Esther Issue 2 Facilitator Guide

The Hidden Queen | Esther 2:5-23 | A flexible 90 minute session

Help readers see people beneath palace roles, distinguish the comic's additions from Esther 2:5-23, and choose one act of care or integrity. Welcome readers with any faith background or none. Guide all 25 story pages; no prior attendance or study is required.

The 90 minute plan

Elapsed	Minutes	Facilitation
0-18 min	18	Brief introductions or check-in: recent highs, lows, or questions. About 60-90 seconds each; passing is welcome.
18-23 min	5	Give the short recap and sonder prompt below. Introduce the session's focus.
23-28 min	5	Read inside front, Esther 2:5-14. Invite two readers; let verse 14 settle.
28-43 min	15	Walk comic pages 1-7 panel by panel. Brief pauses after 4 and 7.
43-45 min	2	Turn to the back Scripture page and read only Esther 2:15-18.
45-53 min	8	Read comic pages 8-13, reaching the coronation centerfold.
53-60 min	7	Centerfold pause: one quiet minute, then compare change, continuity, and unseen lives.
60-63 min	3	Read the remainder of the back Scripture page, Esther 2:19-23.
63-80 min	17	Read comic pages 14-25. Brief stop after 19; let the final two pages settle.
80-87 min	7	Name one biblical fact, one comic addition, and one practical response.
87-90 min	3	Close with a reflection or, if appropriate for your group, the optional prayer on page 3.

Open in your own voice

"In Issue 1, a king's decision reached an ordinary home. In Issue 2, the door opens. Before Esther receives a crown, she has a name, a family, losses, and people who love her. As we read, choose one person besides Esther to notice. What choices do they have, and what might care look like for them?"

Prepare and keep the pace

Mark story pages 4, 7, 8, 12-13, 19, and 25. Ask another facilitator to watch time. Choose willing readers for the biblical passages and dialogue. Read every panel, but pause for discussion at the five marked stops. Leave silent panels a few quiet seconds.

Reading order: the front Scripture page ends at 2:14. Read 2:15-18 from the back Scripture page before comic page 8. This session follows the full issue through 2:23. If you continue with Issue 3, begin with a brief recap of the warning.

If check-in reaches 20 minutes, shorten the opening to 3 minutes. If behind later, take one answer per pause and leave background questions for later. Protect the biblical readings, centerfold, closing response, and reflection.

Read Esther online

esther.gappjunction.com

Scan to explore the website. To read complete issues, choose Sign in or Create account, then Read Esther. Select Issue 2 to accompany this guide.

Explore Watch, For groups, and Behind the story. Save your recovery key when creating an account.

The First Half of Issue 2

Read Esther 2:5-14 first. Story page numbers are printed at the bottom of the comic; physical PDF page = story page + 2. The centerfold is story 12-13, physical 14-15.

Story pages	Notice and distinguish	A question or short cue
1-2 2:5-10	Mordecai is her cousin and adoptive father. The NLT locates exile in his family. Packing, needles, neighbors, and exact dialogue are invented.	"Who is Esther before she becomes queen?" Keep her Jewish identity, family loss, and existing relationships in view.
3-4 2:8-11	Hegai's favorable treatment, seven attendants, and Mordecai's daily concern are biblical. Sarai and the attendants' names are invented; Tirah is one of the seven.	PAUSE AFTER 4: "What has Esther lost, and what do Mordecai and Hegai each do that still helps?" Take two answers.
5 2:12	Twelve months and the two six-month periods come from the verse. Sewing, shared work, posture, and speaking practice are dramatic expansion.	Let the ordinary friendship scenes run. They invite attention without proving why Esther won favor.
6-7 2:12-14	Sarai's plea and aftermath are invented. The verse describes transfer and recall by name; the comic's "For life" is an inference, not an explicit legal term.	PAUSE AFTER 7: "What does staying with Sarai help us notice? Which choices are hers?" Do not ask readers to imagine intimate acts.
8-11 2:15-18	READ 2:15-18 before page 8. Advice, royal love, and selection are biblical; robe, conversation, breakfast, decision staging, and rehearsal are imagined.	The brief wedding-comedy joke can give the room a breath. Identify it as a modern artistic wink if asked, then continue.
12-13 2:17	Crowning is biblical. The grand public wedding and its ceremony are reconstructed. The king's love is stated; Esther's reciprocal feelings are not.	Stop on the full centerfold and use the discussion below.

The seven minute centerfold pause

Give the group one quiet minute to look. Then invite two or three voices across these questions; avoid going around the whole circle again.

- What has changed for Esther? Look for public standing, recognition, resources, and access.
- What has not automatically changed? Family secrecy and past loss remain; we do not yet know the extent of her freedom.
- Whose experience remains outside the celebration? Return to Sarai, the attendants, Mordecai, and workers in the scene.

Return to 2:17-18 for the last minute: name the affection, crown, banquet, holiday, and gifts that the text supplies, then identify one artistic addition. Transition: "The celebration is real within the story. Let's also watch what happens beyond the feast hall."

Care in the room

Before this section, briefly note that the issue includes sexual coercion and later violent punishment. Anyone may pass on a question or turn a page. Do not require personal disclosure. If something personal is shared, thank the person, listen, and offer a private conversation after group.

The Second Half and Closing Discussion

After the centerfold pause, read Esther 2:19-23. Comic page 14 returns briefly to the celebration in verse 18, already read. Follow every panel, keeping most of the time for the story rather than extra historical explanation.

Story pages	Notice and distinguish	A question or short cue
14-16	Feast, holiday, and gifts are biblical. The older guard's death and 50 lashes on page 15 are invented. Esther's gift of date bread to Sarai is also invented.	Let the shift from celebration to grievance and care register. A small kindness does not undo Sarai's circumstances, but it matters to the comic's human story.
17-18 2:19-22	The NLT calls Mordecai a palace official; the Hebrew footnote says he sits at the king's gate. Exact clerk duties, overheard words, and access clues are reconstructed.	Track the information: Mordecai learns of danger and sends a warning. Hathach's particular chapter 2 assignment is a comic addition.
19 2:22	Esther reports the danger and explicitly credits Mordecai. The urgency and private staging are imagined around this biblical action.	PAUSE AFTER 19: "Why does giving Mordecai credit matter? How can someone use influence to protect another person?"
20-22 2:23	The report is investigated and confirmed. Daryav, the witnesses, gate evidence, and violent questioning are invented.	Briefly note that the comic corroborates the report through separate information. Pain is not proof, and the verse does not prescribe torture.
23 2:23	The issue follows the NLT's impalement wording; other versions use hanging language. The precise apparatus is not specified.	Do not linger over bodily detail. Members may turn the page and follow the verse instead.
24-25 2:23	Recording the event is biblical. The interrupted reward conversation and delegation are invented; chapter 2 does not explain a missed reward.	FINAL PAUSE: "What has Mordecai done that matters before he knows whether anyone will thank him?" Stop the story here.

Closing discussion

Ask for one example each: a detail the biblical text states; a comic addition that helped someone care; a practical response. One closing question is: "Who needs me to stay present, speak carefully, or give proper credit this week?" Give a quiet minute to write on the reading guide.

A useful distinction: understanding the guards' grievance in the adaptation is different from excusing their plan. Likewise, seeing good emerge in a story does not make coercion or abuse good. We can recognize kindness, courage, and truthful reporting without treating every royal action as a moral example.

Closing reflection or optional prayer

"God, help us see people beyond the roles they occupy. Teach us to stay present when we cannot fix everything, to use our influence with care, and to tell the truth while honoring those who help. Give us patience when good work goes unnoticed, and help us trust you without explaining away another person's pain. Amen."

A faith group may include specific prayer needs. Other groups can close by sharing one action to take. Continue with Issue 3 when ready; keep the later meaning of the royal record unrevealed.

Facilitator Notes and Likely Questions

Teaching notes on Dr Creasy

Topic	Useful contribution and limits
Family and royal search	Connect the imperial search to Mordecai and Esther's family. Creasy's one contestant from each of 127 provinces is not a number or contest format stated by Scripture.
Favor and hidden identity	Notice Hegai's favor, daily care, and concealed identity. Creasy reads Hegai as cultivating a future queen; 2:9 gives the favor without that inner motive.
Warning and royal record	Track the warning, credit, inquiry, and record. The exact insult, means of discovery, and palace job are interpretations. This block moves into the next chapter; stop at 2:23.

The notes summarize Dr. Bill Creasy's teaching; they do not quote him verbatim. Keep observation and interpretation distinct. Avoid speculative sexual coaching, exact ages, or claims that Jewish identity could be read from someone's appearance.

Optional Christian reflection

Providence: faith groups may contemplate God's sustaining and guiding care amid ordinary events. The Hebrew narrative does not name God or assign him a motive for every event. Discuss hope without suggesting that royal coercion was good or that faithful people are promised promotion.

Faithful presence and love of neighbor: 2:7,11 gives concrete care across distance. Integrity and stewardship of influence: 2:22-23 gives a credited warning, a checked report, and a record. As a Christian response, Romans 12:15 and Philippians 2:3-4 can deepen these themes without claiming the characters consciously followed those later texts.

Keep these answers ready

Why hide her identity? Mordecai tells her to (2:10,20); his reason is unstated. Protection or assimilation are interpretations. The text does not settle their private beliefs or supply a universal rule for disclosing identity.

Is Mordecai her uncle, or an exile from 597 BCE? He is her cousin and adoptive father (2:7,15). The printed NLT says his family was exiled; its footnote gives Hebrew "he." Readers differ on the reference to an ancestor or Mordecai. Do not calculate his age as settled history.

How do the dates fit? Year seven, Tebeth, is commonly winter 479/478 BCE. The women's preparation lasts twelve months. The Greek wars lie in the earlier narrative gap; Scripture does not connect them causally to the search.

What does outside history verify? Susa's palace and Persian imperial setting have archaeological support. The story's individual scenes, wedding ritual, confinement details, and 50-lash sentence are not thereby verified. Evidence shows varied roles and influence for Persian women.

Is the punishment precisely reconstructed? No. The NLT uses impalement; other translations differ. Esther 2:23 gives no apparatus height. Keep the discussion on actions and consequences rather than execution mechanics.

Sources for further reading

Bible: Esther 2:5-23 and the NLT footnotes printed in Issue 2 v2.14. Comic: The Hidden Queen and its companion teaching notes. Interpretation: Dr. Bill Creasy's teaching on Esther, paraphrased and distinguished from the biblical text.

Esther 2 and notes (USCCB) | NET Bible notes on Esther | Susa archaeology (UNESCO) | Greece and Persia (Iranica) | Women in ancient Persia (Iranica)

Use the numbered Hebrew-story chapters when consulting editions with Greek additions. The NLT passage is referenced, not reproduced in this guide. Read the story before using the detailed discussion notes to avoid spoilers.