Esther Issue 5 Leader Plan

The Sleepless Night | Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 7:00–8:30 p.m.

As you read Esther 5:2–6:14, let the group experience the surprise in the king's room, then see the same morning through Rina's eyes. Ask how a reader might recognize God's care while a threatened family still waits.

Lead the room

Time	Reading and facilitation
7:00–7:18	Around the room. Share a high, a low, a surprise, or a prayer request. You can pass.
7:18–7:26	Remember where Issue 4 stopped. Choose a person to follow. Read the inside front cover, Esther 5:2–6:5.
7:26–7:33	Turn to handout p. 5. Find the four Hebrew letters Dr. Creasy noticed in Esther's invitation (5:4).
7:33–7:54	Read story pp. 1–11 in order. Pause at the centerfold. What does the king want, and what has Haman come to ask?
7:54–7:58	Read the back cover, Esther 6:6–14. Listen for the name Haman expects and the name the king gives.
7:58–8:17	Read story pp. 12–21. Hear the proclamation in the square, then listen to the child at the workshop.
8:17–8:30	Turn to handout p. 6. Discuss one question, choose a response for the week, and pray together.

Before people arrive

Put an Issue 5 v5.8 booklet, a member handout, and a pen at each seat. Mark the inside front cover, the centerfold, the back cover, and story p. 17 in your copy. Invite two readers for the Scripture and four voices for the initials. Keep the timeline and cast page as references.

Open the conversation

"Who helped you get through this week in a way other people might never have seen?" Welcome highs, lows, and prayer requests too. At 7:18 invite everyone back to the doorway where Issue 4 ended. If the check-in needs longer, read pp. 3–9 with a single pause and protect the centerfold, Rina's question, and closing prayer.

Read Esther online

https://esther.gappjunction.com

Scan the code or use the address above. Sign in and choose Read Esther to open the digital issues.

From the Scepter to the Centerfold

7:18–7:26 ● Sonder and the first reading

Open to story p. 1. Recall where Issue 4 left us. Esther has risked entering the inner court, and her people are still under the decree. Give the room a moment to look over the king's shoulder. "If that were your sister at the door, what would you watch first?" Have two volunteers share the inside-front-cover reading, Esther 5:2–14 and 6:1–5. Listen for today, tomorrow and that night.

7:26–7:33 ● Return to Esther's invitation

Use the four-letter exercise on leader p. 4. Then return to the comic. Take every panel in sequence and give quieter readers time to finish before asking a question.

7:33–7:47 ● Story pp. 1–9

1–4 Watch the scepter extend on p. 1 and Esther touch it on p. 2. Follow her to three prepared places. At the wine course, hear her ask the two men back tomorrow. What has she actually told them by now? Esther 5:4–8 leaves her reasons for waiting open.

5–7 Follow Haman from the gate to his boasting at home, then to the order for an execution pole. Which single slight outweighs everything he lists? Turn to Tirah staying with Esther and Sarai asking a wakeful woman about her sister. Ask which act of care on p. 7 the comic invites them to imitate.

8–9 Follow the workers to the sleepless king and Neriah's archive. Invite someone who remembers Issue 2 to recall whose deed entered the records (2:21–23). What reason does 6:1 give for calling for the records? What kept the king awake in the first place is left open.

7:47–7:54 ● Hold open story pp. 10–11

Read the whole upper picture across the fold. Below, read both left panels in order, from the missing reward to the king's question. Finish on the lower right as Haman requests an audience. Ask, "Why does each man want this door opened? What does the reader know that neither man knows?" Give everyone thirty seconds to look. Then ask someone to trace the chain from the warning in 2:21–23 to this morning. What difference could any one missed link have made?

From the King's Question to the Doorway

7:54–7:58 ● Read the back cover together

Read Esther 6:6–14 aloud. Give listeners two things to catch. Whose thoughts does the narrator let us hear? Where does Mordecai go when the procession ends? Return to story p. 12.

7:58–8:17 ● Story pp. 12–21

12–14 Read the king's question and Haman's response. Give two people the roles of Haman and Xerxes. Let one describe every honor in 6:7–9, then let the other name its recipient in 6:10. Who supplied the first name in Haman's mind? His private assumption comes directly from 6:6.

15–17 Look at who holds the robe, who takes the reins and who has to speak. After the parade, pause over Rina and Ada. Why might a child reasonably think her family is safe? The comic imagines their exchange. Scripture sends Mordecai back to the gate (6:12), and the decree from 3:13 still stands. What could their neighbors honestly tell them that evening?

18–21 Find the room where Haman boasted earlier. How has the advice changed from 5:14 to 6:13? Hear the knock. At the silent final doorway, find the seal on Haman's hand and the empty third place. Who knows about the coming request? Who is still waiting to hear it? Close the issue at the threshold.

8:17–8:30 ● Compare, respond and pray

8:17–8:23. Invite the group to pick one question from member page 6. At the centerfold, compare the missing reward with the picture of Neriah reading. For Haman, listen for his desire to be seen as the king's favorite. For Rina, invite someone to speak to her as family and offer one thing they could do tonight. Possible responses to all three are on leader page 6.

8:23–8:25. Give everyone time to write one response for this week on member page 6. Invite a name or a practical action from anyone who wants to share. At 8:25 turn to the requests shared at 7:00 and pray together.

"God, thank you for the people whose work we have overlooked. Help us give them credit, stay beside those who are waiting, and speak truthfully about what we can offer. Amen."

Four Letters in Esther's Invitation

Discover the four letters • 4 minutes, then discuss for 3

Ask a reader for Esther 5:3–4. Then say, "The king offers half his kingdom. Esther asks two men to come to dinner today. Dr. Bill Creasy once showed his students the line he had photocopied from his Hebrew Bible. Open to page 5 of your handout and let's see what he saw."

Show member page 5. Point to START HERE at the far right. Say, "This is yavo, 'let … come.' Its first letter is on the right. Circle it, then move left to the next word." Invite four voices to give one initial each. Anyone who wants to write can match boxes 1–4 to rows 1–4 and read the last column downward. Compare answers before moving on.

In Hebrew word order	Meaning	First consonant
1 yavo	let … come	Y • yod
2 ha-melekh	the king	H • he
3 ve-Haman	and Haman	W • waw (also called vav)
4 ha-yom	today	H • he

"Together they give Y–H–W–H, the four Hebrew consonants of the name often printed LORD in English Bibles. The v sound in ve-Haman represents the consonant traditionally written W. 'Today' supplies the last H."

What does Creasy hear in those words?

"Hebrew Esther never names God outright. Creasy sees God present as Esther risks speaking and the story begins to turn. When the summons reaches Haman, what might he think the invitation means? What would they sound like to someone whose family lives under the decree?" Give members time to answer from inside the scene.

Jewish readers were noticing these initials by the thirteenth century. Readers agree about the four letters and differ on authorial intent. Matthias Hopf and Helge Bezold observe that ordinary Hebrew grammar also accounts for the wording. Some Bibles include Greek additions with explicit prayers. This exercise uses Hebrew Esther.

If someone asks about Haman's words

A related tradition reads 5:13, where Haman says his honors mean nothing to him. Four consecutive Hebrew words end H–W–H–Y. Read those final consonants from the last word back to the first and they give Y–H–W–H. Keep this separate from the 5:4 example Creasy demonstrated.

Bring it back to this week

"Think of someone whose quiet action opened a door for you. What did they actually do? Looking back, did you sense God's care there?" Let someone tell the story even if they still wonder what it means. Invite the group to thank one such person by name this week.

Questions Worth Keeping Open

Why invite Haman twice?

In 5:4–8 Esther invites the king and Haman today, then promises an answer tomorrow. She has already risked her life for an audience (4:11, 16). Timing may be strategic, but Scripture leaves her private calculation open. Ask what one night's delay means to a Jewish family living under the order.

Why does the king open the records that night?

In Esther 6:1 the king asks for the records because he cannot sleep. Next come the reading, the discovery that Mordecai's service had gone unrewarded, and Haman's appearance. Read 2:21–23 for the earlier report. Christian readers often see providence in that timing. The narrator lets us hear the sequence and draw our own conclusion.

How long between the plot and the public honor?

Teach "about four years in our comic." Issue 2 stages the plot days after the coronation feast. In Esther 2:16, the dated event is Esther being taken to the king in Tebeth, month ten of year seven. The date in 3:7 is Nisan, month one of year twelve. That is about four years and three months between the dated markers. Scripture dates neither the warning nor the procession exactly. In 2:22 Esther names her source, in 2:23 the deed is recorded, and in 6:10–11 Mordecai receives public honor.

Was keeping such records a Persian practice?

Tablets from Persepolis under Darius I record rations and deliveries. Writing about Salamis in 480 BCE, the Greek historian Herodotus says a Samian named Phylacos earned land and was recorded as a royal benefactor. These distinct witnesses illuminate Persian administration and the reward for service. The account of Mordecai being read in Susa comes from Esther.

Why does my Bible say gallows where the comic says pole?

Esther 5:14 describes a wooden structure fifty cubits high, about seventy-five feet using an eighteen-inch cubit. The NLT in the booklet pictures a sharpened pole. Other translations use gallows or stake. Its conspicuous height tells you how publicly Haman wants this man shamed. The verse leaves the construction details open.

Has the parade made the family safe?

One man has received a public honor (6:11). The order threatening his people still stands. Story p. 17 gives that difference a voice through an imagined family exchange. Ask, "If you were a neighbor after the parade, what could you offer the family by morning?" Listen for acts of solidarity a person could really carry out.

Notes for preparation

The printer file ESTHER_Issue_05_v5_8_PRINT.pdf carries the NLT text of Esther 5:2–6:5 inside the front cover and 6:6–14 on the back. In the supplied Book of Esther – Bill Creasy Transcript, find the closing recap after the approximate 60:00 mark and search "I Xeroxed". Creasy's specific example is 5:4.

Hebrew text of Esther 5:4 • Hopf and Bezold, §3.3 (2024)

Persepolis Fortification Tablets • Herodotus, Histories 8.85

Laurence Turner on the two patterns, p. 185

What We Can Learn Tonight

Leader notes for member page 6 | Choose one question for the whole group

The centerfold gives readers two reasons for opening the same door. Xerxes wants to honor Mordecai. Haman wants permission to kill him. Asking the group to read that exchange aloud will do more than explaining the irony in advance.

Dr. Creasy and other scholars

With the Hebrew worksheet (5:4). Creasy pauses at the invitation. Ask one person to show the four initial letters and another to say why Creasy hears God's presence here. Someone who is unsure the author intended an acrostic can still discuss Esther's courage in choosing her guests.

At the first banquet (5:4–8). Rabbi Nehemiah, in the Babylonian Talmud, pictures a community tempted to leave its future entirely to a woman inside the palace. He proposes that inviting Haman kept them praying for mercy. Ask what faithful support for Esther might look like from outside the room. Welcome other readings of her motives.

At the centerfold (6:1–11). David Firth asks readers to notice how precisely the events are timed. By the time Haman arrives, the king has heard the report and already wants to reward Mordecai. Give the room a few seconds to imagine what would change if Haman had spoken first. Firth sees room here for faith in providence.

Rabbi Nehemiah • Megillah 15b:14 • David Firth • Esther 6:1–11

For our conversation

Let the group answer first. Use one of these possible responses if someone asks how you would answer.

At the centerfold, choose one detail from Esther 6:1–5 and one the artist supplied. Which detail most affected how you understood that night?

"The record names Mordecai, but the king learns he has received no reward (6:2–3). The comic gives the reader a name, Neriah, and lets me see him looking up from the record. What stays with me is his answer to the king. Someone saved the king's life, his name was there to read, and nobody had thanked him."

Haman invents an honor he would love to receive. What does his answer reveal that he would probably never say about himself (6:6–9)?

"I think Haman wants the whole city to know he is the king's favorite. As soon as the king mentions honoring someone, Haman assumes he means him (6:6). He asks for the king's own robe and horse, then imagines a leading noble walking in front of him announcing the honor (6:7–9). The audience is part of what he wants."

Imagine Rina is your niece. After the parade (story p. 17), what can you honestly tell her, and what could you do for her family tonight?

"Rina, you saw something good today. The king honored Mordecai for saving his life. The order against our people still stands, so I can't promise we're safe. I can stay with you tonight." Then I'd ask Ada and Joel whether it would help if I brought supper or sat with Rina and Lev while they talked. Rina's family is the comic's way of asking what one man's honor meant to a whole community.

One response this week

Give everyone a quiet minute to write a name and an action. Invite one or two voices, then use the prayer on leader page 3 and the requests people shared at the start.