

# Esther

## **Introduction: Esther**

This week we will be changing things up a bit for our small group Bible study time by walking explicitly through the inductive Bible study method. We construct every Summit small group guide based on an inductive Bible study framework. Each week we spend time reading, observing, interpreting, applying, and praying the Bible and focus on one specific passage so that our corporate study of the Bible helps in our individual study of the Bible.

### **This week's main point:**

#### **How to practice personal Bible study**

The number one area that most Christians say they are deficient in is Bible study. The Bible says in 2 Peter 1:3 that God has given believers everything we need for life and godliness according to the knowledge of himself. Knowing God's Word, the Bible, is crucial for our life and growth in faith. Unfortunately, instead of feeling joy and love for the Bible, most people's first emotions toward Bible study are anxiety and guilt.

There are two things everyone needs to start studying the Bible: 1) a commitment to do it and 2) a plan to get it done. Many Christians experience a hurdle that must be crossed every day—making time to actually pick up the Bible and read it. When we experience success on the first aspect of Bible study—that is, reading the Bible—we are often tempted to turn back for lack of a plan to get something out of the Bible. Not that the primary objective in Bible study is to get something, but to engage in relationship with God through his word given to us. This week's small group guide will help walk us through a plan for regular study of the Bible.

We will be using the book of Esther to practice. Next weekend Pastor J.D. will be preaching a message overviewing Esther, so this will get us ready to engage more fully in the weekend sermon. There are 10 chapters in Esther. Depending on the size of your group, you can assign each person one chapter or you can assign two or three people to work on a chapter together—however you want to do it. **You do not have to do all of Esther.** It will be best for each person or group of people to do no more than one chapter. In fact, you may even want to divide it up into smaller chunks than one chapter.

Please note: There are wrong answers that we can draw from the Bible, but don't worry about that right now. Tonight we are practicing studying the Bible. Results will come with practice. Have fun. Ask lots of questions. Help each other grow as Bible students!

#### **Encourage your entire group to bring a pen and paper to small group this week!**

Here is how your small group time will look:

- Introduce the inductive Bible study method using the outline below.
- Assign people/groups to portions of Esther.
- Give groups about 60 percent of your time to work through their passage.
- Use the remaining time to share with the group what you learned.

### **The Inductive Bible Study Method**

#### **1) Read the passage.**

- As you work through the text, note any questions you have.

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## 2) **Observation: What does the text say?**

- Read the entire text for comprehension.
- Read the text again, and this time mark:
  - Key words
  - Times, locations, and people
  - Repeated words, ideas, and phrases
  - Transition words (but, therefore, because, likewise, if, then, etc.)
  - Lists
  - Contrasts and comparisons
  - Commands
- Read the text again, marking major themes such as:
  - Gospel truths or pictures of the gospel
  - Reference to or use of the law
  - The Great Commission
  - The Great Commandment
  - God's people or the church
  - Redemptive promises
- Look up key words, noting appropriate meaning and related words.
  - You can use a dictionary or a resource like [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org).
- Consult different translations.
- Look up related cross-references if your Bible provides them.

## 3) **Interpretation: What does the text mean?**

- What was the author trying to communicate to his original audience?
  - Focus on the meaning in the immediate context first, and then look at the bigger picture.
  - Interpret the passage literally or at face value.
- How do other parts of the Bible help make this passage clearer?
- How does this passage fit within the greater story of the Bible?
  - Creation → Fall → Redemption → Restoration
- Paraphrase the text (rewrite in your own words).
- Consult reliable commentaries or other resources.
- Don't make applications yet—that's next. Make sure you have an idea of the meaning of the passage before you move on to applying that meaning to how you live and what you believe.

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## 4) Application: How does the text change us?

- What does this passage tell you about who God is?
- What does this passage tell you about your sin and need for a Savior?
- How can these truths transform what you love, worship, and value the most?
- How does this passage affect the way you interact with your family, neighbors, coworkers, church, and community?
- Is the Holy Spirit bringing to mind specific people, circumstances, conversations, or sins for prayer, confession, repentance, or reconciliation?
- What does the meaning of your passage look like in action?

## 5) Prayer:

- Break up into pairs.
- Pick one or two verses that you studied, and pray together that their meaning would become evident in you and your group.

*\*Special thanks to risenmotherhood.com for the basic outline of this week's guide.*

*\*\*Special, special thanks to my wife, Katie Talbert, for sharing it with me as we talked about the inductive Bible study method!*