

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

Worshipping Together is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. frankstonrp.org.au bit.ly/WTrpcaf

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. airdrierpcs.org

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. bit.ly/WkBbl or bit.ly/3yrBbl

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

Notes this week are drawn in part from commentaries on Esther by John Lange, Warren Wiersbe, and James Smith, and notes from Stephen Sizer and the HCSB Study Bible, and the Reformation Study Bible

Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.



If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

Read, pray, repeat.

* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested, a godly mother will lead her children

Reading Esther 4:1-3 Great mourning

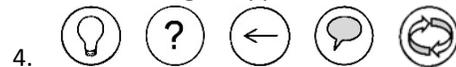
Notes (See back page for authors)
The book of Esther is filled with intrigue, with drama, and with suspense. Stizer comments that *Esther has the fairy tale atmosphere of a 1001 nights, tinged with the deadly smell of Hitler's gas chambers.*

Stizer also notes that *the story of Esther belongs to that dark period in Jewish history when God's people were enslaved and dispersed across the Babylonian empire. Behind the personal enmity of Haman we see the deeper and darker malignity of Satan, seeking to make void the promises of God through the destruction of the entire Jewish race.*

Here in our text, the plot to destroy the Jews has been enacted into law (ch. 3). As the edict was distributed, the Jews were thrown into deep distress and great mourning. Mordecai, Esther's cousin and guardian (2:7) came all the way to the King's Gate in sackcloth and ashes. Wiersbe notes *that was as far as he could go because Oriental kings lived in an artificial paradise that sheltered them from the realities of life.*

God, the true King, though not mentioned by name in this book, can be approached by His people in great mourning.

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
- Who is behind the plot to destroy all the Jews?
 - Why is Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes at the King's Gate?
 - Can the King be approached with those in mourning?



- Praise Pray** Psalm 111b²
- Rejoice that you can approach the True King with mourning
 - Pray for a member of your church
 - Pray for your family
 - Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

¹ You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord's Day you review the previous week's readings and/or the previous or current week's sermons and pray together

² Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

Reading Esther 4:15-17 If I perish, I perish

Notes (See back page for authors)
Esther clearly agrees with Mordecai's analysis. So she prepares herself. The RSB notes that *with conviction, faith, and fear, Esther directs that a fast (prayer always accompanied religious fasting, Deut. 9:9; Judg. 20:26, 27; Ezra 8:21-23; 2 Sam. 12:16; Dan. 9:3) be undertaken on her behalf... Fasts generally were prescribed for only one day. This unusually long fast points to the seriousness of the situation and effectively contrasts with the feasts that stand at the beginning and end of the book (1:3, 5, 9; 2:18; 9:17-18).* She, and her female attendants would also partake in this serious fast.

After that, she would go, knowing that she might die in her effort. If I perish, she says, I perish.

Lang comments that her words *are an expression of willing submission to the fate that may threaten her in the performance of her duty (comp. Gen. 43:14). Esther had great cause to prepare for her own destruction. She not only proposed to go to the king without being called, but also to request something of him, which, according to Persian custom, it was impossible to grant. She would by her petition recall the edict and thereby seem to disregard the royal majesty. She would and indeed must reveal herself as a daughter of this detested Jewish people thus given over to destruction. Last of all, she must thereby place herself in open opposition to that all-powerful favorite, Haman.*

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
- What preparation does Esther ask of Mordecai?
 - What then, and in what mindset, will Esther do?
 - How is Jesus one greater than Esther?



- Praise Pray** Psalm 111b
- Commit to prayer and doing God's will, with God's help
 - Pray for your family
 - Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
 - Pray for the reading and preaching of God's word tomorrow

Reading Esther 4:13-14 For such a time as this

Notes
(See back page for authors)
Mordecai sends back a message to Esther. Wiersbe comments that *in his reply, Mordecai reminded Esther of three solemn facts. First, he told her that her being a palace resident was no guarantee that she would be delivered from death. The royal edict said "all the Jews" (3:13), and Haman would see to it that every last Jew was discovered and slain, even those in the palace. For that matter, there were probably palace personnel who were still loyal to Vashti and would be happy to see Queen Esther removed.*

Second, Mordecai reminded her that her silence wouldn't prevent deliverance from coming from some other source. The reference here is to the providence of God even though the name of God isn't mentioned. Knowing the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), Mordecai had faith that the people of Israel would be protected from annihilation. However, he warned her that even if deliverance did come, some of the Jews might still be slain, and Esther might be among them.

Mordecai emphasized a third fact: Her being in the palace was not an accident, for she had "come to royal position for such a time as this" (v. 14, NIV). He didn't say that God had put her there, but that's what his statement amounted to. If Esther would just take the time to review her life, she couldn't help but see that there had been divine leading all the way. Now, if God brought her to the throne, then He had a purpose in mind, and that purpose was now evident: She was there to intercede for her people.

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. Why was Esther not safe even if she didn't approach the king?
2. Does God need us to do His will? Why/not?
3. How might we discern why God brings us to this or that time?
4.     

Praise Pray
Psalm 111b
1. Ask God to use you and your family in doing His will
2. Pray for a member of your church
3. Pray for your family
4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Esther 4:4-6 What is Mordecai doing? And Why?

Notes
(See back page for authors)
Mordecai could not enter the King's Gate in mourning. Nor could he directly approach Esther in the women's dwelling. So, he sent a message: himself, in sackcloth and ashes at the King's Gate.

And, Esther got the message. Her attendants reported the news to her – not, it seems, the news of the edict to kill the Jews, but the news of Mordecai at the King's Gate in sackcloth. She is terribly afraid (the HCSB notes the word here is *often translated as "writhe, tremble," occurring often in the context of childbirth. Here it is used to describe intense emotion, and it could be translated as "writhed in anguish" or "was agitated."*). Perhaps she is afraid for Mordecai's life if the King should come out to his gate and find Mordecai there in sackcloth. She sends him clothes, but he refuses them. The RSB notes that *Esther may have wanted Mordecai to be attired properly so that she could speak with him in person (v. 2).*

So, she sends Hathach. Could you, previously to today, have identified Hathach? Wiersbe comments, *I doubt that Hathach realized what an important part he was playing in God's plan to defeat Haman and save the Jews. So often in the work of the Lord, He uses obscure people to accomplish important tasks.*

So, Hathach goes, and finds Mordecai in the city square. What is he doing there? And why?

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. How did Mordecai get a message to Esther?
2. What is Esther's response? (3 things)
3. Who is Hathach and what is his role??
4.     

Praise Pray
Psalm 111b
1. Give God thanks that He uses obscure people to do His will
2. Pray for a member of your church
3. Pray for your family
4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Esther 4:7-9 The plot – and a plan – explained to Esther

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Hathach’s name is thought likely to mean “courier.” And, it fits. He brings Esther’s message (What? Why?) to Mordecai, then receives Mordecai’s message and brings it back to Esther.

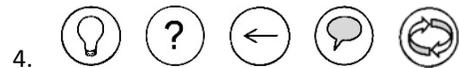
Smith comments that Mordecai *sent back to Esther (1) an account of all that had happened to him because of his refusal to honor Haman; (2) the information regarding the amount which Haman had pledged for the destruction of the Jews; (3) the text of the royal edict; and (4) an order for Esther to go to the king to plead for the deliverance of the Jewish people.*

The HCSB notes that *Mordecai was certainly aware of the danger he was putting Esther in by telling her to plead... personally with the king, but their situation was desperate. It is interesting how he emphasized that the Jews were "her people," the same people he had previously commanded her not to identify with (2:10).*

What is our response when “our people”, fellow Christians, particularly those of our local congregation, are in trouble? Does it fill us with grief? Do we seek to be used by God to bring about a solution? Do we seek help from the only One who can deliver us?

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What messages does Hathach courier from Esther?
2. What messages does Hathach courier back to Esther?
3. How should we respond when our fellow believers face trouble?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 111b
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to care deeply for the members of your church, with God’s help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Esther 4:10-12 One law... the death penalty!

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Esther receives the news from Mordecai through Hathach. And she sends a message back.

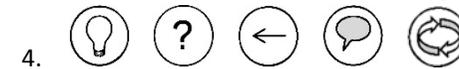
As we see throughout this book, the law of the kings of Persia seemed to wrap them in cotton wool. Such was their protection that not only could one not approach the king’s residence in sack-cloth and ashes, but one could not approach the king, at all, unless the king had summoned them. If one came un-summoned, only if the king extended his gold sceptre (v. 11, see 5:2, 8:4) would their life be spared.

It may be that this was for security, lest an assassin come un-called to the king. Or perhaps, as Wiersbe notes *not only was the king of Persia sheltered from seeing sorrow and hearing bad news, but he was also protected from interruptions that might interfere with his schedule.*

And, as Esther explains to Mordecai through Hathach, the king, although she had previously won his approval (2:17), had not summoned her for the past month. The HSCB notes that *some assume that Esther's statement in verse 11 indicated that her absence from her husband was because she had fallen out of favor with him or that his passion for her had waned. Thus, the king might be less likely to respond to her unexpected presence and request.* Back to Mordecai the message goes as the plot thickens.

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Under what conditions could one approach the Persian king?
2. Under what conditions can we approach God the King?
3. What was Esther’s concern about going to the king?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 111b
1. Rejoice with your family in prayer that we have an approachable God and King
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member