TRACK FOUR

Bible Study & Small Group

A complete session for small groups, classes, and Bible studies, with leader preparation and notes. Plan on 45 to 60 minutes.

Leader Preparation

THE BIG IDEA

In a story where God is never named, ordinary events (a king's anger, an empire-wide search, an orphan's favor, a plot overheard and recorded but unrewarded) are already lining up for His people's rescue. God's providence is often hidden, but it is never absent.

> *"He brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother. The maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter."*
>
> ESTHER 2:7, WEB

BACKGROUND

- **Setting.** Susa, a royal capital of the Persian Empire, in the third to seventh years of the king (1:3; 2:16), about 483-479 BC if he is Xerxes I.
- **The king.** Ahasuerus; most scholars identify him with Xerxes I (486-465 BC). See the Deep Dive track.
- **The Jews in Persia.** Cyrus had let exiles return to Jerusalem about 538 BC (Ezra 1:1-4). Many, like Mordecai's family, stayed.
- **God's name.** The Hebrew book of Esther never names God or mentions prayer. The Greek version adds prayers; those additions are not in the Hebrew text and are outside the Protestant canon, though Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include them.
- **The series.** The Daniel series ended under the Medes and Persians. Next: *For Such a Time as This* (Esther 3-5).

SESSION PLAN

	45 MIN	60 MIN
Welcome and opener	4	7
Watch the film	11	11
Read Esther 2:5-23	4	6
Discussion (choose 4-5)	18	24
Application and prayer	8	12

BEFORE YOU MEET

Read Esther 1-2 in full. Preview the film: it handles Esther 2:12-14 briefly and modestly, and the guards' execution (2:23) is narrated, not shown. Read the leader notes on page 3.

The Session

Open. Think of a time when something that looked random later turned out to matter. What was it?

1
2 **Watch.** Play *A Queen in Persia* (phillacolla.com/biblestories, about 11 minutes). Ask the group to notice every "coincidence" in the story.

3 **Read.** Read Esther 2:5-23 aloud together (chapter 1 is summarized well in the film). Notice that God is never named.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 What image or moment from the film stayed with you?

2 Chapter 1 shows the king's wealth, power, and anger (1:4-12). What picture of human power does the chapter paint?

3 Memucan's advice turned one household's conflict into a law "that it cannot be altered" (1:19). What do you notice about how decisions get made in this court?

4 Esther had "neither father nor mother" (2:7), and Mordecai "took her for his own daughter." Where do you see faithfulness in Mordecai?

5 Esther "was taken" into the king's house (2:8). How should we think about believers caught in systems they didn't choose?

6 Mordecai told Esther not to make her people known (2:10, 20). Was that wisdom, fear, or something else? What does the text say, and what doesn't it say?

7 Mordecai's good deed was recorded but not rewarded (2:21-23; 6:3). How do you handle faithfulness that no one notices?

8 God is never named in Esther. Read Proverbs 16:9 and Proverbs 21:1. How do these verses help us read the book, and our own lives?

APPLICATION

- **Name the hidden hand.** This week, write down three "coincidences" and thank God for His care in them.
- **Be faithful unnoticed.** Do one good thing this week that no one will see, and leave the record with God (Hebrews 6:10).
- **Care for the fatherless.** Like Mordecai, look for someone who needs a family's care: a foster family, a grieving child, a lonely neighbor (Psalm 68:5).

PRAYER

Pray together through Proverbs 16:9: thank God that He directs our steps, even when we make our own plans. Thank Him for adopting us as His children in Christ (Galatians 4:4-5), and ask Him to help each person trust Him in places they didn't choose.

Leader Notes on the Questions

Q2, HUMAN POWER. The king's 180-day display (1:4) and seven-day feast (1:5) show enormous wealth, yet he cannot command his own queen (1:12). The narrator seems to enjoy the irony: a decree is sent to 127 provinces so "that every man should rule his own house" (1:22).

Q3, A LAW THAT CAN'T CHANGE. The idea of an unalterable Persian law returns at the climax (8:8; compare Daniel 6:8). Evidence outside the Bible for such a rule is limited; see the Deep Dive.

Q5, TAKEN. The text uses passive verbs for Esther: she "was taken" (2:8, 16). It neither praises nor condemns her. Interpreters differ on whether to read her as compromised or as a captive with little choice. Hold this with humility, and be gentle; some in your group may carry their own stories of being taken advantage of.

Q6, HIDDEN IDENTITY. The text gives Mordecai's instruction but not his reason (2:10). It will matter later (4:13-14). Don't fill the gap with certainty.

Q8, PROVIDENCE. The narrator never names God or says He is at work. The rest of Scripture teaches His providence plainly (Proverbs 16:33; 21:1; Romans 8:28), so we read the timing of these events confidently as His hand. Be clear that this is reading Esther in light of the whole Bible, and don't claim to know details the text leaves unstated.

IF SOMEONE ASKS ABOUT 2:14 OR 2:23. Answer simply and modestly. Esther 2:14 describes the king's harem; the guards were executed by the king's law. Don't let the group dwell on details; bring the focus back to God's care for His people.