

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS WEEK 7

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 7: *What are the decrees of God?*

ANSWER: The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

MONDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 33B

Scripture: Read Ephesians 3:8-19; 1 Peter 1:17-21

Key Thought: *God has an eternal purpose for His creation.*

Questions:

- ☞ When you make an object, do you have a purpose in mind for it?
- ☞ Do you usually think of the purpose before you make an object?
- ☞ What does it mean that God has an "eternal purpose"?
- ☞ If God's purpose in Christ is eternal, did He decide to save man before or after Adam fell into sin?
- ☞ Does this mean that God thought about you before He made the world?

Prayer

Notes: The question this week has to do with God's decrees, or purposes, for the world He made. Some of the concepts may be difficult for small children to understand (and even for some grown-ups, for that matter), but there are some basic points that can be made. Today's focus is on the fact that God has an eternal purpose for His creation. When we create something, we conceive a purpose for it before making the actual object. This is a reflection of God's image in us. You might ask your children to think of some examples of this. Unlike us, however, God's purpose does not originate at a point in time. Explain to your children what it means that God's purpose is eternal. Before He formed the world, and even before Adam sinned, God had purposed to save His elect through Jesus Christ. Therefore the Bible calls Him "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." Point out to your children that God had them in mind before He formed the earth! Pray together, praising God for His eternal wisdom and thanking Him for His gracious purposes.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 33B

Scripture: Read Isaiah 40:13-18

Key Thought: *God's decrees proceed from His own counsel.*

Questions:

- ☪ Did you ever ask someone for advice? Why?
- ☪ Did God ever need to ask anyone for advice? Why not?
- ☪ Does the doctrine of the Trinity relate to this question?
- ☪ Do the Persons of the Trinity ever disagree with each other?
- ☪ How should you respond to the wise plans of God?

Prayer

Notes: Today's lesson focuses on the phrase "according to the counsel of His will." The main point to stress is that the eternal purposes of God are the result of His own will, and are not changed or affected by outside forces or events. Men often need to take counsel from other men, because their wisdom is limited or flawed. But God never needs the input of anyone or anything outside of Himself. He is infinitely wise and His eternal purpose comes from His wisdom alone. Discuss with your children how the doctrine of the Trinity relates to this question, since God as Three Persons in One is able to take counsel with Himself. Point out that since all Three Persons of the Trinity are infinitely wise, there is no disagreement among them. Together their counsel results in God's perfect will, and together they carry out that will in the world. There are some who teach that God's decision to save individuals is conditioned on a decision of their own will. They decide to accept Him, so He decides to forgive them. Contrary to this view, the Bible teaches that all things are determined by God according to the counsel of His own will. Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Since God does not depend on the input of anyone or anything to accomplish His eternal purposes, no individual or nation is able to alter the unchangeable will of God. Our response should be to humble ourselves before God, realizing that we are subject to His will, and to thank Him for willing to save us through Christ.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 33B

Scripture: Read Ephesians 1:1-11

Key Thought: *The decrees of God are for His own glory.*

Questions:

- ☪ What does the word "predestined" mean?

- ☪ If God has predestined you to be saved, and then He saves you, who deserves the credit?
- ☪ If God saved you because you decided to accept Him, who would deserve the credit?
- ☪ Have you ever taken the glory for something that God alone should receive?
- ☪ Does God's eternal purpose sometimes include His allowing or directing bad things to happen? Why is this?
- ☪ How is God's glory seen in these things?

Prayer

Notes: The passage from the first chapter of Ephesians very clearly states that God has predestined all things for His own glory. Talk with your children today about the fact that God alone deserves all of the glory for the working out of His eternal purposes in the world. When we receive praise or glory from men, it is generally because we have done something to earn it. If we are saved because we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, then it is God who deserves all of the glory for our salvation. Of course, God deserves all of the glory for everything we do, for we are dependent upon His grace to do or accomplish anything at all. Show your children how the common belief that salvation is God's response to an act of man's will robs God of the glory that He alone deserves. Discuss with them the fact that even in allowing or directing acts of judgment in the world, God's justice and power are demonstrated and He is glorified in these things as well. Pray together, asking God to forgive you for any times in which you have taken His glory for yourself through boasting and seeking His grace to glorify Him alone. Thank Him for demonstrating His glory in the salvation He has provided through Christ.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 33B

Scripture: Read Romans 9:9-23

Key Thought: *God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.*

Questions:

- ☪ What does the example of Jacob and Esau teach us?
- ☪ Is God under any obligation to save anyone?
- ☪ Why did God choose to show mercy to some of His creatures?
- ☪ Why did God choose to create others for destruction?
- ☪ As God's creatures, can we accuse Him of being unfair?
- ☪ How should we respond to this teaching?

Prayer

Notes: The ninth chapter of Romans provides one of the clearest statements of God's sovereignty in man's salvation. It is also a difficult passage for many to hear, because it puts man in his place as God's creature. Help your children to see that God is under no obligation to save any of His creatures. In fact, we are all deserving of His infinite wrath because of our sinful rebellion against Him. Paul leaves the matter in the hands of God, where it belongs. God has created some as vessels of wrath, in order to demonstrate His powerful anger against sin, and others as vessels of mercy, prepared in advance for glory. What is amazing is not that God would reject some, but that He would show mercy to any! The teaching of this passage should greatly humble us before God and provoke us to seek His mercy and to be thankful for His grace.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 33B

Scripture: Read Jeremiah 18:1-11

Key Thought: *God's decrees do not cancel your responsibility.*

Questions:

- ☞ Where did you hear the illustration of the Potter and the clay earlier this week? What does this illustration teach us?
- ☞ Do God's eternal decrees mean that we are not responsible to obey Him or seek to change our ways?
- ☞ What did God promise to His people if they repented?
- ☞ What is your responsibility before God?

Prayer

Notes: Some people react to the doctrine of predestination by concluding that it cancels human responsibility. Though it is hard to understand, help your children to see from this passage in Jeremiah that God preserves our responsibility in the process of unfolding His eternal decrees. Since we do not know the mind of God, we are responsible to obey Him and repent from wickedness. Yet even our obedience depends on His supply of grace through Jesus Christ. The balance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility seems impossible to our limited minds, but it is not impossible with God. Pray for grace to obey His Word with godly fear and humility.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.