

GROUP GUIDE TO ESTHER

(based on the commentary available on www.friends-first.com under 'free resources' and under 'explore the Bible')

THE BIBLE IN OUR GROUPS

- A Christian cannot happily live without the Bible anymore than a person could happily live without air, food, water, heat or direction. That's why it is important that Christians - *preferably on a daily basis* - learn to breathe it's oxygen, feed on its nourishment, drink its refreshment, absorb its energy, and obey its instruction.
- The very first thing that the first church devoted themselves to in their gathering was 'the apostle's teaching' (see Acts 2:42) which is now recorded for us in the Bible. That's why God's Word is so central in our gatherings, both our large Sunday ones, and in our small groups.
- Getting into God's Word *together* helps us get even deeper into God's Word, and it helps the Word get deeper into us. Someone said, 'It doesn't matter how much of the Bible you go through, what really matters is how much of the Bible goes through you.' That's why we explore the Bible alone *and* together. What's more, exploring the Bible together greatly motivates us all to explore the Bible alone.
- The average weekly small group gathering consists of three main components: 1) the bonding time (where we get into each other's lives), 2) the prayer encounter (where we get into God's presence), and 3) the life-shaping conversation (where we get into God's Word). This guide impacts the life-shaping conversation part of the gathering.
- In your group devote three weeks to the book of Esther. Everyone in the group is to read specific chapters of Esther as preparation and come ready to have a 'life-shaping conversation' based on it in the group.

OUTLINE

Week Before

- The small group leader needs to:
 - make sure everyone has a copy of the Esther commentary.
 - motivate everyone to read through chapter 1-3 of Esther along with the commentary in their daily devotions this week.
 - encourage everyone to come ready to share next week 1) the one thing they found most interesting and 2) the one thing that impacted their lives the most in chapters 1-3.
 - assure everyone that even if they don't do this reading that they should still come, because they will get much out of the time next week (this is why it is also suitable to keep inviting new people to the group).

Week One

- Opening not-necessarily-spiritual get-to-know-you question: 'Esther was mentored by Mordecai. Who are the people, if any, who have played a mentoring role in your life?'
- Slowly read through the main points of Esther 1-3 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want.
- 'Of all you read in Esther this week, what one thing did you find most *interesting*?'
- 'Of all you read in Esther this week, was there any one thing that *impacted* your life most? And how are you letting it impact your life?'
- Remind people: 'This week, please read chapters 4-7 in your daily devotions. Come ready to share the one thing you find *most interesting* and the one thing you find *most impacting*.'

Chapter 1

- *Life without God is empty and temporary.*
- *King Jesus wants to lavish his Spirit on his people.*
- *We desperately need a Saviour to save us from our sin.*

Chapter 2

- *God is able to sovereignly place us where he wants us.*
- *God usually allows us to go through pain before he uses us.*
- *Patience, humility and wise mentors will help us prepare for our future in God.*
- *God is busy beautifying the church.*
- *Our sins will be exposed.*
- *Be loyal to God-given leaders.*

Chapter 3

- *Refuse to bow down to anyone or anything but Jesus.*
- *Small resentments can become deep prejudices.*
- *Our times are in God's hands.*

Week Two

- Opening not-necessarily-spiritual get-to-know-you question: ‘Chapter 6 speaks of how people can get humbled by life. What is the most humbling thing that has happened to you in the last few years?’
- Slowly read through the main points of Esther 4-7 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want.
- ‘Of all you read in Esther this week, what one thing did you find most *interesting*?’
- ‘Of all you read in Esther this week, was there any one thing that *impacted* your life most? And how are you letting it impact your life?’
- Remind people: ‘This week, please read chapters 8-10 in your daily devotions. Come ready to share the one thing you find *most interesting* and the one thing you find *most impacting* on your life.’

Chapter 4

- *God will allow us to face great challenges from time to time.*
- *God will often match our reluctance with his persistence.*
- *We need the wisdom of trusted shepherds in tumultuous times.*
- *True obedience leaves the outcome to God.*
- *Desperate situations call for a deeper dependence on God.*

Chapter 5

- *Faith, not fear, should determine our actions.*
- *Approach the King through prayer.*
- *Learn to discern between God’s movements and his moments.*
- *Prosperity can make us proud.*

Chapter 6

- *God can reach any person at any time.*
- *God will eventually humble the self-exalted.*
- *God will eventually exalt the humble.*

Chapter 7

- *Patiently keep in step with the Spirit.*
- *God’s judgement may come slowly, but when it comes, it will come powerfully.*

Week Three

- Opening not-necessarily-spiritual get-to-know-you question: ‘The story of Esther is full of amazing ‘co-incidences’. Look back on your life and try name one ‘co-incidence’ you’ve experienced.’
- Slowly read through the main points of Esther 8-10 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want.
- ‘Of all you read in Esther this week, what one thing did you find most *interesting*?’

- ‘Of all you read in Esther this week, was there any one thing that *impacted* your life most? And how are you letting it impact your life?’
- ‘Well done for listening to God in Esther. There are 65 other books waiting for us, so don’t stop reading through them in your own devotions. Keep expecting God to speak to you through his Word. Also be sure to make use of the commentaries available on www.friends-first.com.’

Chapter 8

- *The sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.*
- *Persevere in prayer.*
- *God demonstrates both his justice and his love in the cross.*
- *God works all things for the good of those who love him.*
- *The Gospel message urgently needs to get to all people, everywhere.*

Chapter 9

- *The church today is very different to ancient Israel with respect to war and violence.*
- *Never forget the God-incidences in your life.*

Chapter 10

- *God can raise up Christians to places of great influence in society.*
- *Life is tough, but God is good - and his purposes will prevail.*