

DISCOVERING CHRIST
IN THE STORY OF

ESTHER

DARLENE SCHACHT

TIME-WARP WIFE MINISTRIES



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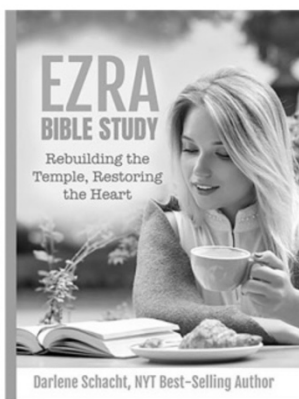
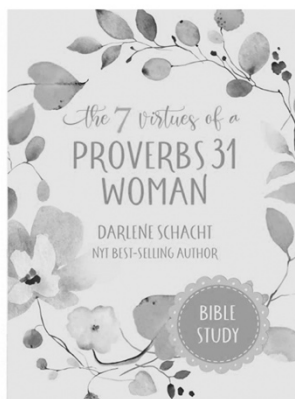
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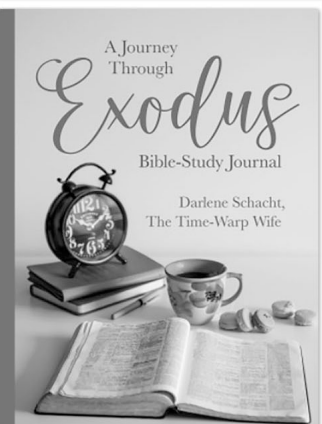
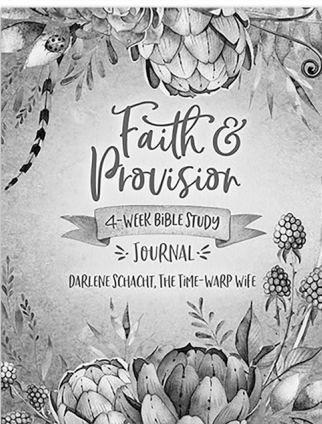
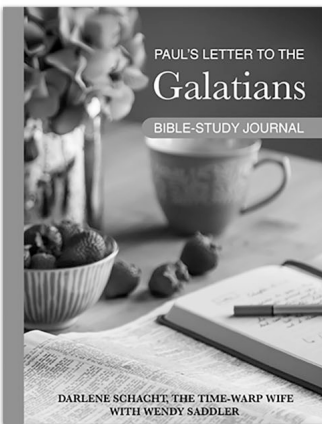
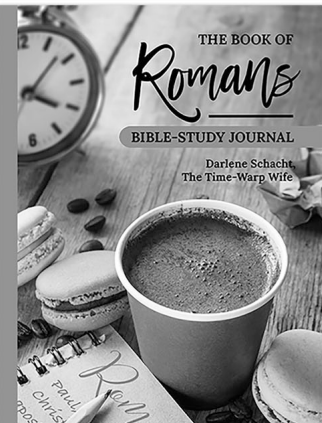
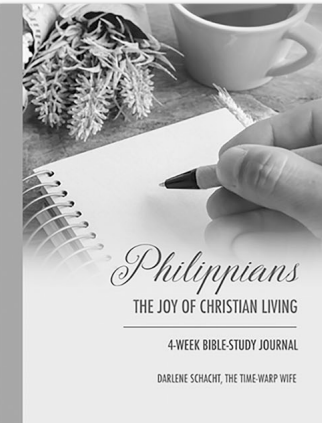
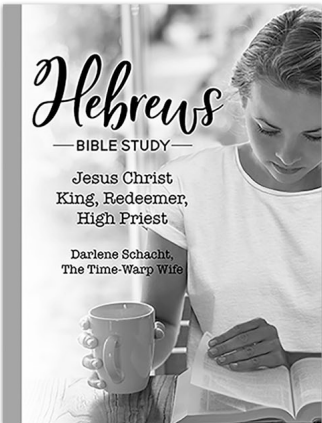
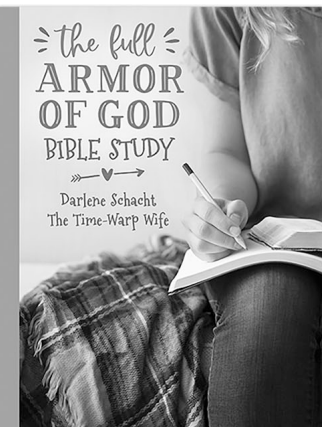
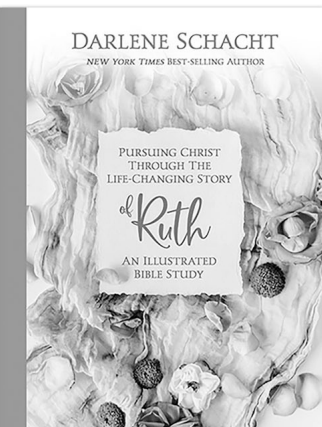
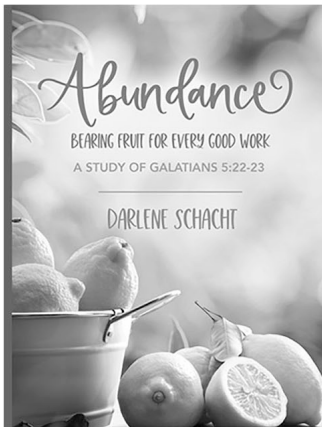
She began her publishing journey in 2011 working alongside actress/author Candace Cameron Bure to publish *Reshaping it All: Motivation for Spiritual and Physical Fitness*.

With a passion for Jesus, Darlene continues to write, sharing the gospel with countless women around the world.

Visit Darlene's blog at TimeWarpWife.com to find Bible studies, devotionals, and daily marriage prayers.

Other Bible Studies by Darlene Schacht:





Introduction



Esther's story, nestled in the Old Testament, unfolds amid intrigue, danger, and redemption in a foreign land. The tale's heartbeat is Esther, a Jewish woman in exile who rises to become queen of Persia, and Mordecai, her cousin and advisor. Both navigate the treacherous court, demonstrating resilience and wisdom. Esther, in particular, embodies courage and faith, her actions leading to a triumphant deliverance for her people.

In studying Esther, it's crucial to note why Jews lived in the Persian Empire. This was due to the Babylonian exile, detailed in 2 Kings 25:8-21, where Jews were taken captive by Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar. The Persian Empire, later conquering Babylon, allowed some Jews to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4). However, many remained, setting the stage for Esther's story as a Jewish queen in Persia.

As we walk through each chapter of this remarkable story, we'll peel back the layers to uncover a richness that goes beyond the historical narrative. We'll discover a series of astonishing reflections of Christ, resonating through the lives of these characters, their actions, and the pivotal events that marked their journey. From the humble service of Mordecai at the king's gate to the courageous stand of Esther before the king, from the deliverance during Passover to the loving adoption of a young girl, we find echoes of Christ's life and ministry. These threads intricately woven throughout the narrative bring to light the timeless truth of God's salvation plan.

These connections are not always obvious. They require us to dig beneath the surface, to ponder, and to piece together the hints

sprinkled throughout the text. This is the journey we will undertake together.

Let's not forget that this exploration isn't just about unpacking an ancient story. It's about finding ourselves in these stories, relating to these characters, and gleaning spiritual wisdom from their experiences. Each character, each event, each decision presents us with lessons that are profoundly relevant to our journey of faith.

I'm especially excited to take you through Chapter 8. This chapter holds some of the most striking correlations between the story of Esther and the gospel message. It is as if God has sketched a portrait of Christ's love and redemption within the lines of this Old Testament book, a picture that becomes clearly visible as we reach this crucial juncture in the story.

THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF ESTHER

Another thing I'd like to point out before we get into the study is a fascinating aspect of the book's narrative: its chiasmic structure. Picture a beautifully crafted mirror, reflecting the plot elements in perfect symmetry. This literary design starts at one end of the story, walks us to a pivotal midpoint, and then echoes the journey in reverse. Imagine it as forming an 'X', with each part of the story complementing its counterpart. This divine craftsmanship showcases the stunning reversals of fortune, which lie at the heart of Esther's story. As we study together, I encourage you to take note of these mirrored events, considering the profound wisdom each reflection imparts. It's one of the many ways we uncover the intricate layers of God's word, revealing how masterfully He weaves together threads of triumph, trial, faith, and providence.

A simple chiasmic outline of Esther might look like this:

1. A: Vashti is queen (Chapter 1)

2. B: Mordecai uncovers a plot to kill the king (Chapter 2)
3. C: Haman is elevated above all the other nobles (Chapter 3)
4. D: Haman plans to destroy the Jews (Chapter 3-4)
5. E: Esther goes before the king unsummoned, risking her life (Chapter 5)
6. F: Haman's plot backfires - Mordecai is honored (Chapter 6)
7. E': Esther goes before the king a third time, risking her life (Chapter 7)
8. D': Haman is destroyed, his plan to destroy the Jews is thwarted (Chapter 7)
9. C': Mordecai is elevated, takes Haman's place (Chapter 8)
10. B': Mordecai writes to reverse the plot against the Jews (Chapter 8-9)
11. A': Esther is powerful as queen (Chapter 9-10)

This structure not only brings to light the careful construction of the narrative, but it also reveals the profound dynamics at work in the story. The central turning point—Haman's plot backfiring and Mordecai being honored - becomes all the more significant in this design. Meanwhile, the mirrored events underscore the dramatic shift from impending doom to triumphant security experienced by Mordecai and the Jews. The chiasmic structure invites us to delve deeper into these narrative turns and understand the story of Esther in a new light.

I invite you to join me in this exploration. Let us uncover these connections, and in doing so, deepen our understanding of God's timeless truths manifested in the story of Esther. These reflections, initially veiled, will unfold themselves as we progress, revealing a tapestry of divine wisdom woven into the fabric of this captivating story.



The Banishment of a Queen



Esther Chapter 1

THE KING'S POWER AND WEALTH (VERSES 1-9)

Esther 1:1-9 throws us right into the heart of a lavish royal celebration that's bigger than anything most of us could imagine. Imagine the opulence, the grandeur, the spectacle! All of it was orchestrated by the king to display the wealth of his mighty kingdom. King Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus) reigned over an empire consisting of 127 provinces, stretching from India to Ethiopia, indicating the vastness of his realm and his immense power as a ruler.

Let's remember something vital as we navigate through these verses. These earthly riches and this grandeur, as impressive as they are, remain just that—earthly. They're transitory, which means they only last for a season.

As I got to writing this chapter, I found myself strolling down memory lane. Growing up in the 70s, our home was filled with stuff. We didn't have the luxuries of a king, but we did have stereos, radios,

wood-framed TVs, tape recorders, cameras, and if your family was like mine, a large brown patterned sofa that nearly matched our dad's pants.

We owned stacks of records, shelves filled with books, and mountains of magazines. For a school project, the go-to was either the local library to dive into your subject, or thumbing through one of the 22 hardbound encyclopedias that your parents had been persuaded to buy.

But isn't it intriguing how all these items, so precious then, hold little to no value today? We treasured them in their time. I remember a man who devoted a good hour just to clean his TV, polishing all the buttons like a vintage car.

Who wants that hefty TV today? Who longs to own Grandma's old couch? How about the thought of lugging around 22 books? And who would prefer an outdated camera over the convenience of a pocket-sized cell phone?

The Bible cautions us about placing too much importance on earthly treasures, particularly our reliance on them, saying,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19)

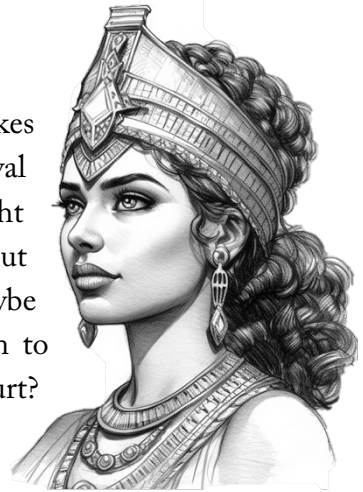
If all we have is faith in finances and success, we'll be left disappointed time and again. Success without holiness is nothing more than a heap of rotting ladders pointing to the sky. Anyone who's scaled those heights will tell you they're still hungry for something more.

Just as a wise parent would, God desires something better for us. He offers more than a crumbling pile of rust,

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:20)

QUEEN VASHTI'S REFUSAL (VERSES 10-12)

Moving on to verse 10, we see that the story takes an interesting twist. King Xerxes, in his royal celebration, orders Queen Vashti to be brought before his court to show off her beauty. But Vashti, in an act of sheer bravery or maybe foolhardiness, says "no." Can you even begin to imagine the shock that ripples through the court?



While we can only speculate on the queen's motivation to refuse the king's call that night, her actions demonstrate a desire to uphold her dignity. This raises questions about the delicate balance between asserting one's boundaries and maintaining respectful relationships.

As we explore this idea, I'm reminded of Ephesians 5:21, which says,

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

It's a delicate balance to strike, isn't it? This concept of mutual respect, submission, and maintaining personal boundaries, all at once.

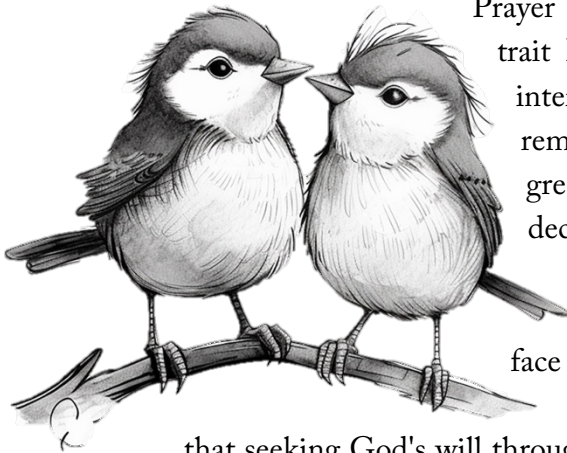
This is where the importance of seeking God's will comes into play. While human judgment is fallible, God's wisdom is infallible. As we navigate the complexities of life, whether it's personal relationships or difficult decisions, the guiding hand of God's will is invaluable.

Turning to prayer in these situations provides us with the spiritual compass we need. It's through sincere prayer that we invite God's wisdom into our lives. The Apostle James reminds us,

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.
(James 1:5)*

Did you know?

In ancient Persia, a queen's refusal to obey the king's command, as Vashti did, was considered a serious offense not only to the king but also to the entire kingdom. This is why her punishment was severe: to maintain the king's authority and uphold societal norms.



Prayer encourages humility, the very trait Ephesians advocates for in our interactions with each other. It reminds us that we are part of a greater plan, and our actions, decisions, and relationships should reflect this.

Just like Vashti, we may face situations that challenge our principles. It's in these moments that seeking God's will through prayer can guide us. It allows us to stand firm in our beliefs, like Vashti, while also reminding us of the mutual respect and love that God calls us to show one another.

Remember, the essence of submission in Ephesians isn't about surrendering our dignity or self-respect. Rather, it's about surrendering our pride, our need to always be right, and our self-centered behaviors, out of love for Christ and for each other.

THE KING'S RESPONSE (VERSES 13-22)

In response to Vashti's refusal, King Xerxes consults with his advisers. Their counsel, sadly, seems to reflect more of a desire to please the king than to resolve the matter wisely and justly. They suggest that Vashti's defiance would set a bad precedent for other wives in the kingdom and propose her removal from the queenship.

Here, we see the importance of wise and godly counsel. The Bible tells us,

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22)

It's important to seek advice that does more than simply tickle the ear or feed your pride. The best advice is grounded in wisdom and steeped in righteousness.

Did you know?

Although God's hand is evident throughout the story as He moves on behalf of His people and though He is the central figure in this narrative, His name is never mentioned in the Book of Esther. This unique aspect underscores the theme of God's providence, showing us that even when He seems silent or absent, He is actively at work in our lives.

What do we know from this chapter about the second feast that King Xerxes held?
In particular, what do you learn about...

1. The location of the feast:

2. The decorations:

3. The drink:

4. The furnishings:

In this chapter we read about three feasts. Two were hosted by King Xerxes himself.

How long was the first one?

How long was the second one?

According to verses 4 and 11, what was the purpose of his feast?

What might the purpose and nature of these feasts reveal about the king's character?

Queen Vashti refusal to answer the king's call resulted in a severe consequence. What was that?

What ripple effect did her choice have?

What role did pride play in this chapter?

What does James 4:6 say about pride?

AS WE CLOSE THIS CHAPTER

Let's take a moment to consider what God is laying on each of our hearts. Are we focused more on earthly wealth or spiritual richness? Are we striking a balance between respecting authority and maintaining personal dignity? And finally, are we surrounding ourselves with godly, wise counsel or friends that tell us what we want to hear?

With prayer and reflection, may we seek the Lord's guidance to lead us and guide us in truth.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Esther Chapter 1

What do we know from this chapter about the second feast that King Xerxes held? In particular, what do you learn about...

1. The location of the feast:

The feasts were held in the palace of King Xerxes, specifically in the courtyard of the garden of the king's palace (Esther 1:5).

2. The decorations:

The palace was beautifully adorned with white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble (Esther 1:6).

3. The drink:

Royal wine was served in abundance, according to the generosity of the king. The drinking was according to the law; no one was compelled to drink, for the king had ordered all the officers of his household to do as each man desired (Esther 1:7-8).

4. The furnishings:

The furnishings of the feast included gold and silver couches placed on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones (Esther 1:6).

In this chapter we read about three feasts. Two were hosted by King Xerxes himself.

How long was the first one?

The first feast lasted 180 days (Esther 1:4), which was a grand display of the king's wealth and majesty.

How long was the second one?

The second feast lasted seven days (Esther 1:5), and it was held in the enclosed garden of the king's palace for all the people present in the capital city, Susa, from the greatest to the least.

According to verses 4 and 11, what was the purpose of his feast?

According to verses 4 and 11, the purpose of the first feast was to display the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. The purpose of the second feast, while not explicitly stated, seemed to be an extension of the first, showcasing his wealth and power, but this time to the general populace of Susa.

What might the purpose and nature of these feasts reveal about the king's character? (This answer might be different for everyone depending on what they glean from the scripture)

These feasts highlight the king's extravagance, his desire to display his wealth and power, and his pride.

Queen Vashti refusal to answer the king's call resulted in a severe consequence. What was that?

Queen Vashti's refusal to appear at the king's command during his feast resulted in her being dethroned. The king, advised by his officials, issued a royal command that Vashti was never again

to enter his presence, and her royal position was to be given to someone else (Esther 1:19).

What ripple effect did her choice have?

it set a legal precedent throughout the kingdom, and was intended to ensure that all women would honor their husbands, from the greatest to the least (Esther 1:20).

What role did pride play in this chapter?

Pride is a central theme in this chapter. King Xerxes' pride is evident in his vast displays of wealth and power, and his swift, harsh punishment of Vashti could be seen as a way of protecting his pride.

What does James 4:6 say about pride?

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'