

ESTHER

A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

STUDY ELEVEN

After the Ache . . . Celebrate!

Esther 9:20–28

Life flies in the fast lane. Quick decisions. Quick money. Fast action. Strong competition. So little time spent stopping and recording and reflecting.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Too often, when we think about the past, our minds focus on negative memories. How vividly we recall the people, events, circumstances, or decisions that have caused us pain, strain, or shame. We're on a nice walk in the neighborhood or having lunch at work and *WHAM!* out of nowhere a painful memory hits us, opening old wounds and shaking us to the core.

These seismic memories, however, don't have to topple us. They can be tools that increase gratitude rather than trigger guilt or give insight rather than incite regret. Frequently, the aches we despise draw us closer to God, helping us see Him more clearly. It's that perspective and deeper appreciation which we should remember after our journeys through trials.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll learn from Esther how, during hard times, we can use our memories to preserve wisdom and adore our God for His faithfulness and grace.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

I remember the days of old.

I ponder all your great works

and think about what you have done. (Psalm 143:5)

In the same spirit as the psalmist, write your own prayer requesting God's guidance through this study and His strength to turn your memories into monuments of celebration.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The purpose of the book of Esther is to recount and preserve the story of God's protection of the Jews who lived in Persia during the days of Mordecai and Esther. It celebrates God's faithfulness, not just to Jews living in Israel but also to Jews of the Diaspora—those living in foreign lands, forcibly displaced from their homeland. It explains how one of the major festivals in the Jewish calendar, the Festival of Purim, got started and its special significance to God's people everywhere.

Non-Jewish people might not celebrate Purim, but all believers can celebrate our faithful God who redeemed us from the curse of sin and death—just as He saved the Jews from Haman's deadly decree.

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Observation: Celebrating God’s Faithfulness

Observation focuses solely upon the biblical text.¹ Begin your Bible study with a slow reading of *Esther 9:17–32*. As you do, look for anything the author repeated, key events, or explanations of those events. Record your initial impressions. What positive feelings does the tone of the passage stir in you?

Why did the author write that the Jews called the festival “Purim”? What were *purim* in Persia?

What did Mordecai and Esther do to establish Purim as a celebratory festival?

In what verse is the theme *remembrance* discussed? What was the purpose of the people remembering according to the author?

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In order to gain perspective over negative things, there must be monuments, there must be memorials. They must be returned to and learned from and passed on. There must be Purims in our lives, without which we live rootless, fast-lane lives without much significance. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Theological Significance of Purim

All the feasts and festivals prior to the time of Esther originated by Yahweh's command through Moses. In Leviticus 23, the Lord instituted through Moses seven annual festivals in addition to the weekly celebration of the Sabbath. The following chart lists them, along with their theological significance.

Festival in Leviticus 23	Meaning
Passover (23:5)	Redemption
Unleavened Bread (23:6–8)	Purification
First Fruits (23:9–14)	Thanksgiving
Weeks or Pentecost (23:15–22)	Provision
Trumpets (23:23–25)	Repentance
Day of Atonement (23:26–32)	Confession, Atonement
Shelters or Tabernacles (23:33–44)	Deliverance, Protection, Faithfulness

How does Purim, appointed by the Lord through Mordecai, compare with the other festivals commanded? What gives Purim its theological significance and meaning? To answer this question, we recommend consulting a commentary on Esther or your Bible dictionary. For an online resource, consult the article, "[Purim](#)," in *The Encyclopedia of the Bible* at biblegateway.com.

Notice how [Esther 9:24–25](#) restates what happened to Haman. What is the theological significance of how God relates to His people and deals with their enemies? What principle does Haman's downfall teach?

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According to [Esther 9:28](#), the Jews celebrated when they remembered their deliverance. Why is recalling what God did in the past important even for those who didn't experience the event themselves?

Mordecai initiated Purim, and Esther authorized it as an annual festival of gratitude for what God had done. After God delivered the Jews from their impending extermination, they turned their survival into a celebration.

Don't just forget the past. Don't just, with the passing of your hand, say, "Oh yeah. It was awful." Build a monument! Celebrate the feast! Pass along the lessons that led to the maturity and the changes that were so essential in your life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Theme of Remembrance

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we examine the theme *remembrance*, which is an essential part of following Christ.

What were the Jewish people commanded to remember in [Exodus 12:1–13](#) and why?

[Psalm 105](#) consists of forty-five verses devoted to remembering. Peruse the first five verses and record the relationship between remembrance and worship.

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The New Testament continues this theme in the special memorial of the Lord's Supper. What is the meaning of this remembrance celebration as Paul explained in *1 Corinthians 11:23–26*?

Each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we remember how God redeemed us through Jesus' death and resurrection. Based on the passages above, write a summary of the importance of remembering—as a spiritual discipline—how God turns sufferings into blessings, agonies into ecstasies, and aches into celebrations.

My suggestion is that each one of us raise up memorials, mental monuments that turn tragedies into triumphs. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Making Positive Memories Central

Two principles for application based on Esther 9:17–32 guide us in reinforcing positive memories instead of dwelling on the negative ones.

1. *Raise up a mental memorial to turn your sadness into celebration.* Bad memories don't have to haunt us. While “weeping may last through the night,” God can bring joy in the morning—joy worth celebrating (Psalm 30:5).
2. *Don't turn your memorial into a shrine.* The Israelites ended up worshiping the bronze serpent Moses used to bring God's healing. We don't worship the memory, nor do we remember for the sake of remembering. We use the memorial to worship God alone, celebrate the good He has done, and glean the added wisdom He's given.

Do you have a memory that has controlled you? Out of the rubble of regret, build a monument of God's grace and unearth the positive out of that recollection that has bothered you for so long.

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Sometimes, our past points an incriminating finger at us, filling us with all the shame and guilt as if we had just recommitted the sin. Our sin, however, doesn't define us. It doesn't dictate who we are. In Christ you have a new name. God has forgiven you and filled you with His Spirit to live a new life. Express your gratitude to God who has adopted you as His child into His family.

The account of Esther was recorded for future generations to remember that, through their exile and suffering, God brought relief and blessing. God, not their enemies, determined their identity and their hope. What if your family declared its own Purim-type holiday to remember God's faithfulness? What story would be the centerpiece of your celebration? How could you make the day meaningful and fun?

An answer to the ache of life, an answer to the “Hamans” whose shadows have crossed your lives, and an answer to the would-have-been holocausts that would have devastated your existence is to make a memorial out of it. The lessons you learned from the past that have turned you into the person God wanted you to be, those are the things to pass on and on and on. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for not dealing with me according to my sins and for strengthening me through the traumas of my past. You know how fragile I am. All people are like flourishing flowers of the field that are gone with a gust of wind. But You are not harsh. You are gentle, and You lavish me with steadfast love through Your faithful Son, Jesus Christ. With Him I walk. In Him I hope. Because of Him, I can celebrate. In His strong name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. 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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