

5. Read the testimony of Jesus regarding the dangers of hiding our faith in Matthew 10:16-42. What are the dangers Jesus outlines?

6. How is judgmentalism distinguished from other types of judgment and discernment, which is always a form of judgment? Some passages that can illuminate your answer include Matthew 7:1-5, Luke 18:9-14; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Romans 12:2.

7. It's easy to see how our culture has twisted God's values and the harm it does to so many people. How can we keep from pointing fingers at our culture and condemning people far from God while being aware of how the culture has infiltrated our own hearts and lives?

Finding Our Way Back to God (The Book of Esther) - Part 2

"3 Indicators that We're Losing (or Have Lost) our Way"

Esther 2:1-18

Finding Our Way Back to God Series

As believers we are constantly finding ourselves compromised, adopting the ideas and ways of a culture without God, losing our distinction and identity as God's people.

We are often and sometimes continually duped into false stories of what life is really all about, who we are, and what's important or right or good.

It's not good for us, it undermines our ability to pass on our faith to the next generation, it impacts our witness for Christ, and it fails to bring God the glory due him.

But it doesn't catch God by surprise or overrule his grace.

We can learn from the book of Esther how to find our way back to God and to living more faithfully, a life that is distinctive for God.

What's in a Name?

"A Jew named Mordecai is a bit like a Jew named 'Crucifix Finkelstein.'" (Mike Cospers in Faith Among the Faithless: Learning from Esther How to Live in a World Gone Mad)

3 Indicators that We're Losing Our Way

1. **We hide our faith _____ (or, worse, we privatize our faith).**

This is _____ because there are times and places in the Bible where people hide their faith identity and are commended or excused.

The story of Namaan and Joseph of Arimathea and the testimony of Jesus (2 Kings 5; John 19:38; Matthew 10:32-33)

Let's not be too quick to _____ Mordecai and Esther.

And let's not _____ the hiddenness of their faith too quickly either.

Privatizing _____ is the conviction that our faith is a private thing—as in “my faith is nobody else’s business” or “my private life and my public life don’t have to match.”

It might be complicated, but when it comes to the God of the Bible, when we hide our faith, it _____ means we’re far from God and we’ve lost our way.

2. We live by a cultural _____ (and in a different story).

Judgmentalism is where we see the _____ in others but fail to see our own or to acknowledge them. Judgment and discernment and growing in a knowledge of what’s glorifying to God and what is not is essential in our journey, but it’s a journey carried out in humility and grace.

Life in Persia and America

- Over-reliance on the five _____
- Rejection of an overarching _____ that gives meaning to life
- Paying a _____ if you don’t fit in to the dominant cultural beliefs
- Frenzied _____
- Treatment of _____
- Sexuality is _____ from its purposes at creation
- D_____

3. We lose our _____ with God.

God is a _____ and relational God.

Why is Esther in the Bible?

- The Bible never hides the reality of the human condition or weaknesses of its _____.
- The Bible communicates a message of grace from the beginning to the end. Our sin and failure and compromise doesn’t put us beyond the _____ of God’s grace.
- The Bible is the story of _____ and Esther demonstrates how God redeems even our sins and failures and compromises.
- In the Bible story it becomes clear that the ultimate hero is _____.

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. If you had to give up your name and had to pick a new name, what name would you pick?
3. Read Esther 2:1-18. List some of the ways Mordecai and Esther compromise their faith?
4. Why is hiding or privatizing our faith so dangerous for our faith?