



DARING FAITH FOR  
SUCH A TIME AS THIS

# Esther

KELLY MINTER

## Leader Guide

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# Leader Guide

**Welcome!** Before you read any further, we want to say how thankful we are for you, the leader. Thank you for your willingness to dive into Scripture, brew the coffee, place the chairs, and set aside the time regularly to meet with other women.

*Esther: Daring Faith for Such a Time as This* is a video-and-discussion-based Bible study from Kelly Minter. The teaching videos were filmed in front of a live audience in Nashville, Tennessee.

Our goal is for this leader guide to help you feel equipped to facilitate and guide your Bible study group gatherings in a way that fosters deep conversation and prayer for you and the women you're leading.

We want to encourage you to use this study however it works best for you and your group. If you want to follow this leader guide to the letter, do that! If you want to do your own thing, feel free! Our goal is to give you all the tools you might need, but we are certain God has ordained your time with your specific group in your specific setting.

We are grateful for you and praying for you as you lead this study.

*Lifeway Women*

# WEEKLY GROUP MEETING: SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

7 Group Meetings • Meeting Length: 1.5 hours

**SESSION ONE**—Introduction: Distribute Bible study books, get to know one another, and watch the Session One video. There is no personal study for Session One.

**SESSION TWO**—Watch the Session Two video and discuss the Session Two personal Bible study.

**SESSION THREE**—Watch the Session Three video and discuss the Session Three personal Bible study.

**SESSION FOUR**—Watch the Session Four video and discuss the Session Four personal Bible study.

**SESSION FIVE**—Watch the Session Five video and discuss the Session Five personal Bible study.

**SESSION SIX**—Watch the Session Six video and discuss the Session Six personal Bible study.

**SESSION SEVEN**—Watch the Session Seven video and discuss the Session Seven personal Bible study.



## HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR GROUP TIME

Each group session contains the following elements. We've included a suggested amount of time based on a 1.5 hour group meeting. Adjust as you need to for the time you have together!

**GATHER (10 MINUTES)** This is a time to greet and welcome everyone and to get them talking. In the first session, you're provided with some general icebreaker questions. In the subsequent sessions, you'll notice a list of questions to help participants review the previous week's personal study. Feel free to adapt, skip, or add questions based on the needs of your group.

**WATCH (40 MINUTES)** During this time, play the teaching video, encouraging the women to take notes on the Viewer Guide page for that specific session.

**DISCUSS (30 MINUTES)** You'll find suggested questions for each week in this Leader Guide. Pick and choose the ones you want to discuss with your group. These questions are designed to help you facilitate conversation around the week's Bible study and personal reflection. As you go through your own study during the week, put a star by any questions or statements you might want to discuss with your group.

**CLOSE (10 MINUTES)** Brief closing activity ideas and/or prayer prompts have been provided. You can use this however you wish to enhance or close the session.

## HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU LEAD.

**HOW TO WATCH YOUR VIDEOS.** The videos for this study are available for streaming through the digital access code on the last page of your Bible study book. Look for the cardstock page labeled “**Here’s Your Video Access**” and follow the two steps that prompt you to enter your unique redemption code to gain your video streaming access.

If your group doesn’t have adequate internet connection for video streaming, DVD sets are available for purchase at [lifeway.com/estherstudy](http://lifeway.com/estherstudy).

Each video is intended to be viewed after completing the accompanying week of personal study. We strongly recommend you use the teaching videos as a part of this study, but you can still discover truth from Scripture and grow in your walk with God by simply doing the print portion if your setting doesn’t allow for video.

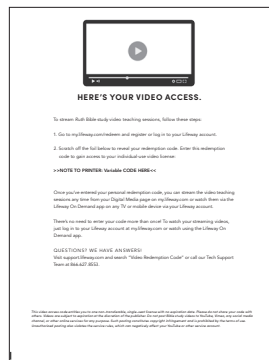
**GET THE WORD OUT.** Be sure to advertise the study early and utilize all methods for getting the word out. Post it on your church’s website, send emails to potential attendees, and promote it on all forms of social media. It’s best to start advertising the study four to six weeks before it begins. The study is seven sessions long, which means you will meet seven or eight times. Visit [lifeway.com/estherstudy](http://lifeway.com/estherstudy) for free promotional materials to help get the word out about your study.

**SCHEDULE.** Be sure to make everyone aware of the schedule ahead of time and start promptly each week to honor everyone’s time. In your group time, you will watch the teaching video together and discuss what you’re learning. You’ll also be encouraged to spend a good bit of time in prayer.

**STAY IN TOUCH.** Prepare a sign-up sheet with space for names, email addresses, and phone numbers. You may also include information like birthdays, social media handles, and favorite candy so that you can foster community among group members.

**GET COZY.** Make an effort to create a comfortable environment for group meetings. Arrange chairs in a circle to encourage conversation. If your group is large, you may want to watch the teaching video together and then split into smaller groups for the discussion time. If you choose to do so, enlist discussion leaders for each group to keep the conversation moving and focused.

**CHILDCARE.** Check with participants to see if childcare is needed and organize leaders and space for the children in advance.



**BIBLE STUDY BOOKS.** Each participant will need a Bible study book. Make sure you leave plenty of time for all the books to be ordered and received between announcing and starting your Bible study. Consider offering a scholarship or buy-one-give-one option for those who cannot afford a study book on their own.

**EARLY PREP.** We encourage you to read through the entire leader guide before the first session and evaluate how this will work best for your group. Highlight specific questions from the leader guide you want to make sure you cover during your group time. We recommend watching the teaching video sessions prior to your meeting, taking note of anything you may want to highlight from the teaching. And be sure you stay on top of your own personal study between each meeting! We've left room in the leader guide for you to write down additional talking points and questions you want to pull in from the personal study.

**PERSONAL STUDY.** Between each meeting, there are five days of personal study to complete in the Bible study book.

**PRAYER.** Most importantly, be sure to pray for the women who attend the study. And pray for yourself as you prepare to lead. Ask God to draw the women closer to Him as they learn more about the book of Esther, courageous faith, and our promise-keeping God.

**EVALUATE.** At the end of each group session, ask yourself: *What went well? What could be improved? Did you see women's lives transformed? Did your group grow closer to Christ and to one another?* Also, do a final evaluation at the close of the study.

**CONNECT.** Find ways to interact and stay engaged with each member of your group throughout the study. Make use of social media, email, text messages, and handwritten notes to encourage them. Continue these connections even after the study ends.

Next, we've provided a discussion guide for each session. Remember these are simply suggestions for how to use your time together. We want to empower you as you lead to do what is best for your group!

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## SESSION ONE

### Introduction

**GATHER.** Welcome participants to the study and distribute Bible study books to each group member. Encourage discussion by asking the following questions:

Invite each woman to introduce herself and share basic get-to-know-you information.

For an icebreaker, ask each woman to share her favorite royal couple, from history or from fiction.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session One. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session One Video Viewer Guide (page 9 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** Kelly's video teaching, using these questions as a starting point:

What drew you to studying the book of Esther?

Before you watched the first video, how familiar were you with Esther's story? If you knew any basic information, what was it?

What's one thing Kelly said that stuck with you from the video?

Ask a volunteer to give a quick summary of the historical context for the book of Esther, which Kelly described during the video. (Be prepared to do this yourself if no one volunteers!)

Read Esther 1:1–4 to your group. Then ask: What one word would you use to describe the overall tone of the opening verses of Esther?

Review the main point Kelly made during her teaching:

1. Ezra and Nehemiah show God's activity in the lives of the people who returned to Israel; Esther shows His activity in the lives of those who stayed.

Invite a group member to read Jeremiah 29:10–14, which Kelly read during the teaching. Then ask: What does this passage teach us about the Lord?

In the video, Kelly said the book of Esther addresses the question of God's faithfulness to His people in exile. Why is it good news for us that God did not abandon His exiled children?

Share one thing you hope to receive from our study of the book of Esther over the next six sessions.

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer.

**REMIND.** Encourage group members to complete their personal study before the next session.



## SESSION TWO

### Welcome to the Empire

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Two. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Two Video Viewer Guide (page 37 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

This week's study covered Esther 1:1-12. Discuss these opening verses and anything that stood out to your group.

Take a few minutes to discuss responses to this question from the Bible study book: *If you lived during this time period and were given the opportunity to return to the battered city of Jerusalem to help rebuild the temple, bring spiritual reform, or rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, do you think you would have gone? Or would you have stayed in the foreign but now more familiar setting of Persia, living as a Jew in exile?* (p. 24).

What's one thing Kelly said that stuck with you from the video?

Review the main points Kelly made during her teaching:

1. The spirit of empire is about having as much as you want, whatever you want, whenever you want it.
2. The spirit of empire is not about people; it's about power.

3. Though the book of Esther never mentions God, it makes us long for Him.
4. Jesus doesn't promise material excess; he promises life abundant.

Describe "empire" in your own words. What are some of the main ways our modern empires contrast with the kingdom of God? Think specifically about things like pursuits and priorities.

Read Mark 10:45. Then discuss responses to the following questions from the Bible study book: *How did Jesus's mission differ from Ahasuerus's in Esther 1:4? What does this teach you about living for the kingdom of heaven versus the empire of money, power, and fame?* (p. 35).

In Session 2, you were asked to consider the following personal response question: *What is one action you can take today to pursue righteousness, peace, or joy in the Lord? Decide on an action you can commit to and take that step today* (p. 30). Encourage group members to share what they wrote down. Brainstorm ways your group can motivate one another in this pursuit.

What was your biggest takeaway from your study of Esther 1:1-12?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer.

## SESSION THREE

### God's People in Faraway Places

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Three. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Three Video Viewer Guide (page 69 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

This week's study covered Esther 2:1–3:15. Discuss these two chapters of Esther and anything that stood out to your group.

These chapters detail particularly challenging parts of Esther's story for us to wrap our minds around, but they also show us great evidence of God's favor in the lives of His people. Invite a few group members to share their responses to the personal reflection question: *Describe a time when you sensed God's distinct favor in a specific situation. How did you know it was Him and not just a random happening?* (p. 48).

What's one thing Kelly said that stuck with you from the video?

Review the main points Kelly made during her teaching:

1. Even in the farthest and darkest corners of the world, God is at work.
2. Outward beauty thrives on the work of a billion-dollar industry. Inward beauty is the work of the Spirit.

3. Esther's *outward* beauty may have been her path to the palace, but it was her *inward* beauty that God would use to save His people.
4. If God can show up in the middle of a harem, where can He not show up?
5. King Jesus desires you and He calls you by name.

Take a few minutes to discuss the following personal reflection question: *What does a healthy, God-honoring understanding of beauty entail? How can you take care of yourself without it consuming you?* (p. 54).

Throughout the book of Esther we see a thread of God's providence in the lives of His people. Share your own definition of God's providence from page 58 of the Bible study book.

Read Proverbs 31:30 for your group. What does it look like practically, in daily life, to be a woman who fears the Lord?

Discuss why God's providence is such an important character trait for Him to possess.

What was your biggest takeaway from your study of Esther 2:1–3:15?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer.

## SESSION FOUR

### For Such a Time as This

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Four. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Four Video Viewer Guide (page 101 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

This week's study covered Esther 4:1–5:8. Discuss this portion of Esther and anything that stood out to your group.

What did you learn about yourself as you processed the following personal reflection question: *Are you more likely to: A) weep in the Lord's presence over a loss, a disappointment, or something that's grieved you; or, B) deal with it yourself, push it down, or keep it separate from your relationship with God?* (p. 74).

What is a step you can take to grow in your vulnerability before the Lord?

What's one thing Kelly said that stuck with you from the video?

Review the main points Kelly made during her teaching:

1. God will accomplish His will one way or another; it's up to us if we want to be part of it.
2. When Esther decides to identify herself with God's covenant and His people, she begins to transform!
3. Esther knew enough about God's general will to make a specific plan.
4. God opened a door for Esther but not before she knocked on it.

This portion of Esther shows us her decision to identify with the Jews and act on their behalf. One question you considered during the personal Bible study is: *What are some areas of your life where you're hesitant to identify with Christ or His church?* (p. 83). Discuss your group's responses and ideas you have for each other.

We see Esther grow so much in this section of the book. What are some of the specific areas of her growth and character that are worth noting? (See also the personal take question on p. 90.) What does her growth teach you about God's work in the lives of His children?

What was your biggest takeaway from your study of Esther 4:1–5:8?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer.

## SESSION FIVE

### In Between Two Banquets

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Five. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Five Video Viewer Guide (page 129 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

This week's study covered Esther 5:9–6:14. Discuss this portion of Esther and anything that stood out to your group.

An important part of this week's study focused on Haman's attitude as well as the counsel of his friends and family. What did you find particularly convicting about Haman's example? What encouraged you as you considered the better way God calls us to live?

Take some time to discuss this pair of personal reflection questions:  
*On the one side, how well do you receive wise counsel? What is your immediate reaction when confronted with hard but necessary truth?*  
*On the other side, what kind of counsel are you most apt to give—what a loved one wants to hear, or what they need to hear? (p. 111).*

What's one thing Kelly said that stuck with you from the video?

Review the main points Kelly made during her teaching:

1. If you are looking to people, power, and pleasure to satisfy, then you will be perpetually disappointed.
2. Don't mistake being passed over by a person for being passed over by God.
3. Sometimes God needs us out of the way for Him to do His work.

Encourage group members to share their responses to the following personal response question: *What area of your life feels out of control? How are you comforted by God's activity in Ahasuerus's palace even in Esther and Mordecai's absence?* (p. 120).

Ask someone to read aloud 1 Peter 1:3-10. Then discuss responses to the question: *What promises are guaranteed to you because of Christ?* (p. 126).

What was your biggest takeaway from your study of Esther 5:9-6:14?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer.



## SESSION SIX

### A Great Reversal

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Six. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Six Video Viewer Guide (page 157 of the Bible study book) .

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

This week's study covered Esther 7:1–9:1. Discuss this portion of Esther and anything that stood out to your group.

Take a few minutes to talk through the following question: *How are you encouraged or challenged by God's hand at work even in the dark and messy scene of Esther 7?* (p. 136).

Read Colossians 1:15–20 over your group as a reminder and encouragement.

In Day 2, Kelly wrote, "The story of Esther is a distinct combination of human courage and divine activity." Share group thoughts on the personal reflection question related to this statement (p. 137): *How does this reality encourage you to work hard and obey, while trusting that God will accomplish His will in your life? Do you tend to lean more one way than the other?*

What's one thing Kelly said that stuck with you from the video?

Review the main points Kelly made during her teaching:

1. The effects of our sin can outlive us, but so can the effects of our righteousness.
2. When all is well with us, we need to be concerned about what is not well with others.
3. No matter the weight of our sin, it is not more powerful than God's counter decree of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Discuss what you've learned about God and His work through the theme of reversals this week.

What was your biggest takeaway from your study of Esther 7:1–9:1?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer.

## SESSION SEVEN

### A Great Celebration

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Ask participants to share which day of study they found most interesting and which one had the most impact on them.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Seven. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Seven Video Viewer Guide (page 187 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

This week's study covered Esther 9:1–10:3. Discuss this portion of Esther and anything that stood out to your group.

Ask someone to read Romans 8:17–18 aloud. Then discuss the Gospel Moment question: *What does this passage remind you about God? How does it encourage you in whatever trial you're walking through?* (p. 164).

Discuss responses to the following question: *God gave significant authority to Esther, a woman, in a patriarchal society. How does this encourage or challenge you as you think of the ways you can serve God in your current setting?* (p. 179).

What's one thing Kelly said that stuck with you from the video?

Review the main point Kelly made during her teaching:

1. In Jesus Christ there is no more exile.

In your own words, summarize how the story of Esther fits into God's grand story.

Spend time sharing your responses to the final question in the Bible study book: *What has been the most meaningful takeaway from studying the book of Esther?*

As you've studied the book of Esther, what have you learned about the character of God? About the plans He has for you and the ways He is at work in your life?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer.

## FINISHING WELL

**NEXT STEPS.** Even after the study concludes, follow up and challenge women to stay involved through another Bible study, church opportunity, or anything that will continue their spiritual growth and friendships. Provide several options of ministry opportunities the members can participate in individually or as a group to apply what they have learned through this study.



VIDEO  
ACCESS  
STUDY

## INTRODUCING BIBLE STUDIES with VIDEO ACCESS INCLUDED!

As trends in media consumption change from DVDs to streaming video, Lifeway made the decision to invest in technology that would allow for Bible studies to be accessed through mobile devices and smart TVs in addition to our website.

The concept of a Bible study book with video access allows us to use the technology to give all participants easier access to teaching videos. This will alleviate a concern we have heard from many group leaders of members who stop coming to their group after they miss a week of study.

### **How will customers access the videos that come with their Bible study book?**

There is a unique access code printed in each Bible study book. They will access their video content at [my.lifeway.com](http://my.lifeway.com) or through the Lifeway On Demand app.

### **How long will they have access to the videos that come with their Bible study book?**

There is no expiration date on the video access that comes with their Bible study book. They'll be able to access it as long as it is available through our Lifeway On Demand video apps.

### **What are the benefits of video access being included in each Bible study book?**

- This provides more flexibility for group meeting time. Groups now have the option to have members watch video sessions outside of meetings to allow more time for discussion.
- If a group member misses a weekly group meeting due to sickness or travel, they will be able to access the video content on their own and continue in their study.
- Group members can re-watch video sessions that were particularly impactful on their own time.
- This simplifies what a group leader needs to facilitate Bible study. You'll now get everything you need with just the Bible study book.

- Our goal is to provide an affordable option for both individuals and churches looking for Bible study options.

### **What do churches and individuals need to lead a group?**

Each group member will need a Bible study book, which will include video access. There is also a DVD option for groups who want a non-streaming viewing option. In addition, select studies provide a Video Streaming - Group option for groups who choose not to use the Bible study books. For the best experience, we recommend each group member have a Bible study book.

### **When do group leaders need a DVD Set?**

Because the Bible study book includes video streaming access, the purchase of the DVD set is optional (not essential) for group leaders. This option is for groups who may not have reliable streaming internet access.