Esther Issue 1 Group Handout

The Crown Alone | Adult group sample

Read Esther 1:1-2:4 alongside Issue 1. As royal decisions move from a palace into ordinary homes, we will notice the people affected, compare the text and images, and consider how we use our own influence.

Come as you are

You do not need previous study or familiarity with the Bible. Read, listen, ask questions, and pass whenever you wish. Personal stories are welcome when freely offered; no question requires you to share one.

Notice a life beyond the crowd

John Koenig's modern word sonder names an awareness that other people have intricate lives of their own. It is not a biblical word. Here it invites us to notice a worker, a child, a servant, or a queen as someone with relationships and concerns beyond the scene we see.

Keep four questions beside you

Scripture What does the passage actually say? Who is speaking?

History What do sources outside Esther establish about the setting?

Comic What does the artwork imagine, emphasize, or compress?

Response Whose experience might I overlook? What could I do with greater care?

A teacher's explanation is interpretation. Ask how it is supported. We can be moved by a scene without assuming the Bible states every detail in it.

People to recognize

Ahasuerus or Xerxes: the king. Vashti: the queen. Mehuman: one of the royal attendants. Memucan: one of the advisers. These names appear in Esther 1.

Ada and her family, and Sarai and her family, are created for the comic. Sarai is not Esther. The final household remains unnamed in Issue 1.

Our reading route

Esther 1:1-12, then story pages 1-9 and a pause. Esther 1:13-2:4, then pages 10-17. We will finish with conversation and an optional prayer. Story-page numbers differ from PDF page numbers; your leader will help you find the place.

Some images portray a degrading royal demand, battle injury, and forced separation. You may skip an image or step out. You can still join the conversation.

Notice and compare

Jot down a few words while we read. These are invitations to conversation, not a test.

A person I noticed

Which panel helped you care about someone you might otherwise pass over? Name the person or the page and the detail that stayed with you.

What we know and what we imagine

At story pages 8-10, what does Esther 1:10-12 state? What does the comic add or make you wonder about?

Reading note. The large image on pages 8-9 imagines a threatened display. Vashti's refusal appears on page 10. The Bible does not tell us why she refuses or say that she must wear only the crown.

A decision reaches someone else

At pages 11-13, follow the decree from the court into homes. Whose concern shapes the decision? Whose experience does the court fail to hear?

A question I want to keep

What is still unclear, or what makes you want to continue reading?

Respond with care

One choice this week

Think of one decision in your home, work, church, or community that affects someone else. What could you ask before deciding for them? You may keep your answer private.

The person or situation I want to notice

_____

_____

One question I can ask or one practical step I can take

_____

_____

A prayer or reflection

God, help me notice the people affected by my choices. Give me humility to listen and wisdom to act with care. Amen.

If you prefer quiet reflection, use the same moment to consider whom you want to listen to this week.

A little context for pages 14 to 16

Susa was a Persian royal center in what is now southwest Iran. The comic's Greek campaign scenes provide context from outside Esther: Athos is a peninsula; the Hellespont is a waterway between Asia and Europe. Esther does not mention that campaign or say it caused the search for a queen.

Sarai's departure is imagined. It anticipates the gathering of women in Esther 2:8, beyond this session's main reading. The comic's private conversations and war memories are not recorded biblical dialogue.

Before we leave

One thing the text and comic helped me see, or one thing that needs a clearer explanation

_____

_____

For another meeting, the next reading is Esther 2:1-18 with Issue 2. This handout accompanies one sample session.

Sources: Esther 1:1-2:4 and 2:8; Issue 1 canon v1.7.2; UNESCO, Susa; John Koenig, Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows; Herodotus, Histories 7.22-24 and 7.34-36. Full links and reading notes are in the leader guide. No Bible translation text is reproduced.