For more information on earning the religious emblem for your faith, contact the Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (P.R.A.Y.) at www.praypub.org.

Produced by the Protestant Committee on Scouting (www.scoutchaplains.org).

Approved by the Council Relationships Committee.

Heart of America Council
Boy Scouts of America

Gold Leather Study Guide
This study guide has been written for use across the Heart of America Council camps.

The entire guide is recommended for use at the Bartle Reservation, while those questions marked with ☐ are recommended for the Naish Reservation.
A LEATHER IS THE OUTWARD SYMBOL OF AN INNER CHALLENGE YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT. YOUR LEATHER CHALLENGE SHOULD AFFECT YOUR LIFE TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT YOU CAN RECOGNIZE A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE WITHIN YOURSELF. YOU WILL KNOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN HONEST WITH YOURSELF WHEN OTHERS SEE THIS CHANGE.

**PERSONAL CHALLENGE**

To what personal goal do I want to strive by wearing a Gold Leather?

How do I plan to do this? Be as specific as possible.

**THE STORY OF THE LEATHER**

It was many years ago in 1914 when a young disabled boy sat on the sidelines at summer camp. He cheered his friends on, always wearing a smile and sharing all he had to give – his Christ-like ideals and happy way of looking at everything – with everyone.

On the last night of camp, a bandanna was tied around his neck as a humble symbol from the campers to recognize his Christ-like way of living. From this small beginning comes the tradition of campers wearing an outward symbol that represents the desire of its wearer to follow the examples that Jesus set for us all. Later, this little "rag" of cloth was replaced with a colored Leather for a Scout to wear on his hip.

What does the Leather signify? It is an outward symbol of an inner challenge that you choose to accept. It reminds you of the challenge you accept at camp and continue to carry out while you are away from camp. The Leather is a personal and voluntary way of challenging yourself to improve your way of life. Your promise of improvement is between you and God. The responsibility to live up to this challenge is yours. God will see your success in fulfilling this desire to live a better life; your family, friends, and anyone you meet should see it, too.

Now you may share in the experience of coming close to God through dedicating yourself to becoming more like Jesus in your thinking and behavior.

Come and enjoy the chance to learn and grow in your relationship with God.
THE LEATHER

The Leather is an outward symbol of accepting an inner challenge to grow. Its symbolism is Christ-centered, sacred, and personal. The decision to continue the journey rests with you.

Each color has a specific meaning. Linked to the meaning of a particular Leather is your personal challenge for growth.

THE BLUE LEATHER
1. Loyalty to the Scout Oath / Law
2. Loyalty to God
3. Loyalty to country
4. Loyalty to others

THE SILVER LEATHER
1. Decision to follow Jesus
2. Decision to live the Christian way of life
3. Decision to live the Christian disciplines

THE BROWN LEATHER
1. Serve God
2. Humility
3. Become more aware of the needs of others

THE GOLD LEATHER
1. Understanding others
2. Concern for others

THE RED LEATHER
1. Sacrifice of time
2. Sacrifice of talent
3. Sacrifice of personal will

THE PURPLE LEATHER

THE WHITE LEATHER

This is the final piece of our journey through Esther and we will see how God's presence and providence was with her and is with us.

Now the tables will seem to flip on Mordecai and Haman. Mordecai has already reported an attempt on King Xerxes life, but it went unnoticed. Now the king wants to recognize the right man. Then Esther has a banquet, a banquet in which God is present.

Why can't the king sleep after the first banquet? (See Esther 5:9-14.) Why is he still awake? Why is he curious about her petition? (See Esther 6:1-11.) What is significant about his sleeplessness and God's providence? Why is Mordecai's recognition significant?

What is the twist? Who is hanged? Who is then elevated in status? (See Esther 8:1-8.) What is the significance of Mordecai wearing the signet ring?

The date is important of the massacre set for the Jews. (See Esther 3:7.) Why is there a delay in the date after the casting of lots?

Have you had a time when you felt divine intervention? How did this Divine intervention affect your faith?
Let's continue to look at Esther and see how she can give us courage to serve others.

Mordecai sends word to Esther of the king's edict to destroy the Jews. Next Esther has to make a decision about her future and the future of her people.

Why does Mordecai sit outside the palace gates in sackcloth (which is a sign of mourning)? (See Esther 4:1-5)

Why is Esther concerned about her uncle? What does that say about her character?

Esther knows she is risking her life in going to King Xerxes. Have you ever been in afraid to step forward and serve God? (See Esther 4:12-14) Why did you hesitate?

How does prayer and fasting play a role for Esther? (See Esther 4:15-17, 5:1-2, Mark 11:23-24, Matthew 6:16-18, Isaiah 58:3-5) What importance is fasting and prayer for you? Have you ever fasted? If so, how long? What was the result?

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**THE MEANING OF THE LEATHER**

Your Leather is a piece of the Creation. You couldn't sell your Leather; it isn't worth much money. Your Leather has only the meaning that YOU give it.

**THE LEATHER IS NOT:**

1. A decoration.
2. An award for achievement.
3. A reward.
4. A "pat" on the back.
5. Measuring myself by others.
6. "I AM FIRST."
7. Self-centered.
8. I am good, or being good.
9. Knowing about God, talking about God.
10. Sight (seeing things as they are).
11. A status symbol.

**THE LEATHER IS:**

1. A symbol.
3. A responsibility.
4. A "push" forward.
5. Measuring myself by God.
6. "I AM THIRD."
7. Christ-centered.
8. I want to be better.
9. Knowing God, talking to God.
10. Vision (seeing things as they ought to be).
11. A personal calling to humility.
THE GOLD LEATHER
Understanding Others

Acceptance of the Gold Leather is an acceptance of concern for others and a desire to understand others.

When you accepted your Brown Leather you challenged yourself to be of service to others. Do you feel you measured up to your challenge? In what ways was it most difficult?

Use this page to write your reflections of this past year.

Later in the story of Esther, Haman is standing at the courtyard wanting to go to war with Greece. He is trying to convince King Xerxes that the Jews (Esther’s people) are a danger to him.

In the next scene Haman is angry with Mordecai over something which happened hundreds of years earlier. (Racial hatred is not new in our culture, but it present in Biblical times, as well.)

Why is Haman elevated in status? (See Esther 3:1-4.)

What is the reaction of others?

Why does Mordecai not honor and respect Haman?

Read I Samuel 15:22-23 to see what history there is in the hatred between these two men. What does that mean for us today?

Why does the King listen to Haman? (See Esther 3:5-15.)
The Story of Esther

Now we will take a look at a real Bible heroine. Her name is Esther and her story is important for all history. Take some time and read all of Esther; it's only ten chapters. Read and learn how her life changed the world of her time. You will hear a story of integrity and worldly power, and yet Esther knows that God is present for all times for her. He is also present now for us.

After you have read all ten chapters, answer the questions below.

In the first chapters of Esther we find Mordecai, who is Hadassah's uncle, Hadassah (or Esther) and Queen Vashti. Due to the misfortune of Vashti, she is to be deposed as Queen and Esther is going to find favor with the king, with the help of the eunuch Hegai. (A eunuch is a type of servant for the king.)

a) Is it only Esther's beauty that influences others? What else is there? (See Esther 2:7.)

b) How do Esther's Jewish roots play a role in her being chosen as Queen? (See I Peter 3:3-5 and Esther 2:10-11.)

c) What is Esther chosen to do? (See Esther 2:8-9.)

d) Do you think God influences the feelings of others toward someone He has chosen for a specific assignment? (See Genesis 39:1-4 and 21-23.)

e) What skills and talents do you have? God has given them to you. What gifts do you possess? (See 1 Corinthians 12:11, 27-28.)

Thank You God (Author unknown.)

Thank you, God for this new day in which to grow, For wondrous things, which, when this day is done, I shall know. For each new face that I shall meet throughout this day, And for the lessons I shall learn from all who come my way. And thank you, too, for strange ideas I shall meet, That call for my best efforts, lest I know defeat. And if, sometime today, I seem to fail, help me to know, Tomorrow's still another day in which to grow!

Listen (Author unknown.)

Listen to the voice of God! Around you! Listen! He calls you to grow! To stretch your mind with new knowledge, To stretch your muscles with clean play and hard work. To stretch your heart to include new friends, To stretch your soul and fill it with beauty and hope And great purposes! Listen to the voice of God!

1. How do you think you can grow by listening to God?

Read Psalm 46:10 NCV: “God says, 'Be quiet and know that I am God. I will be supreme over all the nations; I will be supreme in the earth.'”
James 1:19-25 NCV:

“My dear brothers and sisters, always be willing to listen and slow to speak. Do not become angry easily, because anger will not help you live the right kind of life God wants. So put out of your life every evil thing and every kind of wrong. Then in gentleness accept God's teaching that is planted in your hearts, which can save you.

“Do what God's teaching say; when you only listen and do nothing, you are fooling yourselves. Those who hear God's teaching and do nothing are like people who look at themselves in a mirror. They see their faces and then go away and quickly forget what they looked like. But the truly happy people are those who carefully study God's perfect law that makes people free, and they continue to study it. They do not forget what they heard, but they obey what God's teaching says. "Those who do this will be made happy."

2. How can you learn to understand others?

3. How would understanding yourself first help you to better understand others?

“For Whom the Bell Tolls”
by John Donne

No person is an island, entire of itself; every person is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any person's death diminishes me, because I am involved with mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

9. To be whole, a person must give of him or her self to others. Why? How has your life affected the lives of others around you?
“If I Can Stop One Heart From Breaking”  
by Emily Dickinson

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.

8. True benevolence requires concern for and understanding of others and all things in nature. Reflect on your own life.

 Township  What are your shortcomings?

 Township How can you correct these shortcomings?

“A Boy’s Prayer” by William DeWitt Hyde

Give me clean hands, clean words, and clean thoughts. Help me stand for the hard right against the easy wrong. Save me from habits that harm. Teach me to work as hard and play as fair in Thy sight alone as if the whole world saw. Forgive me when I am unkind, and help me to forgive those who are unkind to me. Keep me ready to help others at some cost to myself and send me chances to do some good every day, and so to grow more like Christ. Amen

4. Township Why is honor and integrity important?

 Read Colossians 3:17 or Colossians 3:23-24. (Is there another passage which shares the same meaning?)

 John 15:12-14 NIV:

 “[Jesus said,] ‘My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.’ ”

5. Township What kind of new friends could you add to widen your circle of friendship and increase your understanding of others?
Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace!
Where there is hatred - let me sow love;
Where there is injury – pardon,
Where there is doubt – faith,
Where there is despair – hope,
Where there is darkness – light,
Where there is sadness – joy.
O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled, as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Matthew 5:14-16 NIV®:

“[Jesus said,] ‘You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.’”

Matthew 7:1-6 NIV®:

“[Jesus said,] ‘Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

‘Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.’”

6. How are these ideas or thoughts important to you?

7. What does the reading say to you about:
   - Judging others?
   - Condemning/blaming others?