign of inward humiliation, righteous indignation, or distress (See Jer 6:26).
2. Why was Esther afraid to enter into the presence of the King to help the Jews?
 - **Parent's Help:** She could die! She had not been in the King's presence recently and if she went to see him, without an invitation, and he didn't hold out the golden scepter, she would be put to death!
3. What did Mordecai say to Esther to change her mind, even to the point where she was willing to die?
 - **Parent's Help:** Mordecai said that if Esther didn't help then God would deliver His people through someone else. He continued saying "and who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Mordecai was appealing to God's providence! Perhaps Esther believed that if she didn't go to see the king she would be disobeying God.

Apply the Word

1. Do you think Mordecai did something wrong when he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes? Has there ever been a time in your life when you've been upset about something because it was offensive to God?

- **Parent's Help:** It seems that Mordecai's participation in the Jewish tradition to tear his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes was done with a proper heart. To have true righteousness indignation one has to be more concerned with God's glory and justice than personal glory or vengeance.
2. Esther was asked to do something scary but good by entering the King's presence. Have you ever had to do something scary, knowing that it was ultimately for good? How did God help you through that?

Pray the Word

1. Lord, help us to be more concerned with Your glory than our own personal comfort.
2. Lord, give us the courage to do what's right even if it's scary at the time.
3. Lord, the next time we hear bad news, help us to immediately think of You. Help us to cry out to You and trust that You will work through our difficulties to bring glory to Your name while working it out for our good if we love Jesus Christ.

Esther 5:1–14

Understand the Word

1. Esther asked the king and Haman to come back to another feast the following day. After her request, we see God do several things in between the first feast and the second feast that set up Esther even better! Do you remember what it's called when God works everything together to sovereignly provide for His people's needs?
 - **Parent's Help:** Providence!
2. Did Haman have a helpful wife and helpful friends? Why or why not?
 - **Parent's Help:** They were clearly giving unwise counsel to Haman! When Haman was ranting in arrogance they didn't try to stop him. In fact, they even encouraged him to take revenge on Mordecai by building a gallows for him.

Apply the Word

1. Have you ever had unhelpful friends in your life that gave you bad advice? How did you know it was bad advice? Do you have good friends now that give you good advice? If so, what makes their advice good?
2. Even though the name of God isn't mentioned once in this book of the Bible, how have you already seen God working in this story?

Pray the Word

1. Lord, please give us good friends in our life who will give us biblical advice.

2. Lord, help us to be patience as You work through things in our life. We know that it took patience for Esther to walk through this situation as she trusted You. Help us to do the same no matter what You ask us to do in our lives.
3. Lord, help us to see Your providence in the rest of this story. And please help us to especially see Your providence in our own lives!

Esther 6:1–14

Understand the Word

1. What sin do you think was in Haman's heart when he said, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"
 - **Parent's Help:** Pride!
2. Why do you think it was ironic and important that Haman thought the king was talking about him?
 - **Parent's Help:** It was ironic because, not only did Haman think the king was talking about him, but he was also planning to kill the man that the king was actually talking about. It was important that Haman thought the king was talking about him because then it encouraged Haman to come up with the most lavish ideas possible, which were actually for Mordecai!
3. It seems like Haman's entourage knew that the God of the Jewish people was against him and therefore he was doomed. What historical moments might they be thinking back to that would elicit a response like theirs?
 - **Parent's Help:** They might have thought back to the Exodus out of Egypt or the many battles that God helped Israel to win against their enemies, including the Benjamites who defeated Haman's ancestors.

Apply the Word

1. Haman suffered from the sin of pride. How have you seen pride creep into your own heart? Think of specific examples.

2. God did a big miracle to reverse the fortune of Mordecai. Have you ever seen God turn a really bad situation into a good one in your own life?
3. Haman's friends start to feel despair. Perhaps because they were thinking back to how God had worked in the past and now they found themselves opposed to Him. How can you experience hope by remembering God's past goodness and be comforted because you trust Him? What specific things has God done in your life that you can recall to find courage?

Pray the Word

1. Pray for the examples of pride that were stated in the question above.
2. Lord, help us to look for Your miraculous hand in our lives so that we can look back and recall those moments to find courage.
3. Lord, thank You for being so good to us. We see the way that You have loved us and we are grateful. Help us to be grateful people always!

Esther 7:1–10

Understand the Word

1. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:10, “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” When Haman got caught, do you think he expressed godly grief or worldly grief as he begged Esther for his life? Can you explain the difference?
 - **Parent’s Help:** Godly grief is when someone expresses sorrow because they have sinned against God. Worldly grief is when someone expresses sorrow because they got caught and will face the consequences of their sin.
2. Can you locate God’s providence in this chapter?
 - **Parent’s Help:** Here are a few examples:
 - Esther has been winning the favor of the king throughout the story so that now, when she says that she and her people are threatened, the king is ready to defend her.
 - Haman happens to be falling on the couch right when the King comes into the room, making the king even more resolved to punish him.
 - The gallows were already prepared and ready to be used, making the king’s decision to hang Haman an easy one.

Apply the Word

1. Have you ever had godly grief before? Explain the situation and how you responded.
2. Have you ever had worldly grief before? Explain the situation and how you responded.

3. Think back over this past week and explain how you have seen God's providential hand at work in your own life. How can you be on the lookout for God's providential hand in the coming week?

Pray the Word

1. Lord, help us to be grieved over what grieves You. Help us to be sensitive to sin and work to kill it in our lives.
2. Lord, help us to look back on our lives with clarity, recalling all that you have done to work out Your sovereign will. Help us to be grateful people who trust in Your plans completely.
3. Lord, give us wisdom to see Your providential hand in our lives this week and to trust You when we don't know what's happening.

Esther 8:1–17

Understand the Word

1. Do you remember why the king couldn't reverse his original decree? What is the solution that Mordecai came up with?
 - The king's orders are irrevocable in alignment with Persian law (See Daniel 6:8). Mordecai's solution was to issue a counter-decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves from the attack that was originally issued.
2. What is the significance of the signet ring? Why was it so important for Mordecai to use the King's ring to send out the counter-decree?
 - **Parent's Help:** A signet ring was a ring that was worn on a person's hand and contained a seal for marking the ownership of something. This seal, when applied to a letter, signified that the owner of the seal was speaking with authority. When Mordecai used the king's ring to seal the decree that he sent out it was as if he was speaking as the king himself.

Apply the Word

1. Are there things in your life that you wish could be reversed or taken back? Even though they can't be reversed or taken back how can you move forward?
2. A signet ring was used to seal a message, declaring ownership. Read Ephesians 1:13 and notice what God says about sealing those who are in Christ.
 - **Parent's Help:** Use this time as an opportunity to talk about the gospel and salvation.

Pray the Word

1. Pray for anything specific that came from your gospel discussion.
2. Lord, we pray that everyone in our family would be saved. Work in their hearts to make them a new creation, desiring to turn away from sin and follow You.
3. Lord, even when there are things in our life that we want to change or do-over, please help us to trust You and move forward.

Esther 9:1–32

Understand the Word

1. Do you know what it means to “plunder”? Why do you think it was so important for the author of Esther to note that the Jews didn’t plunder their enemies?
 - **Parent’s Help:** To plunder is to steal someone’s goods and this usually happens in war when one side overcomes another. The Jews didn’t plunder because their only objective was to defend their lives and preserve their people. This was not an opportunity to take something that wasn’t theirs.
2. The Jewish people started the tradition of celebrating Purim because God had “turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday”. Why is it so important to commemorate moments of God’s provision, protection, and grace?
 - **Parent’s Help:** It’s easy for us, as fallen people, to forget what God has done. We must choose to remember His faithfulness so that we can trust Him the next time troubling times are upon us.

Apply the Word

1. The Jews did not plunder their enemies. They didn’t want to defeat their enemy just to see them suffer. How can you have this same type of attitude with your siblings or friends?
 - **Parent’s Help:** Help your children to see that winning arguments and defeating others isn’t our main objective. We don’t want to rejoice over the failures of our enemies (Prov 24:17).

2. Can you recall a way that God has protected you recently?
3. What type of traditions can you start in your home to commemorate moments of God's provision, protection, and faithfulness?

Pray the Word

1. Lord, help us to not seek vengeance on others. Help us to be at peace with others whenever it is within our power to do so.
2. Lord, give us a spirit of humility, counting others as more important than ourselves.
Helps us to always remember the gospel and the undeserving nature of Your grace.
3. Lord, help us to recall Your provision, protection, and faithfulness so that our faith can grow more and more over time.

Esther 10:1–3

Understand the Word

1. Think back to the very beginning of this book of the Bible. Can you remember where Mordecai was? Can you remember where Eshter was? Do you remember how bad things looked for the Jewish people at one time? Now is a good time to pull out those Providence Journals and share how many acts of God’s providence you found!
2. We read that Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus. Can you remember another biblical character whose life looked hopeless, but then ended up being second in command to a powerful person?
 - **Parent’s Help:** God brought Joseph through a difficult set of circumstances to make him second in command to the Pharaoh of Egypt!

Apply the Word

1. What was your favorite moment of God’s providence in the book of Esther?
2. What’s one lesson you learned from this book that you can keep learning from for the rest of your life?
3. Think about the faith of Esther and Mordecai. Why do you think they were able to have such great faith in God? How can you have a faith like theirs?

Pray the Word

1. Lord, thank You for this book of the Bible and for giving our family the chance to study it together!

2. Lord, help us to always look out for Your providence. Give us the eyes to see You at work and to expect You to do great things even in tragic situations.
3. Lord, help us to trust You more and more. As we start studying another book of the Bible, please help us to learn more about You and grow in our faith.