

ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

Strength and Dignity on Parade

Esther 2:8–20

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

God bestows a special glory to women so that they uniquely express His image and presence in our world. Among a woman's innumerable traits are: 1) Intuition—sensing what isn't said, 2) Endurance—persevering through trials, 3) Responsiveness—tuning in to God and others, and 4) Vulnerability—remaining unguarded and transparent.

In the book of Esther, we see how God chose to display a woman's strengths through a particular, young Jewish woman whom He used for the sake of His glory and for the good of His people. With acute clarity, Chuck Swindoll highlights some of these strengths in this study on Esther 2:8–20. Women can glean insight for spiritual maturity while men can learn to encourage and honor godliness in the special women in their lives.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

For this passage, you'll need your Bible and the previous *Searching the Scriptures* study of this series on Esther to reference dates or notes you took on key terms. Also, it's always helpful to have a Bible dictionary on hand. We recommend *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*.

In light of the vanity of King Ahasuerus (King Xerxes in the New Living Translation), let's read the psalmist's prayer in Psalm 119:37–38 (NASB):

*Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,
And revive me in Your ways.
Establish Your word to Your servant,
As that which produces reverence for You.*

Quotable

*God has given the
woman a sense of
strength and dignity
that is found in
not another of
His creations.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Personalize this prayer by writing it in your own words. When studying God's Word, it's important to pray for the Spirit's aid as we seek His counsel.

Observation: Reading Slowly

The first phase of Chuck's four-step Bible study method is observation. If you aren't familiar with this method or you want to go deeper, we recommend his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.

During observation, use only your Bible to focus on the words of the author. Don't consult commentaries or dictionaries. Block out time and find a place without distractions. (Some consider coffee a must!) With pen, paper, and an attentive mind, use this time of observation to commune with God through His sacred text.

Slowly read *Esther 2:8–20*.

Pursued and Discovered—Esther 2:8–9a

King Ahasuerus' search for a queen to replace Vashti (*Esther 2:1–4*) turned the spotlight onto Esther and her older cousin Mordecai (*2:5–7*). Mordecai and Esther lived in Susa because their ancestors were exiled by the Babylonians from Jerusalem.

How do verses 2:8–9a connect Esther and Mordecai to King Ahasuerus?

Did Esther go voluntarily to the harem? How do you know?



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Prepared and Chosen—Esther 2:9b–20

Look at Esther 2:9b. How did Hegai respond to Esther?

How does 2:10–11 indicate that Esther still respected Mordecai, and where did Mordecai meet her?

Peruse 2:12–14. Can't you just smell those perfumes and feel the ointments? What could the women carry with them the night they were summoned to the king's room? Remember, no detail is insignificant in observation; the biblical authors were intentional with what they wrote.

According to 2:15–16, in what year was Esther taken to King Ahasuerus' room? How many years had passed between Ahasuerus' argument with Vashti and Esther's entrance? Did you notice what Esther took with her into the king's room? Each detail has something to tell.



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No mincing words—the author gets right to his point; what happened in Esther 2:17?

What does 2:18 reveal about Esther’s new status? What did Ahasuerus do once he crowned Esther? And what do the king’s actions tell us about how he felt toward her?

What new role did Mordecai receive in 2:19–20? What did the author repeat in these verses which was also mentioned in 2:10?



Interpretation: Understanding Clearly

With interpretation, we seek to understand the meaning of the text. For this passage in the book of Esther, we contemplate God’s presence in the story, though His name is never mentioned. Also, we consider Esther’s winsome, queenlike qualities.



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In Esther 2:8, we see the hand of God intertwine the story of an inconsequential, young Jewish woman with the life of the most powerful man on earth, the king of Persia. For 2:9, let's look at the New English Translation (NET) at [Lumina](#). On the right panel, click *Hebrew*. In the left panel, read 2:9 and hover your mouse's pointer over the word *favor*. It should highlight the word and the corresponding Hebrew word on the right. At the bottom of the Hebrew panel, read the pop-up text box with other translations of the Hebrew word *chesed*. How did Hegai view Esther?

What may have been a reason for Mordecai wanting to keep Esther's Jewish identity concealed (Esther 2:10)?

Imagine the competition that may have existed between the women in the lifestyle described in 2:12–14. What do you think each woman asked for before seeing the king (2:13)? In the king's harem, Esther differentiated herself in the eyes of all who saw her. What does 2:15 say? Return to the Hebrew panel at [Lumina](#) and look at the translation for *approval*. It's the Hebrew word *chen*.

What phrases about Esther are repeated in 2:8–20? What do these reveal about Esther's loyalty and humility?



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The king remembered Esther's name and loved her more than all the women (Esther 2:17), so he made her queen in place of Vashti. In Esther 1–2, the author answered the question, "How did a young Jewish girl become queen of Persia?" God used Esther's charm, elegance, teachable spirit, and her authenticity along with her beauty to persuade the king. Esther 2:17 says Esther "found *favor* and *kindness*" with the king (NASB, emphasis added). Ahasuerus viewed Esther with both *chesed* and *chen*, goodness and grace. This is the first place where both Hebrew words are used to emphasize Esther's effect on the king. Both words are often used of God throughout the Old Testament.



Correlation: Comparing Carefully

We correlate a biblical passage by comparing what it says with other biblical passages. For some passages, correlation is vital for our understanding while it is more complementary for others. God moved in the heart of the king and others to favor Esther (*Proverbs 21:1*), allowing them to see His grace and goodness in her.

Read *Proverbs 31:10–31*. This vivid passage paints an inspirational portrait of a godly woman. Note each area of life it speaks of, and jot down anything you find interesting. You may even search for traits Esther might have shown to Hegai, the women, and King Ahasuerus.



Application: Receiving Personally

The last step in studying the Bible is application. With the truth of the Bible and an openness to the Holy Spirit, we grow in godliness as God conforms us to the image of His Son (*Colossians 3:10*).

Women—Growing in Godliness

As Esther endured uncontrollable circumstances—taken from her home and placed in a harem—she focused upon what she knew to be right and wise. She even asked Hegai for advice (Esther 2:15). Are you in a season where you focus too much on what you can't control? Write a prayer expressing your confidence in God's goodness and your commitment to do what you know to be right and wise.



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When Esther had the opportunity to lavishly adorn herself, she didn't. She didn't embrace the added superficiality in an already superficial environment but remained humble, loyal, and displayed a depth of character that others noticed. Do you spend time developing your character? What can you put into practice this week to foster your own spiritual growth?

Men—Encouraging Godliness in Women

Men, think of the special women in your life. First, simply write a prayer of gratitude for those women.

Now let's take time to think seriously about one or two things we can do this week to encourage them in their journey toward godliness and spiritual depth. Record what comes to mind.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how great it is to see You exalt into high places those who choose not to exalt themselves—like Esther. So I pray for humility. I ask for a greater awareness of Your control in my circumstances and for a deeper assurance of Your goodness toward me. Conform me, dear Father, into the image of Your Son, Jesus, and use me as You will—whether as a royal on the earth or as one who's despised. In Jesus' name, amen.



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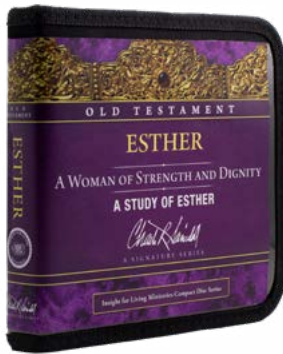
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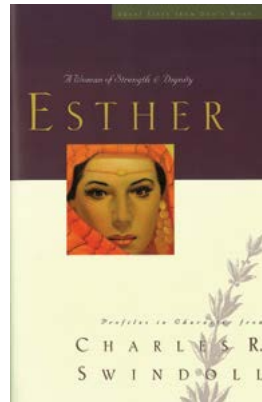
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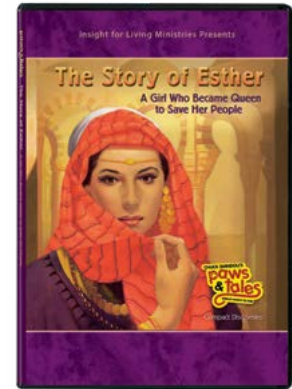
Tools for Digging Deeper



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



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



The Story of Esther: A Girl Who Became Queen to Save Her People
by Paws & Tales
CD set

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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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