

This midweek study will explore why it's important for students to recognize that all humanity has inherited a sin nature that can only be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: God's Plan and Human Action

God's sovereignty over all of life encompasses the free actions of human beings. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a person's heart, but the LORD's decree will prevail." In ways we are unable to fully comprehend, the Lord's plan goes forward through the choices of human beings as moral agents. Even freely chosen sinful actions are factored into God's overarching plan, as is the case with the crucifixion of Jesus—an event both purposed by God through foreknowledge that was also carried out by the wicked decisions of human beings (Acts 2:23). Knowing that God is working all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28), we trust in His promise to fulfill His plan, even when we do not understand our present circumstances.

1 God is almighty over all (Ps. 115:3; Heb. 1:3).

Option: Ask students to imagine the most insignificant happening they can think of (i.e. a leaf falling, an ice cube melting, etc.). Then, explain that even the most seemingly insignificant events are under God's direct control.

- ▶ *How does God's total control over all things expand your capacity to be amazed by Him?*

Read Psalm 115:3.

- ▶ *What other qualities of God help us take comfort in the fact that He is in total control?*

God is totally good, loving, merciful, and righteous, and all of this gives us confidence in His ability to rule the universe the best way possible.

Read Hebrews 1:3.

- ▶ *How does the reality of Christ's power change the way you view negative circumstances?*
- ▶ *Is there any amount of sin we can commit that can ultimately undo God's plans for our lives?*

If we could do anything to ruin God's plans for us, that would mean our sin was more powerful than our God, which we know isn't true. God has power to work all things—including our failures—for His purposes.

2 God works all things for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28; Isa. 48:11).

Option: This time, ask students to list off some negative experiences they have had (within limits). Were they ever able to see how those negative situations served a greater good? Are they still waiting to see how those experiences unfold? Explain.

Read Romans 8:28 and Isaiah 48:11.

- ▶ *How does the total sovereignty of God give us confidence that He will work all things for our good?*

If God is in control of all things, He is able to take any circumstance and work it for our good and His glory. God has no limits when it comes to His capacity to work good for His people.

3 God's sovereignty doesn't mean humans have no responsibility (Rom. 10:14-15).

Read Romans 10:14-15.

- ▶ *What does this passage tell us our responsibility is?*
- ▶ *Do you think some people use God's control as an excuse to be lazy in their spiritual lives? Do you ever do this? Why or why not?*

Sometimes people can look at God's sovereignty and think they don't have to work to share the gospel or fight their sin. But God's sovereignty should act as a motivator to push us toward good works. If it causes us to be lazy, we have misunderstood the doctrine.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *In what ways does knowing God is in control affect the way you view the world?*
- ▶ *How does God's sovereignty motivate you to do more good works?*

If God is almighty over all things, we can take comfort in knowing He will work all things for our good and His glory. Therefore, we can feel all the more emboldened to take risks for Him, share the gospel with others, and live a life that bears good fruit.