

life group study guide

INDESCRIBABLE: Isaiah 45 **God's Righteousness & Sovereignty**



The Sovereignty of God

"God's Sovereignty is not a question of revelation, it's a question of comprehension" - John MacArthur

"God's sovereignty does not mean that I am released from responsibility." - Charles Swindoll

"The Devil is God's devil." - Martin Luther

This week's lesson is designed to bring us into discussion more so than just answer questions. I hope they are discussions that will allow us to get away from our Christian group and out into the world. There are some real questions about God's sovereignty especially in light of recent events right here in our home state. Read these very real questions but then let them rest for a few moments and we'll come back to them.

Where was God during the tornados?

Did God cause them to happen? If not, did He allow them to happen and if so why?

Did God want those people to die?

To begin to answer these questions you have to ask yourself which of these world views are correct?

- 1) God is in control of all things and makes everything, even evil to work to His plan.
- 2) Satan is in control and God is trying to wrestle it away from him, usually scrambling to fix something Satan has done or caused.
- 3) Everything happens randomly and there is no guiding force behind anything anywhere.

Scripture is one complete story about God being sovereign over the entire world and everything that transpires. Let's look at a few verses to start us off and clarify our world view...

Job 23:13 -- Psalms 115:3 -- Isaiah 14:24 -- Romans 11:33-36 -- and one that has special meaning to me, another look into Job: **Job 9:12**

We could list hundreds of verses here and spend the rest of our lives studying this truth of God and never understand it completely or have all the answers to the questions we will face over this issue.

Q) Do you, (we), as Christians have a complete enough understanding of this doctrine to explain it to non-Christians, family and friends?

GROUP ACTIVITY: Consider some of the questions you've been asked by skeptics because of your beliefs. Write them down and after a few minutes share them with the group; someone keep a master list.

I bet you are seeing some pretty powerful questions. Your list represents the questions that non-believers are asking. That Christians often times ask as well. These are the questions that turn people away from Christianity and I bet they follow this basic formula:

Why does God... Where was God... How can God...

They are questions that often revolve around evil, death, illness, fear and uncertainty and of course Heaven and Hell; salvation itself. These questions often have roots in a misplaced understanding of who God is, or an attempt by skeptics to make God into that they want him to be. They don't understand who He is, so they make Him into what they think He should be based upon faulty human reasoning and then call us to task for not sharing their beliefs.

In our time frame we just can't answer every question completely or spend hours discussing the concept of good vs. evil. We just don't have that time so let's deal with a few of the ideas to gain a foundation for the rest. As we look over and ask these questions remember the answers come from

life group study guide

scripture. It is fine to have an opinion, it's OK to admit we don't know, but true answers must be based in scripture.

If you have some pressing questions in your group, feel free to address them if you need to or so desire.

Let's dive in, don't be hesitant, God is bigger than these questions. He is not threatened by any lack of understanding or concerns we have. He waits for us with the answers; we just need to seek Him out.

Here are a few of the questions I bet you have written down:

After you have discussed the questions look up the references listed.

Q) Why would a loving God send anyone to hell?

Matthew 7:13 -- John 3:16 -- 1 Tim 4:9-10 -- 2 Peter 3:9

Q) Based on 2 Peter does God send anyone to hell, or does he have other plans for mankind?

Consider this quote from Charles Swindoll: "We can choose for, or we can choose against. But we cannot choose the consequences. If we choose against the person of Jesus Christ, we thereby step into God's decree of eternal punishment."

Q) Where is he saying that burden of choice lies?

On God and evil or sin: *Q) If God is sovereign does that mean He causes man to sin?*

Which takes us to this question: *Q) If God is not tempting man then where does temptation come from?*

James 1:13 -- James 1:14-15 -- James 4:7

Here is a heavy one: *Q) Is God the cause of evil in the world and if not then how/why does it exist?*

Isaiah 14:12-15 -- Romans 5:12 -- Revelations 14:8

Smarter people than me have debated this issue and struggled with answers but based on Revelation 14:8 it appears as if God has created a world in which our freedom to act in disobedience was allowed, even planned for from before creation.

If that's true then God must have planned for sin to be in the world, allowing it without creating or causing it. Additionally it appears as if God planned for sinners to be saved; from before creation. In other words God put a plan into place to allow for sinners to fall, giving us free will knowing that we would chose to sin.

So if God is sovereign then what He knows/allows/determines is the same thing; nothing happens away from His purpose. No evil deed, no matter how sad or hard to accept can change His eternal plan.

Spend as much time here on discussion as you need, and when you're ready we'll move on...

Let's go back to our questions on current events and the devastation in southern Indiana...

I'd love to tell you that I have all the answers and print them here and all would be solved. But that's not realistic.

So let's look at what Scripture has to add to this discussion to help with these questions. These are not meant to be quick or flippant and they will not always answer or solve what is causing people to hurt. But it's the start of why...

For any answer about the tornados, and most all events, we need to go back to the beginning to Genesis 1.

For the sake of time let's read here: **Genesis 1:31 --- all that God made, (creation), was good.**

If it was good, and I think we can say perfect, in line with Gods nature then what is Paul saying here?

Romans 8:19-22 (I like the Good News translation but the NIV does fine here).

Well again we have to go back to the beginning: **Genesis 3:17-19**

So we see it's not just man that has fallen, but now the earth is under a curse as well, perhaps even in conflict with man; Adam has to work "hard" to produce food now. From the garden to a cursed earth.

If we allow that the earth is set in motion, events as well as weather, and is under the same sin curse because of man then things like floods and tornados and death and evil are some of the results of that curse. It also is the foundation of why do bad things happen to "good" people.

Three verses on that subject: **Psalms 53:3 -- Isaiah 64:6 -- Matthew 5:45**

Another question is where is God during these terrible events of all kinds?

life group study guide

Let's look again to Scripture -- **Psalm 9:7-8** -- **Psalm 139:7-10** -- **Daniel 4:34-35** -- **Romans 11:33-36**

Some Application:

There is no way we can answer these questions in a simple manner. They are heavy and often time the answers seem so unsettling or are unable to give us the peace we seek. We as people look for the quick simple soothing answers, as do I.

When my wife's illness was diagnosed I was in a stage of my life where I struggled to handle that information. I wanted answers and I wanted resolution, to my standards. But here was a problem I couldn't fix and I had numerous questions and comments for God over this subject.

During this time two verses became a staple of my walk:

Job 9:12 -- *If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'*

Isaiah 55:8 -- *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.*

The first verse came out of my fear and dependency on God over the issue. The second came from how He chose to handle it, the way He changed our entire lives together. It was as if he was saying to me; "Hey, I've got this and there are just some things you can't fix so stop worrying."

In His way, His love and patience guided me through His word in study and I grew more in touch with Him in my prayer life. It forced me into a dependence on God I didn't really have before that event.

I learned something more from my study of Job. After everything has happened and Job asks his questions God tells really lays it out for him. And through it all He seems to not offer Job an explanation about what happened. Almost as if God was saying to me as well -- *"Hey, go read Isaiah and Daniel again because I don't owe you an explanation."*

I hated that realization but it forced me into a spot where I learned to exercise my faith. As hard as it is and can be, sometimes faith is the only answer and I think that is where God is talking us all. Someone said about 9-11, it's not about where God was that day, He was where He always is, right here. It's about where you were with God that day.

There are issues and things about God's sovereignty that I don't fully grasp. I can't always answer why something happened to complete satisfaction. I no longer try. I rest in the scriptures, in my faith even though it may be difficult at times.

I know that these answers don't always solve or help those that are hurting. At some point in time, simple faith takes over and I'm free to admit my ways are different than His and I don't know why everything happens the way it does, only that there is a reason that will one day be made clear.

1 Corinthians 13:12