



CREATED FOR PURPOSE

An Esther Study Journal

NONDA HOUSTON

with KIM CATRON



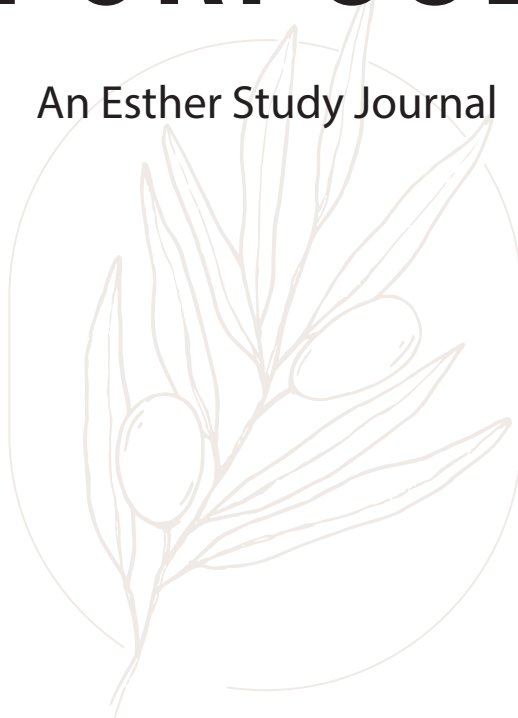
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WELCOME, FRIEND!



We frequently hear Christians and non-Christians alike referencing the quote, “The truth shall set you free.”

However, that is only a partial quote. In John 8:32, Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

It is the truth that you know that has the power to liberate you from the deadly grip of the enemy, heal your hurts, and change the trajectory of your life. And how do we know this truth? Studying, meditating, and applying the Word to our daily life will lead us to transformation.

For the disciple of Jesus, studying Scripture is key to building a solid foundation that weathers the storms of life. Allowing the Word to go deep into our heart, mind, soul, and spirit is the root system that nourishes our growth. This underground process is not visible to human eyes but is directly related to the aboveground health and vitality of a fruitful and flourishing life.

Congratulations on your decision to go deeper into the truth of God’s Word. As we launch out together in this study of the Book of Esther, would you begin by asking God to illuminate the Living Word of God to your heart? Like excavating hidden gems, I believe the Holy Spirit will lead you

in discovering nuggets of wisdom and truth as you dig deeper into His Word.

The cover of this book displays a picture of olives on a branch. I believe this imagery perfectly represents Esther's story: through the crushing and pressing, her life produced a precious oil—an anointing—that ultimately saved her life and the life of every Jew in the kingdom of Persia.

My prayer as you begin this study is that the time you spend in His Word will deepen your love for Jesus and create a longing for His presence throughout each day. May it ignite a fresh passion to know Him, follow Him, and trust Him with every aspect of your life. And may it result in your light shining brightly so others see Jesus in you.

I'm praying this promise over you:

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

Ephesians 1:15–18

In His love,

A handwritten signature in a cursive, grey font that reads "Nonda".

NONDA HOUSTON

Using Inductive Bible Study

JOURNAL THROUGH ESTHER



I am so excited to be on this journey with you! I remember when I heard others express their love for God's Word and thought, I want what they have. But sometimes I struggled to know where to start. Or sometimes I would start well, only to get lost in the genealogies or a long list of laws.

But when someone taught me how to extract the riches buried deep within God's Word, the Bible came alive! That's why I can't wait to pass along to you what I have learned. Together we'll be journaling through Esther and uncovering its hidden treasures along the way.

This study covers the entire Book of Esther, broken down into twenty segments (four weeks of five daily readings). The daily Bible passages are followed by guided journal responses that focus on observation, interpretation, and application of what you've read. This helps you study Scripture thoughtfully and accurately. At the end of each week, you'll find personal reflection questions as well as questions to discuss with others.

Use a highlighter to mark the Focus Verse or use different colors to color-code names, places, repeated words, and more.

An inductive Bible study is a great way to better understand and apply Scripture.

The inductive method is an investigative way of studying Scripture that can be used by both new and seasoned students

alike. It's a powerful tool for those who want to learn how to study Scripture well.¹

Here are a few helpful tips to get you started:

- » Begin with prayer. Make it your habit to ask God to teach you through His Word every time you open your Bible.
- » Read the assigned daily passage provided. I encourage you to read the featured passage in your personal Bible as well as other reliable translations too. Consider the New Living Translation (NLT), The New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), Christian Standard Bible (CSB), New International Version (NIV), as well as the King James Version (KJV). Every day, reading Scripture will be different. Some passages provide volumes of insight and truths. Other passages may provide less for that day's reading. That's okay! Keep reading and asking the Holy Spirit for insight.
- » Highlight or write out the Focus Verse(s) each day. This will help your mind to concentrate on this passage. You will notice the Focus Verses are highlighted in bold for you. Keep in mind the Focus Verse is only a suggestion. Feel free to substitute another passage to explore further.
- » Look (Observation)—Look closely at the passage. Who is mentioned in the Focus Verse? What is happening or being discussed? What is the author of the book saying? Where? When? Why? How? Are any words repeated? What can you observe about this passage? Write your answers to these questions or any other observations in the space provided.
- » Learn (Interpretation)—Without inserting your preferences or ideas, seek to understand what the passage means. What might God be saying? What is your clearest and simplest understanding of what this passage means?

¹"How to Do an Inductive Bible Study," Logos.com., accessed July 18, 2022, <https://www.logos.com/how-to/inductive-bible-study>.

- » Live (Application)—How can you apply the truths of this passage? The reason we study Scripture is to understand who God is and to understand how to live our life according to His instructions. James 1:22–25 explains:

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

- » Listen to God. Most importantly, pause and reflect on what God is saying to you, both during your devotion time and then throughout the day as you continue to meditate on the passage.

When you're finished, this book should be not only a treasured journal of time spent engaging with the Bible, but also a reflection of your interaction with God himself.

Enjoy your study time!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kim". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

KIM CATRON



WEEK 1

Activating Your Trust

The king loved Esther more than any of the other young women. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:17

ENGAGE

Do you like surprises? It may be fun to surprise someone with a party or make last-minute plans to have coffee with friends, but navigating sudden changes in your daily life is challenging. When plans go sideways or life takes an unexpected turn, our natural response sometimes is to tighten our grip on everything (and everyone) in order to gain control.

Jesus tells us to do the exact opposite—to surrender and give Him full control. This always sounds easy until life gets hard. The key to surrender is the daily practice of being rooted in the Word, empowered by the Holy Spirit, faithful in prayer, and trusting God with every aspect of our life.

As you begin this study, take inventory of how you typically process unexpected or difficult moments. Identify old patterns and ask God to reveal new strategies as you read His Word. This week, you will see how a young girl encountered unthinkable challenges but still chose to trust God and the people He placed in her life.

CONSIDER

In the days of King Xerxes, and even today in some countries of the world, rulers put their wealth and power on extravagant display for all to see. The first chapter of Esther tells us that Xerxes hosted an elaborate party during his third year as king. For six months his nobles, officials, and military officers were invited to eat, drink, and be merry. The king concluded the celebration with a weeklong banquet for everyone who lived in the fortress city of Susa.

On the last day of the banquet the wine was flowing freely, and the intoxicated king commanded that his beautiful wife, Vashti, join the men's party, even though she was hosting the women at a separate banquet. To further boast of his opulence, Xerxes commanded the queen to parade in front of his friends wearing her royal crown. Many biblical scholars interpret Xerxes's request as an indecent one, believing he asked Vashti to come wearing only her royal crown. Incensed, she refused the king's command, bringing scandal throughout the land.

The queen was dethroned, and the king's trusted advisors suggested a beauty pageant to find a replacement. The search began to find the fairest in the land.

The Book of Esther may sound like a fairy-tale story, but it was far from it. Esther's childhood had been tumultuous and unstable. After losing both of her parents, she came to live with her cousin, Mordecai, who lovingly cared for her as his own. Although she was welcomed into a new family, it must have been lonely and painful to grieve the loss of her parents and acclimate to a new normal.

Suddenly, Esther was taken from her home again. She was one of the young, beautiful virgins forced to leave their families and brought to the palace to be part of the king's harem. They were prescribed beauty treatments lasting a full year before being summoned one by one to spend a night in the king's private rooms. The next morning, they would move to his second harem and would never see the king again unless requested by name. This continued until Xerxes announced his new queen.

Even in the midst of this darkness and exploitation, God was with Esther. She found favor with the overseer of the harem, Hegai, and eventually with the king himself. Although she may have felt captive in her circumstances, as though her life was anything but her own, she was about to realize that God's watchful eye had never left her. Even when Esther's life's experiences didn't make sense, God planned to use her circumstances to position her for an appointed time in Israel's history.

When your situation goes from bad to worse, remember that God has a unique and beautiful plan for your life too. It may look chaotic right now, but He is at work behind the scenes. Nothing is impossible for our God! Nothing is wasted or forgotten. His burden-lifting, yoke-breaking, miracle-working power is available to you. Throughout the Bible, ordinary people did extraordinary things when they chose to trust God over the impossibility of their circumstances.

In a short time, Esther went from being an orphaned girl to being the queen of Persia. God is working in your life too. You can trust Him!

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Proverbs 3:5–6

What the Bible Says

READ: ESTHER 1:1–8

These events happened in the days of King Xerxes, who reigned over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. At that time Xerxes ruled his empire from his royal throne at the fortress of Susa. In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. He invited all the military officers of Persia and Media as well as the princes and nobles of the provinces. The celebration lasted 180 days—a tremendous display of the opulent wealth of his empire and the pomp and splendor of his majesty.

When it was all over, the king gave a banquet for all the people, from the greatest to the least, who were in the fortress of Susa. It lasted for seven days and was held in the courtyard of the palace garden. The courtyard was beautifully decorated with white cotton curtains and blue hangings, which were fastened with white linen cords and purple ribbons to silver rings embedded in marble pillars. Gold and silver couches stood on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other costly stones.

Drinks were served in gold goblets of many designs, and there was an abundance of royal wine, reflecting the king's generosity. By edict of the king, no limits were placed on the drinking, for the king had instructed all his palace officials to serve each man as much as he wanted.



Learn

What does this passage mean? What is the author trying to communicate? In the simplest terms, write your understanding of its meaning.

Live

How does this passage connect with your everyday life? Is God speaking something specifically to you through this passage?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Nonda Houston

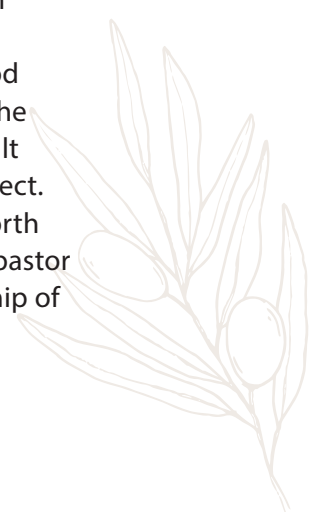
Nonda Houston is an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God and the national Women's director for AG Women. She has been married to her husband, Gordon, for forty years. They served as lead pastors in San Jacinto, California, for twenty-two years, and Nonda served at the SoCal Network Office as Women's director for nearly fourteen years. She loves family time with her four married children and being "Nonnie" to her

eight grandchildren. Nonda is passionate about encouraging, empowering, and equipping women to know Jesus and make Him known.



Kim Catron

Kim is a licensed minister with the Assemblies of God. She has a BS from Texas A&M University and an MEd from Southwestern Assemblies of God University. For the past three years, she has been the team leader for the adult writers of the Bible Engagement Project. Kim currently lives in Greensboro, North Carolina, where she serves as a staff pastor at Calvary Church under the leadership of her husband and lead pastor, Jon.



CREATED FOR PURPOSE: *An Esther Study Journal*

When life is good, it's easy to maintain a happy disposition and a good attitude. But when life gets hard—and it does—how do you navigate adversity and disappointment without spiraling into fear and anxiety? How do you face the winds of trouble without being consumed by chaos and sinking into hopelessness?

The Book of Esther is a book of extremes. It's the story of a powerful, often evil, king and a vulnerable Hebrew girl who experienced dramatic highs and devastating lows in one of the most dangerous settings imaginable. Reading Esther, we witness human trafficking, governmental conspiracy, violent punishment, and even the threat of genocide.

But amid this turmoil, Esther was being pressed and refined—much like an olive is crushed to produce its precious oil. In the end, her experiences led to her transformation. Under unimaginable pressure, the oil of her anointing ultimately saved the life of every Jew in the kingdom of Persia—including Esther herself.

Through this study of Esther, you will learn how to:

- Activate your trust
- Embrace your assignment
- Find your voice
- Walk in victory

Whatever your season of life, let God speak to you through Esther's story. Just like her, you have also been fashioned by God, uniquely designed, and created for a purpose!

FEATURES

Journal through the Book of Esther in four weeks on your own or with a group.



Five Scripture readings per week



Daily journaling prompts



Weekly reflection and discussion questions for group study

RELIGION / Biblical Studies /
Old Testament / General

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