

Esther was given one of the world's hardest assignments: to protect God's special people from an evil plan. But it wasn't because she was extra-brave or super-extraordinary. Her life reminds us that every True Girl has a purpose and that it sometimes takes great *patience* to live it out.

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✧ What Is Purpose?

Imagine you are planting a garden. You have a lot of decisions to make! Maybe you will decide to plant lots of white and yellow daisies so you have something beautiful to look at every time you come home. Perhaps you will choose blossoms that attract butterflies so you can watch them fly by. Or maybe you will plant a garden full of yummy watermelons and cantaloupes so you have the most delicious summer ever. **Whatever you decide, it is clear that each type of plant has a purpose.**

So, let's talk about *purpose*! Do you have any idea what it means? **Take a second to think about it, and then write your best guess below!**



OK, let's see if you're right!

What is PURPOSE?

As we study the life of Esther, we'll discover that she had a special purpose. And we'll learn that we do too. Here's a simple definition of the word:

→ { **PURPOSE:** the reason something exists }

Turn to page 11 and fill in the blanks to define the word *purpose*.

I have a patio garden at home! This year, I planted two cherry tomato plants. They have a purpose: to feed my twin granddaughters, Addie and Zoe, yummy cherry tomatoes. (Because they love tomatoes.)

Thankfully, my itty-bitty cherry tomato plants came with an instruction tag. So, I not only knew what their purpose was, but how to get the result I wanted. The instructions told me how much water and sunlight to give my plants. And they grew nice and tall and made lots of tomatoes.

What's YOUR purpose?

So, what's **YOUR** purpose? You didn't come with an instruction tag! But, if you are a Christian, the Bible can help. It is our instruction manual!

Use your favorite color pencil or pen to underline the two words—"plans" and "determines"—in the verse below.



We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.
(Proverbs 16:9)

We make many plans for our lives. Let's look a little closer, though.

Go back to the verse and circle the word **BUT**!

We make plans, **BUT GOD** determines our steps. He's ultimately working to guide us to be a part of His plan.

That simply means God has thought about you and how you fit into His big plan for the world. Your life is like a journey, and God is at work to guide you to take the right steps in the right direction. Why? So you can do what He has determined you should do.

This brings us to our very first lesson for this Bible study!

PURPOSE LESSON #1:
God has a plan for your life.

Fill in the blanks!
PURPOSE LESSON #1:

God has a _____ for _____.

Now, turn back to the Purpose Lessons page at the front of the book.
 (You'll go there from time to time to complete simple assignments.)
 Beside #1, rewrite the sentence above!

The first thing you need to know about your purpose is you have one! And the Bible does contain a lot of things to help you know and understand what God *determines* for you to do with your life.

In this Bible study, we'll take a closer look at God's master plan and how you fit into it. Looks like we need to **start zooming**!



► Zoom In & Out—Who? What? Where? When? Why?

ZOOM OUT!

To learn about *purpose*, we have to **ZOOM OUT** and look at why God made us to begin with. (That's a lot of zooming!) We're going waaaayyyyyy back to the beginning. The book of Genesis tells us something important about why God created the first man and woman.



Read the verse below and underline the words that tell us who we resemble.
(Hint: You'll find it mentioned two times!)



So God created human beings in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

You were created in God's "image" or likeness. That means you were created to make people remember and think about God, because there are things about you that are like Him. **How cool is that?**

When we read our user manual, it's not about us. It's all about Him. It might seem like we are reading about people like Ruth or Miriam or Esther. But when you really think about it, we are actually reading about all the ways God was working in their lives. Their lives point to Him. So do ours.

How do we use our lives to point to God? (Glad ya asked.)

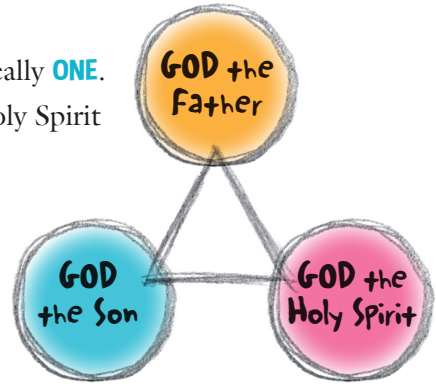
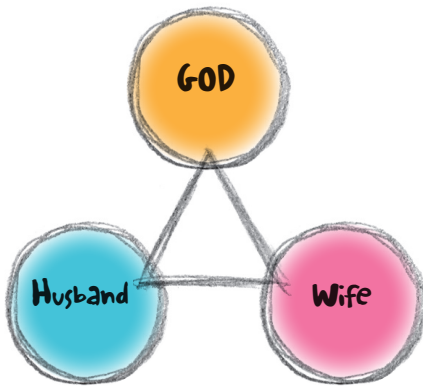
Grab two pencils in different colors. Circle the two words in Genesis 1:27 that refer to the two different kind of people God created.

You probably circled the words *male* and *female*. These are two of the things that remind people about God. Of course, there are a lot of things about us that make us in God's image. Our brains. Our creativity. But God only mentions *male* and *female* in this verse. That means being a girl is a big deal. (So is being a boy. *We are both equally important!*)

But WHY did God create two different sexes, or genders?

It's because He wants us to look like Him. You might be wondering: *How does being a girl or a boy help us do THAT?*

Well, God is three different persons, who are really **ONE**. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit make up what's called the Trinity. ▶



◀ When God created us as *male* and *female*, He gave us the ability to be two completely different people who could be joined together by marriage through God into **ONE**.

Does that mean you *have* to get married? No! But God created two genders. Male. Female. And it's important that you help to protect that Truth. Because God says it is a very important part of our ultimate purpose as humans: to help people remember and think about God.

But there's more! Let's keep reading from the first book of the Bible. What's the first thing God did after He created the first man and woman?

Double underline the first four words of this verse.



Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." (Genesis 1:28)

God didn't just create men and women and leave them there in the garden like some statues of Himself. **He blessed them**. That means He declared them highly favored and special, unlike anything else He created.

You see, God created humans to be in a special loving relationship with Him. As a matter of fact, the whole Bible is a love story about God and how He interacts with us. And it is a user manual for how we can respond to His blessing and love and learn our purpose.

Here's kind of the bottom line about our purpose:

➔ **YOUR purpose is to make God famous and to enjoy Him.**

OK, let's look at Genesis 1:28 again for one more important piece of our purpose. Circle any commands or directions God gave to the first man and woman. (Hint: There are two but it might look like four!) When you find them, write them below:

♥ **COMMAND #1:** be _____ and _____.

♥ **COMMAND #2:** _____ the earth and _____ it.

God gave the first two humans the special task of making more humans. And to take care of the world. We're kind of like His representatives here on earth, caring for what He created and reminding everyone about Him because of our resemblance.

Maybe you're thinking, *What does this have to do with MY purpose?*

Well, when you understand God's plan for the world it will help you understand how you fit in. You see, our purpose is to let people see God through our lives. For example, when God told Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, God used Moses to display His power. In that story, we see God part the Red Sea so the people could walk across on dry land. When the people were hungry, God caused manna (a food kind of like bread) to fall from the sky to provide for them. In every piece of Moses's life, we can see **God**. That's because Moses, God's blessed image bearer, was playing his part in making God famous.



OK, that was a super wide zoom. Let's start to look at how Esther fits into God's big plan.

Esther has a whole book of the Bible named after her. (Only one other woman has that honor: Ruth!)

Esther's life is an incredible story! We will see that she takes her assignment to govern or rule the earth seriously. She plays her important role in caring for God's world when she saves His special people, the Jews, from destruction. What Esther does causes all the Jewish people to throw a super big party to celebrate what **God** did.

But wait!

There's one thing you need to know about this book of the Bible: God is not mentioned even **ONCE**!

Wait a minute! I thought it was all about HIM? Well, remember when we said that all the stories of the Bible are really about all the ways God works through our lives? **AND** how God is made famous through our lives? Esther's story is a magnificent example of God's *providence*.

Providence is just a big word to describe the protective care of God. And it's happening all around us. All of the time! What is providence? One way to help you remember the meaning of providence is to break it down. Can you see another smaller word at the beginning of the word *providence*?

Write the shorter word here:



God provides. Even when we cannot see Him at work.

In your own words, write out a definition for *providence*.



You've probably heard the word *providence* before. And you've probably experienced it.

Think about if you are hungry. Your mom or dad provides you with food! (But it's really God who made it grow.) When you grow out of your clothes, an older sibling might provide you with hand-me-downs. (Again, God made the cotton and sheep wool, right?)

Providence becomes really important when things aren't going so well. And that brings us back to our girl Esther.

Things were **NOT** going so great in Susa, where Esther lived. Let's begin our study of her life by meeting a guy named King Xerxes. It's time to **zoom in**.


ZOOM IN!

ESTHER 1:1-4



Read the Bible passage below. Use a purple pencil or marker to draw a squiggly line under every location you read about. Include cities, countries, and empires.

1 These events happened in the days of King Xerxes, who reigned over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. **2** At that time Xerxes ruled his empire from his royal throne at the fortress of Susa. **3** 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. **4** The celebration lasted 180 days—a tremendous display of the opulent wealth of his empire and the pomp and splendor of his majesty. 

These verses introduce King Xerxes who was the ruler of a **HUGE** kingdom!

If you didn't already underline "127 provinces," do it now! That's a lot of territory to rule.

Let's look at the map of the Persian Empire in the front of this book again. Circle the city of Susa. Then, use a purple pencil or pen to draw a boundary line or border around the area ruled by King Xerxes. It's all the land in the middle without all the diagonal lines through it.

Yep, King Xerxes ruled *a lot* of land and apparently it was totally going to his head. He believed it was all "his."

Look at Esther 1:1–4 again and circle every time the possessive pronoun "his" is used.

Each time the word "his" shows up in those verses, it's indicating King Xerxes possessed or owned something.

In the Bible passage, underline the things that he believed were his.

Do you see the same problem that I see? Remember when we said that our purpose is to make God famous? Well, I think our friend King Xerxes has some things a little bit confused. He thinks **he** is supposed to be the famous one! How famous? Well, he threw a party that lasted 180 days! That's **SIX MONTHS** of partying! What was the purpose of his party? To display all the things that were, in his mind, **HIS**.



THE PURPOSE OF THE PARTY }

The purpose of King Xerxes' party was to show off all the things that he thought were **HIS**. Find these four words that tell us what **HE** possessed.

WEALTH POMP SPLENDOR MAJESTY

R	K	C	J	I	V	F	N	O	L
M	I	O	L	I	Q	U	O	W	F
A	D	U	P	W	E	A	L	T	H
J	F	J	O	C	E	W	C	X	L
E	L	Z	M	M	M	X	N	B	K
S	W	W	P	P	F	J	H	B	W
T	S	P	L	E	N	D	O	R	H
Y	F	N	U	R	C	R	I	Y	T
Y	W	X	X	F	T	H	C	X	M
N	E	D	J	A	M	F	K	T	W



* For puzzle answers, look in the back of the book.

I don't need a dictionary to know those words are pretty fancy schmancy! These are words that make King Xerxes famous. Not God.

I think there was a big problem in Susa, don't you?



Well, you'd think King Xerxes would have been pretty tired after six whole months of partying, but he was not done yet! Read on to find out what happens next. You'll soon

see a total of *three* big problems in Susa. You've already discovered the first one:



PROBLEM #1:

**King Xerxes thought life was all about him.
So, the wrong person was being made famous!**

When we attempt to make ourselves famous rather than God, we are working outside of our purpose. King Xerxes could have thrown a party to celebrate all the ways God had blessed him. But, instead, he made it all about **HIM**—his possessions, his position, and his power.

And . . . now . . . at the end of that loooooong celebration, he decided he needed one more party! Well, it was called a banquet.


ESTHER 1:5-8



In the verses below, circle all of the possessions King Xerxes used at his banquet to remind people how wealthy he was.

5 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.

6 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. **7** Drinks were served in gold goblets of many designs, and there was an abundance of royal wine, reflecting the king's generosity. **8** 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. 

Have you ever been to a city? Maybe you live in one! Think of how many people are there. Can you imagine inviting **EVERYONE IN THE CITY** to a party at your house? Would they fit?

Well, that's exactly what King Xerxes did. He invited everyone in the city to the courtyard of the palace garden for seven days. The very fact that everyone fit into his palace was another way he boasted about his wealth! King Xerxes was putting **HIS** power and wealth on display.

Before we learn about problem number two, we need to meet another character in the story—Queen Vashti. King Xerxes' wife was putting on her own party for the women of the palace when the king called for her to come to his banquet. Did the queen follow the king's orders?

ESTHER 1:9-12



Underline Queen Vashti's decision.

9 At the same time, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. **10** On the seventh day of the feast, when King Xerxes was in high spirits because of the wine, he told the seven eunuchs who attended him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas— **11** to bring Queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head. He wanted the nobles and all the other men to gaze on her beauty, for she was a very beautiful woman. **12** But when they conveyed the king's order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come. This made the king furious, and he burned with anger.



Turn back to the page at the front of the book labeled "My Notes On Esther." I think you're ready to write in some information about The King. Add his name and write down what you know about him.

Whoa! Queen Vashti refused a direct order from the king?! In Persia, that was a big no-no.



VASHTI'S HARD PASS }

We don't know why Vashti refused the king. But here are some theories. Circle any that you agree with and add your own theory in the empty space.

♥ She did **not** want to be treated like **property**

♥ She didn't want to leave her friends

♥ THE MEN AT THE KING'S PARTY WERE DRUNK, AND SHE KNEW BETTER

♥ She was being asked to come in wearing **only** her crown, and the girl had some class.

♥ She understood her own **worth** and wanted to be treated with **respect**

We don't know why Queen Vashti said no. But it seemed to have something to do with understanding that the men in Susa did not understand the value of women. Of course, Queen Vashti's refusal made the king very mad.

And that brings us to . . .



PROBLEM #2:

King Xerxes got advice from people instead of God. Uh-oh!

King Xerxes is embarrassed by the queen's decision, but doesn't know what to do. So, he gets help.

ESTHER 1:13-22



Underline the names of who King Xerxes asks for advice. Put a square around the advice the king decides to follow.

13 He immediately consulted with his wise advisers, who knew all the Persian laws and customs, for he always asked their advice. **14** The names of these men were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan—seven nobles of Persia and Media. They met


with the king regularly and held the highest positions in the empire. **15** “What must be done to Queen Vashti?” the king demanded. “What penalty does the law provide for a queen who refuses to obey the king's orders, properly sent through his eunuchs?”* **16** Memucan answered the king and his nobles, “Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also every noble and citizen throughout your empire. **17** Women everywhere will begin to despise their husbands when they learn that Queen Vashti has refused to appear before the king. **18** Before this day is out, the wives of all the king's nobles throughout Persia and Media will hear what the queen did and will start treating their husbands the same way. There will be no end to their contempt and anger.”

19 “So if it please the king, we suggest that you issue a written decree, a law of the Persians and



{ *What's a *eunuch*? For the purpose of our studies, what you need to know is that they were men who helped the kings and queens of Persia.

Medes that cannot be revoked. It should order that Queen Vashti be forever banished from the presence of King Xerxes, and that the king should choose another queen more worthy than she.

20 When this decree is published throughout the king's vast empire, husbands everywhere, whatever their rank, will receive proper respect from their wives!" **21** The king and his nobles thought this made good sense, so he followed Memucan's counsel. **22** He sent letters to all parts of the empire, to each province in its own script and language, proclaiming that every man should be the ruler of his own home and should say whatever he pleases. 

Did you see "God" included in the list of those the king asked for advice in verses 13 and 14? **Circle your answer.**

Yep, he for sure prayed.

Nope, he forgot to ask the one who matters most!

I don't know about you, but that puts up a red flag for me. You see, when we ask for advice, it influences how we feel about our purpose. It doesn't change our purpose. God created us with a purpose that does not change: *to make Him famous*. But when we surround ourselves with people who are not seeking God, we forget our purpose and begin to make plans to make ourselves important.

And look at that, I think we've found another problem in our story!



PROBLEM #3:

King Xerxes had the wrong user manual!

The Bible is the ultimate authority for our lives. That means that we can depend on it for Truth. It's our user manual. If someone says something or we read something and we're not sure if it's true, we can use the Bible to check!

On the other hand, what were King Xerxes' consultants turning to for their user manual? Let's look back at Esther 1:13. There are two things it says the counselors knew. What are those two things?

Fill in the blanks.

The king's wise advisers knew all the _____ and _____.

The king's counselors were using Persian laws and customs as their user manual! And that ended up with some pretty clear advice. Let's **ZOOM IN** on some of the things they were saying.



BOYS VS. GIRLS



Using the hints after each sentence, fill in the blanks.

- 1 Memucan said that Queen Vashti had wronged the _____ and every _____ and _____ throughout the empire. (Hint: Read Esther 1:16.)
- 2 Then Memucan said that women everywhere will begin to _____ their husbands when they learn what Queen Vashti has done. (Hint: Read Esther 1:17.)
- 3 Memucan tells the king to issue a decree so that husbands everywhere will receive proper _____ from their wives. (Hint: Read Esther 1:20.)

* For puzzle answers, look in the back of the book.

Woah. Looks like Memucan had a frightening case of boys-versus-girls thinking! We need a serious Truth filter to sort all of this out! And you better believe we will be seeking advice from God and His Word.

Look at Genesis 1:27 again. Write the two kinds of people who reflect God's image below.

M _____ and **F** _____

Both male and female are image bearers of God. One is not better than the other. Each is important.

Look again at Genesis 1:28. Fill in the blank:

God blessed _____.

Based on Genesis 1:27–28, put an **X** by which of these statements seems true.

- _____ The males are more important than the females.
- _____ The females are more important than the males.
- _____ God blessed both males and females and gave them both authority to take care of His world.

One of the big problems in Susa was a boys-versus-girls mindset!

Now, it is true that God has some instructions about husbands and wives written in the New Testament that we can read today. Of course, Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote these words years after Esther was alive, but their principles were still true. Let's check it against Memucan's thinking.

Read these verses and underline the phrase that sounds a *little* like the advice Memucan gave to King Xerxes.



For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.
(Ephesians 5:22–24)

Maybe you underlined “wives . . . submit to your husbands.” It is **TRUE** that women should respect and honor the leadership and worth of their husbands. **BUT** that's not the **WHOLE** Truth.


Let's keep reading the next few verses of Ephesians. Underline the things God's commands husbands to do **for** their wives.



For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:25–30)

Wow! Part of the way a man fulfills his purpose if he is married is to **LOVE** his wife and care for her. What a wonderful way to show that she is a worthy image bearer of God!

Memucan had a seriously bad case of “Boys Rule. Girls Drool!” As the king’s adviser, he told Xerxes to use his power to control Queen Vashti instead of to protect and value her.

 **PROBLEM #4:**
King Xerxes had the wrong user manual,
and that impacted how he viewed women.

The king got advice based on the customs of man rather than the Truth of God’s Word. He thought the boys should just rule over the girls without valuing and protecting them.

Queen Vashti does get sent away. And I can only imagine that lots of other wives got treated badly because of the bad example King Xerxes set.

God never intended men and women to be at odds with each other. Genesis 2:18 teaches us that God created women to be helpers for men. Put that with all we learned about how men are supposed to care for women, and we should be experiencing relationships of kindness and helpfulness with each other. Not fighting about who is more valuable!

Yep, there were **BIG PROBLEMS** in Susa!

But God was at work.

You see, God did love and bless women. He did not forget His plan for men and women to be co-rulers of the earth. And the God who provides for us all was about to set things straight . . . **USING A GIRL AND A GUY!**



In our next lesson, we'll get to meet the shero and hero in this incredible story. But first, let's **ZERO IN!**



ZERO IN: What does it mean?

Lots of people today have a boys-versus-girls mindset. They don't consult God's user manual to understand the words *male* or *female*. Sometimes men treat women badly. And sometimes women treat men badly. They believe the lie that their gender is more important than the other. That's very sad to me. And, just like Vashti, I say "no" to some things. For example, I do not like "Girls Rule. Boys Drool." T-shirts.

Write about one way you see boys disrespecting girls.



Write about one way you see girls disrespecting boys.



Another lie people sometimes believe is: "There's no difference between boys and girls." That's not true. God made us different. Guys usually have bigger heads, hearts, and lungs! We both have cartilage around our voice boxes, but boys have a lot more so

it produces a bump called an “Adam’s apple.” Girls, of course, can have babies. Boys cannot. It’s OK to admit that some things about us are different. Because they are. That doesn’t mean we have different value in God’s eyes, though.

Conversations about being male and female are as complicated today as they were in King Xerxes’s day. Lots of people are consulting the wrong user’s manual. They are looking at governmental laws and customs or the culture instead of God for counsel. For the record, most of Susa did not follow the one true God, including King Xerxes. (But you probably had already guessed that by his very bad behavior!)

I think an important lesson we can zero in on today is this: you need godly advisers who will help you.

Who are some wise people in your life who love their Bibles that you could ask for advice?



How do you know when the wise people in your life are helping to point you to your purpose? Do you know what we have today that tells us the Truth? (Hint: We’ve been talking about it a lot.) It’s the Bible! If your wise friends are bringing you back to God’s Word, there is a good chance you can trust their advice.

Circle the word *plans* and *advisers*.



Plans go wrong for lack of advice; but many advisers bring success.
(Proverbs 15:22)

Now use those words to fill this sentence in to see a good equation to live by.

P _____ + **A** _____ = established purpose



ZIP IT UP: What does God want me to do with it?

It's time to *zip it up*! How can you respond to God after reading about the boys-versus-girls problems in Susa? Do you see any of those problems in your life?

Or maybe you just really don't know what your purpose is, but you want to know! One way we can seek God's counsel is to pray and ask for Him to help us think, understand the Bible, and find the right people to advise us. We can also pray for His providence to show up in our stories!

Write a prayer in the space below asking God for help with any boy-versus-girl problems in your world. Or you could write a prayer asking Him to help you understand your purpose.



When you trust God to direct your path, He can use your life too! When you make it your goal to make God famous and obey His commands, He will lead you into your purpose.

Good work, True Girl! You just studied really hard, and I'm proud of you!

In our next lesson, we're going to meet **A GIRL** named Esther and **A GUY** named Mordecai who God used to do something incredibly courageous and important. You will begin to see that it's so much better when we work together as girls and guys!

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