

ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

God's Surprising Sovereignty

Esther 7

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The seasons of God's silence can feel like we're stranded in the middle of a lake swimming blindly amidst a thick fog. No voice from shore. No certainty we're swimming the right direction. Just dense cloud cover and water before our eyes. But God's silence does not mean He's unaware or indifferent to our plight. Likewise, God's hidden nature doesn't reflect His absence.

Though we can't see beyond our circumstances, God transcends time. He views the past, present, and future at once. Similarly, though we can't know what lies outside our physical presence, God hears secrets whispered in shadows and governs the unseen details of our world. So when He seems silent or absent, we must trust that His hand is at work, simply doing what we know to do—like Esther.

In chapter seven, Esther had no guarantee her exposure of Persia's second in command, Haman, would be well received by Ahasuerus. But she acted in faith as she approached the king, arranged the banquet, and waited for the moment to speak for her people. Let's study Esther 7 and increase our confidence in God's sovereignty.

Quotable

*The periods
of God's silence
are just as
significant as the
times in which
He speaks.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Before we apply our *Searching the Scriptures* study method to Esther 7, let's review. Write a one sentence summary of each chapter. Consult Chuck Swindoll's *overview and chart* if you need to.

Esther 1	
Esther 2	
Esther 3	
Esther 4	
Esther 5	
Esther 6	

Prior to studying God's Word, we should ask God for insight. His Spirit will help us see what biblical truths we need to learn and give us the ability to internalize those truths so we might become more like Christ. "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him," (Colossians 2:6 NASB). Take a moment to express this request to God.



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Observing What You Read

You'll know by now that we begin our study with observation—a careful examination of the details in the text.

We observe by:

1. Asking *Who? What? Where? When? Why?* and *How?*
2. Imagining what we can see, touch, taste, hear, and smell
3. Noting the logical connections and flow of thought
4. Examining what's repeated, emphasized, related, alike, and unlike

Let's observe *Esther 7*. Begin by slowly reading the chapter once or twice. If you'd like to broaden your Bible reading, Chuck also prefers the *New American Standard Bible*, which nicely complements the New Living Translation.

Observe *Esther 7* according to the four categories above, and record what you find.



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Interpreting What the Passage Means

After thoroughly examining what the text says, we are now prepared to interpret what it means. During interpretation, we consult our resources and attempt to understand the author's message. Interpretation encompasses two core components: history and theology. First, we look for what happened and what was said, then we look for what the passage teaches about God.

King Ahasuerus honored Mordecai, but what about Esther and the Jews? That's the question the author addressed in *Esther 7*.

Just imagine how Esther's hands must have shook as she drank her wine when the king said, "Tell me what you want" (*Esther 7:2*). But she acted in faith by doing what she knew was right. Imagine Haman's anger as his mind traced the events that had transpired earlier that day—perhaps even ignoring the dinner conversation. Notice the language Esther used in verse 7:3. How did her request in this verse express her deference to the king?

Read how Esther described what was to happen to the Jews in 7:4. How does her explanation compare to the edict presented in *Esther 3:13*? Why is this important?

At the end of *Esther 7:4*, Esther said she would not have troubled the king had her people been "merely" sold as slaves. How would selling the Jews as slaves benefited the king? The implication in her statement is that his decree to kill the Jews would cost the king. Notice how she appealed to the king's finances just as Haman did in *Esther 3*. What do you learn from Esther's approach?



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The aloof king failed to recall the edict that Haman wrote to abolish an entire race . . . until Esther pointed her finger at Haman. Notice there were three verbs Haman used against the Jews, and in verse 7:6, Esther described Haman with three descriptors. In what way might her descriptors have influenced the king's thinking?

The king rushed to his palace garden (Esther 7:7). Probably alone. Earlier in the book of Esther, he made decisions based on his counselors, but this time he had to decide what to do himself. While he settled his thoughts walking among the flowers, Haman turned to Esther in fear and pled for mercy. Mervin Breneman writes, "Haman, in typical Near Eastern form, probably grabbed the feet of Esther, kissed them, and begged for forgiveness."¹ Review Esther 3 and record what Mordecai did to anger Haman. Write also how God produced a turnaround for Haman in Esther 7.

In Esther 6, we saw how God exalted Mordecai because Mordecai had maintained his integrity toward the king. In Esther 7, we read how God ensnared Haman in Haman's own treacherous trap. The chapter ends with Haman impaled upon the stake he had built for Mordecai. As the king's anger against Haman subsided, a firm principle settles in our hearts: those with nothing to hide have no fear of being caught.

Record what this chapter teaches us about God. It could be something new that we haven't already learned in the book of Esther, or it could be an affirmation of a truth we've already received.



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Certainly, Esther didn't have the slightest clue how the king would respond to her request. While we have yet to discover the outcome of the Jewish people in this story, we do know the edict against them angered the king, leading him to execute Haman. As Esther looked back on her situation, she realized God handled those details which she couldn't see. Such as it is with us. Often, it's only in hindsight that we're able to see God's orchestration of events with 20/20 spiritual lenses.



Correlating Our Passage with Other Biblical Passages

Israel's king, David, recorded in Psalm 40 an expression of praise to God for God's care and deliverance. David said he was in the pit of despair as he waited upon God who eventually lifted him out of the miry bog.

Psalm 40 complements *Esther 7* in which God gave Esther favor in the sight of King Ahasuerus. God delivered Esther from Haman's plot. Take a moment to reflect on David's prayer.

Why did David praise God?

How did David respond to God's deliverance?

What did David request from God?

Such a lovely psalm filled with praise and petitions is worth emulating in our own prayers to God.



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Applying What We've Learned

After we have observed, interpreted, and correlated our passage, we want to put its truths into practice. The Bible is a practical book that connects us with God and enlightens us as to how we should live.

Reflect

Record a time in your life when you believed God's delay meant He was late, but you realized later His timing was perfect.

Respond

Have you recently been through a season of God's silence when you've heard very little, if anything, from God? If so what have you learned? How does Esther 7 help us trust God during those seasons?

Reach Out

Do you know someone who's wandering through the fog of God's silence? If so, what is a simple, meaningful way you can encourage him or her? Go ahead and schedule this act of kindness now so you can follow through later.



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You will experience seasons when it feels like the volume knob of God's voice has been turned down—or maybe even off! Surely Esther felt similarly that afternoon before the banquet. At times, the silence will be deafening. On the cross, Jesus cried out in pain not because of the nails but because of His Father's silence. But God invites us to trust Him. Have confidence that no system, whether Persian or Roman or any in the world as we know it, will thwart His perfect providence that works for your spiritual and eternal good.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I trust that You are the governor of my life. Even when You seem absent or silent, I know You are there, that You see me, and that Your plan will unfold into something beautiful. I pray for strength and courage like Esther's so my life may glorify Your Son. It's in His name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, vol. 10, electronic ed., The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 350.



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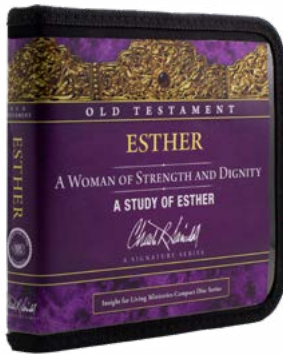
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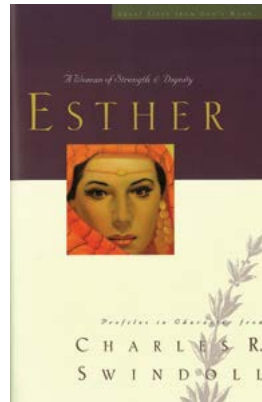
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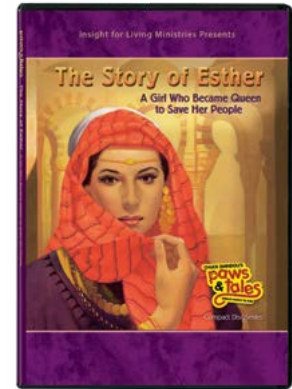
Tools for Digging Deeper



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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