TRACK THREE

A QUEEN IN PERSIA · COMPANION GUIDE

YOUTH MINISTRY

A 60-75 minute youth night for middle and high school students: a hook, a talk, discussion, breakouts, and a challenge for the week.

THE BIG IDEA

God's name is never written in Esther, but His hand is all over it. When your life feels like a place you didn't choose, God is still writing the story.

NIGHT PLAN

	60 MIN	75 MIN
Arrival and hook	9	11
Watch the film	11	11
Leader talk	14	17
Large-group discussion	8	10
Small-group breakouts	12	16
Reflection	4	6
Challenge and prayer	2	4

THE HOOK: PLOT TWIST

Ask: *What's the best plot twist you've seen in a movie, book, or game?* No spoilers for anything recent, and no one has to answer. Take a few answers, then ask: *Looking back, what small details set up the twist?* Bridge: *Tonight's story is full of small details that look random, until you see where they lead.*

Low-prep option: *Didn't Choose It.* Invite students to think of one ordinary thing they didn't decide: a class schedule, a group-project partner, a rainy-day change of plans. They can jot it down privately or just think it; anyone may pass, and no one has to share. Ask: *How does God work in things we didn't choose?*

LEADER TALK

1 **THE MOST POWERFUL MAN ON EARTH.** Ahasuerus ruled "from India even to Ethiopia, over one hundred twenty-seven provinces" (1:1). He threw a 180-day show of wealth (1:4). Yet one queen's refusal set him off (1:12), and his advisers turned it into a law for the whole empire (1:19-22). Power looks big; it is often fragile.

2 **AN ORPHAN IN EXILE.** Esther had "neither father nor mother" (2:7). She belonged to a people far from home, and she "was taken" into the king's house (2:8). Be honest: this was not a fairy-tale contest. Esther was swept into a system she didn't choose. Many students know what it feels like to have big things decided for them.

3 **FAVOR IN A HARD PLACE.** Esther "obtained favor in the sight of all those who looked at her" (2:15), and the king made her queen (2:17). Joseph's story is similar: in a place he didn't choose, "Yahweh was with Joseph…" (Genesis 39:21). The difference is that Esther never mentions God, and neither does the narrator.

4 **WRITTEN DOWN, NOT REWARDED.** Mordecai saved the king's life, and it "was written in the book of the chronicles in the king's presence." (2:23) No reward came (6:3). Some of the most important things you do will go unnoticed for a long time. God doesn't forget (Hebrews 6:10).

5 **JESUS.** *(A gospel connection, not a prediction in Esther.)* Esther was an orphan taken in by Mordecai. In Christ, God adopts people with nothing to offer as His own children (Galatians 4:4-5). The king chose Esther for her beauty; God welcomes us by grace, "not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

6 **HIDDEN, NOT ABSENT.** The film ends by asking where God might be quietly at work in your life, even when you can't see His name written anywhere. You don't have to see the whole story to trust the One who is writing it.

DISCUSSION

MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. The king had huge power but couldn't handle one "no." What does that tell you about him?
2. Esther lost her parents and was taken from her home. How do you think God cared for her?
3. Mordecai did the right thing, and no one rewarded him. Tell about a time you did the right thing and no one noticed. How did it feel?
4. Where could God be working in your life right now, even if you can't see it?

HIGH SCHOOL

1. Why do you think the book of Esther never mentions God, prayer, or the temple?
2. Mordecai told Esther to hide her people (2:10, 20). When is it wise to be quiet, and when does it become hiding?
3. Read Proverbs 16:9 and Proverbs 21:1. How do human choices and God's direction fit together?
4. What's the difference between God being hidden and God being absent?

BREAKOUT GROUPS

1 What's one thing in your life right now that you didn't choose?

2 Where have you seen a "random" detail turn out to matter?

3 Is there something good you did that no one noticed? How can you leave it with God?

4 What's one way you'll look for God's hand this week?

REFLECTION: TWO OPTIONS

Phones down. Hand each student an index card titled *Connect the Dots*. They draw five dots: moments from the past year that seemed random. Beside one, they write where they now think God was at work. Have them keep the card.

Phones out (no social media). Students privately write a note titled *Dots* with three moments from this year they want to bring to God. No one shows a screen or says what they wrote.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

LOOK FOR THE HIDDEN HAND.

Each night this week, write down one thing from the day where God might have been at work: a conversation, a timing, a help you didn't expect. Thank Him for it. Next time your small group meets, share one, if you want to. Anyone may pass.

LEADER NOTES ON HARD QUESTIONS

"WAS ESTHER WRONG TO GO ALONG WITH IT?" The text says she "was taken" (2:8, 16) and doesn't say whether she sinned or resisted. Some interpreters fault Esther and Mordecai for blending in; others stress that a young orphan in a Persian palace had little choice. Present both briefly, and don't shame anyone. Some students have had people with power over them make choices that hurt them. Make clear that is never their fault, and that adults are there to help. Keep the conversation modest; don't speculate about Esther 2:14.

"WHY DID THE KING TREAT VASHTI LIKE THAT?" The text reports a king "merry with wine" (1:10), an angry decree, and advisers worried about wives everywhere (1:17-20). It doesn't hold him up as a model. Vashti's reason is never given, so don't invent one.

"WHERE IS GOD IN ESTHER?" His name never appears in the Hebrew book, and the narrator never says "God did this." But Scripture elsewhere teaches plainly that God rules over kings and lots (Proverbs 21:1; 16:33) and works all things for His people's good (Romans 8:28). So we can say with confidence that God was at work in Esther's story; just be honest that this comes from the whole Bible, not from a statement in Esther.

"DID THIS REALLY HAPPEN?" Most scholars identify Ahasuerus with Xerxes I. Greek historians don't mention Esther or Vashti, and some scholars read the book as a literary story set at court. Ancient sources are partial, and their silence doesn't settle it. This guide, with many evangelical scholars, reads Esther as the account of real events it presents itself to be. See the Deep Dive track.

SAFEGUARDING. If a child or teen tells you about abuse, neglect, self-harm, harmful drinking or drug use at home, or anything else that makes you worried for their safety: stay calm, listen, and thank them for telling you. Don't promise to keep it secret, don't question them for details or investigate, and don't confront anyone involved. Write down what they said as soon as you can, and report it the same day to your church's designated safeguarding lead, following your church's safeguarding policy and any mandatory-reporting law that applies to you. If anyone is in immediate danger, stay with them and call emergency services. Telling a church safeguarding lead does not replace any report the law requires you to make directly to child-protection authorities or police.

PRAYER

Give students a moment of silence to pray Proverbs 16:9: "A man's heart plans his course, but Yahweh directs his steps." Then close: *Father, You see us in places we didn't choose. Thank You that You are never absent, even when You seem hidden. Thank You for Jesus, who makes us Your children. Help us trust You with the parts of the story we can't see yet. Amen.*