

5. Read James 3:3-12. How does he warn believers about the misuse of words?

6. Read the Douglas J.E. Nykolaishen quote from the outline. How are we tempted to misconstrue the meaning of God's providence?

7. Why is appealing to victimhood so often counter-productive when it comes to our faith?

8. How can you grow to trust more fully in God's goodness?

Finding Our Way Back to God (The Book of Esther) - Part 3

"How to See the Invisible Hand of God in Your Circumstances"

Esther 2:18 – 3:5

If you were watching a powerful storm through a window, you would not literally see the wind or feel it, but you would not doubt the _____.

God's _____ hand is at work constantly in Esther, but you have to think of it in terms of watching the results of the wind from inside a secure building.

Esther 2:19-23

We have a tendency to say things in _____ that we would never say in person.

"Virtue _____"

"Echo _____"

James 3:3-12

Esther 3:1-5

How to See the Invisible Hand of God in Your Circumstances

1. Enter the larger story God is _____.

The author of Esther drops all kinds of clues and glimpses of God's hand at work all over the book, but it's there to be seen _____ by those who know the story of God in the Bible.

In the Joseph story and the Daniel story it is made explicit that God is behind their winning of the "favor" of pagan leaders; in Esther it is not mentioned. But it's the same language. Even the word for _____ is one of the most important and weighty theological words in the Old Testament.

"God's providence is about his kingdom work. This always requires God's people to focus on what is central. God's love is promised; comfort and fairness are not." (Douglas J.E. Nykolaishen)

This book was for them and for us like a "wink, wink" that God is _____ at work, even though few want to say it or acknowledge it.

2. Reject _____.

Mike Cospers makes the point that in our culture the claim to be a _____ is often wielded like a sword and often becomes just another way of grasping for power.

You clearly see that a big part of God's providence in this book and in Daniel and in story of Joseph is seen in how God places his man or his woman in _____ places for his kingdom purposes. They often suffer, but if they had claimed victimhood they would have lost their influence. Same with us.

3. Trust God and his providential _____ care.

Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Describe the most powerful storm you remember experiencing.
3. Read Esther 2:18 – 3:5. How does the wind analogy from the sermon help you to understand God's invisible hand at work in all circumstances (i.e., God's providence)?
4. The whole book of Esther puts great emphasis on the power of written words, referring to them 63 times. What are some of the temptations we face to misuse written words.