



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Do you believe that one person can make a difference in the world? Do you believe that your life can have an immeasurable influence on your family and your community?

If you're not convinced, know this: God *does* believe that one person can make a difference in the world. Jesus is the ultimate example of this! As bearers of God's image, we, too, can be empowered by the Spirit to glorify God by standing up for truth, calling people to repentance, and demonstrating God's love . . . or His justice.

The book of Esther is chock-full of examples of one person making a difference—both for good and for evil. The extraordinary power of Esther's story is in her bravery and determination, despite her disadvantages as a foreign, orphan woman.

There's nothing like a huge dose of sound theology to put steel into our bones, and Esther 4 reminds us that though we cannot do *everything*, we should always do the thing we *can* do.



### DIGGING DEEPER

In this study, we're going to get cooking in the book of Esther by practicing the basics of Bible study methods.



### Getting Down to the Background—Observation

*Observation answers the question: What does it say? It's vital to carefully observe words, phrases, names, places, repetition, comparisons, and contrasts before leaping to interpretation.*

When studying or teaching the book of Esther (or any other book of the Bible, for that matter), it's extremely helpful to know the background; context makes the biblical text come alive. The biblical characters' virtues, courage, and fears are illuminated above the foils of the current events of their day.

## Quotable

*You are the  
only you, placed on  
this busy planet  
for a purpose.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



Using commentaries, a Bible dictionary, or online resources such as [lumina.bible.org](http://lumina.bible.org) or [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), answer the following questions to delve into the background of the book of Esther as an observation exercise.

Before you begin, pray Psalm 119:18:

Open my eyes to see  
the wonderful truths in your instructions. (NLT)

In what era do scholars estimate the book of Esther was written?

Did the book of Esther take place before, during, or after the Babylonian exile?

When was the earliest known historical mention of the book of Esther?

Over which empire did King Ahasuerus reign?

Where was Susa (Esther 1:2)? (Use a map. A hint: it's located in modern-day Iran.)



What was King Ahasuerus' more popular name? (Hint: it begins with an X)

Check out [this link](#) to get a glimpse into the personality of Ahasuerus, according to ancient historian Herodotus, or look him up in a Bible dictionary (a great free resource for dictionaries and commentaries online is biblestudytools.com). Take notes on what you find out about his personality.

Look at Israel on a map. What geographical regions surrounded Israel?



### Interpretation

*After you observe, interpretation is the task of discovering: What does it mean?*



### Correlation

*Correlation is the process of discovering: What does it say elsewhere? This is done by cross-referencing passages with others.*

We've gathered a lot of observational data that gives dimension and context to the passage. Now, let's get to the delicious task of investigating the significance of Esther 4:1–17, in light of what we've observed. (Yes, it is delicious to discover more about the Word and its Author!) Often, during Bible study, you'll weave the practice of correlation into your interpretation process—since Scripture interprets Scripture.



Now that we have observed information about the background of Esther, let's interpret Esther 4:1–17 by asking more nuanced questions.

Esther 4:4 says: "When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the burlap, but he refused it" (NLT). Has anyone ever attempted to silence or diminish your sadness or grief? Was it effective?

How does Esther's initial response to Mordecai differ from Jesus' response to hurting people? (See Isaiah 53:3–5 and John 11:33–35 for examples.)

Name three (or more!) other incidents in the Bible where a character was faced with impossible odds but stood alone for the sake of faithfulness to God and his/her people.

Are there other biblical passages related to God's providence that lend credence to Mordecai's warning/encouragement to Esther in Esther 4:13–14? Write them down. (Hint: see Proverbs 24:12 and Romans 8:26–28.)



Esther's most famous words are "if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16 NASB).

Based on what you discovered about Ahasuerus/Xerxes, does Esther's apprehension in Esther 4:10–11 seem reasonable?



### Application

*Application is our opportunity to answer the question: What does it say to me and to others?*

There are two applications Chuck Swindoll gleaned from Esther 4:1–17:

- *Not until you believe one person can make a difference will you be willing to stand alone.*
- *Only when you move from the safe harbor of theory to the troubled waters of reality will you know what it means to stand alone.*

**Write down your additional applications from Esther 4:1–17.**



In his message, Chuck includes practical ways to stand against issues that adversely affect the vulnerable. This includes:

- Abortion
- Hunger
- Homelessness
- Substance abuse
- Racism
- Pornography
- Sex trafficking
- Fallen believers
- Those who haven't heard the gospel

What are some ways that you can commit to making a stand in your neighborhood, at your job, or in service to the community? Write them down.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Lord of Hosts, please guard our hearts from watching out for our own protection, rather than upholding Your reputation and the truth of Your Word. May the conviction to stand up for You—even alone, at times—make a difference in lives, in families, in homes, in neighborhoods, in cities, in this nation, in our world. In the matchless name of Christ our Savior we pray. Amen.*



# WISE COUNSEL FOR TROUBLED TIMES

## Standing Alone

Esther 4:1-17

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

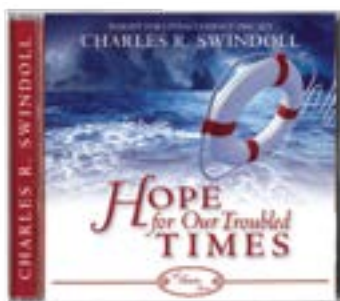
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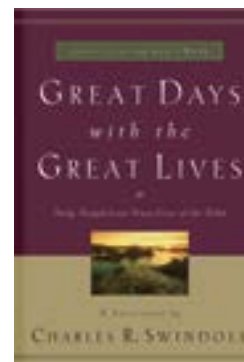
### Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2017 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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