ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

An Evil Interlude

Esther 2:21–3:15

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES STUDY

LET'S BEGIN HERE

When Adam and Eve tripped over Satan's lies and fell because of their lack of faith, all creation crashed down with them. Now, according to the apostle Paul, evil fills our days (*Ephesians 5:16*). From hurricanes to broken legs, depression to murders, wars to cancer, we can't escape suffering, and trying to escape it delivers only painful disappointment.

So we must learn to live with suffering and draw strength from Christ, who teaches us by His example to depend on God the Father until that day of bliss when "there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain" (*Revelation 21:4*).

In the book of Esther, evil slinked in the shadows as treacherous men devised secret plots first against the king and then against the Jews. And yet, through the darkness, God lit a path for His people, and He will light our way, too, as we respond wisely to today's evils.

YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Esther 2:21–3:15 occupies the focus of this *Searching the Scriptures* study. You who've followed along will recall that we use Chuck Swindoll's four-step process as discussed in his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*:

1. **Observation:** We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book.

2. **Interpretation:** We understand what the text means, delving into word studies, ancient cultural practices, history, and theology.

3. **Correlation:** We compare our passage with other biblical passages on the same topic to complement our understanding of the topic from our main passage.

4. **Application:** We integrate the biblical truths and principles into our lives, obeying Jesus' commands, believing Jesus' promises, and walking with Jesus always.

Quotable

You cannot escape pain in this life, but you can learn to live above the level of misery.

— *Charles R. Swindoll*

Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

An Evil Interlude

Esther 2:21–3:15

We should pray before reading the Bible because it contains divinely revealed truth. God promises to illuminate us by His Spirit as we seek Him through His Word in Jesus' name. So write a brief prayer, requesting God to give you understanding and strength through this study.

Sometimes it's better to perform observation and interpretation together in concise chunks so you understand the meaning of the narrative as the story unfolds. Remember to first observe slowly and then interpret.

Mutiny: A Minor Plot against the King **Esther 2:21–23**	
Observation	**Interpretation**
1a. Read *Esther 2:21–23* slowly. What is the evil interlude in these verses?	**2a.** How did God work through Mordecai, Esther, and the king in this passage?
1b. Who discovered the plot, and how did he receive credit for stopping the attack?	**2b.** Read *Esther 6:1–9*. How did God use the mutiny in *2:21–23* for good in Esther 6:1–9?

Bigthan and Teresh let their anger-driven imaginations inspire them to plot the murder of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes in the New Living Translation), but God stopped them. Even so, evil reared its head once again—except this perpetrator was a man who oversaw all other nobles in the king's palace.

Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

An Evil Interlude

Esther 2:21–3:15

Vengeance: A Major Scheme against the Jews Esther 3:1–6a	
Observation	**Interpretation**
1a. First, read *Esther 3:1–6a* slowly. What was the new evil interlude, and how did it arise? **1b.** What did Mordecai do to provoke Haman's rage against him?	**2.** Haman, in the line of Agag the Amalekite, received a promotion instead of Mordecai. Look up *Exodus 17:8–16* and *1 Samuel 15:1–3*, and write down what we can infer about the hostility between Haman and the Jews.

Injustices run rampant today just as they did in Mordecai's day. The vicious evil of prejudice narrowed Haman's perspective and compelled him to contrive a pogrom against Mordecai and the Jews. In such instances, it becomes easy to think, *Where are you, God?* Sounds familiar, right?

Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

An Evil Interlude

Esther 2:21–3:15

Plan for Extermination Esther 3:6b–11	
Observation	**Interpretation**
1a. Read *Esther 3:6b–11*. According to *3:8*, how did Haman describe the Jews? Did he name them? How did he obscure the king's view of the race?	**2a.** In *Esther 3:6b–7*, Haman cast lots because that's how one determined the favor of the gods in Persian culture. How would the king have viewed this act?
1b. The end of *3:10* contains the author's theological interpretation of Haman. What does it say about Haman?	**2b.** In *3:9*, Haman told the king he'd pay 375 tons of silver into the treasury if he agreed. Where might've Haman acquired this silver?

King Ahasuerus removed the signet ring from his finger and placed it in Haman's hand—signifying the king's approval of Haman's diabolical plan to extirpate the Jews in all 127 Persian provinces. Haman was driven by fury, equipped with lies, and clothed in power. Instead of stopping Haman immediately, God let the tree of evil grow before cutting it down . . . which is how He might choose to work in our day as well.

Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

An Announcement to All Esther 3:12–15	
Observation	**Interpretation**
1a. According to *Esther 3:12–15*, do we have any evidence that Ahasuerus knew what was happening?	**2a.** What part of this passage tells us the king was aloof to the gravity of Haman's actions? This is an indirect way the author cast a negative shadow on the transpiring events.
1b. Biblical authors sometimes used repetition and elaboration for emphasis. In what two ways did the author of Esther do this in *3:13*? Also, how much time elapsed between the formation of the decree and its execution?	**2b.** The edict went out on the thirteenth day of the first month, Nisan—the day before all Jews would have celebrated Passover. Look up *Passover* in your Bible dictionary. How is it significant to our passage?

We can now see the dangers the Jews faced in this account. As all the people of Susa read the decree with confusion (Esther 3:15), perhaps they asked themselves, *Would the king wipe out other people groups?* God chose to let Ahasuerus reign despite his ignorance. Pause and give thanks that King Jesus reigns with a thorough knowledge of His people and their needs.

Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

An Evil Interlude

Esther 2:21–3:15

Correlation

When dark clouds enter our lives, like the one we see entering the story of Esther in chapter three, we're compelled by the Scriptures to approach God. Read the two passages below that express hope toward God during suffering and evil, and record any encouragement you receive from them.

Psalm 42

Habakkuk 3:17–19

Application

Three characters in this passage teach us vital lessons about evil and how to respond to it.

From Haman

Someone will always resent your independent devotion to the Lord. Don't second guess your obedience by believing his or her resentment suggests God's disapproval of your actions.

From Mordecai

Never underestimate the diabolical nature of revenge. We should especially be aware of any resentment sprouting in ourselves.

Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

From King Ahasuerus

Never overestimate your own importance. Some wise counselor should have come alongside Ahasuerus and said to him, "What is this you're allowing? And why? Not even you are important enough to decide the fate of an entire race!"

***Searching the Scriptures* Wrap-up**

Write one sentence to *summarize* this lesson.

Write down one thing to *remember* about God.

Write down one way you can *respond* to God's Word.

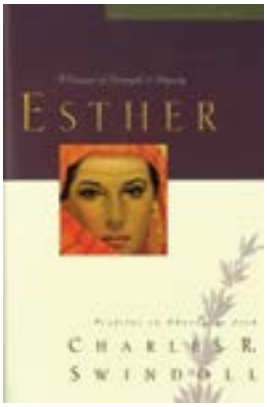
A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I confess that You are always present in this world, that You always know my needs even when I'm hurting, and that all of history works together for the good of Your people—including my own good. I want to release my anxiety over what I can't control and, instead, stand on Your promises because You are faithful. Please teach me to respond with wisdom to the evil, pain, and suffering in my life and the lives around me. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

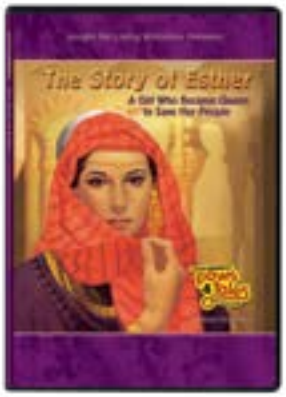
Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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
by Paws & Tales
CD set

For these and related resources, visit www.insightworld.org/store
or call USA 1-800-772-8888 • AUSTRALIA +61 3 9762 6613 • CANADA 1-800-663-7639 • UK +44 1306 640156

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.

Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1997, 2005, 2018 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide.
Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.
Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application