

ESTHER

The Girl With Two Names | Discussion Notes

In the final part of our series we are looking at God's providence. In the story we see God working things together for the good of the Jewish people, even though He seems hidden.

- What does God's 'providence' mean for you?

It can be difficult to recognise where God has been working - we can forget or think that it was just coincidence. You might want to try this activity to help recognise God's providence:

- Hand out a pen and piece of paper to everyone. Put some background music on and set a timer for 5 minutes. Then encourage the group to write down the different ways that they have seen God working things together for them. These could be tiny things or something huge. Then come back together and share.

Read Jeremiah 29:4-14. This is the same passage Philip spoke from last week where we learned what it means to 'do the God thing anyway' when we can't see God.

- What encourages from this passage?
- Philip points out that God doesn't promise us 'one plan' for our life, but 'plans' (plural). Have you ever thought about your future as more than just one set plan that we have to try and stick to?
- What are the problems with believing that God has just one set plan that we have to try to stick to?
- Is it comforting that God has many ways of working out His future for you?

In the final chapters of Esther we see God's providence at work in many ways. There are too many to list but here are just a few examples. King Xerxes can't sleep on the crucial night and so he read that history of his rule. Then it just so happens that he reads the story of how Mordecai thwarted a plot to kill him. Haman had a pole set up on which he thought Mordecai would be impaled, instead Haman is the one impaled.

All of this happens despite Esther messing up her part of the plan. She was meant to plead for the Jews to be saved, but instead she backed down and just invited Haman to a big party the next day - this only made things worse by puffing Haman's ego up even more! Philip explained that in this story we see that making a difference isn't about being perfect or powerful, but instead is about **trusting in God's power** and **embracing our weaknesses**.

- Do you ever mess up opportunities that God gives you to do good?
- How can we learn to trust in God's power?
- What stops us from fully trusting in God's power in our lives?
- What does it actually mean to embrace your weakness and trust God?

All of us have areas in life that we are trusting God for provision. Spend a couple of minutes reflecting on what these are in each Hub members lives, then share with the whole group. Finally break into smaller groups of 3 or 4 to pray for God's provision in each of these areas. Pray that God would make us agents that bring salvation to others, just like Esther. Pray that we would use our position, our context, our friendships, to bring God to others.