

FASCINATING STORIES OF FORGOTTEN LIVES

STUDY ONE

Often-Overlooked Lives of Significance

2 Samuel 23; 1 Chronicles 11–12

The emphasis of this message is on the value of the unknowns—the often-overlooked lives we should, but frequently fail to, acknowledge and honor.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll



To deepen your study, scan to listen.

SIGNIFICANT. Merriam-Webster’s defines the word as: “having meaning . . . having or likely to have influence or effect.”¹

Who qualifies as significant? Who are the people whose lives bear the qualities of meaning, influence, and effect? And who judges whether a person’s life is significant? Are significant people those whose names are in a book of *Who’s Who*? Or who are brilliant academics? Star athletes? Gifted musicians? Would you make the list?

If the dictionary’s definition is our final standard for defining *significance*, we would never know with certainty whether we qualify. We would be caught in an endless pursuit of accomplishment and comparison with others. Such a standard is a recipe for frustration. Thankfully, a stronger voice invites us out of that pursuit to rethink true significance.

Scripture teaches that every person possesses significance. Our significance doesn’t rest in what we accomplish or how we compare to others. Rather, it rests in the fact that God created us “in his own image” (Genesis 1:27). We’re stamped with divine majesty. Humans, through no effort of our own, carry significance, worth, and value—from the moment of our conception in our mother’s womb (*Psalms 139:13–18*).

If our compass is fixed to the true north of God’s Word, we’ll think rightly about ourselves without veering into a ditch of thinking too highly or too lowly of ourselves. Even if the world sees us as “nobodies,” we are “somebodies” in God’s eyes.



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This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study considers often-overlooked lives of significance from the pages of the Old Testament. Some you'll recognize and others you may not. They're the mighty men who faithfully followed King David. God preserved their memory for our encouragement and instruction that we might get a glimpse of His thoughts on true significance.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a moment to prepare your heart to receive God's truth. You may wish to pray as Pastor 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

Everyone knew David! As a teen and the anointed king-in-waiting, David made a name for himself by courageously slaying Goliath, the menacing Philistine giant. Afterward, although David faithfully served King Saul for more than ten years, paranoid Saul became jealous of David's fame, and he sought to kill him.

David lived as a fugitive in his own land, moving from canyon to cave and from forest to wilderness. During that desperate time, David learned to recognize and depend upon the unknowns who would later become his loyal band of supporters and mighty warriors.

These were the rabble, the people on the fringes of society who were "in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented" (1 Samuel 22:2). Although unknown, unappreciated, or forgotten by most, these outcasts were drawn to fugitive David. They were crucial to David's success as Israel's eventual monarch.

Our study focuses on the historical books of 1 Chronicles and 2 Samuel. Though 1 Chronicles was written later, it details David's early life, while 2 Samuel covers his later years. To familiarize yourself with the geographic locations mentioned in these passages, consult a map in your Bible atlas, study Bible, or online at insight.org/maps.

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Observation: Forgotten . . . But Mighty

The first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method is observation, which, according to Pastor Chuck, is “the process of seeing what the Bible actually says. You’re not answering questions at this point. You’re not adding something through your imagination. You’re simply reading the words on the page.”³

David’s Early Reign . . . The Mighty Men

According to [1 Chronicles 11:10](#), what did David’s mighty men do after Saul died in battle ([1 Chronicles 10](#))? Read [11:11–47](#). What do you note about the mighty men’s influence, resolve, and spiritual obedience?

The chronicler provided some unique details about one valiant warrior in 11:22–23. Who was this man, and among his many mighty deeds, what three feats are recorded? How would his capabilities have benefited David?

Read what [12:1–40](#) tells us about who also linked arms with David. What skill of the mighty men protecting David is noted in 12:2? Who were they related to, and why do you think the author noted this fact? Jot down additional observations you catch in this passage.

In 12:18, what do you observe about Amasai’s words of commitment to David?

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David's Last Words . . . The Mighty Men

Years passed, and at the end of David's earthly days, he paid tribute to the mighty men who faithfully served him. Read [2 Samuel 23:1–17](#) and record your initial observations.

Look closely at 23:8–12. The writer recorded the names of David's three mightiest men and lauded each for a particular feat. Who were the three mighty warriors, and what did each achieve?

David led these men, and as their ranks grew they became the mighty men of his camp. They became the significant people of David's life. Interestingly, as is often true, nobody knows all their names today. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: God's Appointments Are Significant

Wherever God chooses to employ His people, they and their roles are significant. David became more and more powerful, rivaling the mightiest characters in the Old Testament. How do we know that this was not about his selfish ambition? Who made him great, according to [1 Chronicles 11:9](#)?

Compare this verse with David's declaration of his faith in God before Goliath in [1 Samuel 17:45–47](#). What qualities in David made him significant in God's eyes—whether or not he ever became famous?

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In [2 Samuel 23:1–2](#), how do David’s last words demonstrate that he held the right perspective about himself and his actions? What does this noble perspective teach us about significance?

In [23:8–12](#), the writer clearly defined a “rank order” of David’s mighty men. There is no hint of ego, and each man performed critical and consequential feats. What principles can we glean about who receives the credit, about humility, and about significance from God’s perspective?

They gathered together around David, and they became his mighty men of valor. They were all volunteers, and they didn’t seek the limelight. There was not one glory hog among them. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Our Significance Is Found in the Savior

From the opening of the Old Testament to the closing of the New Testament, our significance is found in the triune Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While “we are only dust” and “our days on earth are like grass” (Psalm 103:14–15), we hold inestimable significance in Christ.

How do David’s words in [Psalm 8:3–4](#) speak to our value and significance as a creation of God? What contrast did David draw in this psalm?

Moving from our creation to our redemption, how does Paul’s declaration in [Romans 5:6–11](#) demonstrate your significance? Describe our transformation from “dust” to “friends of God.”

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Read [1 Corinthians 1:28–31](#) in the NLT and in the NASB. What is Paul's point? What contrast is made between worldly insignificance and godly significance?

Do your work behind the scenes and then forget about it. It isn't about you. It isn't about any of us. It isn't about making a name. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: You Are Significant Even If Overlooked

Four applications emerge from our study of the unknowns, the forgotten, and the overlooked in Scripture.

1. *When you don't care about who gets the credit, you never complain about the role you fill.* In the body of Christ, every role is significant, even if humanly overlooked.
2. *When you focus on the right objectives, you don't waste your time in wrong pursuits.* Our objective is to always exalt the name and person of Jesus Christ. Always.
3. *When you are surrounded by great people who give and serve, a spirit of unity naturally emerges.* When we understand our significance in the Lord, comparisons and competition die away. Mutual respect produces a common bond with a common goal.
4. *When you blend unity with humility, contagious joy results.* Just as love may be the most significant quality within the body of Christ, joy may be the most attractive feature to those outside the Christian faith.

Which one of the four applications most encourages you? Why? Where and how have you seen that principle lived out?

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Is there a person in your circle who embodies and models a spirit of serving Christ though unknown or overlooked? Describe this person's role and how he or she serves.

Have you found yourself or do you currently find yourself serving the Lord as one who is unknown or overlooked? Can you embrace it? If so, rejoice and record a short prayer of thanksgiving to God. If you struggle to embrace God's role for you, record a short prayer requesting His peace, His perspective, and His enablement.

I found over the years of ministry that nothing excites me like the joy of God's people when they are living in harmony, unity, and humility together.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Our Father, thank You for helping me see people I've never met before who were such significant role players in the life of David. Thank You that Your wonderful way still goes on—people who don't seek the limelight serving humbly for Your glory, not their own. Now help me to be that kind of servant. May I hold my fame loosely and be firmly devoted to Your work and prove it by my actions. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2014), see "significant."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
3. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures*, 71. 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 Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2005, 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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