

ESTHER

A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

STUDY ONE

God's Invisible Providence

Selected Scriptures

God's presence is not nearly as eloquent as His absence. His voice, as important as it is, is not nearly as intriguing as His silence.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

GOD's invisibility in no way nullifies His invincibility. He may slip behind the scenes and out of view, but He is always at work accomplishing His will, and no power in heaven or on earth can hinder Him. As the psalmists declared:

*Our God is in the heavens,
and he does as he wishes. (Psalm 115:3)*

And:

*The LORD does whatever pleases him
throughout all heaven and earth,
and on the seas and in their depths. (135:6)*

In the book of Esther, we find the majestic interweaving of God's invincibility with His invisibility—His power with His silence. Though God's name is absent in the book, every word on its pages bears His fingerprints. In fact, God often chooses to work in this way today. He might seem silent to you right now, but He is there and working just as He worked in Esther's life almost 2,500 years ago. Let's find out how.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



Scan to listen to
Chuck's message.

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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

To start, take a moment to prepare your heart to receive God's truth. In his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll states, "Study without prayer is an incomplete process—a futile effort."¹ You may wish to pray as Chuck prays before he studies the Word:

"Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it."²

Write your own prayer here.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Let's begin our spiritual adventure in Esther, exploring the ways of God in human affairs, by gaining an *overview* of the book's background and message.³

The events of Esther took place between 483 and 473 BC in Susa, the capital city of Persia. King Xerxes, known in the book of Esther as Ahasuerus, ruled Persia 486–465 BC. He's a central figure.

We always want to understand a Bible passage in the context of the immediate passage, the passage's context within its book, and then the book's context within the whole Bible. The table below provides biblical and historical context for the events in the book of Esther.

Overview of Biblical History to 473 BC	
Moses received the law on Mount Sinai.	c. 1446 BC
Kings David and Solomon reigned over the united kingdom of Israel.	1010–931 BC
The kingdom of Israel divided into Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom.	c. 930 BC
Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom.	722 BC
Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and exiled the inhabitants of the Southern Kingdom.	c. 586 BC
Persia defeated Babylon, and King Cyrus gave an edict for exiles to return home.	539 BC
The events of Esther occurred.	483–473 BC

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Scholars aren't certain who wrote Esther, but the author was familiar with the Persian royal court—and was likely an eyewitness. It could've been Mordecai, Esther's cousin. Because the Jews in Susa chose not to return to their homeland following the edict of Cyrus (539 BC), the author answered a major theological question in his day: "Does Yahweh still care for those Jews not in Jerusalem?"

Based on the events of the book of Esther, the answer is yes! Their experience is commemorated by a Jewish festival each year called Purim. The festival remembers God's faithfulness to His people in far-off places when He delivered them from evil, as recorded in [Esther 9:20–27](#).



Observation: Scanning the Book

In his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains his four-step Bible-study method which consists of observation, interpretation, correlation, and application. A strong grasp of what a passage says through observation leads to solid interpretation—which we confirm by correlating our passage with other biblical passages. The results are timeless scriptural principles which we can apply to our lives.

When performing a deep study of a book of the Bible, it's best to read it from beginning to end before examining each paragraph. This panoramic view helps us develop a sense of context. So that's what we will do with Esther.

Before any journey, it's helpful to look at a map to see where we're going. Peruse Pastor Chuck's chart, which is like a map of Esther. Notice the flow of events, the main characters, and the theme of the book.

ESTHER OVERVIEW BIBLE CHART

	GOD'S PROVIDENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE DURING . . .						
	Hard Times				Happy Times		
	Esther 1–2	Esther 3	Esther 4–5	Esther 6–7	Esther 8	Esther 9	Esther 10
	King's Banquet Honoring the kingdom Honoring the new queen	Haman's Plot	Esther's Courage Mordecai's urging Approaching the king	God's Deliverance Mordecai honored Haman executed	Mordecai's Decree	Jews' Rejoicing Enemies destroyed Feast established	Shalom!
CIRCUMSTANCES	Threat and trust			Deliverance and praise			
FEASTS	Of the king		Of the queen		Of the nation		
DATES	483 BC			473 BC			
THEME	The sovereign accomplishment of God's purposes through ordinary people and apparent coincidences						
KEY VERSES	Esther 4:13–16						
CHRIST IN ESTHER	Pictured in Esther, who was an advocate for her people and was even willing to die for them						

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Now that you see the layout of the book, let's read it. Esther consists of ten chapters, so you may divide it into two readings for the weekend or five readings for each day of the week. If you can do it in one sitting, even better! Don't worry about the details or try to answer questions yet. Just read and notice how God works behind the scenes for the good of His people. It's helpful to jot down a few notes during this reading because it keeps your mind engaged.

When I come to a book that never mentions God, I see God all the more profoundly and eloquently written through it. It's in invisible ink. Just like life. I've never heard an audible voice in the middle of the night speaking to me, assuring me, but by faith I see Him on a regular basis, written in the events of life, in the crushing blows that drive me to my knees, in the marvelous experiences I hear from others as well as experience myself, and I realize it is the unsearchable mind, the unfathomable will, it is the sovereign control, it is the invisible providence of God at work, because He, though invisible, is invincible.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Meeting the Characters, Locating the Places

For this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll simply familiarize ourselves with the people and places. If you own a Bible dictionary, now is the time to pull it from the shelf. If you don't, we recommend buying *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. For an online alternative, consult the *Holman Bible Dictionary* at studylight.org.

You may also consider other resources to supplement your study. An excellent study Bible is *The Swindoll Study Bible*. Pastor Chuck Swindoll's book *Esther: A Woman of Strength and Dignity* is a nice complement to his sermon series and these studies that accompany it. A reliable commentary is *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, and a handy Bible atlas, like the *Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible*, prove invaluable for mining the treasures of God's Word.

Research the following people and places, and record a few notes on them.

Xerxes or Ahasuerus (Esther 1:1)

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Susa (Esther 1:2)

Persia (1:3)

Vashti (1:9–12)

Mordecai (2:5–7)

Esther (2:7)

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Haman (Esther 3:1)

Purim (9:20–27)

In Esther, God works through the lives of five significant people to carry out His mind, His will, His power, and His presence. And I've got great news: He's not through. He's doing the same thing today. You're part of the movement and workings of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Exploring Our God

God's promises to Abraham, His deliverance in Exodus, and His work through the kings and prophets form the biblical backdrop to Esther. Without other books in the Bible, we wouldn't be able to see the hand of Providence through both the hard and the happy times of the Jews who remained in Susa.

Let's look at them and take some notes on God's character and power as conveyed in each passage.

Isaiah 55:8–9

Daniel 4:34–37

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Romans 11:33–36

If you come toward God with sheer reason in mind, you will find yourself at a loss to understand His ways. They are unfathomable. But if you come with open heart in faith, you will find Him there with open arms, ready to accept, to receive, and to fill you with power. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Embracing the Message

After reading through Esther, we can apply the book's main message through reflection.

Be Quiet

Because the immortal and invisible One is constantly at work in the world, take time to be quiet and ponder how God has worked in your life. Write down what comes to mind.

Be Convinced

Not only has the Sovereign Lord worked in your past, but He is currently working in your present. No matter your circumstances, God is God and He is a good God who loves you (*Romans 8:31–38*). Take a moment to write a prayer of your confidence in Him—whether your current situation is rough or smooth—and express your petitions in Jesus' name.

I've heard some people say the reason they can't believe in the sovereignty of God is that it makes you passive. I see no passivity in Esther. If anything, the sovereignty of God makes me active. It drives me before Him and says to Him, "Lord, put me in the process. Get me involved in Your action plan. Speak through me. Use my model. Use my message. Use my actions." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Reflective Wrap-Up

Reflect on what God has shown you through His Word using three lenses. First, write one sentence to *summarize* this lesson.

Second, write one thing to *remember* about God.

Third, write one way you can *respond* to God's Word.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You move in mysterious ways performing Your wonders across the earth, the work of Your hands. I will not fear when dark clouds form above my head, and I give thanks for the bright days You give me. Please increase my faith in You and my understanding of You as I continue living under Your smiling providence awaiting the day when I see Your Son's face in glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures*, 128.
3. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and revised by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1989, 2018, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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