

ESTHER: A WOMAN OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

After the Ache . . . Celebrate!

Esther 9:17–32

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Have you ever been on a nice walk in your neighborhood or having lunch at work and *WHAM!* out of nowhere your mind hits you with a memory you hate to relive? Too often our minds focus on negative memories when we think about the past. We need hardly any effort to recall the people, events, circumstances, or decisions that have caused us pain, strain, or shame.

However, these seismic memories don't have to shake or topple us. They can be tools that increase our gratitude to God or give us insight for living. 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 never forget after our journeys through trials.

Focusing on Esther 9:17–32, Chuck Swindoll reveals how we can use our memories to preserve wisdom gained through hardship and to adore our God for His faithfulness and grace.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Esther 9:17–32 records the purpose for which the author wrote the book of Esther: to recount and preserve the story of God's protection of the Jews who lived in Susa during the days of Mordecai and Esther.

In this eleventh *Searching the Scriptures* study on Esther, we'll explore the value of intentional reflection.

Quotable

Life flies in the fast lane. Quick decisions.

Quick money.

Fast action. Strong competition.

So little time spent stopping and recording and reflecting.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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To begin, let's read Psalm 143:5–6. In this short poem, David asked God to deliver him from an enemy who wished to kill him. Remembering what God had done in the past led David to trust God in his present circumstances.

I remember the days of old.

*I ponder all your great works
and think about what you have done.*

I lift my hands to you in prayer.

I thirst for you as parched land thirsts for rain. (Psalm 143:5–6)

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



Observation

Because observation focuses solely upon the biblical text, we always begin observation with a slow reading of the passage—even two or three times. Do that now with *Esther 9:17–32*. As you do, look for anything the author repeated, key events, or explanations of those events. Record those things along with any other significant details you find.



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

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

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



Interpretation

Sometimes interpretation requires correlation because authors depend upon prior biblical sources to convey key points. The author of Esther did this indirectly, so we’ll explore a few other biblical passages in our interpretation phase.

All the feasts and festivals prior to the time of Esther had their origin by Yahweh’s command through Moses. For example, God commanded the sabbath rest (Exodus 20:8–11) and the Passover feast (23:15). Leviticus 23:1–2 summarizes the origin of the feasts:

The LORD said to Moses, “Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. These are the LORD’s appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as official days for holy assembly.”



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Notice how this language is not present in Esther. How does the origination of Purim through Mordecai contrast with the other festivals commanded during the exodus? What gives Purim its theological significance? To answer this question, we recommend consulting your Bible dictionary to look up *feasts* and *festivals* as well as *Purim*. For an online resource, consult the article, “*Feasts*,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Bible* at biblegateway.com. Also, you might consult your commentary on Esther.

Notice how Esther 9:24–25 restates what happened to Haman. With this statement, the author affirmed theology conveyed throughout the book. What is that theology as it relates to the Jews and as it relates to the idea of pride?

According to Esther 9:28, the Jews celebrated when they remembered their deliverance. What would they lose if they didn’t remember this event? Why is remembering what God did in the past important even for those who didn’t experience the event themselves?



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Esther 9:32, the last verse of chapter nine, states, “So the command of Esther confirmed the practices of Purim, and it was all written down in the records.” Why did the author end with this statement? What might the author have meant theologically by this statement?

In this last section of Esther 9, we read how Mordecai initiated Purim and how he 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 memorial of celebration.



Correlation: Comparing Carefully

In the previous *Searching the Scriptures* study, we examined how the theme *rest* threads the entire canon of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, so that it carries theological weight when the author uses the phrase. You probably noticed it used again in our passage today (Esther 9:17–18, 22).

In this study, we’ll examine the theme of *remembrance* and its development and significance in the biblical narrative as well as the importance of reflection in our own lives.

What were the Jewish people commanded to remember in *Exodus 13:1–16*? Why were they commanded to reflect on this?

What was the importance of reflection in *Deuteronomy 5:12–15*?



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Psalm 105 consists of forty-five verses all devoted to remembering. Peruse the first five verses and record the relationship between remembrance and worship.

The New Testament continues this theme. For this study, we'll read just one. What did Paul want us to remember in *Ephesians 2:11–16*?

Based on the passages above, write a summary of the importance of reflection as a spiritual discipline.



Application

Chuck provided two principles for application in his sermon on Esther 9:17–32. These are especially helpful for those who squirm at the recollection of personal past events.

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 (Psalm 30:5).
2. *Don't turn your memorial into a shrine.* We don't worship the memory, nor do we remember for the sake of remembering. We use the memorial to draw closer to God, celebrate the good He has done, and glean the added wisdom He's given.



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

Sometimes, our past points an incriminating finger at us, filling us with shame and guilt as if we had just recommitted the sin. Indeed, the corrupting power of sin leads us to think and act in shameful ways. But sin does not 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.



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 a flourishing flower of the field that is 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.



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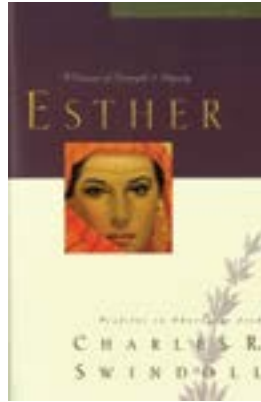
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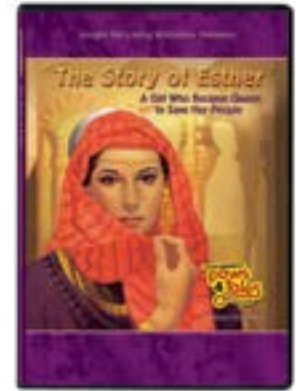
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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