Esther Issue 3 Group Handout

The Man Who Would Not Bow | Thursday October 15, 2026 | 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Tonight we read Esther 3:1-15 and follow Issue 3 v3.5.1. We will ask how truth, conscience, and the use of authority affect real people. No prior reading is needed; choose one person besides Mordecai or Haman to notice as we go.

Tonight's route

Time	Together we will
7:00-7:18	Share highs, lows, significant events, fun facts, and prayer needs. Passing is welcome.
7:18-7:27	Recap Issue 2, return to Sonder, and read inside front: Esther 3:1-5.
7:27-7:49	Walk through story pages 1-13. Watch who gets heard and who is overlooked.
7:49-7:56	Read and pause at the centerfold, story pages 14-15.
7:56-8:19	Read back cover: Esther 3:6-15; then follow story pages 16-29.
8:19-8:30	Compare Scripture and comic, choose a response, and pray together.

Sonder when an order reaches a family

Sonder is John Koenig's modern word for recognizing that each person has a life as vivid and complex as our own. The court can speak of a whole people as a problem. The comic gives us names, friendships, work, and a family table so that the people affected become harder to overlook.

Stay with Vardun when his explanation is lost; with Sarai when a friend makes time; with the scribe asked to keep writing; with Rina when an imperial order becomes a question about her own family. These scenes are dramatic additions that invite attention to the people named or included in Scripture.

Keep these questions beside the pictures

What does Scripture state? What does the comic imagine? What can history establish? What is a teacher's interpretation? How might we respond?

Use the comic's printed story numbers. Story page + 2 = physical PDF page. The centerfold is story 14-15 / physical 16-17. The final facing opening is story 28-29 / physical 30-31.

Read Esther online

esther.gappjunction.com

Scan to explore the site. Choose Sign in or Create account, then Read Esther for available digital issues. Save your recovery key when creating an account.

The Time and World of Esther 3

We are in Susa, a Persian royal center in today's southwest Iran. Esther belongs to the story of Jewish life beyond Judah under Persian rule. Jerusalem's Second Temple already stands; Esther follows a community living elsewhere in the empire.

The timeline we are following

Date in Esther	Approximate BCE	Event and passage
Year 3	483-482	Royal display and feasts; Vashti is removed (1:3-22).
Year 7, Tebeth Month 10	479-478	Esther is brought to the king and crowned queen (2:16-18).
Year 12, Nisan Month 1; Nisan 13	474	Lots are cast; the decree is written on Nisan 13 (3:7,12). We reach this tonight.
Sivan 23 Month 3	c. 474	**To be revealed in a later issue**
Adar 13-15 Month 12	c. 473	**Later events remain concealed**

The decree names Adar 13 as the planned attack date (3:13); its outcome stays for later issues. The print NLT footnotes convert Nisan 13 to April 17, 474 BCE, and Adar 13 to March 7, 473 BCE. Modern calendar conversions are a guide; the months and regnal years are the biblical anchors.

From Esther's coronation in Tebeth of year 7 to the lots in Nisan of year 12 is about four years and three months. The comic imagines events within that interval. Scripture gives no promotion date for Haman and no grain or bridge story.

A real empire with ordinary work

Excavations at Susa include Darius's palace and administrative buildings. The Persepolis Fortification Archive, from another Persian center, records food distribution and bears many seal impressions. Such evidence helps us picture organized administration; it does not independently establish the comic's named workers, bridge incident, or exact court conversations.

Older biblical memories in the names

Haman is called an Agagite (3:1). Mordecai is a Benjaminite with Kish in his ancestry (2:5). Read beside Deuteronomy 25:17-19 and 1 Samuel 9:1-2; 15:8-9, these names recall Amalek, King Agag, and Saul. Many readers hear an old conflict echoing in this story. The comic turns that connection into a family conversation; the full conversation and genealogy are not supplied by Esther.

Words and details to recognize

Term	What it means here
Pur / purim	A lot / lots, cast to choose a date (3:7). Keep its later significance for a later issue.
Signet ring	A seal used to authorize an order in the king's name (3:10-12). Its transfer gives Haman power to act.
10,000 talents	An enormous promised amount of silver (3:9). The NLT note gives about 340 metric tons. Its source is not stated.
Plunder	Taking the victims' property. The decree offers that material incentive to those who kill them (3:13).

People in Issue 3

The written labels distinguish people named in Scripture from characters or names created for the comic. Biblical labels are blue; invented labels are rust. Both remain readable in black and white.



Haman

BIBLICAL

Son of Hammedatha, the Agagite. Promoted above the nobles; turns his anger at Mordecai against all Jews (3:1-6).



Mordecai

BIBLICAL

Jewish palace official, Esther's cousin and adoptive father. Refuses the commanded bow and identifies himself as a Jew (3:2-4).



Esther

BIBLICAL

The queen, whose Jewish identity remains concealed (2:10,20). Her visits and gifts to Sarai in this issue are invented.



Xerxes

BIBLICAL / HISTORICAL

Ahasuerus, usually identified as Xerxes I. Promotes Haman and gives him the signet ring and authority (3:1,10-11).



Sarai

INVENTED

Esther's friend among the royal women. Their ordinary conversations and sewing keep friendship visible beyond rank and ceremony.



Tirah

INVENTED NAME

One of Esther's seven attendants in the comic. Carries sewing and makes time to sit with Sarai; names and actions are added.



Vardun

INVENTED

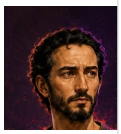
Road official who closes a failing bridge to protect workers. His dismissal makes the cost of Haman's selective report personal.



Arsham

INVENTED

Senior court official who manages access, passes instructions, and supervises the decree's copies. His name and exact tasks are added.



Neriah

INVENTED

Jewish palace scribe in the comic. Writes under pressure and tells Mordecai what he heard in the royal audience.



Bagai

INVENTED

Gate official and Mordecai's coworker. Warns him about the bowing order, reports the refusal, and reads the public decree.



Ada

INVENTED

Joel's wife and mother of Rina and Lev. Discusses inherited memory and draws the children close when the danger reaches home.



Joel

INVENTED

Ada's husband and father of Rina and Lev. Reads the public notice, then explains it to his family.



Rina

INVENTED

Ada and Joel's older child. Her questions bring the decree's threat into the room as a child's lived experience.



Lev

INVENTED

Ada and Joel's younger child. His presence reminds us that the decree explicitly includes children (3:13).

Also named: Deena is an invented gate coworker; Dara is the invented courier with the red sleeve patch. Lady Parya, Belati, and the unnamed workers supply imagined everyday lives. Hammedatha is Haman's biblical father (3:1). Lucy is an artistic bird motif.

Read Scripture and the Comic Together

The adaptation expands brief biblical statements into choices we can see and relationships we can feel. Those additions help us discuss the text while remaining additions.

Story pages	Scripture gives us	The comic adds or chooses
1-10 Before 3:1	A gap after the events of chapter 2; no account of how Haman earned his promotion.	Grain payments, the failing bridge, Vardun's dismissal, Mordecai's exact office work, and Esther's visits to Sarai.
11-13 3:1-4	Haman's promotion; a royal bowing order; Mordecai's repeated refusal and disclosed Jewish identity.	Private ambition, the word "Lower," sewing exchanges, and the coworkers' names and exact dialogue.
14-15 3:4-5	The report reaches Haman; he sees the refusal and becomes enraged.	The staged confrontation and its exact words. The silent centerfold asks us to consider both men without narrating their thoughts.
16-17 3:4,6	Mordecai is Jewish; Haman decides to target all Jews. Earlier biblical books describe Agag and Amalek.	A family discussion, Mordecai's fear, and his explanation that bowing would violate duty to God. These speeches are not in Esther 3.
18 3:7	Lots are cast in Nisan of year 12 to choose the later date.	The objects, room, officiant, and exact exchange around the lots.
19-20 3:8-11	Haman accuses an unnamed people, offers silver, and receives royal authority and the ring.	Private staging and brief replies. The accusation is Haman's speech; it is not the narrator's verdict on Jewish people.
21-23 3:12-14	Scribes write the order in local scripts and languages; it is sealed and dispatched. Women and children are included.	Arsham, Neriah, Dara, the clerk's pause, and the detailed office work. Scripture does not name these officials.
24-27 3:12-15	The decree is public; Susa is thrown into confusion.	Neriah as Mordecai's source, the street questions, and Joel explaining the public notice to Ada, Rina, and Lev.
28-29 3:15	The king and Haman drink while the city is in confusion.	A particular household at its table. The final facing pages turn the biblical contrast into two human scenes.

Why would Mordecai not bow

Dr. Creasy reads the refusal as faithfulness to God. The comic dramatizes that reading. Esther 3 connects the refusal with Mordecai's Jewish identity but leaves his full reasoning unstated. Other biblical people bow before human rulers (for example, 1 Samuel 24:8); bowing is not always worship.

Mordecai's refusal is the occasion for Haman's rage. Haman chooses the collective attack, and Xerxes authorizes it. The targeted families have not become guilty because one man refuses a bow.

What We Can Learn Tonight

What to notice	A response to consider
Anger can dress itself as public policy 3:5-9	Haman turns a personal grievance into accusations against an entire people. Ask whose words you are accepting and whose story is missing.
Authority carries responsibility 3:10-15	Xerxes lends his name and seal to the order. Consider what your approval, signature, silence, or influence makes possible.
People must remain visible 3:13,15	The decree includes children and makes killing profitable. Keep names, relationships, and practical needs in view when a group is treated as a problem.

Faith when the chapter ends in fear

Christian readers often speak of providence: God's sustaining and guiding care even when it cannot yet be seen. The Hebrew narrative of Esther does not explicitly name God. This chapter ends with a real threat and an unsettled city. We can pray, lament, and practice care without pretending we already know how every person's suffering will end.

What Dr Creasy and other teachers add

Creasy makes the public cost of refusal and the terrible reach of the decree vivid. He also notices how the promise of property gives people a motive to participate. Traditional Christian readings emphasize conscience and providence; Jewish and literary readings also attend to communal identity, the Kish/Agag echoes, and the danger of official language. Keep the text's statements and each teacher's inference distinct.

For our conversation

- At the centerfold, what do you notice about power, conscience, fear, and the watching crowd? What does Scripture tell us, and what are we supplying?
- What changes when the decree reaches Rina and Lev? Which person's experience made the story more real to you?
- When have you needed a fuller account before accepting a judgment? What would responsible care or truthful speech look like this week?

One response this week

Someone whose fuller story I will seek: _____

One concrete act of care, truth, or responsibility: _____

Optional companion readings: Proverbs 16:33 on lots; James 1:19-20 on anger; Proverbs 31:8-9 on speaking for others. Next issue: Esther 4. We stop tonight at 3:15 and leave its response for that meeting.

Sources and further reading

Comic and Scripture: Issue 3 print edition v3.5.1, sent October 15; its supplied NLT text and footnotes cover Esther 3:1-15. Comic page numbers throughout mean the printed story numbers. Dr. Bill Creasy: supplied Book of Esther transcript; wording is paraphrased and time markers are approximate.

Esther 3 notes (USCCB) | Esther 3 notes (NET Bible) | Susa archaeology (UNESCO) | Persepolis records (Stolper, pp. 92-102)

Use the numbered Hebrew-story chapters when comparing editions that include Greek additions. Scripture is referenced here; read the supplied NLT passage in the comic or your own Bible.