

# The Sovereign: Episode 2

## Discussion Guide



### Read Together

We're in a series called *The Sovereign: An 8-Episode Series on God, Esther, and the Rest of Us*. It's the story of young Jew, exiled from her homeland, wrestling with her identity as she rises from orphan nobody to Persian royalty—just in time to save her people from genocide.

- Can anyone recap Episode 1: “The Refusal” (Esther 1:1-22)?
- Each week, we'll ask someone to recap the story so far (or at least the last episode).

This week, we're in Episode 2: “The Contest” (Esther 2:1-18). Three years have passed since the end of Episode 1. *Let's read it together.*

### Discuss Together

*It's okay if you don't get through all the questions. As discussion leader, your job is to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit and facilitate a conversation that leads people toward everyday life like Jesus. Feel free to add additional questions of your own. If you have a big group, it can be helpful to discuss some questions in groups of 2-3 before opening it up to the whole group.*

**Additional Note:** *This week centers on sex. Some groups might find it helpful to split into men and women for this week, but that's up to the discussion leader.*

- **Can someone paraphrase this week's episode in your own words?** If you miss a few details or leave anything out, the rest of the group can jump in at the end.
- **What is something that struck you from an initial reading of the text?**
- Esther has two names (2:7): Esther (her Persian/Babylonian name) and Haddasah (her Jewish name). It's a reminder that she lives in-between two worlds: her ethnic/religious identity as a fourth generation Jewish immigrant and the pagan, Persian world she grew up in.
  - **Does anyone remember how the Jews ended up in exile in the first place?**
  - Mordecai said that Esther could easily hide her Jewish identity (2:10). **What are some reasons it might have been easier to just “blend in” with Persian society?**

- **What are some reasons that Christians might find it easier to just blend in our own cultural moment?**
- On Sunday, we talked about the similarities between Xerxes approach to finding a spouse (2:8-16) and navigating love, sex, and relationships in our own cultural moment.
  - **What are some similarities you see?**
  - Xerxes approach was innately *competitive*. **What are some ways that the modern approach to sex, relationships, and dating can feel like a competition?**
  - Xerxes approach was very *superficial* and based on physical beauty alone. **What are some reasons we place so much emphasis on that? What's the problem with that?**
  - In the end, the final part of the audition to be Xerxes' wife was a night in his bedroom. **Why do you think sex has taken such a prominent place in modern relationships? How might you respond to the idea that sex is just one step in getting to know someone as you're dating?**
  - Esther, like every other woman in the competition, was *objectified* by Xerxes. **What does it mean to objectify someone? Have you ever felt objectified? What's the problem with seeing someone as an object?**
- Esther had sexual baggage. She had been in some questionable situations. And, lots of people have sexual and relational baggage as well. **What are some ways that our sexual baggage can negatively affect us—especially in the church?**
- Esther had sexual baggage, but God still used her. *What you've done (or what's been done to you) does not limit what God can do through you.* **What would you say to someone who feels like their sexual baggage means that God can't use them?**
- **What other questions or thoughts do you have from this week's episode?**

## Pray Together

As you spend some time in prayer together, it might be a good opportunity for people to open up and ask for forgiveness (for things they've done) or healing (for things done to them).