

ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

What Goes Around, Comes Around

Esther 6

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

God does not always respond to our schedule. Often, when just a few grains of sand remain in the hourglass, God reveals to us He is not aloof from our situation. He acts in ways we would never expect. Like when He provides funds the day before the payment's due or when the phone rings after you figured you'd never hear back.

Things are not always as they seem in our day just like they weren't always as they seemed for the Jews living in Susa during Esther's day.

In this study, we'll explore the divinely orchestrated turn of events in one of the Bible's most adored chapters—when the proud became humbled and the humble exalted. Explore Esther 6 with Chuck Swindoll so you can learn to trust God's timetable instead of your own.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

You'll recall that we use the same Bible study method Chuck uses in his own studies as detailed in his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*. Four steps undergird this process and are important to distinguish so we don't skip ahead or get confused.

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 into our lives the biblical principles from our passage—obeying Jesus' commands, believing Jesus' promises, and walking with Jesus always.

Quotable

*Even when
no one seems
to notice or care,
God is very
much alert to
our situation.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Before searching the Scriptures, it's always important to pray that God will guide your study and grant you the hope, correction, faith, and encouragement your specific situation requires. Take some time to formulate this prayer in your own words below.



Observation: Reading Slowly

Begin your study with a slow reading of *Esther 6*.

Esther 6:1 says, "That night." Which night specifically was the author referring to? What had just happened that day, and what was supposed to happen the following day (*Esther 5:14*)?

Why was Haman in the king's court so early? List the ways Haman told King Ahasuerus (Xerxes in the NLT) that he should honor the man whom the king wished to honor (6:7–9)?

After Mordecai was honored, where did he go (6:12)? Where did Haman go, and how did he respond to Mordecai's veneration (6:12–13)?



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How did Zeresh and Haman's friends respond to Haman after he told them what happened (Esther 6:13)? How does this response compare to their response in 5:14?



Interpretation: Understanding Clearly

Haman constructed a monumental wood stake stretching seventy-five feet into the air. Almost certainly word had gotten to Mordecai about Haman's plan to impale him. Instead of highlighting Mordecai's anxiety or strategy to prove his loyalty to Ahasuerus, the author revealed how God worked through the king's restlessness.

Sleep evaded King Ahasuerus, proving in Mordecai's case that not all was lost even when things appeared so. Such is your case as well.



Searching the Scriptures Tip: Interpretation

Interpretation produces two core components that fill our understanding of the Bible and help us apply its truth to our lives. History is the first of these components and includes studying the language, culture, and events that are bound by space and time. But it's from these events that we learn about God. How God worked in biblical history informs our understanding of His character, actions, and desires for people today—which leads to the second component: theology. Theology spans space and time. We worship the God who is always involved in this world.

The King's Soporific—Esther 6:1–3

The deliverance of Mordecai hung on the slender thread of the king's insomnia. In *6:1–2*, what did King Ahasuerus order his servants to read to him to help him fall asleep?



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You'll recall from Esther 2:21–23 that Mordecai received no reward for unveiling Bigthan and Teresh's plot; rather, the king spotted Haman and honored him (Esther 3:1). From Mordecai, we learn that even when others fail to take proper notice, God notices.

A Providential Turnaround—Esther 6:4–12

As God would have it, the king's attendants ushered Haman into the king's presence to develop a plan to honor the person Haman wanted to murder.

Anthony Tomasino summarized nicely Haman's motive behind his advice to the king:

Haman does not ask for money, power, or promotion, all of which he already possesses. Instead, he asks for the opportunity to be “king for a day.” . . . In the ancient world, clothing was closely associated with the people who wore it. . . . For Haman, wearing the king's robe meant identifying in some sense with the king himself.¹

After Haman honored Mordecai according to the king's command, notice the response of both Haman and Mordecai in Esther 6:12. What can we infer about each one's character from their responses?

The contrast couldn't be clearer about these two officials. Had Mordecai been proud and ambitious, he almost certainly would not have returned to his station at the king's gate. But he did. He did not exalt himself. Instead, he relied upon God's timing and providence.

Back to the King—Esther 6:13–14

As a sort of prophecy about what was to come—for Haman and the reader—Haman received counsel from his wife and friends. Notice how Haman didn't get to respond to their warning. Where was he taken in verse 6:14, and what thoughts might have been swimming in his head as he made his way there?



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God didn't sit still once He exalted Mordecai. The Jews throughout Persia needed rescue. Not only did His providence keep Esther's story moving, it orchestrates your story as well.



Correlation: Comparing Carefully

Because this chapter provides an example of a humble person before God as well as a proud person, let's perform a study on humility and pride in the book of Proverbs. Remember that the Proverbs illustrate how the world works and how we should live as God's people in it.

Humility

Humility is the opposite of pride and arrogance. Humility means to have a modest perception of one's self. Using Bible Study Tools, search for *humble* and *humility* in the book of Proverbs within the New Living Translation. Review the verses and summarize what you learn from them.

Pride

Pride is unwarranted self-confidence causing an inflated view of one's own importance, possessions, or abilities. Using Bible Study Tools, search for *pride* and *proud* in the book of Proverbs within the New Living Translation. Review the verses and summarize what you learn from them.

Remember the Proverbs portray how life *typically works*; unfortunately, the proud sometimes win, and the humble sometimes lose. However, Jesus' death and resurrection guarantee that He will arbitrate justice on the last day. Humility may not receive its reward until then.



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Application: Receiving Personally

To help us apply the truths of Esther 6, Chuck shared four principles from this text.

1. *When all seems lost, it isn't.* As Mordecai slept and Haman constructed his gallows, God unfolded His plan.
2. *When no one seems to notice, God does.* God used the king's insomnia to initiate Mordecai's exaltation.
3. *When everything seems great for our enemies, it's not.* God arranged the plans for Haman to honor Mordecai the very day Haman sought to kill Mordecai.
4. *When nothing seems fair, God is just.* Haman's sorrow for not receiving the king's honor didn't prevent God's plan to cease Haman's pogrom against the Jews.

Which of the principles above speaks most to you in your season of life? Do you feel like God is ignoring your struggles, or do you feel like things keep getting worse no matter how faithfully you live in obedience to God? Write a prayer expressing to God how you feel.

Now summarize the hope you have drawn personally from Esther 6.



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Searching the Scriptures Wrap-up

Write one sentence to *summarize* this study.

Write one thing to *remember* about God.

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



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for always noticing me and caring for me no matter my situation. I confess that life is not always as convenient as I want it to be and that I often feel like my will should be done on earth rather than Yours. But You are good, and Your ways are unsearchable. Give me strength to trust in Your goodness as You mold me into Your Son's image. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Anthony Tomasino, *Esther: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, ed. H. Wayne House and William Barrick, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Press, 2016), 279–80.



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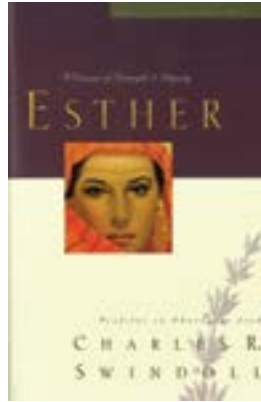
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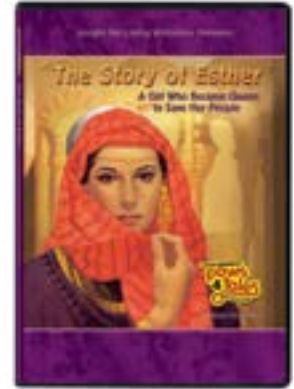
Tools for Digging Deeper



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CD series



Esther: A Woman of Strength and Dignity
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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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