

ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

Thinking and Saying What's Right—Regardless

Esther 4

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In a world with more than 7.5 billion people, it's easy to feel like a statistical speck of dust without much significance. But you aren't an afterthought penciled into history by God. No—you hold immense value in His eyes, and He made you unique with special qualities. You breathe for a purpose—and that purpose stems from Him.

In Esther 4, God's purpose for Queen Esther unfolds before our eyes as we discover that she alone had the best opportunity to combat Haman's diabolical plan. Esther initially wavered against Mordecai's risky request, but she turned to God for strength and deliverance.

In this study, Chuck Swindoll teaches us the impact just one person can make.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Having a few study resources can greatly enhance your time in God's Word. If you want Chuck's full coverage of his study method, we recommend you grab a copy of *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*. Also, you may want to pick up Chuck's book *Esther: A Woman of Strength and Dignity*. Additionally, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* or *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* are especially helpful. Chuck recommends adding a new resource to your library once a month.

Also, the *Bible Study Tools* and *Bible Gateway* websites offer free access to all the English Bible translations you need. Bible Study Tools lets you perform searches for words or phrases in a single book or in the whole Bible. Another terrific online resource offered by Bible Study Tools is *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

Quotable

*Not until we
believe one person
can make a
difference will
we be willing
to risk.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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S05
1

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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Before delving into *Esther 4:1–17*, write a prayer in your own words requesting God's Spirit to increase your understanding of and love for Him as well as to increase your courage to think and say what's right, regardless of circumstances.



Observation

During observation, we answer the question, *What does the text say?* We avoid using any resource except our Bible. We observe by performing a slow reading of the text, then we reread it as much as time allows. You can even read the text in multiple translations. *The New Living Translation* and the *New American Standard Bible* complement each other well. We'll examine Esther 4 in its three main sections.

Mourning and Weeping

Read *Esther 4:1–4*.

How and where did Mordecai express his sorrow after learning of the king's command regarding the Jews?

Sometimes, biblical authors use repetition for emphasis, which reveals more clearly their intent in writing. How did the author use repetition for emphasis in *Esther 4:1–4*?



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2

ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

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Esther 4

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

What news did Esther's eunuchs and maids share with her, and how did she respond?

Record any additional observations you find.

Mordecai's sorrow compelled him to rebuff the queen's consolation. Each of us has endured (and will endure) seasons of suffering without relief. In such times, we can always turn to Jesus, who overcame the most intense of sufferings, because He will give us His peace, strength, perspective, and hope to make it through.

Informing and Responding

Observe *Esther 4:5–12*. This paragraph chronicles the first of Esther and Mordecai's exchanges.

In *Esther 4:5–9*, what steps did Mordecai take to precisely convey all the information Esther didn't know? In what verse, and in what way, does it seem that Mordecai had insider knowledge to the innerworkings of Haman's plot?

What two reasons did Esther use to evade Mordecai's command (*Esther 4:11*)?



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3

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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Pleading and Praying

Observe *Esther 4:13–17*, the last of Esther and Mordecai's exchanges in this chapter.

In what four ways did Mordecai appeal to Esther to petition the king?

Esther faced two choices—both of which would likely result in a speedy death.

What did Esther require of Mordecai before she did what he asked?



Interpretation

During interpretation, we answer the question, *What does the passage mean?* We want to understand the theology of the passage because the Bible is a book about God. To do this, we must understand the culture, language, and intent of the author as best we can.

Esther 4 contains references to fasting. Look up in your Bible dictionary the purposes of a fast, discern which kind was used in Esther 4, and record how it informs your understanding of this section. If you don't have a Bible dictionary, you can use the online Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology to look up the word *fast*.



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THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Reread Esther 4:13–14. In it, Mordecai made a subtle theological claim about the significance of God's work in and through the Jewish people. What was that claim, and what do we learn about God from it?

Esther demonstrated a change in attitude from verse 11 to verse 16. What was that change? How would her faith in God have produced that change?

Even with ripped goat skin for clothing and flowing tears at the royal gate, Mordecai couldn't get the attention of King Ahasuerus. But it didn't take long for Esther to learn of Mordecai's sorrow and, in that discovery, learn that his sorrow was also her own. From Mordecai's urging, she made up her mind to act in God's strength.



Correlation

During correlation, we answer the question, *How does it compare?* We compare our text with other biblical passages to gain a deeper understanding of the truths and principles our text teaches.

The Bible is replete with individuals who act in faith to further God's purposes. *Hebrews 11* contains a helpful definition of faith and gives a snapshot of the faithful and their deeds. Read and reflect on Hebrews 11. How did Esther demonstrate the meaning of faith as defined in Hebrews 11:6?



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Thinking and Saying What's Right—Regardless

Esther 4

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

In *Hebrews 11:32–39*, the author described a variety of outcomes that faith produced in biblical figures from the past. God approved of their faith in Him despite some of them suffering what the world would typically call a defeat. The author of Hebrews wrote that some overthrew kingdoms and quenched fire while others were killed and imprisoned. The success of our faith by the world's standards does not reflect whether or not God has approved us. It's His opinion that matters most.



Application

During application, we answer the question, *How should we respond to the text?* Chuck quotes Howard Hendricks: “If you observe and interpret and correlate the Scriptures but fail to apply the Scriptures, you have committed an abortion.”¹ Challenging words. Let's look at Chuck's two application principles from Esther 4.

The Difference of One

Not until we believe one person can make a difference will we be willing to take risks. As we read in Hebrews 11, God's power can pour through one person for the benefit of many. Take a moment to consider if you truly believe this for yourself. As the first step to affirm or reaffirm your faith, write a prayer acknowledging God's power and stating your willingness to be used for His purposes even if it means taking actions that may put your comfort or convenience at risk.

From Theory to Action

Only when we move from the safe harbor of theory to the world of reality do we make a difference. Often our consistent, small actions—though seemingly insignificant—make the most difference. Are you silent when you shouldn't be? Are you letting indecision plague you to the point of inaction? Take a moment to write down the action you feel the Spirit prompting you to take.



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6

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Thinking and Saying What's Right—Regardless

Esther 4

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Sometimes, we're tempted to put the great ones in the Bible on a pedestal of faith. But consider the apostle James' words on the power of prayer: "Elijah was a human as we are" (James 5:17). In other words, we're no different from Elijah. His courage came from the same kind of faith we can have . . . because we worship the same God.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for preserving the story of Esther and for the encouragement it brings Your people. Please strengthen my heart to act when I need to act and to speak when I need to speak. I know You are with me and control the outcome, so please glorify Your Son in my life. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2017), 160.



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7

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Thinking and Saying What's Right—Regardless

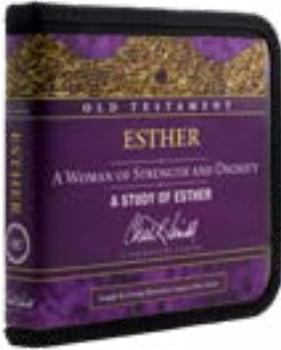
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THE
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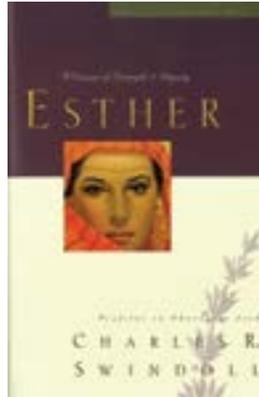
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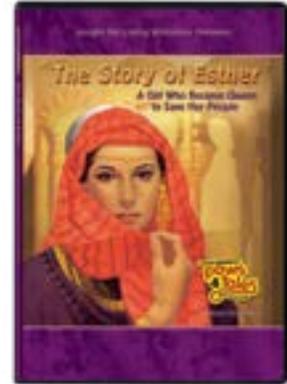
Tools for Digging Deeper



Esther: A Woman of Strength and Dignity
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



Esther: A Woman of Strength and Dignity
by Charles R. Swindoll
Softcover book



The Story of Esther: A Girl Who Became Queen to Save Her People
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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8