

The Book of Esther

from the Old Testament



Family Study Guide by Maggie Hogan



Illuminations

Family Study Guide

Illuminations™ Year One
The Book of Esther from the Old Testament
Family Study Guide by Maggie Hogan
~ **Weeks 1 and 2** ~

Preparation and Supplies

You will need the following to get the most out of this Family Study Guide.

- One or more Bibles. We are using the New King James Version. If you don't have a copy of the NKJV, you can go here to read the Book of Esther online: <http://tinyurl.com/cjdyz>
- Dictionary—paper or online version
- Bible atlas or historical atlas
- Decide which **Hands-On Activities** you'll do and gather your supplies.

High School Students

High school students will research and then write a five-paragraph essay about one of the following:

- The festival of Purim.
 - Compare and contrast Esther with another woman of your choosing in the Bible. Compare and contrast their characters. What can we learn from their examples, good or bad? How is this relevant to your life today?
 - Fasting, as taught in the Bible. What are the biblical reasons for fasting? Do people still fast today? How does one fast? Have you? Why or why not?
 - An opinion essay on why the name of God is not used in the Book of Esther. Cite your sources.

Introduction

Main Characters

- **King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes):** powerful king who ruled the vast Persian Empire from India to Ethiopia
- **Queen Vashti:** His wife at the beginning of the Book of Esther
- **Haman:** a favorite of the king; wealthy, influential, evil
- **Mordecai:** a godly Jew living in Shushan (or Susa)
- **Esther (or Hadassah):** an orphaned Jew, protected by her kinsman, Mordecai

Geography

Students should find these places in their Bible or historical atlas:

- Susa (or Shushan)
- Persian Empire from India to Ethiopia

Time

Many believe that the story of Esther took place over about a 10-year time frame (approximately 483 to 473 B.C.), and

would fit historically between Ezra 6 and 7. This would place the story a few decades before the events in the book of Nehemiah.

Vocabulary Assignments for this FSG

There will not be assigned vocabulary words for grades 3–8 in this FSG.

Required Materials

- A copy of *The Book of Esther*

Week 1 - Day 1

Chapter 1

- Parents, read aloud Lesson 74 on Esther in *The Mystery of History*, Volume I, if you have not already done so.
- Read aloud Chapter 1, Book of Esther.

Discussion Generators

- How do we know that King Ahasuerus was both powerful and wealthy?
- What was his wife, Queen Vashti, doing while he gave a feast? What did the king order that Queen Vashti refused to do?
- Do you think she was right in disobeying her king and husband? Why or why not?
- What was Prince Memucan's advice to the king concerning Vashti?
- How did Prince Memucan justify this decree?

Week 1 - Day 2

Chapter 2

- Read aloud Chapter 2.

Discussion Generators

- Who was Mordecai?
- Where did he live?
- Why did Mordecai raise Hadassah (Esther)?
- What was the Persian name for Hadassah?
- Why was Esther summoned to the king's palace?
- What information did Mordecai instruct Esther not to mention?
- How did Esther spend the next 12 months at the palace?
- How did the king show his love for Esther?
- What did the doorkeepers Bigthan and Teresh attempt to do?
- Who discovered the plot?

- What happened then?

Week 1 - Day 3

Chapter 3

- Read aloud Chapter 3.

Discussion Generators

- Why wouldn't Mordecai bow or pay homage to Haman, despite the king's command to do so?
- Why did Haman plot to destroy all the Jews in Persia?
- Put the following events in the correct order:
 - a. The king agrees and says to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."
 - b. Haman suggests to the king that a decree be written that they (the Jews) be destroyed and Haman will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work.
 - c. In every province there was great mourning, fasting, weeping, and wailing among the Jews.
 - d. Haman tells the king that there is a "certain people" in his lands that are different from all the other people and who do not keep the king's laws.
 - e. A decree was written according to Haman's words and was sent out to every province of the king's.

Week 1 - Day 4

Chapter 4

- Read aloud Chapter 4.

Discussion Generators

- Why was Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes?
- What did Mordecai tell Esther (through her attendant, Hathach) to do?
- How did Esther first respond?
- Mordecai replied by saying in Esther 4:14, "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?" Explain in your own words what Mordecai meant.
- Esther 4:14 is a wonderful verse to memorize! See if you can have it memorized by the end of this study.
- Esther agrees to attempt to see the king but first she asks Mordecai and all the Jews of Susa to join her in doing what?
- Have you ever fasted? Why or why not?

>Hands-On Activities for Boys

1. Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was a very rough cloth often made of goat or camel hair. Tearing one's clothes, then putting on scratchy, uncomfortable clothing was a sign of deep remorse, repentance, and sorrow.
2. Find a quiet place to sit and think over your sins. Pray for forgiveness and if there is someone to whom you need to apologize, do so.
3. With parental approval, find very old clothes (not suitable for passing on) and tear them. Next, put on scratchy clothes (possibly on, with, or over the torn clothes). A large sack that held potatoes is one good option, or you can buy burlap at a fabric store. Now, **with adult supervision**, burn a piece of paper outdoors, capture some of the burned pieces, and smear the ash part over your face. This helps to symbolize that you are currently having remorse and/or are in repentance.
4. Have someone take a photo of you in sackcloth as a reminder of Mordecai's deep sorrow over the decree.

Week 1 - Day 4

Chapter 5

- Read aloud Chapter 5.

Discussion Generators

- After fasting, Queen Esther goes to the king. How did she know she found favor in his sight? [He held out the golden scepter.]
- What odd request did Esther then make?
- Why do you think she did this?
- At the banquet, what is the next request she made?
- Haman was quite pleased when he left the banquet until what happened?
- Why do you think this made Haman mad?
- Haman went home and bragged about what to his wife and friends?
- Despite his bragging, Haman still wasn't happy because of Mordecai's lack of respect for him. What idea did Haman's wife and friends put forth?

Chapter 6

- Read aloud Chapter 6.

Let's stop here for a few minutes and learn about the literary term, "**irony**." Parents, irony is a sophisticated concept and preteens are not likely to truly understand it. However, at least introduce it now because it is beautifully exemplified in Chapter 6. As you come across other instances of irony in life, help your children to see them.

The word "irony" is derived from the Latin word *ironia*, meaning "feigned ignorance." The key to understanding irony is

that it is a discrepancy between:

- what is expected or intended and what happens, or
- what is said and what others understand, or
- what is said and what is done, or
- what is said and what is meant.

However, this discrepancy must also be in some way absurd or laughable. If there is no humor to be found in it, it is not ironic. (It might be tragic, but it is not ironic.)

Irony is:

- incongruous
- subtly funny or absurd

Irony is not:

- bad luck
- just an unrelated coincidence
- random
- sarcasm (although many confuse the two!)

The following example of irony came from this source (a great site that exposes Internet myths) <http://www.snopes.com/humor/lists/fakenews.htm>

"A woman came home to find her husband in the kitchen, shaking frantically with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Intending to jolt him away from the deadly current, she whacked him with a handy plank of wood by the back door, breaking his arm in two places. Until that moment he had been happily listening to his Walkman."

This is ironic because:

1. there is a discrepancy between what was expected (a man being rescued from electrocution) and what happened (a man unexpectedly having his arms broken instead) and
2. there is something funny or absurd in the thought of this happily dancing man being whacked—out of love—by his wife.

If this same man actually was being electrocuted, it would be sad or tragic, not ironic.

Now, back to Esther. Do you remember reading in Chapter 2:21–23 about a plot against the king that was exposed by Mordecai? Well, in Chapter 6, this plot is revisited. One night when the king cannot sleep he has his book of records read to him. Imagine the king hearing that his loyal subject Mordecai had not been royally thanked for helping to save his life. Just as he is pondering how he should honor Mordecai, in comes Haman, anxious to get the king's approval for setting Mordecai on the gallows he just had built! But before he can ask permission, the king asks him what he should do for a man he wishes to honor?

Can't you just picture Haman puffing and preening himself because he thinks the king is desiring to honor **him**? Haman quickly lists all the things he would like as one so honored and then—to his utter horror—the king tells him to go and do all these things . . . to none other than Mordecai! Now THAT is irony!!

After Haman does all that he had suggested to the king, Mordecai quietly returns to his job at the palace gates while Haman rushes home absolutely beside himself with this completely unexpected turn of events. He fusses and fumes about this indignity to his wife and friends for a short while before being summoned by the king to attend Queen Esther's second banquet.

Activities

1. Try and think of ironic situations you've seen or make up new ones. Remember not to confuse irony with sarcasm!
2. Act out a scene from Chapter 6.

Week 2 - Day 1

Chapter 7

- Read aloud Chapter 7.

Discussion Generator

- Tell in your own words what happened in Chapter 7.

Activity

- Play a game of "hangman." The gallows figure predominantly in the story of Esther. When you play hangman, remember Haman and that he did to himself what he would have done to Mordecai. You will find directions at the end of this FSG.

>Hands-On Activities for Girls

1. If you have daughters, look over the recipes at the end of this FSG and choose which ones to try this week.
2. Make lists and gather your materials.
3. If time permits today, try a simple recipe. If not, have everything gathered and prepared to use on Day 4 this week.

Week 2 - Day 2

Chapter 8

- Read aloud Chapter 8.

Fill in the Blanks

- Now King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman and Mordecai was called before the king. The king took off his _____, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai instead.
- Queen Esther then appointed Mordecai to be over the _____ of _____.

- King Ahasuerus then told Esther and _____ to write a _____ concerning the _____ and to seal it with the king's signet ring.

Discussion Generators

- According to the constitution of the Persian government, no law or decree could be repealed or recalled, so the king had them write a new decree that would allow the Jews to defend themselves, instead of being slaughtered. What do you think of a government that does not provide for laws to be changed or removed?
- The result of the new decree was that Shushan (Susa) and all the people rejoiced. The Jews had light and joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many people of the land did what because of this?

Week 2 - Day 3

Chapter 9

- Read aloud Chapter 9:1–10 and then 9:20–32. (If you have older students, feel free to read the entire chapter. It does go on to describe in more detail how many of the Jews' enemies were killed, and it tells us that Esther asked for, and was granted, a second day for the Jews to fight their enemies. There are many opinions as to whether this was justified or not. This can lead into much discussion that is too deep for this FSG.)

Discussion Generators

- In 9:24, we read again how Haman had "cast Pūr" to choose the date of the Jews' destruction. (This was also written about in Esther 3:7.) We read the following information about casting pūr on the Jewish Agency website: www.jewishagency.org/

"The origin of the word 'Pur' would seem to be Persian. As written in the Book of Esther, it means a 'lot'. Purim is the plural form of the word 'Pur', and thus means 'lots'. The festival is called Purim because of the lots cast by Haman . . .

"The earliest meaning of the word 'pur' is small fragments of stones or pottery. This very ancient use of the word has its source in an ancient custom of drawing lots by throwing small stones or stone splinters into an urn. We know of this manner of drawing lots from the Bible. In the book of Joshua, it was discovered that Achan had violated the 'herem' on Jericho only after lots were drawn on all the people, first by tribes and then within the tribe, by families."

From Chabad.org we read this:

"The casting of lots expresses the idea that one has passed beyond the realm of motive and reason. A lottery is resorted to when there is no reason or impetus to choose one option over the other, so that the matter must be surrendered to forces that are beyond one's control and comprehension."

- Haman casts lots to determine the date of destruction of the Jews. In other words, he leaves the date to be determined by a source beyond his control. What he does not realize is that the "source beyond his control" is God.
- This event is still celebrated today as the Jewish holiday of Purim. Learning more about Purim is part of your end-of-book wrap-up activity tomorrow.

When Is Purim?

- March 09, 2009
(begins at sundown)*
- February 27, 2010
(begins at sundown)

- March 19, 2011
(begins at sundown)
- March 07, 2012
(begins at sundown)

*Because the Jewish day begins and ends at sundown, most holidays begin at sundown.

Chapter 10

- Read aloud Chapter 10.
- The Book of Esther is a reminder that even when God’s people are in disobedience and not following Him, they are still under His watchful care. He saved the Jews from destruction using imperfect people, which gives us hope that despite our own sin and inadequacies, God can still use us to accomplish His plan.

Discussion Generators

- This ends our study of Esther. Have your students choose one of the following questions to answer either orally or on the whiteboard:
 - Briefly summarize the main events of Esther, in order.
 - Describe either Esther’s or Mordecai’s character traits that you have seen in this book.
 - Which one of these people do you most admire and why?
 - What is the ultimate irony in the Book of Esther?
- Look ahead to tomorrow’s ideas and make whatever preparations you need to make to act, bake, celebrate, or beautify!

Week 2 - Day 4

End-of-Book Wrap-Up Activity Ideas

- Play “Hangman.” Directions are on the last page of the answer key.

- Write lyrics about the book of Esther to an existing tune. For example, using “Bye bye, Miss American Pie” you might start out with:
 - “Hi, Hi This here Jew Mordecai . . .” and go on to tell his story.

- Make an Esther number book, similar to the alphabet book we did for Ruth, but instead of letters use numbers from 1 to 10, give an example from the book, and include chapter and verse. Illustrate. For example:
 - 2 Queens, Esther & Vashti
 - 10 Sons of Haman
- Dana, on the *Illuminations* Yahoo group, shared this: "When we celebrate Purim, we make noisemakers (groggers) from prescription pill bottles. We put in beads, beans, anything that will make noise and then we do a play of the story. When Haman is mentioned, we boo and hiss and use the noisemakers. We use a costume crown for Esther and have a scepter for the King. It's a lot of fun and the children love it! We also make Hamantaschen cookies."
- You could also just re-read selections from Esther and besides booing and hissing for Haman, you could cheer for Mordecai.
- Make Hamantaschen or Hamantasch (Haman's Hat or Haman's Pockets) cookies. Recipes can be found all over the web, including here:
 - <http://tinyurl.com/2fn78h>
 - http://kosherfood.about.com/od/purim/r/hamantash_dairy.htm
 - <http://www.holidays.net/purim/goodies.html>
 - <http://www.cyber-kitchen.com/recipes/Hamantaschen.htm>
- Interested in celebrating Purim? www.myjewishlearning.com
- Or from a Christian perspective: http://biblicaltholidays.com/jewish_customs.htm
- Try out one of the great Beauty Treatments/Recipes in the answer key.
- Take a look at some of the wonderful Bible commentaries in the answer key.

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Family Study Guide Answer Key



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The Book of Esther from the Old Testament
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~ **Weeks 25 and 26** ~

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Introduction

Main Characters

- **King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes):** powerful king who ruled the vast Persian Empire from India to Ethiopia
- **Queen Vashti:** His wife at the beginning of the Book of Esther
- **Haman:** a favorite of the king; wealthy, influential, evil
- **Mordecai:** a godly Jew living in Shushan (or Susa)
- **Esther (or Hadassah):** an orphaned Jew, protected by her kinsman, Mordecai

Geography

Students should find these places in their Bible or historical atlas:

- Susa (or Shushan)
- Persian Empire from India to Ethiopia

Time

Many believe that the story of Esther took place over about a 10-year time frame (approximately 483 to 473 B.C.), and

would fit historically between Ezra 6 and 7. This would place the story a few decades before the events in the book of Nehemiah.

Vocabulary Assignments for this FSG

There will not be assigned vocabulary words for grades 3–8 in this FSG.

Week 25 - Day 1

Chapter 1

- Parents, read aloud Lesson 74 on Esther in *The Mystery of History*, Volume I, if you have not already done so.
- Read aloud Chapter 1, Book of Esther.

Discussion Generators

- How do we know that King Ahasuerus was both powerful and wealthy? [He reigned over 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia. He gave a feast for all his officials and servants for 180 days and then gave another feast for the people of Susa for 7 more days.]
- What was his wife, Queen Vashti, doing while he gave a feast? [She gave a feast for the women in the Royal Palace.]
- What did the king order that Queen Vashti refused to do? [She refused to be shown off to the men at his feast.]
- Do you think she was right in disobeying her king and husband? Why or why not? [Answers will vary. See the commentary on this verse in the Teacher Notes at the end of this FSG.]
- What was Prince Memucan’s advice to the king concerning Vashti? [That a decree should be recorded that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus, and the king should give her royal position to another who is better than Vashti]
- How did Prince Memucan justify this decree? [By saying that Vashti’s disobedience would inspire other women in the realm to despise their husbands and disobey them]

Week 25 - Day 2

Chapter 2

- Read aloud Chapter 2.

Discussion Generators

- Who was Mordecai? [A Jew of the tribe of Benjamin]
- Where did he live? [In Shushan—also called Susa]
- Why did Mordecai raise Hadassah (Esther)? [She was an orphan related to him.]
- What was the Persian name for Hadassah? [Esther]
- Why was Esther summoned to the king’s palace? [A search was on for beautiful young women from among whom a queen would be chosen to replace Vashti]

- What information did Mordecai instruct Esther not to mention? [That she was Jewish]
- How did Esther spend the next 12 months at the palace? [Six months of beauty treatments with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women]
- How did the king show his love for Esther? [He crowned her queen and made the Feast of Esther a holiday in her honor.]
- What did the doorkeepers Bigthan and Teresh attempt to do? [Kill the king]
- Who discovered the plot? [Mordecai]
- What happened then? [Mordecai told Esther, who told the king, who confirmed the information and then hanged the men on the gallows. This was then written in the book of the chronicles in the king's presence.]

Week 25 - Day 3

Chapter 3

- Read aloud Chapter 3.

Discussion Generators

- Why wouldn't Mordecai bow or pay homage to Haman, despite the king's command to do so? [As a Jew, he did not believe it was proper.]
- Why did Haman plot to destroy all the Jews in Persia? [Because Mordecai—a Jew—offended him]
- Put the following events in the correct order:
 - a. The king agrees and says to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."
 - b. Haman suggests to the king that a decree be written that they (the Jews) be destroyed and Haman will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work.
 - c. In every province there was great mourning, fasting, weeping, and wailing among the Jews.
 - d. Haman tells the king that there is a "certain people" in his lands that are different from all the other people and who do not keep the king's laws.
 - e. A decree was written according to Haman's words and was sent out to every province of the king's.[Correct order: d, b, a, e, c]

Week 25 - Day 4

Chapter 4

- Read aloud Chapter 4.

Discussion Generators

- Why was Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes? [To visibly show his great distress over this horrendous decree]

- What did Mordecai tell Esther (through her attendant, Hathach) to do? [To plead before the king for her people, the Jews]
- How did Esther first respond? [She sent word that she had not been invited to see the king for 30 days and if she went uninvited and the king did not hold out the golden scepter to her, she would be put to death.]
- Mordecai replied by saying in Esther 4:14, “For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Explain in your own words what Mordecai meant.
- Esther 4:14 is a wonderful verse to memorize! See if you can have it memorized by the end of this study.
- Esther agrees to attempt to see the king but first she asks Mordecai and all the Jews of Susa to join her in doing what? [Fasting for three days and three nights]
- Have you ever fasted? Why or why not? [Answers will vary.]

>**Hands-On Activities for Boys**

1. Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. Sackcloth was a very rough cloth often made of goat or camel hair. Tearing one’s clothes, then putting on scratchy, uncomfortable clothing was a sign of deep remorse, repentance, and sorrow.
2. Find a quiet place to sit and think over your sins. Pray for forgiveness and if there is someone to whom you need to apologize, do so.
3. With parental approval, find very old clothes (not suitable for passing on) and tear them. Next, put on scratchy clothes (possibly on, with, or over the torn clothes). A large sack that held potatoes is one good option, or you can buy burlap at a fabric store. Now, **with adult supervision**, burn a piece of paper outdoors, capture some of the burned pieces, and smear the ash part over your face. This helps to symbolize that you are currently having remorse and/or are in repentance.
4. Have someone take a photo of you in sackcloth as a reminder of Mordecai’s deep sorrow over the decree.

Week 25 - Day 4

Chapter 5

- Read aloud Chapter 5.

Discussion Generators

- After fasting, Queen Esther goes to the king. How did she know she found favor in his sight? [He held out the golden scepter.]
- What odd request did Esther then make? [She invited the king and Haman to a banquet.]
- Why do you think she did this? [Answers will vary.]
- At the banquet, what is the next request she made? [She again invited them to another banquet the next day.]
- Haman was quite pleased when he left the banquet until what happened? [Until he saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, and Mordecai did not stand or tremble before him]
- Why do you think this made Haman mad? [Haman was a very proud and vain man, and it hurt his pride that a Jew did not give him great honor and respect.]

- Haman went home and bragged about what to his wife and friends? [About his great riches, his promotions and advancements, and his invitation to the queen's banquets two days in a row]
- Despite his bragging, Haman still wasn't happy because of Mordecai's lack of respect for him. What idea did Haman's wife and friends put forth? [To build a gallows 50 cubits (75 feet) high and to suggest to the king that Mordecai be hung on it]

Chapter 6

- Read aloud Chapter 6.

Let's stop here for a few minutes and learn about the literary term, "**irony**." Parents, irony is a sophisticated concept and preteens are not likely to truly understand it. However, at least introduce it now because it is beautifully exemplified in Chapter 6. As you come across other instances of irony in life, help your children to see them.

The word "irony" is derived from the Latin word *ironia*, meaning "feigned ignorance." The key to understanding irony is that it is a discrepancy between:

- what is expected or intended and what happens, or
- what is said and what others understand, or
- what is said and what is done, or
- what is said and what is meant.

However, this discrepancy must also be in some way absurd or laughable. If there is no humor to be found in it, it is not ironic. (It might be tragic, but it is not ironic.)

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- bad luck
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2. there is something funny or absurd in the thought of this happily dancing man being whacked—out of love—by his wife.

If this same man actually was being electrocuted, it would be sad or tragic, not ironic.

Now, back to Esther. Do you remember reading in Chapter 2:21–23 about a plot against the king that was exposed by Mordecai? Well, in Chapter 6, this plot is revisited. One night when the king cannot sleep he has his book of records read to him. Imagine the king hearing that his loyal subject Mordecai had not been royally thanked for helping to save his life. Just as he is pondering how he should honor Mordecai, in comes Haman, anxious to get the king's approval for setting Mordecai on the gallows he just had built! But before he can ask permission, the king asks him what he should do for a man he wishes to honor?

Can't you just picture Haman puffing and preening himself because he thinks the king is desiring to honor **him**? Haman quickly lists all the things he would like as one so honored and then—to his utter horror—the king tells him to go and do all these things . . . to none other than Mordecai! Now THAT is irony!!

After Haman does all that he had suggested to the king, Mordecai quietly returns to his job at the palace gates while Haman rushes home absolutely beside himself with this completely unexpected turn of events. He fusses and fumes about this indignity to his wife and friends for a short while before being summoned by the king to attend Queen Esther's second banquet.

Activities

1. Try and think of ironic situations you've seen or make up new ones. Remember not to confuse irony with sarcasm!
2. Act out a scene from Chapter 6.

Week 26 - Day 1

Chapter 7

- Read aloud Chapter 7.

Discussion Generator

- Tell in your own words what happened in Chapter 7. [Answers will vary—but should include these basics: the king and Haman again dined with Esther. She made her petition (request) to the king to save her people from death. The king asked who would destroy her people? She told him "Haman." The king was furious, and when an attendant mentioned the gallows Haman had built, the king said to hang Haman on it.]

Activity

- Play a game of "hangman." The gallows figure predominantly in the story of Esther. When you play hangman, remember Haman and that he did to himself what he would have done to Mordecai. You will find directions at the end of this FSG.

>Hands-On Activities for Girls

1. If you have daughters, look over the recipes at the end of this FSG and choose which ones to try this week.
2. Make lists and gather your materials.
3. If time permits today, try a simple recipe. If not, have everything gathered and prepared to use on Day 4 this week.

Week 26 - Day 2

Chapter 8

- Read aloud Chapter 8.

Fill in the Blanks

- Now King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman and Mordecai was called before the king. The king took off his _____ [signet ring], which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai instead.
- Queen Esther then appointed Mordecai to be over the _____ of _____. [house of Haman]
- King Ahasuerus then told Esther and _____ [Mordecai] to write a _____ [decree] concerning the _____ [Jews] and to seal it with the king's signet ring.

Discussion Generators

- According to the constitution of the Persian government, no law or decree could be repealed or recalled, so the king had them write a new decree that would allow the Jews to defend themselves, instead of being slaughtered. What do you think of a government that does not provide for laws to be changed or removed? [Answers will vary. One thought—in this case it makes the Persians appear to be very prideful, as if they could never make a mistake in their laws.]
- The result of the new decree was that Shushan (Susa) and all the people rejoiced. The Jews had light and joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many people of the land did what because of this? [Became Jews]

Week 26 - Day 3

Chapter 9

- Read aloud Chapter 9:1–10 and then 9:20–32. (If you have older students, feel free to read the entire chapter. It does go on to describe in more detail how many of the Jews' enemies were killed, and it tells us that Esther asked for, and was granted, a second day for the Jews to fight their enemies. There are many opinions as to whether this was justified or not. This can lead into much discussion that is too deep for this FSG.)

Discussion Generators

- In 9:24, we read again how Haman had "cast Pūr" to choose the date of the Jews' destruction. (This was also written about in Esther 3:7.) We read the following information about casting pūr on the Jewish Agency website: www.jewishagency.org/

"The origin of the word 'Pur' would seem to be Persian. As written in the Book of Esther, it means a 'lot'. Purim is the plural form of the word 'Pur', and thus means 'lots'. The festival is called Purim because of the lots cast by Haman . . .

"The earliest meaning of the word 'pur' is small fragments of stones or pottery. This very ancient use of the word has its source in an ancient custom of drawing lots by throwing small stones or stone splinters into an urn. We know of this manner of drawing lots from the Bible. In the book of Joshua, it was discovered that Achan had violated the 'herem' on Jericho only after lots were drawn on all the people, first by tribes and then within the tribe, by families."

From Chabad.org we read this:

"The casting of lots expresses the idea that one has passed beyond the realm of motive and reason. A lottery is resorted to when there is no reason or impetus to choose one option over the other, so that the matter must be surrendered to forces that are beyond one's control and comprehension."

- Haman casts lots to determine the date of destruction of the Jews. In other words, he leaves the date to be determined by a source beyond his control. What he does not realize is that the "source beyond his control" is God.
- This event is still celebrated today as the Jewish holiday of Purim. Learning more about Purim is part of your end-of-book wrap-up activity tomorrow.

When Is Purim?

- March 09, 2009
(begins at sundown)*
- February 27, 2010
(begins at sundown)

- March 19, 2011
(begins at sundown)
- March 07, 2012
(begins at sundown)

*Because the Jewish day begins and ends at sundown, most holidays begin at sundown.

Chapter 10

- Read aloud Chapter 10.
- The Book of Esther is a reminder that even when God's people are in disobedience and not following Him, they are still under His watchful care. He saved the Jews from destruction using imperfect people, which gives us hope that despite our own sin and inadequacies, God can still use us to accomplish His plan.

Discussion Generators

- This ends our study of Esther. Have your students choose one of the following questions to answer either orally

or on the whiteboard:

- Briefly summarize the main events of Esther, in order.
- Describe either Esther's or Mordecai's character traits that you have seen in this book.
- Which one of these people do you most admire and why?
- What is the ultimate irony in the Book of Esther? [Haman got what he wanted for Mordecai: to be hung on his gallows. Mordecai got what Haman wanted for himself: honor, respect, and wealth. In fact, Mordecai even got Haman's house and possessions.]
- Look ahead to tomorrow's ideas and make whatever preparations you need to make to act, bake, celebrate, or beautify!

Week 26 - Day 4

End-of-Book Wrap-Up Activity Ideas

- Play "Hangman." The directions are on the last page.
- Write lyrics about the book of Esther to an existing tune. For example, using "Bye bye, Miss American Pie" you might start out with:
 - "Hi, Hi This here Jew Mordecai . . ." and go on to tell his story.
- Make an Esther number book, similar to the alphabet book we did for Ruth, but instead of letters use numbers from 1 to 10, give an example from the book, and include chapter and verse. Illustrate. For example:
 - 2 Queens, Esther & Vashti
 - 10 Sons of Haman
- Dana, on the *Illuminations* Yahoo group, shared this: "When we celebrate Purim, we make noisemakers (groggers) from prescription pill bottles. We put in beads, beans, anything that will make noise and then we do a play of the story. When Haman is mentioned, we boo and hiss and use the noisemakers. We use a costume crown for Esther and have a scepter for the King. It's a lot of fun and the children love it! We also make Hamantaschen cookies."
- You could also just re-read selections from Esther and besides booing and hissing for Haman, you could cheer for Mordecai.
- Make Hamantaschen or Hamantasch (Haman's Hat or Haman's Pockets) cookies. Recipes can be found all over the web, including here:
 - <http://tinyurl.com/2fn78h>
 - http://kosherfood.about.com/od/purim/r/hamantash_dairy.htm
 - <http://www.holidays.net/purim/goodies.html>
 - <http://www.cyber-kitchen.com/recipes/Hamantaschen.htm>
- Interested in celebrating Purim? www.myjewishlearning.com
- Or from a Christian perspective: http://biblicalholidays.com/jewish_customs.htm

Beauty Treatments/Recipes for use with *The Book of Esther* FSG

- Make one or more of the beauty treatment recipes found on the following pages. (Some of these would also be great gifts!)

The following three recipes were taken from:

***Pretty for Pennies: Frugal Bath & Beauty Guide* by Tawra Jean Kellam.**

She is a Christian small business owner who has fabulous frugal ideas that she sells via e-books. You may have seen her written up in *Parade Magazine* this past year. I highly recommend her materials. Her books and other great information are found here: www.LivingOnADime.com.

Hot Oil Treatment

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil*
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil

Heat ingredients just until warm. Spread on wet hair, especially the ends. (Place only on the ends if you have oily hair.) Wrap a warm, wet towel around hair for 30 minutes to one hour. Shampoo and rinse. Alternatively, put this on before a shower and then put on a shower cap. Let the hot water from the shower run on your head to warm the oil. You may also use a blow dryer instead of the shower. Be careful not to make it too hot.

*Other oils you could use are: sunflower oil, wheat germ oil, sesame oil, almond oil, avocado oil.

This next (historically accurate) recipe was provided courtesy of **Jessie Hawkins, MH / LSP author, consultant and small business owner of: www.VintageRemedies.com**. Check out her site—filled with great info!

She says, “This next recipe is actually based on typical beauty treatments common during that era and could be similar to the ones Esther actually received. The ‘paste’ treatment is still used in some luxury spas.” Thank you, Jessie!!

- 1 T orange peel, dried and ground
- 3 T ground almonds
- 2 T oats
- 1/8 t ground cloves
- 1 T ground dried rose petals
- 1/8 t nutmeg (ground)
- 2 T sweet almond oil
- 6 drops neroli
- 6 drops sandalwood

Mix all ingredients together until a paste forms. Add a drop or two of additional almond oil, if needed. Unlike the other scrubs, this one is applied to freshly cleansed skin. After bathing, dry off and roll the paste all over the body. Massage it into the skin, leaving a sheer coating of the paste. After the entire amount has been massaged in, wipe off any dried excess from the skin.

Honey Lip Balm

- 2 tsp. beeswax
- 7 tsp. sweet almond oil
- 1 tsp. honey
- 5 drops flavoring (optional)
- 1 capsule Vitamin E

Heat beeswax and oil just until melted. Add the rest of the ingredients. Mix well. Use a dropper to place in tubes or small jars.

Lip Gloss

- 3 Tbsp. petroleum jelly
- 1/4 tsp. lipstick*

Melt petroleum jelly and lipstick in the microwave just until melted. Mix well and place in a jar.

*Add more or less lipstick for desired shade. This is a great way to use up the last bit of lipstick in the tube.

The following recipes are from: www.creativehomemaking.com

Shampoo Recipe #1

In a blender, combine:

- 1 ounce olive oil
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon apple cider vinegar.

Use as regular shampoo.

Shampoo Build-up Remover

- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1 cup water

After conditioning, use this as a final rinse—leaves hair soft and shiny.

Hair Conditioner Recipe #1

- 1 teaspoon baby oil
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 cup water

Beat the egg yolk until it's frothy, add the oil then beat again.

Add to the water. Massage into the scalp and throughout your hair.

Rinse well.

Hair Conditioner Recipe #2

Combine mashed avocado with some coconut milk.

Comb it through the hair and let sit for 10–15 minutes, rinse out.

Hair Conditioner Recipe #3

Mayonnaise is a great conditioner for dry hair.

Depending on the length of your hair, apply approximately ½ cup of mayonnaise to your dry hair. Work into hair really well and then cover your hair with a plastic bag, allowing it to set for about 15 minutes. Rinse thoroughly and then shampoo as usual.

Egg & Olive Oil Hair Mask Recipe

Mix two whole eggs with four tablespoons of olive oil. Smooth through hair. Wrap head with plastic wrap, and leave in hair for 10 minutes. Rinse well.

Fruit Smoothie Hair Mask Recipe

- ½ banana
- ¼ avocado
- ¼ cantaloupe
- 1 T wheat germ oil
- 1 T yogurt

For extra conditioning, squeeze in the contents of a vitamin E capsule. Leave in hair for 15 minutes.

Remove Conditioner Buildup Recipe

Baking soda removes conditioner buildup from your hair. Rub in and rinse thoroughly, then shampoo with your regular shampoo.

Avocado Facial

Avocado is a naturally rich moisturizer. Mash the meat of the avocado into a creamy texture. Massage into the face and neck. Leave on for 15 minutes and gently rinse off.

Lemon Facial Mask

Squeeze half a lemon and mix the juice with one beaten egg white. Leave on your face overnight or, for a quick pick-me-up, just 15 minutes. Splash warm water on your face to rinse. It helps remove blotches because the lemon works as a bleaching agent.

Egg & Honey Facial Mask

Mix together

- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 egg yolk
- 1/2 teaspoon almond oil
- 1 tablespoon yogurt

Honey stimulates and smoothes, egg and almond oil penetrate and moisturize, and yogurt refines and tightens pores.

Oatmeal Facial

- 2 heaped teaspoons fine oatmeal
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Combine ingredients, and add enough water to make a paste. Apply to skin and rub gently. Rinse and gently pat dry.

Grape Cleanser Facial

Grape juice makes an excellent cleanser for any skin type. Simply split one or two large grapes, remove pips and rub the flesh over face and neck. Rinse off with cool water.

The following recipes were taken from:

<http://www.spaindex.com/HomeSpa/HomeSpa.htm>

Spa Index has dozens of organized, easy-to-read beauty “recipes” like these.

Foaming Vanilla Honey Bath Oil

- 1 cup light oil, such as mineral oil, massage oil, or baby oil
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup unscented liquid soap or unscented shampoo
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

Mix together all the ingredients in a clean bottle with tight-fitting lid. When ready to use, shake vigorously, and pour 1/4 cup under running bath water.

Roman Bath Soak

- 1 cup of fine grade oil (consider sesame, olive, apricot, or avocado oil)
- 1 cup of mild shampoo or liquid castile soap
- 1/2 teaspoon of fragrance oil or essential oil of your choice

This is an easy but indulgent soak that is ideal for winter dry skin. Combine all of your ingredients in a clean bottle or jar. Shake vigorously before each use, and dispense one to two tablespoons into your rapidly running bath water. You’ll find the addition of mild shampoo helps to both emulsify and disperse the oil liberally throughout the bath water, for even distribution and coverage on your skin—instead of the tub.

Rosemary Herbal Bath

- 1/4 cup dried, crumbled sage
- 1/4 cup dried, crumbled rosemary
- 2 tablespoons of oatmeal
- 2 tablespoons of dried parsley
- 2 tablespoons of coarse bath crystals

Grind or thoroughly mix the ingredients together and secure in a muslin or cheesecloth bag, and tie so that your “tea bag” hangs directly beneath your flowing bath tap. Fill your bath with warm water that steeps these herbs designed to relieve mental fatigue (rosemary), treat loss of concentration (sage), soften water (oatmeal), stimulate the body (parsley), and alleviate light-headedness (salt).

Almond-Mayonnaise Scrub (Dry Skin Exfoliator)

- 1/4 cup almonds
- 1/8 teaspoon mayonnaise

Grind almonds in blender until they form fine almond meal. Whirl in mayonnaise. Gently rub scrub onto your face, and leave in place 10 minutes. Rinse. Shelf life: Refrigerate for 2 to 3 weeks.

Honey Oatmeal Facial

- 1/4 cup plain yogurt or buttermilk
- 1/2 cup oatmeal
- 2 tablespoons of honey

Finely grind or process the oatmeal in a blender or food processor. Set aside. In a small bowl, stir together honey and yogurt, and then add ground oatmeal. Mix thoroughly until a smooth paste consistency has been reached. Smooth over your face and neck, leave on for 15 minutes, and rinse off with warm water. May be used daily.

Teacher Notes

From John Gill's Exposition of the Bible:

Verse 12. But the queen refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains,.... Even though he sent by them again, as the Targum; and so says Josephus {o}; which might not purely arise from pride in her, and contempt of him, but because she might conclude he was drunk, and knew not well what he did; and therefore had she come at his command, when he was himself and sober, he might blame her for coming, nay, use her ill for it, and especially if she was to come naked, as say the Jews {p}; and besides, it was contrary to the law of the Persians, as not only Josephus {q}, but Plutarch {r} observes, which suffered not women to be seen in public; and particularly did not allow their wives to be with them at feasts, only their concubines and harlots, with whom they could behave with more indecency; as for their wives, they were kept out of sight, at home {s}; and therefore Vashti might think it an indignity to be treated as an harlot or concubine: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him; which was the more fierce, as he was inflamed with wine.

From the Matthew Henry Bible Commentary:

I. It was certainly the king's weakness to send for Vashti into his presence when he was drunk, and in company with abundance of gentlemen, many of whom, it is likely, were in the same condition. *When his heart was merry with wine* nothing would serve him but Vashti must come, well dressed as she was, with *the crown on her head*, that the princes and people might see what a handsome woman she was, v. 10, 11. Hereby, 1. He dishonored himself as a husband, who ought to protect, but by no means expose, the modesty of his wife, who ought to be to her *a covering of the eyes* (Gen. 20:16), not to uncover them. 2. He diminished himself as a king, in commanding that from his wife which she might refuse, much to the honor of her virtue. It was against the custom of the Persians for the women to appear in public, and he put a great hardship upon her when he did not court, but command her to do so uncouth a thing, and make her a show. If he had not been put out of the possession of himself by drinking to excess, he would not have done such a thing, but would have been angry at any one that should have mentioned it. When the wine is in the wit is out, and men's reason departs from them.

II. However, perhaps it was not her wisdom to deny him. *She refused to come* (v. 12); though he sent his command by seven honorable messengers, and publicly, and Josephus says sent again and again, yet she persisted in her denial. Had she come, while it was evident that she did it in pure obedience, it would have been no reflection upon her

modesty, nor a bad example. The thing was not in itself sinful, and therefore to obey would have been more her honor than to be so precise. Perhaps she refused in a haughty manner, and then it was certainly evil; she *scorned to come at the king's commandment*. What mortification was this to him! While he was showing the glory of his kingdom he showed the reproach of his family, that he had a wife that would do as she pleased. Strife between yoke-fellows are bad enough at any time, but before company they are very scandalous, and occasion blushing and uneasiness.

From John Darby's Synopsis of the Bible

*The condition of the people **in the land** till Christ's coming as shown by Nehemiah:*

The Book of Nehemiah has shown us Judah reinstated in the land, but deprived of the presence of God, except as to general blessing, and unacknowledged by God as His people; so that, whatever length of time may elapse, their condition leads us morally up to the moment when the Messiah should be presented to seal up prophecy, to finish the transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. That book gave us the last word—until the coming of Christ—of the history of Israel; and that, in grace and patience on God's part.

*The Jews' position **out of the land** but under God's hand shown in Esther:*

The Book of Esther shows us the position of Israel, or, to speak more accurately, the position of the Jews, out of their own land, and looked at as under the hand of God, and as the object of His care. That He still cared for them (which this book proves to us), when they no longer held any position owned by God, and had, on their part, lost all title to His protection, is an extremely touching and important fact in the dealings of God. If, when His people are in such a state as this, God cannot reveal Himself to them—which is manifest—He yet continues to think of them. God reveals to us here, not an open interposition on His part in favor of His people, which could no longer take place, but that providential care which secured their existence and their preservation in the midst of their enemies. Those who were in danger were of the captivity of Judah (chap. 2: 5, 6), and of those who had not returned to the land of Canaan. If this betrays a want of faith and energy on their part, and of affection for the house and city of God, we must see in it so much the greater proof of the absolute and sovereign goodness, absolute and sovereign faithfulness, of that God Himself.

God's secret, sovereign and unfailing care

We see then in this history, the secret and providential care that God takes of the Jews, when, although maintaining their position, as Jews, they have entirely fallen from all outward relation to Him, are deprived of all the rights of God's people, and are stripped of the promises, in the fulfillment of which, as offered them by the mercy of God at that time in Jerusalem, they take no interest. Even in this condition God watches over and takes care of them—a people beloved and blessed in spite of all their unfaithfulness; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This, when well weighed, gives this book a very touching and instructive character. It is the sovereign unfailing care of God, come what will, and shows the place which this people hold in His mind.

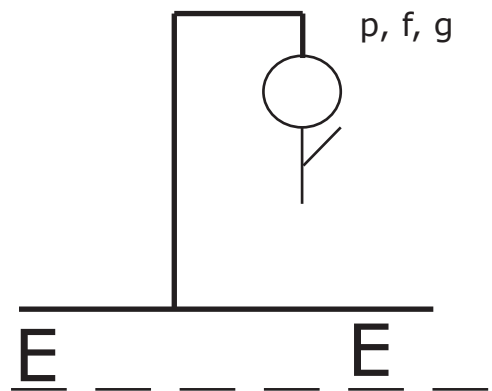
It has been often remarked that the name of God is not found in the Book of Esther. This is characteristic. God does not show Himself. But, behind the power and the mistakes of that throne to which the government of the world had fallen, God holds the reins by His providence; He watches over the accomplishment of His purposes and over everything necessary to their fulfillment; and He cares for His people, whatever may be their condition or the power of their enemies. Happy people! (compare, as to Israel, Jer. 31: 20).

Hangman

One person chooses a word or phrase. (Optional: Mom may write words or phrases for younger students to pick from so they don't have to spend time figuring out the spelling.) Place one dash on the bottom of a piece of paper for each letter of the word or words chosen. Leave a space between words. Leave a longer space between words.

For example, _ _ _ _ _ would work for "Esther" but "Queen Esther" would need a space between words like this: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Draw a "gallows" at the top of the paper. Have the other player guess one letter at a time. (Write down each letter off to the side so that he can remember what he has already guessed.)



Fill in the letter (everywhere it appears) on the appropriate dash each time the person guesses correctly. Add one body part to the drawing each time the letter chosen is not in the word. Begin by drawing a head attached to the short vertical line (the "noose"). Add eyes, ears, nose, body, legs, and arms. (Optional: Decide ahead of time if a wrong guess gets them—for example—one leg or both legs.) The object of the game is for the guesser to guess the word/phrase before the entire body is drawn on the gallows. If he doesn't guess it out before then, he loses.

Two Tips:

You may give hints such as "animal, vegetable, or mineral."

Begin the game by guessing the vowels.
Then guess the common letters like "S. T. R. L. and N."

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