

Study 1 – Sovereignty of God

Ask people to respond with any questions via email and pray

1. Why the Attributes of God?

- a. Like getting to know your spouse, friend, child, or relative – you know who you’re talking to, you know who you’re talking about, and you can better understand and receive God’s love, grace, care, discipline...
- b. Especially in this season it can help us gain sight for what God is doing even now...

2. What are the Attributes of God?

- a. List: Article 1 BC

We all believe in our hearts
and confess with our mouths
that there is a single
and simple
spiritual being,
whom we call God—
eternal,
incomprehensible,
invisible,

unchangeable,
infinite,
almighty;
completely wise,
just,
and good,
and the overflowing source
of all good.

- b. Incommunicable and communicable attributes
- c. Importance that God is all of them at the same time and in all times – He is simple (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/the-simplicity-of-god/>)

3. Sovereignty introduced

- a. Joey Votto (1st Baseman for the Reds) the sovereignly smart hitter

“Last April, on a gorgeously sunny, relatively cool afternoon at Dodger Stadium, in Los Angeles, the Cincinnati Reds’ Joey Votto popped out to first base. Ahead in the count, he’d lunged at the ball, sending it high into foul territory, before it landed in the mitt of the first baseman. Infield flies are the lamest thing a batter can do apart from striking out, but the crowd went wild—or rather, the baseball commentators and Twitter masses did. (“This has to be a sign of the zombie apocalypse.” “The world is ending.”) Because, over the course of his 13-year Major League career, in 6,827 trips to the plate, Votto had never popped out to first. Think of a veteran opera singer who never hit a wrong note onstage, or an actor who never flubbed a line. Equally astounding, Votto had flied out to the infield—right, left, or center—only seven times since 2010, while any other Major Leaguer with the same number of trips to the plate would have done so 137 times.”

- b. The ways we wonder at the sovereignty of others – sports (GOAT) *think about Lynden High School Sports*, rich and famous, political figures, or pastors – yet find

ourselves acutely interested in their downfall – sports stars who use performance enhancing drugs. We are attracted to this pattern because deep down we know that sovereignty is real, but we also know it is beyond us.

- c. Especially in the US we have a love hate relationship with sovereignty. We want a king yet we despise the king. We are the wild west – just think about all the protesting...

4. Sovereignty Explained – God is truly sovereign

- a. So what is Sovereignty – or what does it mean to be sovereign? Simply put to be sovereign over something or someone is to have authority over that thing or person. Again, like some might have claimed Joey Votto to have a sovereignty over the batter’s box, and yet God is the only true sovereign, and He is sovereign over all things.
- b. Jen Wilkin – “God’s sovereignty asserts that there are no limits on His authority to act.” God is sovereign and in control of all things

Dan. 4:34-35 Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing.

He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”

Psalms 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

- c. And we experience His sovereign authority and control through His providence, and our Heidelberg Catechism actually gives us amazing language for God’s sovereign care:

Q&A 27

Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?

A. The almighty and ever present power of God¹ by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that

leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty— all things, in fact, come to us not by chance⁴ but by his fatherly hand.

- d. But what about all the grief and pain?
 - i. Reality of God as simple – His rule is always loving, just, wise, good, etc. His sovereign rule is not cold and detached from all His other attributes.
 - ii. Augustine – likens God’s sovereign rule to a stained glass window: we see just a few cracks whereas God sees the whole stained-glass window.

- iii. Story by 14th century archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Bradwardine's story about God's sovereign rule
 - iv. The beauty of Jesus – He has all authority (example of Satan's temptation and great commission: "all authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me"), yet submits to the sovereign will of His Father, why? So you could see how all of God's attributes are for you – and you can trust him.
5. But what does this mean for us? Application
- a. It comforts us
 - i. We are creatures of dust – we don't have to bear the burden of being sovereign.
 - ii. We need sleep and God does not – God never sleeps, but always moves all things to the good of those who love him.
 - iii. We need/can take sabbath and God does not...
 - iv. We need inward renewal and God does not...
 - v. We need community and God does not...
 - b. Challenges us – we seek to be sovereign – Wilken pp. 140-141, 145-148

*Odder Fodder who are in heaban,
Hallowed by my name.
My kingdom come, my will be done
On earf as it is in heaben.*

i. Controlling our Bodies

"How we relate to our bodies reveals much about our need for control. Caring for our bodies is a stewardship issue. They are not our own. They have been given to us to maintain in healthy ways. But when we cross the line into unhealthy control, we move from stewardship to idolatry. This can take the form of obsessive concern with diet or exercise, eating disorders, excessive fear about illness or germs, hypochondria, fear of aging, or just garden variety vanity." p. 145

Signs that we've crossed over: impact on our time, words, and wallet...

ii. Controlling our Possessions

"This may manifest as hoarding, compulsive purchasing (me...), fear of using what we own because it might get damaged or suffer wear (Grandma's sitting room where no one is allowed to sit), compulsively maintaining property, micromanaging finances, or the inability to loan or give items to others." P. 146

iii. Controlling our Relationships

Relationships are gifts and God ordained, yet we are sinful and relationship conflict is always about control...signs of unhealthy control in relationships include:

- Inability to admit you're wrong
- A need to have the final word

- A need to have the upper hand
- A “my way or the highway” attitude

“Do you allow moodiness to make others walk on eggshells around you? Do you expect others to be able to read your mind when your feelings are hurt? Is there a subtext to your speech? Choose kindness over control, and watch your relationships gain health.” p. 147

iv. Controlling our Circumstances or Environments

“They backseat drive, offer unsolicited advice or ‘help’ with projects or situations that don’t involved them directly, practice slavish punctuality even when no one else is waiting for them, and fight an overpowering desire to be the person in charge of the TV remote. They know the best way to load the dishwasher, surreptitiously rearranging it when they think no one is watching.” p. 148

Example of someone leading a small group talk while wearing a beanie

6. What changes us – seeing the love and grace of our Sovereign God poured out at the cross as He submitted to the good will of His Father in Heaven, and the sin authority to the humanity that killed him all for you and your eternal salvation...

Scripture for Reflection:

Job 23:13

Psalms 115:3

Daniel 4:35

Psalms 33:11

Isaiah 14:24

Romans 9:14-21

Questions (From Jen Wilken with my additions in italics):

1. Of the four types of control discussed (body, possessions, relationships, circumstances), which do you want the most? Which is not a problem for you? *Are there others to add to the list?*
2. Over whom has God placed you in authority? To whom has God commanded you to submit? How should submitting to authority make us better at exercising it, and vice versa?
3. In what ways do you feel the most out of control? What is your worst-case scenario? Confess it to God and ask him to grant you freedom from anxiety.
4. How does the fact of God’s sovereignty comfort you personally? How does it shape your understanding of the miracle of salvation?
5. *Especially in this time of COVID-19 how does God’s sovereignty comfort you? If you struggle to find comfort in it – especially in this time – why is that? Take time to confess that to God and share with your small group so that you might experience His renewing love through the power and presence of His Spirit and His people.*

Pray

Take time to pray. Confess the ways you desire control and mistrust God’s sovereignty. Ask Him to grow you in trust and submission to Him and His good authority. And praise Him and thank

Him that He is sustaining all things, He is making all things new, and that He never sleeps nor slumbers so you can rest in Him.

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