



My Purpose Will Stand

Overview for Parents

This year, your child will be studying the curriculum *My Purpose Will Stand: A Study for Children on the Providence of God*. The providence of God is a glorious doctrine of the Christian faith, teaching us that God preserves and governs everything in the universe.

What a joy it is to know, and to teach our children, that nothing is determined by chance or fate, but by the hand of a holy, wise, and loving God, who orders all things for His own glory! This wonderful truth enables us to be thankful for all the good things that happen in our lives, and to be confident in God's omnipotent care in the midst of trials.

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* (in response to Question 18) states that "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory."

In order to teach this important truth, the curriculum uses this central statement to explain God's providence in a concrete way that children can understand:

God's eye is watching
over the universe.
God's hand is working
in the universe.

Through the course of this study, students will learn a more complete definition:

God is **PRESENT** and **ACTIVE**
in all His creation.
His **EYE** is watching,
His **HAND** is working,
to uphold and govern all creation
to fulfill all His purposes
for His glory
and the good of His children.

My Purpose Will Stand will show that God is actively at work in the world in the past, present, and future. All created things exist because of God and are under

His active control. Everything that happens to us is already known by God, ordered by God, and provided by God. Nothing is outside His control. All God's purposes are good and therefore, everything that comes into our lives is for our ultimate good.

The practical outcomes of embracing the glorious truth of God's providence are...

1. Knowing that God is the almighty sovereign ruler of the universe, your child will have the opportunity to respond in faith with a heart full of trust when difficult things happen. Even disappointments and suffering can only come by God's will and are ultimately for the good of His children.

Rather than questioning the wisdom of God in confusing circumstances, despairing in disappointment, or complaining in suffering, confidence in a sovereign and good God leads a child to rest in His wisdom and care. We pray that your child will not respond, "Why me?!" in hard circumstances, but will instead respond with a heart of anticipation that says with awe, "I wonder what God is up to?!"

2. We pray that your child will recognize that every good thing comes into life, not by chance, but by God's fatherly hand. True thankfulness is cultivated by genuinely believing that all good things come from God because of his goodness, generosity, and love for His children.

May your child so trust God's providence—His power to accomplish His purposes, and His heart for His people—to have a lifetime of unshakable confidence and trust in God, knowing His surrounding love.



How are the Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) Pages used?

Growing in Faith Together Pages have been written to help parents interact with their children about what they are learning in class. As you diligently interact with your child about the truths he or she is learning and help apply these truths in daily life, you may see your child grow in spiritual understanding and faith. Our desire is that these exercises will encourage a heart response of faith as your child learns to trust God's good purposes.

MAIN IDEAS, SCRIPTURE REFERENCES, AND LESSON SUMMARY

This information will help you understand what your child learns in class each time. The lesson summary also gives you the opportunity to ask God to make the truth relevant in your own life.

MEMORY VERSE

Your child is encouraged to memorize a verse each week, and we encourage you and your family to memorize the verse as well. Memorizing Scripture is of vital importance in spiritual growth. When the Word is memorized, it is an ever-present counselor and an effective weapon against the attacks of the enemy. If you help your child memorize verses, he or she will have hundreds of verses learned by the end of adolescence, an amazing storehouse of truth for life! May God equip you to cultivate a life-long habit of Bible memorization.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

These exercises are designed to help you interact with your child about the truths learned in class and study them at a deeper level. Scripture texts and questions are provided to guide your discussion. By discussing spiritual truth when your child is young, you encourage an openness to discuss deep faith issues when he or she is older. It is our prayer that this exercise will help you develop a lifetime habit of talking openly with your child about spiritual matters.

ACTION STEP

Each week your child will be challenged to choose an action step meant to help students act on the truth they are learning in the lesson each week. Ask your child to share this action step with you and record it in the space provided. Watch throughout the week to see it put into practice, and provide encouragement as you observe your child acting on the truth and applying it in daily life. By acting on the truth of God's Word, head knowledge will become heart response. Faith will grow as God is found to be faithful and true.

SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

Please provide a spiral notebook and encourage your child to keep a spiritual journal. Thoughtful suggestions for journal topics have been provided. By consistently writing in a journal, students are encouraged to think more deeply about the lesson material and to interact with biblical truth rather than simply read it.

FAITH STORIES

Each lesson includes a short story for you to read together with your child or your whole family. Many of these stories are real-life examples from the lives of believers, which show God's providence in action. These stories cause us to respond in wonder and awe as we observe how God acts to accomplish his purposes in the universe. Discussion questions are provided for each story. Take some time to discuss these faith stories to help your child realize the magnificence of God's providence.

OTHER FORMATS

The Growing in Faith Together Pages are also available as a professionally printed spiral-bound booklet in quantities of 10, and as a GIFT Page App for use on smartphones and tablet devices. See childrendesiringGOD.org for more information.

We look forward to partnering with you this year, to the end that the next generation may put their trust in God. If you have any questions or suggestions, or if we may be of help to you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us. Any of us would be glad to talk with you.



Scope and Sequence

Lesson 1: **There is None Like God**

God cannot be compared to anyone or anything else.

Memory Verse: Isaiah 46:9b

Lesson 2: **The Providence of God**

God is present and active in all His creation, watching and working in all things.

Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 3:24

Lesson 3: **God's Sustaining Providence**

God created and sustains the universe.

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:17

Lesson 4: **God Has the Right, Power, and Wisdom to Govern the World**

God alone has the right, power, and wisdom to govern the world..

Memory Verse: Psalm 103:19

Lesson 5: **God Has a Plan for All Creation**

God has an unchanging plan for the World.

Memory Verse: Psalm 33:11

Lesson 6: **Everything God Does Has a Purpose**

All things are ordained by God and serve His plans.

Memory Verse: Ephesians 1:11

Lesson 7: **All God's Purposes Are Right**

God rules the world with perfect justice and righteousness.

Memory Verses: Deuteronomy 32:3-4

Lesson 8: **God will Accomplish All His Purposes**

Nothing and no one can hinder God from accomplishing His purposes.

Memory Verses: Isaiah 46:9b-10

Lesson 9: **God is Never Surprised: God Foresees All Things Because He Has Already Ordained All Things**

God foresees all things because He has already ordained all things.

Memory Verse: Psalm 147:5

Lesson 10: **Hidden Providence**

Though God's providential works are often hidden from man, we are called to trust Him.

Memory Verses: Isaiah 55:8-9

Lesson 11: **God's Purposes Are Far Reaching**

Though God's works of providence serve multiple purposes, God's ultimate purpose is to display His glory.

Memory Verse: Job 37:5

Lesson 12: **God Acts for His Glory**

God acts in order to be seen and to show His greatness and worth.

Memory Verses: Psalm 77:13-14

Lesson 13: **God's Providence Over Nature**

God controls nature; consequently, all creation is subject to His will.

Memory Verse: Isaiah 48:13

Lesson 14: **God's Providence Over Human Life**

God creates all people for His sovereign purposes and for His glory.

Memory Verses: Psalm 139:13-14

Lesson 15: **God's Providence Over Rulers and Nations**

Rulers and nations are subject to the providence of God.

Memory Verses: Daniel 2:20b-21

Lesson 16: **God's Providence Over His Word**

God sustains His Word, which accomplishes His purposes.

Memory Verse: Isaiah 55:11

Lesson 17: **God's Providence Over Man's Heart**

Man's heart is subject to the will of God.

Memory Verse: Proverbs 21:1

Lesson 18: **God's Providence Over the Cross**

All the events leading to the cross were planned by God from before the foundation of the world.

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 2:24

Lesson 19: **Saving Providence: Seeking and Saving the Lost**

The saving providence of God calls men to be saved.

Memory Verse: Luke 19:10

Lesson 20: Saving Providence: God's Gift of Salvation

Memory Verses: Ephesians 2:8-9

Salvation is a free gift of God.

Lesson 21: God's Providence in Salvation and Evangelism

Memory Verse: Romans 8:30

God works through the evangelistic efforts of His people as they proclaim the Gospel.

Lesson 22: God's Providence Over Evil and Misfortune

Memory Verses: Lamentations 3:37-38

God not only permits evil, but He ordains evil; yet in His grace, He restrains evil.

Lesson 23: God is Sinless in His Providence Over Evil

Memory Verses: James 1:13-14

Although God decrees evil, He does not directly perform morally evil deeds.

Lesson 24: Evil Serves the Purposes of God

Memory Verse: Proverbs 16:4

All evil serves God's purposes.

Lesson 25: God's Providence Over Pain and Suffering

Memory Verses: 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

God uses the evil intended against His children for their good.

Lesson 26: God Takes No Pleasure in Evil or Suffering

Memory Verses: Lamentations 3:31-33

God takes no pleasure in evil or misfortune; evil and suffering grieve God.

Lesson 27: God's Providence Over Calamities

Memory Verse: Isaiah 45:7

Disasters are a result of God's curse as a consequence of man's sin.

Lesson 28: God's Providence Over Man's Way

Memory Verses: Proverbs 3:5-6

Man's way is subject to God's control.

Lesson 29: God's Providence Over Circumstances

Memory Verse: Proverbs 19:21

God directs circumstances to serve His purposes.

Lesson 30: God's Plans Work Together Perfectly

Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 3:24

God is sovereign over all circumstances and orders them to work out His plans perfectly.

Lesson 31: God's Timing Is Perfect

Memory Verse: Psalm 90:2

God's timing is perfect.

Lesson 32: God's Providence and Man's Choices

Memory Verse: John 8:34

Man is free to make real choices, and is therefore accountable and responsible for his choices.

Lesson 33: God's Providence Over Prayer

Memory Verse: Psalm 57:2

God ordains prayer as a means to fulfilling His purposes.

Lesson 34: All Things Work for Good for God's Children

Memory Verse: Romans 8:28

Because nothing is outside of God's providence, all things work for good for God's children.

Lesson 35: Trusting in the Providence of God: Believing that All God's Purposes are Right

Memory Verse: Psalm 145:17

Faith is believing that all God's purposes are right.

Lesson 36: Trusting in the Providence of God: When you Can't See God's Hand, Trust His Heart

Memory Verse: Isaiah 64:4

Faith is trusting God's heart when you cannot see or understand His ways.

Lesson 37: Trusting in the Providence of God: Submitting to the Will of God

Memory Verse: Psalm 143:10

Trusting in the providence of God means submitting to His will.

Lesson 38: Looking for the Providence of God in All Things: Meditating on the Works of God

Memory Verse: Psalm 143:5

To rejoice in God's works, we must learn to meditate on His works.

Lesson 39: Looking for the Providence of God in All Things: Seeing the Big Picture

Memory Verse: Galatians 2:20

God is the center of everything in the universe.

Lesson 40: Looking for the Providence of God in All Things: See Jesus

Memory Verses: Romans 11:34-36

In everything that happens to us, we should see the hand of God and rejoice that if we have Him, we have everything.



There is None Like God

MAIN IDEA

- **There is none like God; nothing and no one compares with God.**

MEMORY VERSE

...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.—Isaiah 46:9b

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Isaiah 40:11-22, 25-26
- 2) Isaiah 46:9b



LESSON SUMMARY

In all of the universe, there is none like God. Nothing and no one compares to God, who is infinite in wisdom and power. Unlike the idols of man, God is self-existing, eternal and active. This is a staggering reality! Meditating on it should draw us to worship Him.

Rejoice in a God who is so uniquely above all else. Draw your son/daughter into your worship of Him.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Bible verses must be understood in their context. The context is the setting of the verse—the verses before and after it, the chapter and book in which it appears.

...remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.—Isaiah 46:9b

- **What word does Isaiah use to refer to the Israelites?** Now read verses 5-9a together.

To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike? ⁶Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! ⁷They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble. ⁸“Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, ⁹remember the former things of old. —Isaiah 46:5-9a

- **Why did God say, “I am God, and there is no other”?**

A little historical context: Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom (Judah) during the time of the Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom (Israel).

- **What warning can you take from understanding the context of your memory verse?**

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Pastor and author John Piper says, “There are eyes in pencils and in pens.”¹ What do you think he means by this? Writing helps us to slow down and to think about what we have read. From your Bible reading this week, write about where you see the greatness of God in the world around you.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

The Great True God

by Carrie R. Zeman

On a bright August Sunday in 1862, two Dakota Indian churches gathered at the Riggs’ house at Hazelwood to celebrate communion. After twenty-five years among the Dakota in western Minnesota, the Riggs and other missionaries had translated the Bible into the Dakota language and helped many Dakota learn to read and to write. The missionaries were also teaching them how to farm, because the traditional Dakota way of life—hunting buffalo for food and trapping fur animals for trade—was rapidly disappearing as treaties granted Indian lands to white settlers. Many Christian Indians who worshipped *Tahkoowakan*, or the Great True God, gathered at the Hazelwood church for communion that Sunday. But most Dakota still worshipped false spirits.

News of trouble reached Hazelwood late that afternoon: settlers had been killed by Dakota many miles away. Rumors like this were common. Many Dakota were angry with the United States government for not keeping promises to regularly distribute provisions and money in exchange for Indian land. The missionaries had talked to government officials and had even written to the President on the Dakota’s behalf. They had often shared their own food when their Indian neighbors were starving. But many Dakota were still discontent. That evening, some Indian strangers stole the Riggs’ horses. Later, the missionaries heard that the traditional Dakota had declared war on everyone who was not like them—whites and Christian Indians alike. Christian Dakota men guarded the Hazelwood house that night while their wives prayed inside with the Riggs family and sang, “Tahkoowakan is the refuge of His saints, an ever-present help in trouble.”

About midnight, word came that hostile Indians were on their way to Hazelwood. Taking little more than the clothes they were wearing, the missionaries escaped to a hiding place on an island in the Minnesota River. It rained all night as they huddled together for warmth

and prayed. By noon the next day, the rain had stopped, but they were cold, muddy, hungry, and eager to return home.

“Seek not what you shall eat, nor what you shall drink,” Mr. Riggs reminded his family, quoting the words of Jesus to His followers. “But rather seek the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.”

He had hardly finished speaking when they heard rustling in the grass along the river bank. A Dakota woman emerged from the brush carrying a bundle. “Tahkoowakan told me to bring this to you,” she said. She handed them a bag of food wrapped in extra shawls.

The woman also brought a message: white people were being killed or taken captive wherever hostile Dakota found them. Their house at the mission had been plundered. It was not safe to return home. The Riggs considered the food God had provided and the messenger He had sent to them. They prayed once more for God’s protection and left the island.

As the family struck out east over the vast prairie, their hearts were heavy with thoughts of the home, the friends, and the lifetime of work they had left behind. Then, as if to dampen their spirits even more, a storm blew in. Steady, soaking rain accompanied them all afternoon as they trudged across the prairie. They didn’t know it then, but hostile Indians were following close behind, tracking the trail of tall grass bent as they pushed through. But the rain refreshed the grass, making it spring up behind them like a wall. Tahkoowakan erased their trail, hiding and protecting His people.

The story of the Riggs family in the Dakota Conflict of 1862 continues in Lesson 22.

How did God show Himself as faithful to the Riggs family? What did God do for the Riggs family that they failed to notice? At the time it was happening, do you think the Riggs were praising God for the rain that soaked them as they fled? Why not? What do these works of God show us about what God is like? When something hard is happening in your life, do you always understand why God is causing it to happen?

1. Piper, John. *When I Don’t Desire God: How to Fight for Joy*. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 123.



The Providence of God

MAIN IDEAS

- **God is actively involved in the universe; He is not a distant, non-caring God; He is at work in the world.**
- **God is watching over the universe, and He is working in the universe.**

MEMORY VERSE

O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?
—Deuteronomy 3:24

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 8:1
- 2) Genesis 21:14-19
- 3) Deuteronomy 3:24
- 4) Nehemiah 1:3
- 5) Nehemiah 2:1-8
- 6) Psalm 11:4
- 7) Proverbs 15:3
- 8) Isaiah 64:4
- 9) John 5:1-9, 17
- 10) Hebrews 1:10



LESSON SUMMARY

Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (John 5:17). This points us to the beginning of our definition of the Providence of God:

**God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working.**

From this beginning concept that God is not a distant, non-caring God, but is actively involved in the world, constantly watching over and working in the universe, we will build a full definition of the providence of God as the curriculum lessons progress.

This week, rejoice with your son or daughter that embedded in God's providence is His gracious providing for the world. Pray that this week you will have eyes to see God's hand at work in the world, providing for His creation.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?
—Deuteronomy 3:24

What works and mighty acts could Moses have been referring to?

One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.—Psalm 145:4

How does this verse apply to our family?

Tell your child about some of the "mighty acts" of God you have seen in your life. Be sure your son or daughter is alert to how God was watching over you and working for you.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write in your journal about an event (or events) in your life, or in a situation you are aware of where you have seen God's providence (His eye watching and His hand working).

Rewrite the verse below in your own words.

From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.—Isaiah 64:4

SEEING GOD AT WORK

Always Look Up

by Noël Piper

The young couple was snorkeling for the first time ever in the warm Caribbean bay near a harbor where boats were coming and going. "The boat sounds seem very loud," Mrs. Clausen said. Another woman nearby, who had snorkeled many times said, "Whenever you hear a boat, look up! Don't just assume that the boat is far away. Always look up to make sure." She had no idea how important her words would be the very next day.

The next day, Mr. and Mrs. Clausen went snorkeling again, this time in a place where no boats are supposed to go. When Mrs. Clausen heard the sound of a boat, God reminded her of the warning, "Look up!" She looked up and saw a boat speeding straight toward her. There was no time to swim out of the way! Immediately, she dived straight down, hoping to get deep beneath the boat. The propeller of the motor hit her legs and cut them very severely.

If she had not heard the warning the day before, she would have ignored the boat. Then the injury would have been to her head or body, probably killing her. The warning that God had given her through the other woman saved Mrs. Clausen's life.

What would happen now, though? She needed immediate medical attention, but this was a small island

with no hospital and not much medical equipment. Usually, people who get injuries like hers get terrible infections. The infections can cause almost as much damage as the original injury.

God had prepared for this very moment in Mrs. Clausen's life. A couple was vacationing next to the beach. When the man saw the accident, he ran to get his wife. His wife was a highly-trained emergency room nurse. She knew exactly what to do to fight infection. She ordered the other vacationers, "Run straight to your cottages, and bring me glasses of water—lots of glasses of water!" Then she very carefully poured fresh water into and around and over every part of the wounded legs, cleaning away the bacteria-filled sea water.

Then the nurse rode with Mrs. Clausen to the clinic. Since she was there to help, the clinic doctor could concentrate on the most urgent medical needs.

It was a long time before Mrs. Clausen recovered completely, but today she is healthy and her legs are fine. When she remembers that terrifying moment of being hit, she says that there was only a split second to think about anything. The most important thing that flashed into her mind was, "I know God loves me."

Where do you see God's eyes watching over the universe in this story? Where do you see His hand at work? Keep your eyes open this week. Look for ways that God works things together for your good. Or listen for a story of what He's done for someone else.





God's Sustaining Providence

MAIN IDEAS

- **God created and sustains the universe.**
- **God acts in sustaining life. Without God's sustaining providence, we would die.**

MEMORY VERSE

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
—Colossians 1:17

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Job 38:39-21
- 2) Psalm 119:90-91
- 3) Psalm 145:9
- 4) Lamentations 3:22-23
- 5) Acts 17:24-25, 28a
- 6) Romans 11:34-36
- 7) Colossians 1:16-17
- 8) Hebrews 1:3a



LESSON SUMMARY

God's providence is His act of "providing" for the universe, sustaining it from moment to moment. If God withdrew His sustaining providence, the world would cease to exist, since He holds all things together (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3a). It is utter folly to presume that we do not need God.

This week, rejoice with your son or daughter in God's merciful sustaining of the universe and review the Providence definition in progress:

God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working
to uphold all creation.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Psalm 104. Look at the Psalm again and notice how the Psalmist switches between "you" and "he."

- **What is the difference between using the second person (you) and the third person (he)?**
- **What does this going back and forth from observing God's work in the world (he) and addressing God personally (you) show us?** [Observing God's providential work in the world should lead us to praise Him for who He is.]
- **How should we respond to God when we see His work?**

Have your child share his or her observations of God's works of providence in the world, your family, and his or her personal life. Praise God for His faithfulness.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Record your praises to God in response to observing His works of providence this week.

If you have no praises, think about what prevents you from praising God. Write a prayer sharing your struggle with God and asking for His help.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

The Greatest Juggler

by Sally Michael

Have you ever seen a juggler smoothly sustaining balls in the air? He needs a sense of timing; he needs to throw the balls the right distance and in the right spot. If his rhythm is broken, he drops balls. When we see a gifted juggler, we marvel at his skill.

Yet there is juggling going on around us all the time—and we forget to marvel at the Juggler. The balls are the planets. And the Juggler is God. God perfectly sustains the planets in their orbits around the sun—and never drops a ball.

All the planets in our solar system orbit the sun in the shape of an oval or an ellipse. But all the ellipses are not the same size or the same shape. The shape of the orbit of Mars is very oval, but the Earth's orbit is almost round. Why? Because God has planned this to sustain life on earth. The earth is never more than 94.5 million miles away from the sun—never so far away that the earth would freeze and life would die off. It is never closer to the sun than 91.4 million miles—or we would burn up. If our orbit were more oval-shaped, life on earth would not be sustained.

What keeps the planets from spinning off in space? Why do they continue to orbit around the sun? Not until the time of Sir Isaac Newton did man understand the great sustaining work of God in the universe. Newton discovered gravity and the reason the planets orbit the sun. The sun's gravitational force pulls planets toward it.

But why aren't the planets pulled into the sun and burned up? The answer is in the speed of the planets. Each planet's speed is perfectly set to be slow enough so that it does not escape the sun and fling out into space, and yet fast enough that it is not pulled into the sun. Who designed all this? This is what Sir Isaac Newton said, "The motions which the planets now have could not spring from any natural cause done but were impressed by an intelligent agent...The universe was rightly designed a Temple of God. This Being governs all things...as LORD over all." The next time you marvel at a juggler, marvel at God, the greatest juggler of all.

Look through a science book or book about nature to find other evidences of God's sustaining providence. In what ways does God work to sustain life? During the week, write a list of the different ways God sustains life. See how long you can make your list. Then praise God for being such an awesome God.



God Has the Right, Power, and Wisdom to Govern the World

MAIN IDEAS

- God governs the universe.
- God is the Creator, Owner, and Sustainer of the universe, and therefore only God has the right to govern the world.
- God has the power and wisdom to govern the universe.
- Those who are created have no right to question or resist the Creator and Owner of all creation.

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.
—Psalm 103:19

SCRIPTURE

- 1) 1 Chronicles 29:11-13
- 2) Psalm 103:19
- 3) Jeremiah 10:12
- 4) Romans 9:18-23
- 5) Colossians 1:16-17



LESSON SUMMARY

Psalm 103:19 tells us that not only did God create the universe, but He also rules it. In some ways, God is like the conductor of the universe. As a conductor actively leads an orchestra, determining the involvement of each musician, so God orchestrates the universe, commanding, directing, orchestrating all things. The big questions we asked this week are:

- “Should God rule?” (Does He have the right to rule?)
- “Can God rule?” (Does He have the ability to rule?)

Romans 9:20-21 helps us to understand that because God is the Creator and Owner of the universe, He has the right to rule it, and 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 shows us that He has the power to rule the universe.

The world would be a scary place if God had the right and power to rule, but not the wisdom to rule well. Jeremiah 10:12 resolves that dilemma for us by telling us that God “established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.”

Rejoice with your son or daughter that

ONLY GOD has the right, power, and wisdom to rule the world.

as you review the unfolding definition of God’s providence:

**God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working
to uphold and govern all creation.**

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.—Psalm 103:19

What do you notice about the way the two phrases in the verse relate to each other? Do they say completely different things, or repeat the same thought? Why do you think the psalmist repeats this truth?

What is included in the “over all” that God rules? What is excluded? What does this tell you about the circumstances of your life? Where are you having a hard time accepting God’s rule?

Share with your child several examples of times when it has been hard for you to accept God’s rule or when you have been tempted to think that something God does is unfair.

How can we help each other to trust God?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write this week about one area of your life where you would like to trust God. Then make a list of some possibilities about what God, in His wisdom, could be doing in this situation.

**SEEING GOD AT WORK**

Who's Really in Control?

by Noël Piper

Here's a "Believe it or not" story for you! Joseph Stalin, one of the worst dictators in history, was responsible for the evangelization of many people in Central Asia. "How can that be?" you might ask. Stalin hated Christianity and tried to stomp it out—why would he want to spread Christianity?

He certainly didn't mean to, but God meant for him to spread Christianity. Stalin thought he had absolute control over the Soviet Union (Russia and all the countries Russia had conquered). He thought so. But here's what happened.

About 70 years ago, many North Koreans fled from trouble in their country. They settled in the Russian city of Vladivostok, which is near Korea. Then about 60 years ago, Joseph Stalin, the ungodly ruler of the Soviet Union, began to build weapons in Vladivostok. He was afraid that some of the Koreans might be spies, so he didn't want them there. Since he had the power to send people wherever he wanted, he tore the Koreans away from their homes and sent them thousands of miles away to other places in the Soviet Union.

One of those places was in the area of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in central Asia. The people there had resisted Christianity for hundreds of years, because they thought Christianity was a European and American religion. So, they thought, it couldn't be for Asians.

Over the years, the Koreans, who were also Asians, settled into their new lives in the new place. They lived and worked alongside Uzbeks and Kazaks and became friends. They were part of the regular activities of their neighborhoods.

Now here's the part that Stalin didn't expect. Among the Koreans were groups of Christians. Uzbeks and Kazaks could look at these Korean friends and see that Christianity wasn't just a European and American religion. Jesus was for Asians, too. So Uzbeks and Kazaks began to come to Christ.

Joseph Stalin might have thought he was the most powerful ruler in world, but who was really governing the world and the people in it?

Use a globe or world map to find North Korea, Vladivostok, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. The government leaders and most of the people in these places still resist the true God and Christianity. Pray for the people, and that God would show them His power over the world.

—Story adapted from *Catch the Vision 2000* by Bill & Amy Stearns (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1991), 12-13. Used by permission of Bethany House Publishers.



God Has a Plan for All Creation

MAIN IDEAS

- God has an unchanging plan for the world.
- All of history is the unfolding of God's plan.
- The end of all of history is that the Father would be glorified when every person bows before Jesus and confesses Him as Lord.

MEMORY VERSE

The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.
—Psalm 33:11

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Psalm 33:11
- 2) Jeremiah 1:5
- 3) Luke 4:43
- 4) John 12:27
- 5) Philippians 2:9-11



LESSON SUMMARY

History is not merely the unfolding of events. It is, in every detail, the unfolding of God's purposes. It is truly HIS story, written before the foundation of the world, and working out in its unchanging purposes from generation to generation.

The cross of Jesus is the pivotal point in history. The four key events of history—creation, fall, redemption, and return—are bringing us to the ultimate end of all of history in which the Father will be glorified by the confession of every person that Jesus is King as they bow before Him.

Rejoice with your son or daughter that the counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations (Psalm 33:11) and review the following definition of God's providence:

God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching. His HAND is working
to uphold and govern all creation
to fulfill all His purposes

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Students, it is your turn to explain to your parents what you learned about God's plan for the world.



Start by drawing the cross and write the letters "C" and "F" before the cross. Then write the letter "R" at the cross and another letter "R" after the cross. Explain to your parents what each of these letters stand for.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and¹¹ every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.—Philippians 2:9-11

- How does Philippians 2:9-11 fit into God's plan?
- What word does Philippians 2:9 start with? What does this word signal?

Go back to verse 5 and read Philippians 2:5-8.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.—Philippians 2:5-8

Talk with your parents about the cost to Jesus to fulfill His Father's purpose for His life. Then discuss with your parents your willingness to sacrifice for God's kingdom.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write about three times over this week when you had a choice between your own comfort and sacrificing something for the kingdom of God. Then record the choice you made. Pray for God's work in your heart.

**SEEING GOD AT WORK****Wanted: Sailors**

Hien, a Vietnamese Christian, was planning to escape from Vietnam along with about fifty others. Their plans were progressing successfully when something happened which was not in their plan. Four Vietcong appeared at Hien's door. The reason they appeared? They had heard that he was trying to escape.

Hien quickly denied the charge and lied about his activities. But God was at work in his heart and in his circumstances, and the Holy Spirit convicted Hien. He confessed his fear and reluctance to trust God. He made a promise to God after the men left—if the Vietcong returned, he would tell them the truth.

Once again, plans progressed smoothly until a few hours before the appointed sailing time. But then again came another knock at Hien's door...and another visit from the four Vietcong. This time they insisted that they knew Hien was trying to escape and asked him if it was true. What should Hien do? God knew of Hien's promise. Why had He permitted these men to show up

just a few hours before sailing time? Couldn't He have delayed them a few hours?

Reluctantly, Hien admitted that he and fifty-three others were planning an escape. He had already been imprisoned before. Would the Vietcong imprison him again?

But they didn't drag Hien away. Instead they whispered, "We want to escape with you!" Now their party numbered fifty-eight!

But the story doesn't end here. These fifty-eight found themselves at sea in a violent storm. Their destruction looked very possible. But there were four good sailors among them and they brought the group of escapees through the storm. Who were the four good sailors? The four Vietcong. God had not merely permitted these men to show up just a few hours before sailing time. He had sent them.

Was it just "chance" that those four sailors were added to the ship? What was God's plan for those sailors? We meet many people in life through what seem to be chance meetings. Often when we look back, however, we see very clearly that God had a plan for those meetings. Mom or dad, think of such a "chance meeting" in your life and share it with your child. Or think of someone who has been a significant influence in your life, and share with your child how you met that person. Help your child to see how God orchestrated this acquaintance and how His plan brought glory to Him.

—Story adapted from *Deliver Us From Evil: Restoring the Soul in a Disintegrating Culture* by Ravi Zacharias, (Nashville, Tenn.: Word Publishing, 1998), 193-194. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Word Publishing.



Everything God Does Has a Purpose

MAIN IDEAS

- **Nothing happens by chance; all things are ordained by God.**
- **Everything ordained by God has a purpose; all things serve God's plans.**

MEMORY VERSE

*In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.
—Ephesians 1:11*

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Psalm 103:19
- 2) Proverbs 16:4, 9, 33
- 3) Lamentations 3:37
- 4) Ephesians 1:11



LESSON SUMMARY

Just as each piece of equipment is purposefully chosen for a backpacking trip by a good backpacker, so all of God's acts are purposeful. God has a perfect plan for the world, and there are no mistakes in God's plan.

Proverbs 16:4 and Ephesians 1:11 tell us that God governs all of creation for His purposes, and He is actively working to fulfill those purposes. This means that there are no surprises to God, no random acts in our lives, for God is perfectly in control of all things at all times.

Rejoice with your son or daughter that there are no surprises to God, no random acts in our lives, but that God is perfectly in control of all things at all times, and review the working definition of God's providence:

God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working
to uphold and govern all creation
to fulfill all His purposes

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

- How does Ephesians 1:11 describe God?
- Why can Paul say this about God?
- What assurance is given to believers in this verse about receiving an inheritance?

The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.—Proverbs 16:9

Have your child explain in his or her own words what Proverbs 16:9 says.

- What are your plans for this week?
- What are some of the things over which you have no control that could change your plans?
- Why is it reassuring to know that everything God does has a purpose?

This week, reflect together on both of your responses to the situations in your lives.

- Do our responses reflect faith in God?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write about your responses to the changes in your plans this week. Ask God for faith to believe in His purposes.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

I'll Go to Church

by Noël Piper

Dick was a college student who had heard about God, but didn't really think he had any need for God—until one day...

He was driving to a very important job interview and his car stalled. He coasted to the side of the freeway and tried to start the car. Nothing. He waited a few minutes and tried again. Nothing. What was he going to do? He was almost late and he had to get to this meeting on time.

He could think of only one way that he might get help in time. He prayed. "God, if you will get me to my interview on time, I will go to church on Sunday." He turned the key, and the car started right up!

He was used to sleeping late on Sunday mornings. But the next Sunday, he woke up early for some reason. And he remembered his promise to God. He rolled out of bed and got dressed, but he had no idea where to find a church. So he left the dorm and started walking down the street, thinking he'd just walk till he found one.

After a few blocks, he saw a church building. He read the name on the sign, but he didn't know much about religious groups. So he didn't realize that this group holds its services on Saturday, not Sunday. So, when he walked in the front door and found people meeting there, he didn't know he should have been surprised that anybody was there on Sunday.

The congregation was a church that rented the building on Sundays. They welcomed Dick, and after a few weeks, he became a Christian because of the influence and witness of the believers there.

It was no accident that Dick's car stalled and that it wouldn't start until he prayed. It was no accident that he promised God he'd go to church. It was no accident that he awoke early on Sunday and remembered his promise to God. It was no accident that he found a church. It was no accident that faithful Christians were there on Sunday, even though it was the building of a group that meets on Saturdays. It was no accident that Dick became a Christian—God was seeking him and saving him.

How can you see God at work in this story to fulfill His purposes? Was what His purpose in stalling the car? Or in waking Dick up early? Ask some adults about how God worked in their lives to make them Christians.



All God's Purposes Are Right

MAIN IDEAS

- **All God's purposes are right.**
- **It is wrong to judge God and question His purposes.**

MEMORY VERSES

For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! ⁴The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.
—Deuteronomy 32:3-4

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 18:24-25
- 2) Deuteronomy 32:3-4
- 3) Job 37:11-13
- 4) Psalm 9:7-8



LESSON SUMMARY

God, the Judge of all the earth, rules with perfect justice and righteousness (Genesis 18:5b; Psalm 9:7-8). So not only is God able to rule the world, but He is able to rule the universe well or rightly. Not only does God have the right to govern the universe and do whatever He pleases, but He also pleases to do what is right. It is against His very nature to act in an unrighteous way.

Though we may be tempted to question God's ways, we must remember that God is wiser and more loving than we are, and all His purposes are right.

Rejoice with your son or daughter that "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4) as you remember that:

God has the right, power, wisdom and righteousness to rule the universe.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! ⁴The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.—Deuteronomy 32:3-4

Ask your child to define the following words: proclaim, ascribe, justice, iniquity, upright.

How would you explain Deuteronomy 32:3-4 in your own words?

Have your child explain to you why all God's purposes are always right, using the Scripture verses listed on the left to help with his or her explanation.

Share with your son or daughter about a time when you did not see the rightness of God's purposes at first, but later saw His goodness in the situation. **How was the situation handled? What can you learn from that experience?**

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Tell God about a situation you are having a hard time with. Ask Him to teach you how to trust Him. Ask Him to give you a verse that will help you in your struggle.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

A Curse or a Blessing?

by Noël Piper

One night when I was a little girl, I was leaning on the windowsill with my cousin and watching a frightening storm outside. “What will we do if there’s a flood?” I worried. She reassured me with what she thought was truth from the Bible, “We won’t have a flood, because God gave Noah a rainbow as a promise that He wouldn’t ever send a flood again.”

Of course, she didn’t quite understand. What God really promised was that He would never again destroy the whole world with a flood. There really are still floods.

A flood is a terrible thing, isn’t it? When people know that the river near them is rising, they move furniture upstairs to keep it dry, and they put sandbags around their house to try to keep the floodwaters out. If they can’t control it, the flood will damage their house and belongings.

Would anyone ever want the river to flood? Yes. Is a flood ever a good thing? Yes.

One of the earliest places of civilization in the whole world was Egypt. There was one main reason for that—the flooding of the Nile River. Every year people could

count on a flood that spread over the whole river valley. Wherever the floodwaters went, rich soil from upriver settled to the ground and stayed, even when the water receded. This fertile topsoil that was renewed every year created rich farmland that could feed a thriving civilization. The Egyptians depended on the yearly flood and looked forward to it.

Because the Nile flooded every year, Egypt was a rich country, and God used Egypt to save His people, the Israelites. He sent Joseph to persuade the Pharaoh to store up food when the crops were good. Then, when there was famine, the Israelites came to Egypt and were saved. God sent yearly floods to Egypt to prepare a place for His people.

He brings the clouds to punish men, or to water his earth and show his love.—Job 37:11

To punish...or to show His love. So is a flood a good thing or a bad thing? Is it a punishment or a blessing? It depends on God’s purposes.

Try to think of some other events that may seem to be either terrible or loving, depending on God’s purposes. Whether God sends rain to water the earth, or to punish people, do you trust Him that His purposes are right? Is it right for God to show love? Is it right for Him to punish? Can He do both at the same time? Perhaps you’ll notice something like that around you this week.



God Will Accomplish All His Purposes

MAIN IDEAS

- **God will accomplish all His purposes.**
- **God's plan cannot be thwarted. Nothing and no one can hinder God from accomplishing His purposes.**

MEMORY VERSES

...I am God, and
there is none like me,
¹⁰declaring the end
from the beginning
and from ancient times
things not yet done,
saying,
"My counsel shall
stand, and I will
accomplish
all my purpose."
—Isaiah 46:9b-10

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Job 42:2
- 2) Psalm 33:11
- 3) Isaiah 14:24, 27
- 4) Isaiah 46:9-10
- 5) Matthew 2:1-18
- 6) Acts 10:9-15
- 7) Acts 11:17
- 8) Philippians 1:6b



LESSON SUMMARY

We are not always able to do all that we purpose to do, but God always accomplishes His purposes (Isaiah 46:9-10; Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 14:24). Because God is not limited in any way, He will never fail to fulfill His purposes. Therefore, opposing God is foolish since no one or nothing can thwart His purposes.

With your son or daughter, thank God that He always accomplishes His purposes.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Isaiah 46:9b-10 in a few different translations of the Bible. Instruct your son or daughter to list some characteristics of God that show there really is "none" like God. **What does "declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done" mean?**

Working together, think of some of the declarations of God in His Word and how God brought them about.

Optional: Read and discuss Esther 4:12-14.

And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. ¹³Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"—Esther 4:12-14

What do these verses tell you about God fulfilling His purposes? Can anything stop the purposes of God from going forward? (Briefly review the story of Esther, if needed.)

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write in your journal this week any way in which, either in your heart or in your actions, you opposed God. Confess your sin and ask God to give you a heart that wants to obey Him.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

We Heard Them Singing

by Noël Piper

I sat in the small house of an old Chinese couple, eating figs and grapes they'd grown in their tiny courtyard. Their hands were rough from factory labor, and their faces were happy as they talked about depending on God.

I had heard about the house church that met in their home. House churches are small groups of Christians who meet together, even though the government doesn't approve. Sometimes neighbors had reported them, and they had been in trouble. Sometimes the meeting had to move to another house, and then back again when it seemed safe. But nothing could keep them from worshiping God.

"How did you become Christians?" I asked them. I knew that it's very hard to hear the Gospel in their country. It's not likely that anyone would ever hear an evangelist. There are no Christian radio stations broadcasting the good news. A person who isn't already a Christian probably wouldn't go into a church. And Christians have to be careful about letting others know they are believers in Christ.

They answered me, "We were walking along the road one day, going to the next town. We passed a group

of people traveling the other way. They seemed happy and they were singing. People in our country don't sing like that, just walking down the road. We turned back to catch them and ask them what they were singing about and why they were singing.

"They were Christians, and they were praising God. We wanted to have a God who makes people happy, so we became Christians, too."

Before I left, we stood together with our arms around each other's shoulders. First, they prayed for me. I couldn't understand their Chinese language, but God understands every language. And He is the one they were talking to.

When I prayed, I praised the God of Americans and Chinese and of every country in the world. I thanked Him for hearing and answering prayers that are spoken in English and Chinese and in every language of the world. And I thanked Him for sending a singing group of Christians along the road on the same day that these friends were traveling, and for opening their ears and hearts to hear the song and the Gospel.

Can you see Jesus in this story? How was something very ordinary (singing) the providence of God showing Jesus to these people? Do you look for the providence of God in your life? Do you try to see Jesus in the plan that God is fitting together perfectly in your life? Pray that God would give you eyes and a heart to see Jesus at work in and through your life.



God is Never Surprised: God Foresees All Things Because He Has Already Ordained All Things

MAIN IDEAS

- **God is never surprised; He foresees all things.**
- **God foresees all things because He has already ordained all things.**
- **God has already been working for things that will happen in the future.**

MEMORY VERSE

*Great is our Lord, and
abundant in power;
his understanding is
beyond measure.
—Psalm 147:5*

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 3:15
- 2) Genesis 6:13
- 3) Genesis 41:25
- 4) Psalm 147:5
- 5) Isaiah 42:9
- 6) Isaiah 46:9-10
- 7) Jeremiah 1:5



LESSON SUMMARY

Have you ever heard the saying, “You’re never safe from surprises until you’re dead”? This is very true...for us. Yet God is never surprised! Because God has ordained all things, He knows all things—all that is happening now and all that will ever happen. What a wonderful, comforting reality this is.

With your son or daughter, give God all your concerns knowing that He foresees all that will happen in your lives and is directing all things for His good purposes.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

As a team with your child, try to think of as many verses or stories in the Bible as you can that show God knows about things before they happen.

Why should this be a comfort to us?

Have your son or daughter explain about God working in anticipation of an event. Then discuss what God did in anticipation of his or her birth and how your child's birth reflected the truth of Psalm 147:5. Thank God for working for you and your child and for anticipating your family's needs.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Read John 13:21-38. Record all the places where you see Jesus' foreknowledge. How does Jesus' foreknowledge show the greatness of His love that sent Him to the cross?



SEEING GOD AT WORK

No Surprise.

Clarence Jones was sure God wanted a gospel radio station in Ecuador. He had learned all he could about radio. He felt God's call to Ecuador. Then he met missionaries from Ecuador who could help him get a permit.

Two American engineers insisted that, "Ecuador is probably the worst place in the world for a radio station. The high mineral content in the Andes Mountains will scramble your signal. Stay away from the mountains." The State Department cautioned, "Get away from the equator. We suggest you avoid Ecuador altogether."

Convinced that God wanted a radio station in Ecuador, Clarence Jones obtained a twenty-five-year permit from the Ecuadorian government. Land was obtained on which to build the station, HCJB.

Ten years later, the station had grown from 250 watts to 10,000 watts. But what was particularly amazing was that the station was being heard in countries too

far away to receive its signal. As far away as Sweden, Russia, and New Zealand people were tuning in to HCJB radio station. How was this happening?

It was happening because God knew the perfect location for radio station HCJB, and He led Clarence Jones to it. In conversation with an HCJB missionary at an international meeting of radio technicians the following comments were made. "What a smart operation! The equator is the very finest location for north-south broadcasting. With equal distance from the magnetic poles, it's the one place in the world freest from atmospheric disturbance. And with your hundred-foot antenna sitting on a ninety-six-hundred-foot mountain, you virtually have a ten-thousand-foot antenna. The higher above sea level you can get your tower, the farther the signal will travel. Amazing how your engineers have chosen the best site on earth!"

What was Clarence Jones' reaction to this news? He laughed! "God knew it all along!" he said. There are no surprises to God.

Did Clarence Jones know that Ecuador would be the perfect place for a radio tower? What did God show about His knowledge and purposes through this incident? Do you trust God like Clarence Jones did? Talk about why you can trust a God who is not surprised by anything.

—Story adapted from *Hero Tales, Volume 3* by Dave and Neta Jackson. (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 95-97. Used by permission of Bethany House Publishers.



Hidden Providence

MAIN IDEAS

- **God's providential works are often hidden from man.**
- **Though we do not always see the work of God, we are called to trust Him.**

MEMORY VERSES

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
—Isaiah 55:8-9

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Exodus 1:22
- 2) Exodus 2:1-10
- 3) Exodus 5:6-9
- 4) Isaiah 55:8-9



LESSON SUMMARY

Often the work of God is hidden from us—like the hidden work of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly in a cocoon. Though we are unaware of His work, God is still at work bringing about His eternal purposes.

You may not recognize God's work in your life right now, yet He is unfolding His plans in His ways and in His time. With your son or daughter, commit yourself to trusting God's power, wisdom, and goodness, and confess that all that He does is right.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.
—Ephesians 3:8-11

Ask your son or daughter the following questions:

- **Who** is talking?
- **What** does he mean by “the unsearchable riches of Christ”?
- **What** is the “plan of the mystery hidden for ages”?
- **Why** was it hidden for ages?
- **How** was this mystery brought to light?
- **How** long did it take for the mystery to be brought to light?

Discuss the challenge of trusting God when His purposes are hidden and it seems that He is not working.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Read and think about the following quote from author Jerry Bridges¹:

“The sovereignty of God is often questioned because man does not understand what God is doing. Because He does not act as we think He should, we conclude He cannot act as we think He would.”

Rewrite this quote in your own words. Is there anything God is doing in your life you don't understand? Write a prayer asking for Him to give you the faith to trust Him.

SEEING GOD AT WORK

Shipwreck

by Carrie R. Zeman

Jonathan Dickinson wedged his feet against one cabin wall. His shoulders braced against the other to keep his wife from rolling off their narrow bunk as the ship pitched and tossed on the Atlantic Ocean. It was so dark in the tiny cabin that he couldn't see Mary's face, but he felt her hand in his as the storm lashed the ship for the third day. As he had many times each night of the storm, Jonathan commended to God his wife and the three-masted ship they shared with 23 other people. And he fell asleep despite the storm.

He didn't know how long he'd slept when he was awakened by a tremendous CRACK! A mast crashed down on the deck above. A splintering crash rumbled up through the floor like a cannon shot off in the cargo hold. The cabin floor heaved up and smashed into Jonathan's forehead. Something soft and heavy landed on his legs, pinning them, and he heard voices shrieking over the wind. Then the strange stillness struck him. After a month of sailing north toward Philadelphia from Jamaica, after days of riding the storm like a bucking horse, the ship was still.

Jonathan's mind caught up with the fact that he was lying on the floor of the unmoving ship. “We struck something. We're not moving,” he said. But he could still hear the wind and rain lashing the sails, the waves breaking against the ship. Mary rolled off of him and he reached for her hand. His beard was wet and salty. “It's the sea. Water's coming in.” He helped his wife off the wet floor and reached out into the darkness, groping for the door in the cabin wall.

Topside, the ship's crew clung to the rails and masts to keep from sliding down the deck, the tilted planking washed slick with rain and sea water. “There's no land!”

one said, gesturing into the darkness. He shouted over the storm, “We've hit a reef!”

“Doesn't a reef mean there is land nearby?” Jonathan asked. “Not in the Caribbean,” the sailor answered. “This sea is filled with coral shoals. We've been running with the storm for three days. There's no telling where...” A wave crashed over the bow and wiped out his words. “It doesn't matter! The ship's breaking up—we're going down!”

“Then now is the time to pray,” Jonathan said and ushered his wife back to their cabin where at least they were sheltered from the pelting rain.

It was one o'clock in the morning when they knelt in the dark in an inch of seawater and began to pray, casting themselves on God's mercy. Two hours later, the cabin had flooded up to their waists. But then they noticed something astonishing: the water level was going down. The storm still raged, but the sea-water was running out of the ship! About five in the morning, a sailor spotted land in the far distance. But it was too far to swim. So Jonathan and Mary continued to pray for God's protection and help.

At dawn, they heard wild cheering on deck and went back topside. The storm had begun to slacken. As the darkness faded, everyone could see: God had wrecked their ship, not on a reef where they would drown, but on the beach of an island so flat that the land they'd spotted was actually hills miles inland. The water had risen in the ship with the tide, and had run back out again as the tide fell! They had no idea where they were or what awaited them on that island, but Jonathan and Mary knelt on the deck and praised God for the beach that wrecked their ship—and saved their lives.

This true story from 1696 continues in an upcoming lesson. Have you ever felt completely terrified? Everyone on this ship believed they were about to die—even those who believed in God. Only when the sun came up could they see they had actually been safe on a beach. While everyone else waited to die in fear, Jonathan and Mary waited in prayer. Why did they react this way? What Bible verses might have helped them in this dark time?

1. Bridges, Jerry. *Trusting God, Even When Life Hurts*. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1988), 29.





God's Purposes Are Far Reaching

MAIN IDEAS

- **Often God's works of providence are far reaching; they have a greater purpose than just the present seeable purpose.**
- **Man's understanding of the purposes of God is limited.**
- **God's ultimate purpose is to display His glory.**

MEMORY VERSE

God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend.
—Job 37:5

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Exodus 2:11-4:31
- 2) Exodus 11-12
- 3) Job 37:5
- 4) Romans 9:17



LESSON SUMMARY

God has multiple purposes in all that He does, most of which we don't recognize and can't comprehend. We see the obvious things, but not the hidden things. In time, we sometimes begin to see some of those formerly hidden purposes, though never all of them.

In the Exodus, God was at work freeing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, but He was doing more than that. He was showing that His name is great—that He is a powerful God. He was demonstrating His glory, not only to the Hebrews and the Egyptians but to the nations...and to us. He was also showing us how to escape the bondage and consequences of sin through the death of His first-born Son, the Passover Lamb.

With your son or daughter, thank God for His Son and His far-reaching purpose to free a sinful world from bondage and eternal punishment.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend.—Job 37:5

Ask your child to explain Job 37:5. God showed Job how limited his understanding of the work of God was.

Read Job's response to God's revelation in Job 42:1-6.

- **What did Job understand about the providence of God?**
- **What did Job understand about himself?**
- **What was Job's response?**
- **What should our response be to seeing the greatness of God?**

Pray with your child that he or she might see the greatness of God.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Each day this week, write about something that happened and then use your imagination to identify how that circumstance could have an effect on someone else now or later.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

But We Prayed for Safety!

by Noël Piper

“Please keep us safe while we travel today,” we prayed before we left the motel in the morning.

Many miles later, there was a loud clanking under the hood, and we had to pull over to the side of the freeway and stop. It was a long way to an exit where there might be a service station, and most stations were closed by now anyway. Cars whizzed past, as we wondered what to do.

“I think we should pray,” said one of the children. And so we stood together with our heads bowed and asked God to help us.

When we opened our eyes, a pickup truck had stopped. The driver was a mechanic. He checked and knew exactly what our problem was—we needed a new water pump. But how would we get one? Everything was probably closed, and we had no way to go anywhere. No problem. He drove to the 24-hour truck stop where he worked, got the part for us, brought it back, and installed it in our car, right there beside the freeway.

It was very clear to us that God had answered our prayer for help—almost instantly. And we thanked Him gladly. But we had prayed at the beginning of the day that He would protect us. Why hadn’t He answered that prayer? Well, He *had* protected us from danger and hurt. It was only our car that had broken.

Yes, he could keep us safe, but that wasn’t all He wanted us to know about Him. Now we had greater things to thank Him for. He had shown himself to us even more than if nothing had happened.

How? We were kept safe—no one was hurt. We were able to pull safely off the highway. He reminded us to pray—to ask Him for help. He caused a mechanic to stop—a man who worked where we could get the part we needed. He gave the mechanic the time and willingness to go get the part and to fix the car by the road. That also gave time for us to talk with the mechanic about our amazing God and the way He works.

We hadn’t asked for enough in our morning prayer. God had much more to show us about Himself.

Can you remember a time when you asked God for something, but He did something else? Try to think of some reasons He might have answered your prayer in a different way. For example, in this story, what might God have wanted to show the truck driver about Himself?



God Acts for His Glory

MAIN IDEAS

- **God acts in order to be seen.**
- **The purpose of all of God's acts of providence is to show His glory; to show His greatness and worth.**

MEMORY VERSES

Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is great like our God? ¹⁴You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.— Psalm 77:13-14

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Exodus 15:9-11, 18
- 2) Judges 7
- 3) 1 Samuel 17:46b
- 4) 2 Kings 5:15b
- 5) Psalm 34:8
- 6) Psalm 77:13-14



LESSON SUMMARY

God is so glorious that His goodness and worth just flow out from Him and are on display for us to see. He does not hide who He is, but displays His *glory*, goodness, and worth in all of His acts of providence. Reducing the Israelite army from 32,000 men to 300 in delivering the Israelites from the Midianites was a display of His greatness and goodness.

What a great God we have!

Our reaction to the glory of God should be to echo back, "God is great!" Today, as a family, praise God for His greatness and worth, and rejoice as you rehearse the expanding Providence Definition:

God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working
to uphold and govern all creation
to fulfill all His purposes
for His glory

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.—Psalm 77:13-14

Share with your child how God has shown Himself to be mighty to you.

- **What wonders has He performed?**

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.—Psalm 19:1

- **How do the heavens declare the glory of God?**
- **Where do you see the greatness of God revealed in nature?**

Optional: Take a nature hike as a family and look for some of the wonders of God

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Record glimpses of the glory of God you see this week in nature and in His work in the world. Be sure to praise God for His glory when you see it. Then tell a family member or a friend about some of the great things of God you have seen this week.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

God and the Great Grasshopper Plague

by Carrie R. Zeman

In 1873, the month of June was sunny and bright in the west central United States. From Colorado to Minnesota, farmers walked fields thickly sprouted green with corn, wheat, barley and oats, hoping for bumper crops, and calculating how many new acres to plow for the following year. Merchants in towns were happy to sell the farmers' lumber to build bigger barns to store their crops. In big cities, manufacturers were glad to melt more steel to supply the nails for the barns and the plows for increased acreage. Good crops meant good business, and everyone worked as hard as he could to ensure his own prosperity.

Shortly after lunchtime on June 12, 1873, the sunlight began to dim. Farmers looked west, expecting to see storm clouds on the horizon. But the cloud they saw glinted strangely in the fading light and traced an erratic path across the sky, moving unnaturally fast. A faint hum whirled louder, then buzzed, then settled into the sound of thousands of scissors nipping and snipping the air so loudly that farmers ran in fear to their houses. The sky was greenish-black with millions of grasshoppers descending on the Midwest.

Inside farmhouses, farmers pulled grasshoppers from their hair and squished them underfoot, while women slammed windows shut and stuffed clothing under the doors to keep the insects out. Grasshoppers landing on the roof sounded louder than hail. They ate almost everything: food in the pantry, vegetables and fruit in the garden, leaves on trees, crops in the field, even clothing hung out to dry and the wooden handles of plows. In fact, there were only three things grasshoppers didn't eat: green tomatoes, raspberries, and castor beans. The hoppers ate and ate and ate for weeks until there was nothing left. Then they flew away.

Everyone was relieved to see the grasshoppers leave and shook their heads at the tremendous loss of crops. It was too late in the season for replanting. But they all

made plans for the following year and worked hard to get ready. Surely, everyone said, such a disaster would not happen again. But they were wrong. An inch beneath the surface of every field, the grasshoppers had laid eggs: 900 million per acre. The next spring, farmers' fields sprouted grain and grasshoppers, and the baby hoppers, unable to fly, crawled across the countryside eating everything in reach. The cycle repeated itself every year for five years. People everywhere were suffering. But God had a plan.

In 1877, Minnesota had a new governor, John S. Pillsbury, who loved God. Governor Pillsbury was convinced that God had brought a grasshopper plague upon the Midwest to demonstrate His power, just like He had in Egypt in Bible times. So Governor Pillsbury proclaimed April 26, 1877, a day of prayer. Many people scoffed at the idea—that through prayer God could get rid of the grasshoppers when years of the best research and hardest human work had failed. But all over the state, thousands of Christians spent the whole day on their knees, confessing their sins and pleading with God to end the plague.

The next week was snowy and bitter cold for the end of April. Then spring came and once again, a new crop of grasshoppers sprouted from the ground with the wheat. Were the scoffers right? Were grasshoppers more powerful than God? Many people thought so. But they were wrong. That spring God shut the mouths of the baby grasshoppers so they ate almost nothing; they grew sleek and fat and sprouted wings without food. Then one morning, the grasshoppers flew away—millions of them in a vast cloud that filled the sky. That cloud simply vanished; no one could find a trace of the grasshoppers within flying range. And the next spring, 1878, only grain sprouted in the fields—the God who shut the grasshoppers' mouths had also kept them from laying eggs. The Great Grasshopper Plague was over.

Read in Exodus 10 about the greatest grasshopper plague God ever caused. Imagine you are Governor Pillsbury, looking for guidance from God. Who caused the grasshopper plague in Egypt? How did Pharaoh sin against God? Who was in control of Pharaoh's heart? What were God's purposes in hardening Pharaoh's heart and sending the plague? What providence did God have in mind for the Israelites? What did God want to show the people of the Midwest? What is He showing you today?



God's Providence Over Nature

MAIN IDEA

- **God controls nature; nature is subject to the will of God.**

MEMORY VERSE

My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.—Isaiah 48:13

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Exodus 8:21-24
- 2) Exodus 14:21-22
- 3) Numbers 11:31
- 4) Joshua 10:11
- 5) Job 37:10-12
- 6) Psalm 135:5-7
- 7) Isaiah 40:25-26
- 8) Isaiah 48:13
- 9) Mark 4:41



LESSON SUMMARY

All nature is subject to the will of God: rain cannot fall, volcanoes cannot erupt, and tornadoes cannot develop apart from the hand of God. Animals—lions, birds, frogs, even big fish, small gnats, and flies—are subject to God's control, and they all fulfill His purposes. Everything in the universe is under the providence of God and serves His purposes.

When Jesus controlled the winds and the waves, He was making a bold statement of who He is: He is God. The disciples knew then that Jesus is not just a good teacher or a prophet, *And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* (Mark 4:41)

Are you in awe of a God who controls the forces of nature and the flight of insects? Pray this week that God will fill you with awe at the extent of His providence. Rejoice in this God with your son or daughter.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read about God's providence over fish in Matthew 17:24-27, John 21:4-6, and Jonah 1:15-17.

- **How do these stories show you the greatness of God?**
- **Could they be coincidences?**

Discuss the probability that any of these situations would happen. Then think about the fact that Jesus said that two of them would happen before they did happen.

- **How does that disprove that they were coincidences?**

Help your child think of other biblical examples of God's providence over nature—over the forces of nature and over animals and insects.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Each day, write about something that happened in nature, either from your own personal experience or from something you read. What does this tell you about God? Can man do any or all of these things?



SEEING GOD AT WORK

Hiding from God's Storm

by Noël Piper

We huddled together in the dark bathroom. Just the day before yesterday we had been playing on the beach. But yesterday, when we had gone out again, we couldn't play. We had to run right back to the house, because the sand was like miniature shotgun pellets aimed at our faces, legs, and arms. We could imagine what a sandstorm in the Sahara might be like.

Now today, we were hiding from a full-fledged hurricane. When the rain had gotten so hard we couldn't see the edge of the yard, and the trees were bending almost to the ground, and the electricity was out, we followed the instructions we heard from the battery-operated radio, "Find an inside room. Stay away from windows, in case of shattering glass." It was sort of cozy and exciting, sitting close together in the flashlight shadows, hearing the wind howling outside and listening to radio reports about the effects of the storm all over the city.

Suddenly, there was a thunderous crack and then the house shook like an earthquake. We couldn't go out of our hiding place to see what had happened, but we were

all okay. Okay, yes. But not feeling so cozy and excited anymore. Now, I began to pray seriously. That crash had reminded me that God was in control of this situation. I couldn't just take it for granted that if I followed all the "safety rules," then everything was guaranteed safe. God was blowing this storm and God was shaking this house. God was holding us in His hand and He would decide whether our bathroom hiding place was "safe."

Afterward, we found a 10-story-high pine tree broken and fallen onto a corner of the house. I imagined God snapping it as easily as I might break a pencil. And if God had dropped the top of the tree 20 feet farther over, it would have smashed the roof right over our bathroom hiding place.

The hurricane was God's. And the tree was His, and it fell where He dropped it. And our hiding place from God's nature was not the bathroom, but God Himself.

Have you ever been in a big storm? What do storms like this tell us about God? How can God's providence comfort you when you are frightened?



God's Providence Over Human Life

MAIN IDEAS

- **God is sovereign over the life-forming work in the womb.**
- **Praise is due to God, for all people are fearfully and wonderfully made.**
- **Those with disabilities are created purposefully by God for His glory.**
- **God has appointed the length of our days; He is sovereign over death.**

MEMORY VERSES

*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.
—Psalm 139:13-14*

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 29:31
- 2) Genesis 30:22
- 3) Exodus 4:11
- 4) Psalm 139:13-16
- 5) John 9:1-7
- 6) 1 Corinthians 4:7



LESSON SUMMARY

God is sovereign over the forming of human life, uniquely fashioning each baby in the womb. God makes no mistakes in the wonderful way in which He makes us. We are the work of God's creative hands—carefully planned and wonderfully made. God made each one of us in the way that is best for us.

Whenever we take credit for God's creative work, fail to thank Him for His goodness, or look down on His creative work in another person, we sin and insult our Creator. Children with disabilities are God's fearful and wonderful creations, sovereignly and purposefully made for His glory. Those with disabilities can display God's glory in unique ways, as God is glorified in weakness by those who depend on Him and radiate His joy in suffering. Their identity is not their disability; the greatest identity they could have is to be a child of God.

With your child, thank God for the way He has uniquely and wonderfully fashioned him or her. Pray that your family will bring glory to God as a reflection of His goodness and by the way you accept the weaknesses of others.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Psalm 139 with your child. Tell your son or daughter about when he or she was born.

- **Where do they see evidences that you are “fearfully and wonderfully” made?**
- **Do you see God's work in your life as good?**

Discuss what each of you would like to change about yourself or your life. Help your child see if these are God-glorifying growth areas, or if they are self-serving and/or reflect a desire for recognition. Then, help him or her choose one growth area and ask God to help your child grow in that area. Parents, continue to pray for your child and look for ways to encourage God-glorifying growth in his or her life.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

This week, write about some of the blessings God has brought into your life. Thank Him for His providence in your life.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

God is a Great Engineer

by Sally Michael

The couple had been praying for a baby to adopt. A mother needed an adoptive family for her baby girl. But they were on different continents and didn't know each other. How could they connect with each other?

God is a great engineer and His purposes are far-reaching. In His sovereign plan, God purposed to place this baby girl in a Christian home and He made the connection—and the plan was many years in the making.

When the wife was in junior high, God sent her and her family to South America. Her father worked in the American Embassy, but the family became very involved with the missionary community. Later, after the father's retirement, God sent the family back to South America as missionaries, where the parents, Lucy and Dick, still lived when their daughter and her husband were praying for a baby.

The birth mother brought her baby girl to the house of a woman for whom she used to work, asking if she knew of anyone who would like to adopt a baby girl. The woman called a friend. God had arranged things so that the friend's sister was visiting her at the time of the phone call. God had also placed a friendship between the sister and Lucy.

When the phone call came, the friend turned to her sister and said, "Do we know anyone who wants a baby girl?"

"Someone I know wants a baby...Oh, I know, Lucy's daughter in the United States!" God had made the connection for this adoption. He caused the birth mother to go to the home of a woman who would call a woman who had a sister who knew the adoptive mother's mother! He timed the phone call perfectly! And He accomplished His purpose of placing this baby girl in a Christian home. Our God is a great God!

Many pieces fit together to connect the birth parents and the baby girl. Discuss what could have gone wrong. How many different things had to work out? What does this tell you about God? How has He fit together the pieces of your life



God's Providence Over Rulers and Nations

MAIN IDEA

- **God controls rulers and nations; rulers and nations are subject to the providence of God.**

MEMORY VERSES

*Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.
²¹He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.
—Daniel 2:20b-21*

SCRIPTURE

- 1) 1 Samuel 15:3
- 2) Isaiah 11:12
- 3) Isaiah 29:16
- 4) Isaiah 45:9
- 5) Jeremiah 23:3
- 6) Daniel 2:20-21
- 7) Daniel 4:32, 34-35, 37



LESSON SUMMARY

Kings and rulers may think they rule their countries and change the course of history, but God is on the throne of heaven and directs all things and their hearts wherever He pleases (Proverbs 21:1). God places rulers in power, and He removes them (Daniel 2:21) and uses them to serve His purposes.

With your son or daughter, thank God for those He has put in positions of power and influence and pray for the heart to trust God's good judgments.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

With your son or daughter, read Nehemiah 2:1-8 and discuss the following questions.

- **What did Nehemiah want the king to do?**
- **Who do you think got the king to help Nehemiah?**
(Hint: See verse 4 and the end of verse 8.)
- **Do you think the king realized that God was in control?**
- **How did Nehemiah show his reliance on God rather than on his ability to convince the king?**

God loves when His people pray to Him, and He loves to answer their prayers. Discuss how your family could pray for the leaders of your country. Then spend time praying for them.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

With your dad or mom, look in the newspaper or read an online news site. What good and bad things do you find happening in your city or country? Write about how these can be under God's control. Write about how you can pray for your city, state, country, or leaders, and pray together with your dad or mom for these things.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

God Struck Them Dumb

by Carrie R. Zeman

Storm winds whipped across the waves pelting rain as Jonathan and Mary Dickinson and their fellow travelers waded through the breakers onto the sand. Just visible in the gray light of early morning, a long wrinkle of dunes creased the beach a hundred feet inland from the wreck of their three-masted sailing ship. The top of the dunes, three feet above sea level, was the highest point on the island. Beyond a shallow channel lay a second island, and on it a hill rose sharply in the distance. But their island was little more than a strand of sand rimming a flat salt marsh. There were no trees, no signs of human habitation as far as they could see.

"We be in the Keys of Florida, me thinks," the ship's navigator said, planting two pieces of ship's spar in the sand next to the chest the Dickinsons had salvaged from the wreck. "St. Augustine be four or five days' sail that way," he said, pointing north. "But with ocean channels between the Keys, we're stranded here until we can hail some ship."

"Or till we be eaten, you mean," a sailor said. "That Dutch crew was dinner for them cannibals last season..."

"Bah. Cannibals be a rumor," the navigator answered. "The crew is not found yet and there surely be Indians in these islands, but you can't be concluding cannibals..."

Jonathan interrupted the argument. "God certainly did not rescue us from the ocean to fill some native's stew pot. Now I suggest we accept God's provision and get to work. Our women and wounded need shelter and we all could use a meal."

Morning brightened. Near noon, it finally stopped raining as the men finished erecting tents from sail cloth lashed to spar poles. Jonathan and Mary removed their Bible from their trunk and read a psalm over a late breakfast of damp biscuits rescued from the ship's hold. They were just finishing prayer when they heard the cry, "Indians!" from some men near the wreck.

The people in camp saw no strangers on the beach. They turned around to see 50 Indian men emerge from behind the tents. The natives were stocky and deeply tanned, their dark hair knotted in knobs held close to their scalps by pieces of bone. Thin Spanish knives glinted in the Indian's fists as they advanced on the castaways. "All our ammunition's wet!" a sailor despaired.

"God means for us to trust in Him, not weapons," Jonathan said loudly, taking his wife's hand. Quietly he added, "God help us all." For even more menacing than knives, the natives' faces scowled the purest evil Jonathan had ever seen.

The Indians were following the orders of a man they called Casseekey. Jonathan could not understand their language but recognized the hatred in their voices. At Casseekey's command, the Indians used their knives to force the prisoners to sit down. Jonathan sank down on top of the trunk. Mary sat next to him. Then in a barrage of orders, each Indian planted his knee between his prisoner's shoulder blades and grabbed a handful of hair, pulling their head back. Casseekey stood behind Jonathan holding a knife at his throat.

"We fear not those who can harm the body," Mary whispered. "They cannot harm our souls."

As Jonathan looked up into the face of the man who was about to order their deaths, Casseekey opened his mouth to speak. But no words came out. The evil in the chief's face melted away and his hands fell to his sides. The knife dropped to the sand. Throughout the encampment, Indians looked down at their empty hands in confusion, working their mouths without sound.

On August 14, 1698, the Jobese Indians at Hoe Bay on Jupiter Island in the Florida Keys were unable to speak for 30 minutes. God struck them mute—and spared the lives of the 25 survivors of the wrecked ship, *Reformation*.

In 1699, Jonathan Dickinson wrote in his Journal: "In my late afflictions I have seen more of the wonders and dealings of the LORD than I've ever seen before or ever should have seen if I had not gone through them. The LORD is with me. All things are well." What was he referring to? What do you think he meant? Why do you think God preserved Jonathan's testimony for us to read 300 year later? What does this show us about God's providence over rulers, even evil rulers?



God's Providence Over His Word

MAIN IDEAS

- **God sustains His Word.**
- **God's Word accomplishes His purposes.**

MEMORY VERSE

...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.—Isaiah 55:11

SCRIPTURE

- 1) 1 Kings 11:30-31
- 2) 1 Kings 12:15
- 3) Isaiah 40:8
- 4) Isaiah 55:10-11



LESSON SUMMARY

Though the Bible was written by about 40 different people over the span of 1,500 years, it flows as one continuous story because it has one ultimate Author—God. In God's amazing providence, He directed a wandering sheep into a cave, and the shepherd boy's rock to pottery which led to the discovery the Dead Sea Scrolls. These Scrolls show the amazing accuracy of the Word of God through thousands of years of hand-copying. "The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

Not only is God's Word eternal, but it is also effectively accomplishing God's purposes: creating faith, causing conviction, bringing encouragement, producing understanding, and providing guidance.

With your son or daughter, thank God for the precious gift of His Word, preserved for thousands of years by God's sovereign hand. Praise God for His Word and His sustaining providence over it.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Matthew 2:5-6; 2:14-15; 3:1-3; and 13:34-35.

- **How do these passages show God's providence over His Word?**
- **How many reasons can you give to show why God is able to be sovereign over His Word?**

Share with your child about a time when you saw God's Word being fulfilled. Praise God together for His faithfulness.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Each day, write about how God's Word has been active in your life or in the life of someone in your family, and what purpose it accomplished.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

Trash or Treasure?

After Vietnam fell to the Communists, Hien, a Vietnamese Christian, was imprisoned for “aiding and abetting the Americans” during the Vietnam War. He was required to read communist propaganda and was prohibited from reading anything in English. The effect of this daily attack on his mind was the formation of doubts. Maybe God was not real. Perhaps he had been misguided. Finally, he decided that the next day he would not pray or even think about believing in God.

The most disliked task by those in the prison was cleaning the latrine—and the next morning he was assigned latrine duty. As he was cleaning the latrine, he noticed that in the overflowing tin can wastebasket was a paper with English words on it. He washed it off and put it in his pocket.

That night he pulled out a small flashlight and began to read the English words:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?...

Read Romans 8 and talk about how it would be an encouragement to someone in Hien’s position. What verses would be particularly encouraging to someone’s faith at such a time? What did God’s providence over His Word accomplish in Hien’s life?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our LORD.

Someone was using pages of the Bible as toilet paper, and Hien had found a page containing Romans 8. When his faith was weak, God sent him a page from the Bible to encourage his faith.

Hien volunteered for latrine duty the next day, and each day after that. Each day he found another page of the Bible which he cleaned off and read at night. His faith was sustained through someone else’s “trash.”

—Story adapted from *Deliver Us From Evil: Restoring the Soul in a Disintegrating Culture* by Ravi Zacharias, (Nashville, Tenn.: Word Publishing, 1998), 191-193. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Word Publishing.



God's Providence Over Man's Heart

MAIN IDEA

- **God is sovereign over the heart of man; man's heart is subject to the will of God.**

MEMORY VERSE

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.—Proverbs 21:1

SCRIPTURE

- 1) 1 Kings 12:12-15
- 2) 2 Chronicles 36:22-23
- 3) Ezra 6:22
- 4) Proverbs 21:1



LESSON SUMMARY

The people of Israel appealed to Rehoboam to “lighten the hard service” that his father placed on them. But Rehoboam followed the evil inclinations of his heart, rejecting the counsel of the older men and placing harsher conditions on the people. Only by God’s grace can a man’s sinful heart be changed.

When God withholds His grace, man follows the evil inclinations of his heart, and any inclination toward good is the intervention of God’s grace to change man’s heart. We see that grace in inclining Cyrus’ heart to help the Jews rebuild the temple.

We, too, have evil inclinations in our hearts, and only God’s grace can incline our hearts toward Him and what is good. Pray with your son or daughter for God’s grace on your heart. Pray that He will incline your heart toward Him and what is good, and away from evil.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ²¹But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD.—Ezekiel 11:19-21

- Where do you see the providence of God over man’s heart in Ezekiel 11:19-21?
- What does Ezekiel say that we need in order to obey God?
- How do these verses reflect the grace of God?

Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! —Psalm 119:36

- What battle does this Psalm 119:36 highlight?
- What does the psalmist mean by “selfish gain”?
- From the verses you read, how does true godly change occur in a person’s life?
- Do you ever pray for your heart?

Help your child to rewrite Psalm 119:36 in different ways so that it reflects some of the struggles of his or her life. Take time to pray together for these specific struggles.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write a definition of “hard heart.” How does a person with a hard heart act toward God and the things of God? Write a prayer asking God to give you an obedient and responsive heart toward God.

**SEEING GOD AT WORK****I Will Never...**

by Noël Piper

“I will never marry a preacher—never!”

I was very sure about this. A pastor’s wife has to be good. And I didn’t want to always be that good. I was sure that my life wouldn’t be as fun if I were married to a preacher. And fun mattered a lot to me.

Not long after that, I met the man who would become my husband. He was planning to become a doctor. That fit well with my plans. Soon we began to fall in love and talk about getting married. Then he decided that, instead of medicine, he’d rather study the Bible. This was moving into “dangerous” territory for me, but something was changing inside me. It seemed to me that God was showing me that it was right for me to marry this particular man. God’s choice of the right man for me was more important than whether he chose to be a...pastor. But anyway, he was planning to be a teacher, not a preacher.

After he finished his education, he taught Bible at a college for a few years. During this time, God was making more changes inside me. I began to know that fun wasn’t the most important thing. I was loving God and His ways more.

One morning my husband said, “What would you think if I became a pastor?” When I heard that question, I knew it was the right thing for him to do. But if he did become a pastor, that would mean I would be married to a preacher! I answered him—truthfully, “I’ve seen this coming for a long time. I will be happy with whatever God leads you to do.”

From the day I had made that foolish pronouncement until the morning of my husband’s question, 15 years had passed. God spent 15 years changing my heart, making me ready for that moment. And making me ready for the life we’ve had together since then. God was very patient with me.

Discuss with your parents or some other adult what they remember about when they were younger. What did they expect their lives to be like? How are their lives different than what they expected? How has God changed them? How did God change their hearts to be obedient to Him?



God's Providence Over the Cross

MAIN IDEAS

- **All the events leading to the cross were planned by God from before the foundation of the world.**
- **God planned the cross to solve man's sin problem.**

MEMORY VERSE

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.—1 Peter 2:24

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 3:15
- 2) Matthew 16:21-23
- 3) Luke 2:10-11
- 4) Acts 2:22-24
- 5) Acts 4:27-28
- 6) Acts 13:27
- 7) 1 Peter 2:24



LESSON SUMMARY

When Jesus revealed His upcoming death to His disciples, they didn't understand. Peter protested that it would never happen. But Jesus rebuked him, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (Matthew 16:23). Jesus knew the cross was a necessity—a part of God's eternal plan since before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The whole Bible points to the Redeemer, and yet people miss Him, hearing the message of the cross without receiving the Savior. Have you heard and received the message of the cross? Pray for a love for the cross and the message of the Gospel.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read 1 Peter 1:13-21 and discuss the following questions.

- **What is Peter talking about when he tells us to set our hope on the "grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"?**
- **What expectation does Peter reveal in verses 14-16?**
- **What are "futile ways"?**
- **What does it mean to be ransomed?**
- **Why can we put our faith and hope in God?**

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

***Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”
27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the
Scriptures the things concerning himself.—Luke 24:26-27***



What happened on the way to Emmaus? This week as you read your Bible, write what the Bible says about Jesus.

SEEING GOD AT WORK

An Unarmed Child

by Sally Michael

The missionary pilot could not navigate the plane using familiar landmarks due to the dense fog. He had to rely on instruments alone. But what he did not know was that he had been blown off-course. Attempting to get below the cloud cover and fly through a known valley resulted in disaster. He entered the wrong valley—a much narrower valley that ended abruptly at the face of a mountain ridge. By the time he realized his mistake, there was no escape. The plane crashed and burst into flames killing Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilot, Menno Voth, missionaries Gene and Lois Newman, and their five-year-old son, three-year-old daughter, and one-year-old son. Nine-year-old Paul Newman, sitting in the back of the plane, escaped the flames by crawling out a gaping hole where the tail had once been.

Was this just a senseless accident? Or was God at work accomplishing His good purposes? Certainly, to many it could look like a mistake. Three months earlier, two other missionaries had been killed by hostile natives just 800 yards away from the site of the crash. Eight deaths...and a nine-year-old boy stranded in the hostile Seng Valley of Irian Jaya. Could there be a purpose in it all?

For the Yali people of the Seng Valley, there was a perfect providence in it. What better way to reach the hearts of hostile natives than through a child? First, the heart of one Yali man was touched. He found Paul

crying, curled up on the ground in a rain shower. The man brought Paul to his house, warmed him by the fire, and made food for him. Soon other Yalis came to see this unarmed white child. The news spread from village to village. By the next morning, hundreds of Yalis came to see this child. They had killed white men in the past. But an unarmed child posed no threat to them.

Later, search airplanes discovered the wreckage. A helicopter returned so the victims could be removed for burial, and Paul was rescued in the process. Within two years, there were many believers among the Yali of the Seng Valley. A plane crash and an unarmed child had been an opening for the Gospel through a previously closed door.

What is the salvation of a tribe of people worth? What would you sacrifice to bring the Gospel to an unreached people? Is there any amount of money too much to pay to see a tribe of former cannibals praising God? Would it be worth dying to see them become followers of Jesus? Is it worth the death of two people? How about the death of eight people? Who would have known that a child alone in the jungle would be a means for an opening of the Gospel among Yali cannibals?

(This actual story took place in 1969. The plane that crashed was a Missionary Aviation Fellowship plane. Gene and Lois Newman were also MAF missionaries.)

Was God sovereign over the fog and wind? Why would He ordain that a missionary plane would crash? What might not have happened if the plane had not crashed? Just as God orchestrated the events leading to the cross to save sinners, so God orchestrated the salvation of the Yali people. Do you think the missionaries who died would say it was worth dying so that the Yali people of the Seng Valley could hear and accept the Gospel? Do you think it was worth it? Why? It might be helpful in your discussion to try to draw some comparisons between the length of time we exist on earth and the “length of time” we will be in eternity.

Draw a short line to portray life on earth and then one below it to symbolize eternity. The eternity line can be drawn by taping many papers together. Place an arrow on the end of the eternity line. Then discuss the relative unimportance of life on earth compared to life in eternity.



Saving Providence: Seeking and Saving the Lost

MAIN IDEAS

- **God is at work in this world seeking to save lost people.**
- **God calls the lost. The saving providence of God calls men to be saved.**

MEMORY VERSE

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.
—Luke 19:10

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Deuteronomy 7:7-8
- 2) Luke 19:1-10
- 3) Acts 9:1-9



LESSON SUMMARY

God is actively working in the world, seeking and saving lost people. Though there was nothing in Zacchaeus deserving God's grace, Jesus sought out and saved Zacchaeus, demonstrating the amazing love of God and His mercy to undeserving sinners.

This amazing grace was demonstrated again in God's call to Saul on the Damascus Road. Those whom God is calling cannot resist His call or thwart His purposes—not even His enemies.

God is still at work calling men like Zacchaeus and Saul to Himself. He is watching over this world and working in this world to save men. Praise God for His irresistible call and His mercy to undeserving sinners.

With your son or daughter, thank God for His seeking and saving grace, and for His irresistible call.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.—John 10:16

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.—John 10:27-28

How is the idea that Jesus came to seek and save what was lost (Luke 19:10) explained in terms of a shepherd? What does a shepherd do when he knows there are sheep that need to come into the fold? How do the sheep know the shepherd? What does the shepherd give the sheep when they follow him?

Explain to your child how Jesus, the Good Shepherd, sought and saved each one of you.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Answer the question: Do you believe you are a Christian or not? (Be sure to write what you really believe.) If you believe you are a Christian, write about the things that help you know that you are. If you believe you are not a Christian, write about what causes you to believe you are not a Christian. Talk this over with mom or dad.



SEEING JESUS AT WORK

Only One Room at the Inn

Adoniram Judson grew up in the late 1700s around Boston. His father was a pastor, so Adoniram heard about God as he was growing up.

When he was 16 years old, Judson attended Brown University. His best friend at Brown University was Jacob Eames. Jacob was not a Christian and introduced Adoniram to many writers who did not believe in God. Through the influence of Jacob Eames, Adoniram rejected God.

When Adoniram Judson returned home, he told his parents that he no longer believed in God. His mother cried, and his father “roared and threatened and pounded the furniture.” But Adoniram would not listen to them. At 21 years old, he left home to go to New York City where he heard tales of the American West. He was thrilled at these tales so he headed on horseback for the West.

During his trip West, he stopped at an inn one night—but the only room left was next door to a young man who was very sick. The owner of the inn apologized for placing Judson next to all the commotion caused by the sick man, but Judson was tired and went to bed.

All night long, people entered and left the room of the young man next door. Judson could hear groans and people talking. Adoniram Judson was very troubled by what went on next door, and so as he was checking

out of the inn, he asked about the condition of the young man.

The owner answered, “I thought maybe you’d heard. He died, sir, toward morning. Very young. Not more than your age. Went to Brown University out East. His name was Jacob Eames.”

Of all the places Adoniram Judson could have been, of all the nights Adoniram Judson could have been at that inn, of all the rooms Judson could have occupied in that inn, God in His providence placed Adoniram Judson right next door to the man who ridiculed his faith—on the night that man died. God was calling Adoniram Judson to Himself, and He had arranged all the details to put Adoniram Judson at that inn on that night, next door to his friend. God used the death of Jacob Eames to cause Adoniram Judson to consider his eternal destiny.

Judson did not continue his travels. Instead, he turned around and headed home. Before long, he committed his life to Christ and then to missions. He became the first foreign missionary from America and sailed for Burma in February of 1812.

Our God is a great God of providence! He even arranges hotel rooms. He is still at work seeking and saving the lost. Praise God for His irresistible call!

Share with your child the circumstances that brought you to salvation. Help your child see the providence of God in the ordering of your life. Did you try to resist God’s call? Pray with your son or daughter for those you know who are not saved.

—Story adapted from *On This Day* by Robert J. Morgan. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998) page for February 6. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Evaluating Your Child's Spiritual Condition

by John MacArthur

This is Father's Day and that's a good word to fathers, be done with lesser things, give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of kings...that's what that hymn says.

One of the ways that we as fathers do that is by being the spiritual head of the family. And I thought this morning I would just share a few thoughts along that line.

The most compelling question that a father should ask is, "How do I know if my child is saved...How do I know if my child is saved?" After all, the greatest responsibility we have as parents and certainly as fathers is the salvation of our children, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That is the command of Scripture. "You fathers, provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," Ephesians 6 says. We are the evangelists as it were of our children. And the question comes up... how do I know if my child is saved? That is a compelling question and I want in a very simple and straightforward way to help you to be able to understand that question.

What you really are asking is...is God...is God working in the life of my child unto salvation because salvation is a divine work, it is the work of God in the life of your child. And what you're looking for as you look at your child's life is evidences of that work. You cannot know your child is saved because at some point in the past your child prayed a prayer. Your child at some point, maybe at the age of five or six or seven or whatever prayed a little prayer and invited Jesus Christ to come into his or her heart. It's certainly fine to have that desire in the life of a child, there's nothing wrong with a child making that request of God or praying that prayer at the prompting of a Sunday-school teacher or of a Christian-school teacher, or of a parent, that is in itself no indication of salvation. A prayer does not indicate salvation. A prayer is basically a human act and not necessarily consistent with the working of God. There are people who have prayed that prayer at various times in their life and are not converted for one reason or another. You cannot then know your child is saved simply because they prayed a prayer, invited Christ into their life. You cannot know because they have reported to you that that's what they decided to do, that they decided at some point along the way, might have been

under the influence of your own discussion with them, or they might have heard something in Sunday school, or even in church, and they have decided they wanted to be Christian, they've decided they wanted Christ as their Savior, that does not necessarily indicate salvation.

You can't look at any event, at any specific prayer, at any specific formula, at any particular confession that they might make that in fact they have asked Jesus into their life or they've made a decision for Christ. That is not an indicator of salvation. You cannot look at any such event to know your child is saved. And I think that is important to say because so many parents having heard their child pray such a prayer or make such a decision in early childhood then wonder how it is that the child reaching junior high, or high school or college years completely turns their back on the Lord or treats God with indifference or is disinterested in the church and roams off into the world and etc., etc. And they wonder how in fact that could happen if they were saved at some point in time past. But you cannot look at an event as an indicator of salvation. The only thing you can look at is evidences of the working of God in the life.

What evidences? First of all, let's use the word "conviction." When someone is saved there is a work of the Holy Spirit in conviction. In John 16 Jesus said I'm going to send the Holy Spirit and He is going to convict. He's going to convict of sin and righteousness and judgment. That is the Holy Spirit is going to convict a heart of the nature of sin, that sin is wrong, it's evil, it dissatisfies God, it is rebellion against God, etc. And then of righteousness, that is that one is unable to meet the standard of righteousness, and then of judgment, and therefore judgment is the consequence.

When God is in the process of bringing someone to salvation, there will be conviction of sin. So what you look for in your child is evidences of that conviction apart from the fear of your punishment, apart from the fear of your displeasure and disfavor and the loss of privileges or whatever you might use to manipulate their behavior, you're looking for honest, personal conviction. In a word, you're looking for a penitent heart. You're looking for a child who feels badly about sin not because of what might happen when you find out but because they know it dishonors God. That's what you're looking

Evaluating Your Child's Spiritual Condition, page 2 of 3

for. That's evidence of God working in the heart...not a momentary prayer, not a momentary decision or series of decisions, but rather evidence of the working of the Spirit of God in conviction which produces penitence, a certain sorrow over one's own sin.

When you begin to see that in your child, you can know that the work of the Spirit of God is going on. And that could happen, I think, in a young child. People ask me all the time, "At what age can someone be saved?" I'm not prepared to say that, I don't think there is any age, but I think at certainly at the age of seven or eight or nine or ten it is possible for a child to come to Christ. You're not going to fully know that until they reach an age of independence, say around 12 or 13, where they can make their own choices and behave with a little more freedom and respond to their peer pressure around them, then you're going to know the real working of God has been done by the responses that they make when you're not literally the only controlling element in their life. But early on they can be saved and you need to be looking for evidences of that working in their heart which will come to full flower in their, perhaps around 12 or 13. That's why we wait till then to baptize people because at that point you can begin to see these evidences independent of total parental control. But the first thing you look for is the conviction of sin, that's a work of the Holy Spirit, that produces penitence, sadness over sin because it dishonors God.

The second thing you look for, we'll call it revelation. Not just conviction but revelation...they understand the gospel. Nobody can be saved if he does not understand the gospel. A few days ago with one of my grandchildren I started at the very beginning with the character of God and I just personally took quite a length of time, the two of us were together, to go through the whole story of redemption, just asking questions. And as I went through it was very apparent that this little child had a complete grasp of God's redemptive plan, that man was sinful, that he was helplessly sinful, that the Bible defines him as sinful, that his own experience confirms that, that he is in need of forgiveness, that God provides forgiveness because Jesus Christ took his place and bore the punishment of God. I went through all of that and that is a critical element because now you know the Spirit of God is working to quicken the mind of the child to grasp the truth. And at any point along the way, the question can be asked...do you understand that truth? Yes. Do you believe that truth? And you can add to penitence belief. The child begins to not only understand it but believe it. There's a grasp in the heart of this revelation as true, and I mean true in a personal sense. So you're looking at the child and

you're looking for penitence and you're looking for belief, real belief in the truth of salvation doctrine as indicated in the Scriptures. Because what's happening then is the glorious gospel, 2 Corinthians 4:6, God is allowing the glorious gospel to shine unto them and they're beginning to embrace it.

Thirdly would be the word "sanctification." What you're looking at here is obedience. Sanctification means separation. You begin to see the child pursuing obedience. In other words, it's not just that they're afraid of you, it's that they actually want to do what's right because they want to honor God, they want to please God. Something begins to rise in their heart that indicates they want to please God. You can begin to see that in a child fairly early, I think around seven, or eight, or nine years old, a child can really begin to feel the promptings in the heart of longing to do what honors God. That's evidence that they've been separated from the hankerings of sin which dominate them, which you as a parent control by your discipline. If any man be in Christ, he is...what?...he's a new creature, old things pass away and all things are new. And new things come and part of that newness is a longing to be obedient. If they really love God they'll keep His commandments, the Bible says.

So, what you're looking at in your children is not...you don't look for an event, you look for the evidences of God's saving work going on in their lives...penitence, belief, obedience. And a fourth one, and this is something you know as well, we could say conviction, revelation, sanctification, association.

If God is working in their heart unto salvation, they will desire to associate with the right people. They will...if you're looking at your child and saying, "Well I remember when my child prayed a little prayer, I remember when I prayed and my child invited Christ into my life," but your child gravitates toward the kids who dishonor Christ, your child gravitates toward the kids who are disobedient or toward junior high age, your high-school age child gravitates toward the wrong crowd, that is indication enough that they may well not be a Christian because Christians gravitate toward those who want to honor God. If you love God, 1 John 5 says, you love those who love God. You're drawn to those kinds of people.

So, that's what you're looking for. You can't...as a parent you can't satisfy the question...is my child a Christian?...by looking at any event, or any moment or any prayer. What you're looking for is the working of God. And by the work of God in conviction He produces penitence.

Evaluating Your Child's Spiritual Condition, page 3 of 3

And by the work of God in revelation He produces belief. And by the work of God in sanctification He produces obedience. And by the work of God in association He produces fellowship...fellowship. There's a desire to be with other believers. And if you see those things in your child then you know that the Spirit of God is at work. And at some point along the way that...that is...that is moving in the direction of salvation in that little heart. At what point there is an age of accountability and they real...and a genuine regeneration and justification and full salvation of that life God knows...God knows. But these will be the indications that the Spirit of God is at work in the life of your child. As you look at your young child, those are the kinds of things you're looking for.

And I would encourage you too that these things don't happen in a vacuum. You as a parent need to be working along with the Spirit of God in these areas, talking to your children about the issue of sin, about the issue of conviction, talking to your children about the facts of the gospel, make sure they understand the issues of substitutionary death and atonement, forgiveness, dealing with the issues of obedience and sanctification, the issues of fellowship, being with the right people and loving God's people. You need to be the tool that God uses to pass that information on which the Holy Spirit in His power quickens into transformation in the life of the child. I don't...I don't think it's a very safe thing to assume that because at some point along the way your child prayed a prayer your work is done, it is not. You need to be very patient and very consistent, praying that God will work these works and watch to see

if in fact these are the things that are going on in the life of your child. And if there's any doubt about these things, then you need to crank up the intensity of your prayers and perhaps the clarity and consistency of your example, as well as your loving instruction to the child. And be to some degree patient in realizing this, if your child is not a Christian you can't expect them to act like one. So there has to be a certain compassion even in your discipline in that process until they come to faith in Jesus Christ. Those are the things you look for and when God is at work in a child those are the things you will see. Pray with me.

Father, we pray as fathers You might equip us by faithfulness of life, by the knowledge of the truth and by love and diligence to bring before our children these matters that the Spirit of God uses to quicken their hearts. I pray, Father, that You would make every father a primary evangelist, along with the mother, in the life of every child. May our consistency of life, consistency of teaching, consistency of intercession on behalf of the precious children you have given us result in their salvation. Help us to bring up our children in the way they should go to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and provide that truth in their minds which the Spirit of God can work into their hearts to bring about a miracle of salvation. Help us fathers to be the family priest to bring our children before You, and the family prophet to bring You before our children, to take this responsibility seriously, this highest of all privileges that we may see the salvation of our children to our own and to Your eternal joy. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.



Saving Providence: God's Gift of Salvation

MAIN IDEAS

- **Salvation is a free gift from God.**
- **God keeps no one out of heaven—man's sin keeps him out of heaven; God rescues some from hell by giving them the free gift of faith.**

MEMORY VERSES

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
—Ephesians 2:8-9

SCRIPTURE

- 1) John 3:1-21
- 2) John 4:4-30
- 3) Acts 16:22-40
- 4) Romans 9:13-16
- 5) Ephesians 2:8-9



LESSON SUMMARY

Salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). It cannot be earned, but is freely given by a merciful God. The Philippian jailer was released from the prison of sin, the woman at the well received living water, and Nicodemus was born again—all by grace.

No one has the right to expect or demand God's mercy. Just like any giver has the right to give his gift to whomever he pleases, so God has the right to extend salvation to whomever He pleases.

Though it may seem "unfair" to us that God would elect some for heaven and condemn others to hell, in reality, everyone is deserving of Hell. All are running away from God...yet God in His mercy rescues some. "If you perish in Hell, blame yourself, as it's entirely your fault. But should you make Heaven, blame God, for it's entirely His fault! To Him alone belongs all the praise and glory!"¹

Salvation is an amazing gift! So totally undeserved. Thank God with your son or daughter that He is merciful to sinners.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and discuss the following questions.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.—Ephesians 2:8-9

- What is a person saved by? Through what?
- Did the person who was saved have anything to do with it?
- Did he earn it?
- In what form did it come from God?
- Can the person who is saved brag about being saved? Why or why not?

Tell your son or daughter about the best gift you have ever given. Share about who you gave it to, why you gave it, how you felt when you gave it, and how the gift was received.

- How is this a very small picture of God's heart in giving the gift of salvation?

Pray with your child for an unsaved person.

1. The sarcasm of "blaming God" for being "at fault" in the salvation of man is meant as a means of glorifying God for His grace and indicting man for judging God for not extending His saving grace to all. Quote from: Webb, Mark. *What Difference Does It Make? A Discussion of the Evangelical Unity of the Doctrines of Grace*. Available online at http://procal.tripod.com/doctrines_of_grace.htm (accessed 11/14/11).

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Are you running toward God or away from God? What in your life shows this? Write about the evidences for your answer and talk to your parents about it. Pray for God's grace in your life.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

The Prodigal

John Vassar was a powerful evangelist of the nineteenth century. On one occasion traveling in the West he visited the home of a praying wife whose husband was an unbeliever. She begged for a Bible, and Vassar gave her one and went on his way. He had no sooner left when the husband, coming home, saw the book and was enraged. Seizing the Bible with one hand and the ax with the other, he hurried to the woodpile where he placed it on the chopping block and hacked it crosswise in two. Returning to the house, he threw half of the destroyed Bible at his wife, saying, "As you claim a part of all the property around here, there is your share of this."

The other half he tossed into his tool shed.

Months later on a wet winter's day, the man, wanting to get away from his Christian wife, retreated to his shed. The time passed slowly, and in boredom he looked around for something to read. Thumbing through the mutilated Bible, his attention was caught by the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. He became absorbed in the parable only to discover that its ending belonged to his wife's section. He crept into the house and secretly searched for the bottom half of the book, but was unable to find where his wife had hidden it.

Finally he broke down, asked her for it, and read the story again and again. In the process he came to the heavenly Father like a penitent prodigal returning home.

Is a person saved because he deserves to be saved? Is it because of anything he has done? If you are a Christian, talk with your parents about how God brought you to Himself.

—Story reprinted from *On This Day* by Robert J. Morgan. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998) page for May 15. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.



God's Providence in Salvation and Evangelism

MAIN IDEAS

- **Salvation is a work of God.**
- **Faith comes by hearing the Word of God.**
- **God works through the evangelistic efforts of His people as they proclaim the Gospel.**

MEMORY VERSE

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
—Romans 8:30

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Acts 16:14
- 2) Romans 8:30
- 3) Romans 10:13-14, 17
- 4) Ephesians 1:3-5



LESSON SUMMARY

Have you ever received socks for your birthday? Did you see them as a good gift? Often it is difficult to recognize some gifts as gifts, because they are not something we really want.

God's gift of salvation is like a gift of socks to some people—they can't recognize it as a gift. What they need is a renewed heart that is able to see salvation as a priceless treasure and respond with joy.

Salvation involves God's election, a Gospel call, regeneration, conversion, justification, and adoption, and culminates in sanctification, perseverance, death, and glorification. Because the Word of God is the means through which the Gospel call is extended, we are called to preach, teach, and share the Word. Though we give the witness, God does the work of conversion.

With your son or daughter, thank God that evangelism is His work and pray for faithfulness to share the Gospel.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Students, it is your turn to share with your dad and mom. Share the Gospel with your parents using the four words "God," "Man," "Sin," and "Salvation." Use the Salvation Diagram (that you filled out in your Student Notebook) on the following page to walk through the steps.



Here are some verses that may help you in your explanation: Genesis 1:1; Psalm 103:19; Revelation 15:4; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:8-9; Mark 1:15; and John 3:16

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

This week, try to take the following steps in sharing the Gospel: pray, go, and tell. Pray—write your prayer for an unbeliever and for yourself in evangelism. Go—go with the intention of sharing the Gospel and be on the alert for opportunities. Tell—share the Gospel with someone this week, and write about it in your journal.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

Who Could Ever Fit These Pieces Together?

by Noël Piper

Question:

What do all of these have to do with each other?

Mongolian Boy • Russian University • Tanzanian Friend
• American Tourists • Native American Christians •
Rodeo • Goat Liver and Fat • Tiny Lamb

Answer:

They're the puzzle pieces that God brought from all over to create the world's first Mongolian church.

1. A Mongolian boy, Yi, was sent to university in Moscow, Russia.
2. In 1980, a Tanzanian in Moscow gave Yi an English Bible to help him learn English.
3. Yi studied English with the Bible for seven years.
4. Back in Mongolia, he became a popular tour guide for English-speaking groups.
5. In 1987, an American tourist seemed different somehow. Yi asked, "Do you know God?" "Yes," answered the man. The tourist helped Yi become a Christian. "I know it's illegal to be a Christian," the man said, "and it will be hard for you. But friends will come."
6. In 1990, one of Yi's tour groups was mostly Native Americans from several tribes—and they were Christians.
7. The Native Americans performed in a rodeo, along with tough-riding Mongols. Government officials watched. As part of the celebration, the Native Americans sang the LORD's Prayer.
8. Some Mongols invited the Native Americans to a feast. As they sat in a huge tent and ate goat liver sandwiched between fat, the Mongols heard the Native Americans say, "This is exactly how we eat." This caused them to feel very close to the Native Americans.
9. The host, whose son had died recently, gave a tiny lamb to a young girl in the group.
10. The father of the girl took the lamb in his arms and told the Mongols about God, who gave His Son—the Lamb of God—for their sins.
11. All the Mongols there prayed in a group with the Native Americans.
12. Soon after, Yi guided a group of Christians from Ohio. They were amazed to discover Mongolian Christians and to realize how well Yi knew the Bible after all his years of studying.
13. The Ohio Christians and the Mongol Christians met together to ordain Yi as the elder of *the first Mongolian church in the history of the world.*

Only God can move such amazing "puzzle pieces" into place to create believers and a church.

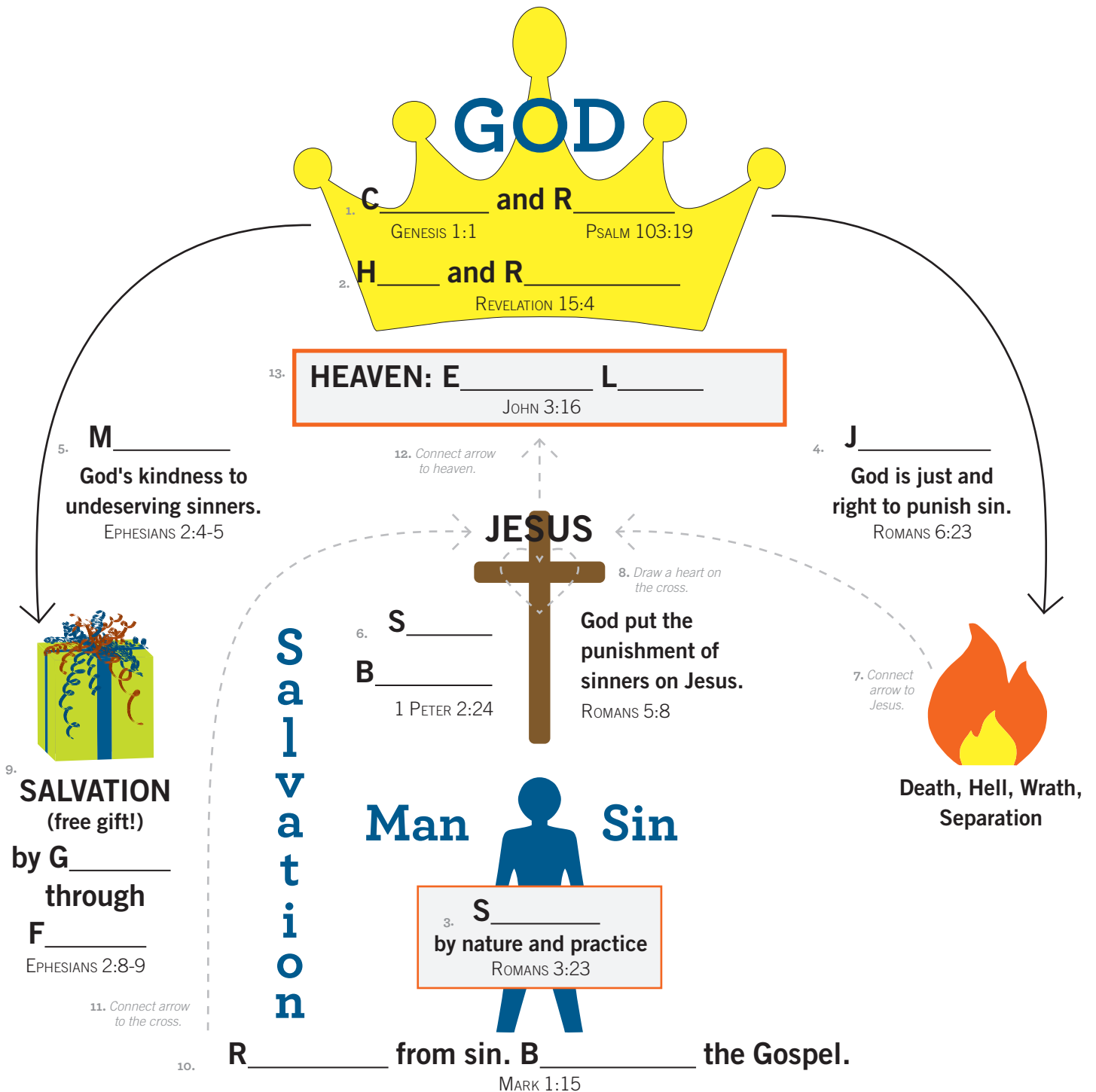
Note: "Yi" is a fictitious name.

How did God cause Yi and the other Mongolians to become Christians? How did it happen that the Gospel was preached to them? What does this tell you about the power of the Gospel being preached to bring people to salvation? Were any of the people in this story really missionaries? What does this tell you about who should share the Gospel with others? Who do you need to share the Gospel with? Keep your eyes open for opportunities to share the Gospel and ask God to make you a faithful witness.

—Story adapted from *Catch the Vision 2000* by Bill & Amy Stearns (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1991), 169-172. Copyright © 1991 by William G. & Amy D. Stearns. Used by permission of Bethany House Publishers.

Salvation Diagram

By remembering four words, you can tell the basic facts of the Gospel. The words are GOD, MAN, SIN, and SALVATION. Follow the numbers to fill out the chart below and look up the verses as you go along.



Ten Essential Gospel Truths

1

God is the sovereign Creator of all things.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 19:1, Psalm 22:28; Psalm 24:1; Isaiah 44:24

IMPLICATION: God made you. You belong to God. God is your ruler.

Truth

6

God is merciful. He is kind to undeserving sinners.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 145:8; Ephesians 2:8-9

IMPLICATION: You must depend on God's mercy in order to be saved.

Truth

2

God created people for His glory.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 29:1-2; Isaiah 43:6-7; 1 Corinthians 10:31

IMPLICATION: God created you to know, trust, and love Him most of all.

Truth

7

Jesus is God's holy and righteous Son.

SCRIPTURE: John 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:15

IMPLICATION: Jesus came into the world to save you.

Truth

3

God is holy and righteous.

SCRIPTURE: Leviticus 19:2, 37; Deuteronomy 32:4; Romans 7:12

IMPLICATION: God is holy and righteous. God's commands are holy and righteous. You must obey God's commands all the time.

Truth

8

God put the punishment of sinners on Jesus, so that His righteousness might be put on them.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24

IMPLICATION: Jesus died on the cross to be punished in your place.

Truth

4

Man is sinful.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 3:10-18, 20, 23

IMPLICATION: You have disobeyed God's commands. You are a sinner.

Truth

9

God offers the free gift of salvation to those who repent and believe in Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:15; John 3:16-17; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9

IMPLICATION: God tells you to believe in Jesus and repent of your sins and you will be saved.

Truth

5

God is just and is right to punish sin.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 59:2; Romans 1:18; Romans 6:23a

IMPLICATION: You deserve God's punishment of death and hell. You are helpless to save yourself.

Truth

10

Those who trust in Jesus will live to please Him and will receive the promise of eternal life—enjoying God forever in heaven.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 9:23; John 11:25; 1 John 2:15; Psalm 16:11

IMPLICATION: If you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation, you must follow Him. Jesus has promised that when you die He will bring you to heaven to live with and enjoy God forever.

Truth

Truths excerpted from: Michael, Sally, Jill Nelson, and Bud Burk. *Helping Children to Understand the Gospel*. (Minneapolis, Minn.: Children Desiring God and Bethlehem Baptist Church, 2009), 37-85. Used by Permission. The booklet includes a fuller explanation of these essential truths and child-appropriate teaching of them.



God's Providence Over Evil and Misfortune

MAIN IDEAS

- **God not only permits evil, but He ordains evil.**
- **All that God created was good—evil entered the universe through Lucifer and the fallen angels.**
- **Though man deserves only evil, God in His grace restrains evil.**

MEMORY VERSES

*Who has spoken
and it came to pass,
unless the Lord has
commanded it? ³⁸Is
it not from the mouth
of the Most High that
good and bad come?
—Lamentations 3:37-38*

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Deuteronomy 32:3-4
- 2) Job 1:9-12
- 3) Job 2:10b
- 4) Psalm 103:19
- 5) Psalm 107:1
- 6) Psalm 147:5
- 7) Isaiah 45:7
- 8) Jeremiah 32:17
- 9) Lamentations 3:37-38
- 10) Daniel 4:37b
- 11) Romans 11:33



LESSON SUMMARY

Nothing is outside the providence of God...So, does that mean that God's providence extends over evil and misfortune? The Bible is the only reliable source of truth and must guide how we answer this question.

The conclusion that God does not have providence over evil could imply that:

- Satan or evil is more powerful than God.
- God is not all-powerful, because He is powerless and not in control over evil.
- Things happen without God's knowledge. If evil or misfortune happen before God knows to prevent them, then God is not all-knowing.
- God doesn't care about some things—like evil—so He doesn't bother to control them.

But these conclusions contradict truths about God in the Bible. Our lesson texts show God's sovereignty over evil. Yet, how can a good God ordain evil or misfortune? The Bible tells us that God's goodness and His ordaining of evil cannot be contradictions (Psalm 107:1, Daniel 4:37b).

Though God ordained that evil be, evil entered the universe through Lucifer, who chose to rebel against God. Evil also entered the world through Adam's and Eve's sin, and the curse their sin brought on the world has resulted in natural disasters, sickness, and much suffering. God is constantly restraining Satan, and His hand of grace is continually restraining horrific evil in the world. Rather than blame God for evil done by others, we need to thank Him for His continued goodness to us.

This week make a conscious effort to thank God for the evil He restrains—in the world and in your own heart. What would we be without His grace? What would this world be like without God's restraining hand on evil? Imagine how hell will be! Tremble at the thought of unrestrained evil. With your son or daughter, think of the evil God restrains and thank Him for His goodness.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Revelation 20:1-15 with your child. **What does this show about God's providence over evil? What does this show you about how God feels about evil?**

Discuss the evil you see in this world. **How does God feel about this evil? How does He feel about the evil within our own hearts? Where do you see God's grace in your life?**

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

If you were in Job's situation, write about how you would feel and what you would do if you did *not* understand God's providence over all things. Then write about how you would feel and what you would do if you *did* understand God's providence over all things.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

God Placed Them On His Heart

by Carrie R. Zeman

Robert Hopkins Chaska and Peter Big Fire loved God and had made commitments to Christ before the outbreak of the Dakota Indian Conflict. Yet both were falsely accused of sympathy with the hostile Indians who killed 500 settlers in Minnesota and the border towns of Iowa and the Dakota Territory in August 1862. With 350 other men, Robert and Peter were convicted with little evidence of guilt, and condemned to die against their claims of innocence. They were shackled together, awaiting their execution in a drafty prison while state officials secured President Lincoln's permission to kill them all.

The condemned had few possessions in prison. But when the Conflict broke out, Robert and Peter each had hidden a copy of the Dakota New Testament, while hostile Indians burned everything else. Those two Bibles and three copies of the Dakota hymn book were the only ones in the entire prison. Robert and Peter read the New Testament to their brothers, prayed aloud, and sang hymns in prison every day. Several times a week, Mr. Riggs or Dr. Williamson walked to Mankato to preach to the prisoners.

The Riggs and the Williamsons (missionaries to the Dakotas) and the Christians who had supported their work were discouraged. After more than 25 years of ministry, there were only 60 committed converts among the Dakota at the time of the Conflict. None of the Christian Indians had participated. In fact, they helped many settlers escape, and sheltered and released almost 200 captive women and children. God's hand had obviously guided the missionaries' safe escape. But their missionary life seemed over, and their hearts bled for the thousands of Dakota who still did not know Christ—and for the thousands of Americans who wanted to see every Dakota man, woman, and child executed or banished.

In early December, President Lincoln made his decision. The military commander read Lincoln's order in English while Mr. Riggs translated: 39 men were condemned to

die by hanging. Robert and Peter were among the rest—sentenced to an indefinite term in prison. At the last minute, Lincoln commuted the death sentence of one more Dakota. On the day after Christmas in 1862, 38 Dakota men were hung from a single gallows while their fellow inmates watched through cracks in the prison walls. It was the largest mass execution in United States history.

But what men intended for evil, God intended for good. Prisoners, who before the Conflict would not listen to the missionaries speak about Christ, began listening to Robert and Peter read the Bible. The traditional Dakota gods had failed them; they wanted to know about the victorious God. The prisoners were acutely conscious of their own helplessness and were overwhelmed with an awareness of their sin. Many wanted to follow the God who gave Robert and Peter hope, and gave the missionaries a heart to preach to them in prison. Each Sunday, when Mr. Riggs returned to the prison, Robert added more names to the list of new believers. On February 3, 1863, Dr. Williamson baptized 300 new Dakota Christians.

God's work didn't stop at the prison walls. More than 100 miles away at Fort Snelling, Dr. Williamson's son, Thomas, went to live with and minister to the hundreds of Dakota women, children, and old men imprisoned in a walled detention camp. Their husbands and brothers wrote from the Mankato prison, urging them to renounce their fathers' gods. Hundreds more chose to follow *Tahkoowakan*, the Great True God. When the 1,300 Dakota at Fort Snelling were exiled to a barren reservation in South Dakota, Thomas Williamson went with them. At the prison in Iowa, Mr. Riggs and Dr. Williamson established a Bible school that trained the pastors and elders of the first Christian Dakota churches. Today, in churches scattered from Nebraska to Manitoba, Dakota believers still sing the hymn of testimony their great grandparents first sang in 1862: "Jehovah had mercy on me for His mercy's sake. His loving kindness is very great! He has placed me on His heart."

What evidence of God's sovereignty over evil do you see in this story? What purpose might God have had in the evil arrest and imprisonment of so many people? What happened to the peoples' hearts during that imprisonment? Does God still demonstrate His power over evil today? What example can you think of that shows God's sovereignty over evil?



God is Sinless in His Providence Over Evil

MAIN IDEAS

- **Although God decrees evil, He does not directly perform morally evil deeds.**
- **Moral evil is directly done by sinful men, Satan, and demons.**
- **God is sinless in His providence over evil.**
- **Man does not deserve God's blessing.**

MEMORY VERSES

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.
—James 1:13-14

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Job 1:20-22
- 2) Acts 2:22-23
- 3) Romans 1:21-25, 29-31
- 4) James 1:13-14



LESSON SUMMARY

God does not tempt anyone to do evil (James 1:13-14) but moral evil flows from an evil heart. Though God allows Satan, demons, and man to do evil deeds, He does not cause them to do anything they don't want to do. He sovereignly allows them to carry out their evil intentions. God is blameless in His providence over evil.

Though God is at work restraining evil, He does not restrain all evil. God is good to restrain so much evil, and He is not bad when He does not restrain what we do not deserve for Him to restrain.

We often take God's goodness for granted and act like His goodness is a right of ours. We don't often hear praises of God when bad things don't happen, yet there is much blaming of God when bad things do happen. However the truth is:

Our birthright does not include pain-free living. Only those who understand that this world languishes under a curse will marvel at its beauties despite that curse.
—Randy Alcorn¹

Think about the quote by Randy Alcorn this week. Do you have an expectancy of pain-free living, or a gratitude for the beauty that God brings despite the curse? Do you see God as blameless over evil? Pray that God will give you a right understanding of His providence over evil. With your son or daughter, pray for a heart of gratitude for God's mercies and repentance for assuming that mercy.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

***Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.*—James 1:13-14**

Though you may not actually blame God for your sin, do you make excuses for sin? What kinds of excuses do you make?

Share with your child about a time recently when you sinned. Explain what desire was in your heart that enticed you to sin. Now, help your son or daughter look at what desires have been in his or her heart when they have sinned recently.

The real problem is not just our sinful actions— what is the real problem?

Pray with your child and ask God to give you pure hearts.

1. Alcorn, Randy. *If God is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil*. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah Books, 2009), 331. Ministry website: www.epm.org

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

This week, record your sinful actions or attitudes. Then ask God to reveal to you the sinful desire behind the action or attitude. Write about that, too. Pray and ask God to forgive your sin and change your heart.

**SEEING GOD AT WORK**

Why Does Everything Happen to Us?

by Noël Piper

Our next door neighbor saw us at our picnic table, and strolled over to sit with us. “We’re going to move,” he said.

“But why? You’ve been here only a couple of years.” We were surprised.

“We can’t take it anymore. Since we moved here, our car has been stolen and trashed, our house and garage both have been broken into, our electronics and bikes have been stolen, and graffiti has been painted on the garage. Besides that, some people teased our dog so much we had to give her away. It’s just too much.”

Then he asked, “How come none of this kind of stuff ever happens to you?”

“Well, a few things a little bit like that have happened to us. But you’re right—you’ve been hit hard. Here’s one

thing that might make a difference—every night we ask God for protection, and...”

He quickly cut us off, just as he always did when we mentioned God. “Well, anyway, I just wanted to let you know our plans.” And he left.

What does happen when we kneel at night and ask God for His protection? When I remember that conversation with our neighbor, I think we can be sure that God has kept away some unpleasant things that might have happened to us or to our property. And He gave our neighbor a glimpse of how He can work for his people.

God has also helped us realize that “our” property is really His. Sometimes He chooses that His property be stolen or damaged. When that happens, we can trust that He has done it for a good purpose, even if we don’t know exactly what that purpose is.

If you are a Christian, does that mean God will never let bad things happen to you? Why do people do evil things? Is God right to restrain evil? Is it right to blame God when He allows evil things to happen? Who is responsible for evil? Thank God for His mercies that are new every morning.



Evil Serves the Purposes of God

MAIN IDEA

- **Evil serves God's purposes.**

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

—Proverbs 16:4

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 37:18-28
- 2) Genesis 39:7-40:4
- 3) Proverbs 16:4
- 4) Acts 5:30-31
- 5) Hebrews 2:9-10
- 6) 1 Peter 3:18



LESSON SUMMARY

The most horrific evil in the world—the crucifixion of God's own Son—was planned by God, and served ultimately for the greatest good in the world. Yet God didn't make Satan or sinful men crucify Jesus, He let them do what was already in their hearts to do.

Satan did not spoil God's plan, but rather was used by God to accomplish His good purposes. The evil done against Joseph by his brothers, Potiphar's wife, and Potiphar was truly wicked, and yet God used it to serve His good purposes. Everything that happens—even evil—serves God's plans.

We can be tempted to see a part of God's plan and think it is a mistake, but there are no mistakes in God's purposes. No evil can touch us that does not fit into God's plans, and every evil against us has a purpose.

If you are a child of God, He will not let any evil touch you unless it is ultimately for your good, and you can rest in the reality of this grace toward you. With your son or daughter, praise God for His control over evil.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Ask your son or daughter to share with you what can be learned about God's providence over evil from the story of Samson in Judges 14:1-4, Judges 15:14-16, and Judges 16:28-30.

Discuss some "bad things" (evil) that have happened to you or your family and how they have served God's purposes.

What evil have you seen that has fit into God's plan?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.



SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING:

Record your thoughts about evil serving the purposes of God.

Record your thoughts about this verse:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.—1 Peter 3:18

SEEING GOD AT WORK

You Will Die Soon

by Noël Piper

The congregation sang together, praising the LORD. Suddenly one voice soared above all the others, lifting everyone's heart with it. They knew it was Joe, a man who depended on God every day for his life. He never knew whether he would be alive the next week, but you wouldn't guess it when you heard him singing to God.

Joe was a person who used to be very disobedient. For a long time he lived a life that totally ignored God. But God didn't ignore Joe. God got Joe's attention, and caused Joe to begin to love Him and to follow Him. That meant that Joe left behind the disobedient life he had been living. It was not easy to make such a big change.

Just a few months later, Joe's doctor told him he wouldn't live many more years. He had a disease that is a threat, especially to people who are living in certain ways that disobey God—ways that Joe had been living.

At first, Joe felt as if God had deserted him, and just when he had started to really believe God! But when he told God how he felt, God comforted him and gave him a promise. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me

and find me when you seek me with all your heart'" (Jeremiah 29:11-13, from the 1984 edition of the New International Version of the Bible).

And God kept His promises. The doctor told Joe to expect only two more years. But God gave him 11 and a half years. During this time, Joe wrote, sang, and spoke to groups all over the world. He told them about God's power to change their lives and about the good plans God has for the people who trust Him and follow Him. That didn't mean that God made life easy for Joe. Often he was sick and in pain, but a lot of times his friends didn't realize it, unless it was so bad he had to go to the hospital.

Joe shocked some people when he said that he was thankful for the illness that would kill him someday. He was *thankful*, because it made him depend on God. Because of his illness, he learned to know God in a very deep way.

His friends could see that he wasn't afraid of dying. Why wasn't he? Because God kept His promise to give him "a hope and a future." Joe knew that dying didn't mean the end of everything. No, it meant he would be moving into the future—with God.

Think about this: What caused Joe's illness? How was the evil in Joe's life used for good by God? Can you think of other times that God has caused good to come from bad things? Does this mean that God doesn't care about evil? How do you know this?



God's Providence Over Pain and Suffering

MAIN IDEAS

- **God's providence extends over pain and suffering.**
- **God uses the evil intended against His children for their good.**
- **The believer receives help in suffering by looking ahead to future glory and finding satisfaction in God.**

MEMORY VERSES

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

—2 Corinthians 4:17-18

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 50:20
- 2) Habakkuk 3:17-19a
- 3) Romans 8:18
- 4) 2 Corinthians 4:17-18
- 5) Hebrews 11:1



LESSON SUMMARY

In learning to ride a bike, you often suffer scrapes and bruises. But the suffering endured is worth the joy of being able to ride a bike. In the same way, our suffering, when seen in light of the purposes of God is "light and momentary."

Though God can bring about His purposes without allowing suffering to come into our lives, sometimes pain is necessary for our good. But no suffering can come to God's children without the permission of God and which is not ultimately for our good.

We can rejoice that God is more interested in His children's spiritual growth than in our comfort and is willing for us to suffer pain in order to produce that growth in us. He has also given us means to endure that suffering, such as focusing on the reward, finding our satisfaction in God, and trusting Him for strength.

Pray for understanding of God's sovereignty in suffering and that you will be able to truly embrace the goodness of God in suffering. With your son or daughter, pray for those you know who are enduring suffering right now.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.—2 Corinthians 12:7-10

- Do you think, from reading the passages, that Paul's problem caused him pain or suffering?
- Who did he ask to take it away?
- Was it taken away?
- Was Paul angry because of the way things turned out? Why or why not?

Share with your son or daughter about a time of difficulty in your life. Explain what good results you saw from that time of trial and what helped you to survive the difficulty.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write the memory verse in your own words. What are some of these “unseen things” that we should remember? How can they comfort us through hard times?



Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
—2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Do you know someone who is going through a hard time? How can you help to comfort them? How can you help someone else “fix their eyes on what is unseen”? Write your ideas.

SEEING GOD AT WORK

The Making of a Harpist

Can God use a physical handicap for good in a person's life? What if you were a doctor delivering a baby that you knew would be handicapped for life? Would you be tempted to use less than your best doctoring skill so that such a handicapped baby would not survive the birth? This is what happened to Dr. Loomis.

Dr. Loomis was performing a difficult breech delivery when he realized that the entire thigh of one of the baby's legs was missing. The mother had suffered from emotional problems. She was not a strong person. How could she raise this severely deformed child? What would life be like for this baby growing up? Dr. Loomis decided to let the baby die—no one would know. Many breech babies die in delivery because the delivery takes too long. If he stalled, the baby would not live. But the baby squirmed, and Dr. Loomis could not let her die.

Just as he suspected, the mother had a difficult time handling the baby's deformity and was in the hospital for months. For years, Dr. Loomis wondered if he had made the right decision.

One year at the hospital's annual Christmas party, the hospital staff enjoyed the beautiful music of three young

musicians playing the organ, cello, and harp. Although all the musicians played beautifully, Dr. Loomis was especially moved by the music of the harpist. Not only did she play exceptionally well, but she also seemed to love the music and the harp.

After the program, he was greeted by a woman he did not recognize. “That was my daughter who played the harp—and I saw you watching her. Don't you remember the little girl who was born with only one good leg 17 years ago? We tried everything else first, but now she has a whole artificial leg on that side—but you would never know it, would you? She can walk, she can swim, and she can almost dance. But best of all, through all those years when she couldn't do those things, she learned to use her hands so wonderfully. She is going to be one of the world's great harpists.”

Who made that baby squirm at just the right moment so that Dr. Loomis could not carry out his plan to let her die? Who moved Dr. Loomis' heart? Who gave this child such extraordinary musical ability and the opportunity to develop it? God, in His providence, was turning what the world calls a tragedy into good and making a superb harpist.

Can you think of other ways in which an illness or a handicap can work for a person's good? What could you remember about God's purposes and unseen things to encourage you when you go through something difficult? Discuss this as a family.

—Story adapted from *Christmas in My Heart, Volume 2*, by Joe Wheeler, and by Review and Herald Publishing Association, pp. 109-119. Adaptation used by permission of Editor/Compiler Joe Wheeler.

"I Asked the Lord that I Might Grow"

By John Newton

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek, more earnestly, His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer!
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.

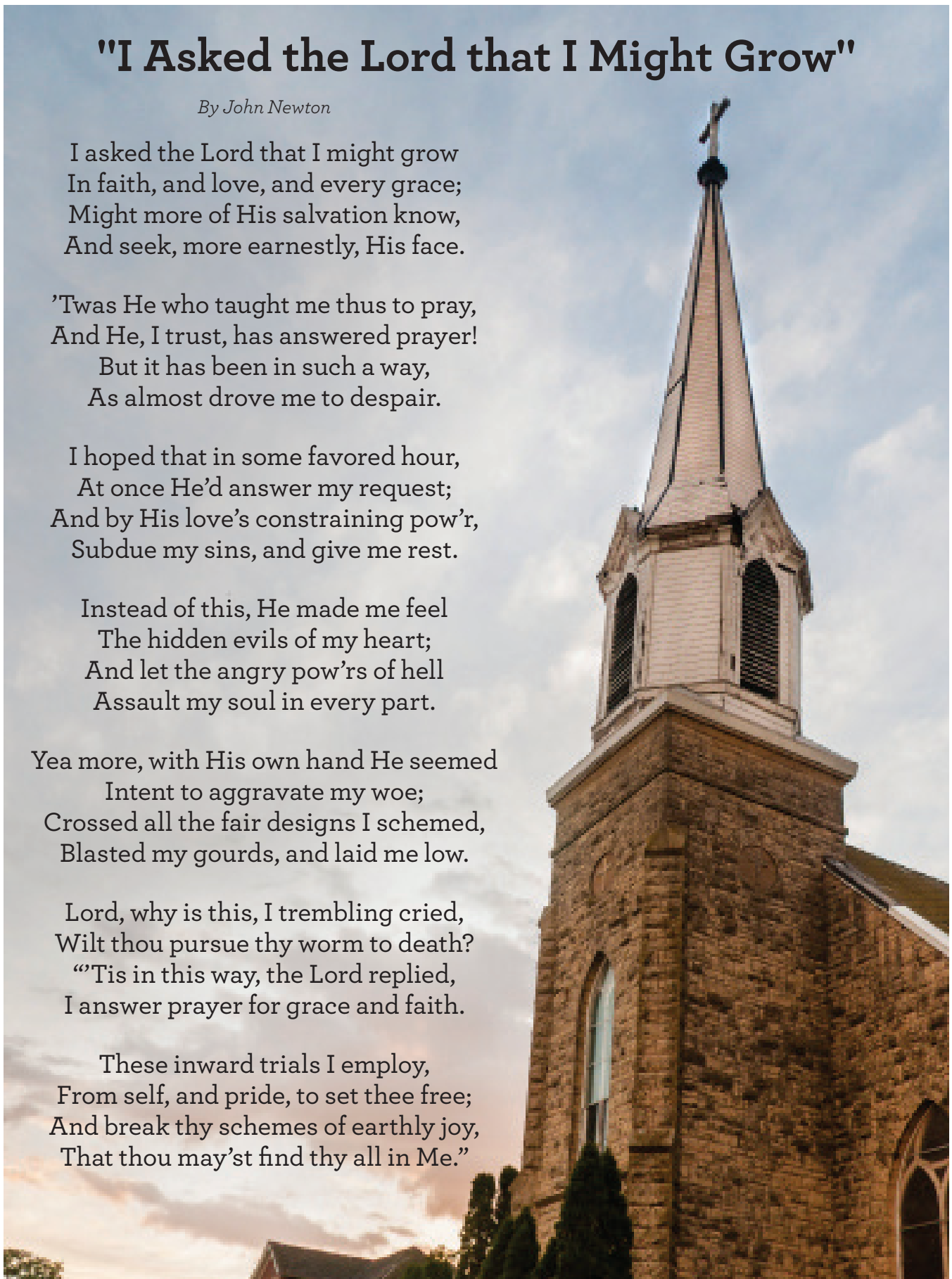
I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request;
And by His love's constraining pow'r,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry pow'rs of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?
"Tis in this way, the Lord replied,
I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ,
From self, and pride, to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st find thy all in Me."





God Takes No Pleasure in Evil or Suffering

MAIN IDEA

- **God takes no pleasure in evil or misfortune; evil and suffering grieve God.**

MEMORY VERSES

For the Lord will not cast off forever,³² but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love;³³ for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.

—Lamentations 3:31-33

SCRIPTURE

- 1) 2 Samuel 24:10-17
- 2) Psalm 5:4
- 3) Lamentations 3:31-33
- 4) John 11:32-35



LESSON SUMMARY

At a wedding we can experience both happiness and sadness at the same time—like happiness for the joy of the couple and gaining a new family member, and yet sadness that things are changing. Just as we can be happy and sad at the same time, God can be full of joy and yet grieve at the same time.

Though Jesus understood and rejoiced in the good purposes accompanying the sickness and death of His friend, Lazarus, He was also sad at the same time. Most of Jesus' miracles on earth were healing miracles, relieving suffering. God does not delight in suffering, only causing it when it is necessary (Lamentations 3:31-33; Psalm 5:4).

God's heart for all men, and especially for His people, is a heart of love. He is great in mercy and is grieved when we experience sorrow. When He must judge, it is with grief. Jesus' death on the cross for sinners is an indication of just how much God has given to relieve the suffering of sin.

Delight in a God who weeps and works to alleviate suffering, and yet in love allows suffering to work His good purposes.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Ask your child to explain the meaning of Lamentations 3:31-33.

Work together to find examples of God's compassion in the Bible.

Share with your son or daughter about a time when God disciplined you. Discuss how you saw His compassion in the discipline and explain why discipline is an act of love.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write about one sin from this week and how it grieved God. What command did you break? In what way did your heart not reflect God's heart? Pray and confess your sin. Thank God for His mercy.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

How Can I Forgive Him?

by Noël Piper

Corrie ten Boom and her sister, Betsie, were in a concentration camp—the most horrible prison you can imagine. They were being punished for doing good—for saving lives.

The guards took all their belongings and crowded them into freezing barracks. When guards announced “roll call,” prisoners had to stand in the rain or snow for as long as the guard decided. Guards beat or killed people for any reason, or no reason. Many prisoners starved to death.

But God had not forgotten them. When everything was taken from them, God helped Corrie keep her Bible. In the barracks, Betsie read aloud from it.

A long time afterward, Corrie said,

One thing became increasingly clear. And that was the reason the two of us were here... Our Bible was the center of an ever-widening circle of help and hope...We gathered about it, holding out our hearts to its warmth and light. The blacker the night around us grew, the brighter and truer and more beautiful burned the word of God. “Who shall separate us from

the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

Several years after she was freed, Corrie told a large group about how God helped her and Betsie to treasure His word and experience Christ's love and his power to overcome evil.

Afterward, anger boiled up in Corrie when she saw a former guard. He said, “How grateful I am for your message. To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!” He put out his hand, but Corrie couldn't lift hers. How could she shake the hand of one of the people responsible for Betsie's death? She wanted vengeance. But then she thought, “Jesus died for this man. LORD Jesus, forgive me and help me to forgive him.” As she raised her hand, God gave her forgiveness and love for this man who used to be her enemy.

Corrie knew that God hated concentration camps. Now she realized that He also takes no pleasure in what seem like “small” evils—like refusing to forgive. When she was a prisoner, He gave her strength to overcome evil and to trust Him. When she met her enemy, He gave her the power to forgive.

*Was the great evil of the concentration camp an excuse not to forgive? Why not? Why would it have been evil not to forgive? Do you ever try to justify your sin because of someone else's bigger sin? How does God view all sin? Try to find a copy of *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom's story. Read it and find out many other stories of God's providence in the midst of awful evil.*

—Story adapted from *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizabeth Sherrill (Chappaqua, New York: Chosen Books, Inc.). Used by permission of Chosen Books, Inc. Quotes were taken from the edition printed by World Wide Publications, copyright 1971, pages 195 and 233.



God's Providence Over Calamities

MAIN IDEAS

- **God's providence extends over disasters.**
- **Disasters are a result of God's curse as a consequence of man's sin.**
- **Disasters come directly from the hand of God as judgment for sin, from Satan, from the hand of man, or from natural causes resulting from the curse.**
- **Disasters are a mercy—God uses disasters to warn us of the serious consequences of sin and to cause repentance.**

MEMORY VERSE

I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.
—Isaiah 45:7

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Numbers 16:1-35
- 2) Isaiah 45:7
- 3) Amos 3:6
- 4) Amos 4:6-11
- 5) Romans 8:20-22



LESSON SUMMARY

God is not only powerful and governs all things, but He is also good (Psalm 107:1; Daniel 4:37b). Therefore, natural disasters come from God and yet do not contradict His goodness.

Natural disasters were not part of God's original creation, but entered the world through man's sin as a result of the curse (Romans 8:20-22). So the groanings of creation are a visual picture of the horror of sin.

Sometimes disasters are caused by the limitations of man—through his ignorance or weakness. But *sometimes* (not always) the cause of disasters is man's sin. God sometimes brings about disasters as a punishment for sin as in God's judgment described in Amos 4. God was both merciful and just in all of these calamities, warning His people to return to Him.

Thank God that He keeps in proper proportion both His mercy and judgment. Think of His mercy toward you, and thank Him for undeserved blessing. Think of His judgment toward you: Has that, too, been a mercy? Ask Him to give you a proper perspective on calamities and, with your son or daughter, thank God that He is both just and merciful.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Jonah 3.

- What did Jonah tell the people of Nineveh?
- What did the people (including the king) do?
- Was that what God desired?
- Did He bring calamity? Why?

Read Jeremiah 19:14-15.

- What is God going to do? Why?

Read Exodus 9:8-17.

- What calamity did God cause? Why?

Read Exodus 14:26-31.

- What was the disaster that happened to the Egyptians?
- Why did God do it?

Read Acts 16:25-34.

- What purpose of God was served by the earthquake?

What conclusions can you draw about God's providence over disasters?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

With your parents, check the news and write about a disaster that happened somewhere in the world. List all the ways you can pray for the people affected by it. Then pray for them.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

Saved Through Calamity

On October 19, 1856, Charles Spurgeon was preaching to a large crowd. The Surrey Gardens Music Hall was packed with 12,000 people, and there were 10,000 standing outside because the hall was too crowded.

While the service was in progress, someone yelled “Fire!” and started a mass panic. As people pushed toward the doors, some were trampled—28 were seriously injured and seven died. Many others were less seriously injured. Charles Spurgeon fainted and had to be carried out of the building.

Can the hand of God be seen in this tragedy? Charles Spurgeon saw God’s hand, and this is what he said about that incident. “In connection with that terrible calamity at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, notwithstanding all the sorrow and suffering that it brought on us, as we now look back on it, we see how God, by means of that calamity, called public attention to the preaching of the Word. And I have no doubt that for every life that was then lost, a thousand souls have since been saved from going down to the pit. So let God’s name be praised for that gracious overruling of a terrible crime.”

God orchestrated the calamity at Surrey Gardens to serve His purposes. Why does God use hardship sometimes to soften hard hearts? Discuss why the death of seven people is a small price to pay for thousands of people saved from an eternity in hell.

—Story adapted from *2200 Quotes From the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon* compiled by Tom Carter, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), 170-171. Used by permission of Baker Books.



God's Providence Over Man's Way

MAIN IDEAS

- **God controls the way of man; man's way is subject to the providence of God.**
- **We should hold our plans tentatively, acknowledging God's providence over our way.**

MEMORY VERSES

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
—Proverbs 3:5-6

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Proverbs 3:5-6
- 2) Proverbs 16:9
- 3) Isaiah 48:17
- 4) Jeremiah 10:23
- 5) James 4:13-15



LESSON SUMMARY

God's eyes are watching over the universe, and His hand is working in the universe, guiding all things for good. God is wise in governing the world, unlike man who often lacks wisdom. In His mercy, God leads His people "in the way they should go" (Isaiah 48:17).

Because God is all wise and we lack so much wisdom, we need to turn to God and "not lean on our own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). Most of God's guidance to His people comes through His Word. Though we pray, read God's Word, and consult mature Christians for guidance in decisions, ultimately all of our plans are subject to God, who directs the steps of His children (Proverbs 16:9; Jeremiah 10:23).

May the prayer of our hearts always be *deo volente*—"Lord willing"—as we subject our plans to His governing providence.

Think of the ways in which God has guided your life. Thank Him for His guiding providence. Pray that you and your son or daughter will not "lean on your own understanding," but acknowledge God "in all your ways."

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. ⁵⁸Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.—Acts 7:57-58

Do you think it was an accident that Saul (Paul) was at the stoning of Stephen? Why do you think God let us know Paul was there?

Now read Acts 27:39-44 and Acts 28:7-10 (or you may want to read Acts 27 through 28:10). Work with your child to identify all the acts of providence you can find together.

Did God direct Paul's way? What do you think was God's purpose?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

Write each day about your own experiences or those of people you know that show God's providence (guiding hand) over your way—your decisions and plans. Do you have any thoughts about why God directed things to happen that way?



SEEING GOD AT WORK

A House Led Them To A Heavenly Home

by Sally Michael

The family spent weeks looking for a house. Dad was stationed at the Naval Base in Newport, Rhode Island, so they started looking in Newport. But nothing was affordable to them. Each day they expanded the perimeter of their search looking for the right house, but still found nothing affordable and adequate. One house almost seemed the right one, but they ended up rejecting it.

Discouraged, they kept looking and finally ended up in Barrington, Rhode Island, forty minutes away from the base. It was a longer commute for dad than they had hoped, but the house fit their needs so they bought it.

Although they were not Christians, God guided their choice of a house—He had placed them right where He wanted them. Mom had decided to finish the two years she lacked for a college degree. In Barrington was

a Christian college, so although she wasn't interested in Christianity, she was interested in getting a degree, and by attending a college so close to home she could see her children off to school in the morning and get home before they returned.

Bible courses were required, as well as a Bible entrance exam. On the exam of 100 questions, mom missed 99. She had to purchase a Bible, her first, in order to take the Bible classes. Students at the school started praying for her as she studied the Bible, and in a chapel service one day she dedicated her life to Christ.

In time, the whole family became Christians. They thought that they had only been looking for a house in which to live when they ended up in Barrington. But God was leading them to an eternal home.

Was it an accident or a “lucky thing” that the family chose to live in a house in Barrington? Did it “just happen” that the mom chose to finish college close to home—at a Christian college? Was this a good thing? Often we do not see God’s guiding hand of providence until time has passed and we look back to see how the pieces of our lives worked out for good. Look back on your life and talk about how God’s hand has guided your family.



God's Providence Over Circumstances

MAIN IDEA

- **God directs circumstances to serve His purposes.**

MEMORY VERSE

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.
—Proverbs 19:21

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Proverbs 19:21
- 2) Isaiah 46:9-11
- 3) Isaiah 64:4



LESSON SUMMARY

Things don't "just happen." God ordains and controls circumstances to fulfill His plan and purposes. Only in heaven will we get even a glimpse of all that He has been orchestrating. Though we think we plan our steps, God orchestrates them to fulfill His purposes. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand (Proverbs 19:21).

Pray for the confidence that God is controlling all the circumstances of your life, and that His purposes are always good and right. This week, pay attention to the providence of God in your circumstances. Thank God, with your son or daughter, that God's orchestrates your lives. Ask Him for faith to trust His providence.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

With your son or daughter, read Luke 24:13-35 and Matthew 26:47-54.

- Did each of these circumstances "just happen," or was there a divine plan behind them?
- What was God's purpose for each one?

Share an example with your child of God's providence over circumstances in your family's life.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

As you read your Bible this week, try to see God's providence over circumstances. Write about examples you see.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

The Pulpit

Billy Bray was a Cornish preacher in the 1800s. He didn't start his adult life as a preacher; in fact, he was far from being a preacher—he was a drunkard.

But God providentially placed in the hands of Billy Bray a book by John Bunyan called *Visions of Heaven and Hell*. The book scared Billy Bray, and he started praying for God's mercy on him. He prayed every day and night until his prayer was answered and God saved him.

After he was saved, he started telling others about Christ, often preaching outside standing on a stone. In time, a chapel was under construction. But there was no pulpit for the chapel.

Billy went to an auction where he saw a cupboard that could be made into a pulpit. Not familiar with auctions, Billy turned to a man close to him to inquire what he thought the cupboard might cost. The man told Billy he thought the cupboard would sell for six shillings—and then handed Billy the six shillings.

But the cupboard sold for seven shillings. Billy could not return the six shillings to the man who had given them to him because the man was gone. What should Billy do with the money? Billy went to the chapel to pray for an answer.

When he left the chapel, he saw a horse and cart going up the hill. In the cart was the cupboard! Billy followed the cart, only to find that when the purchaser of the cupboard tried to get the cupboard in his house it wouldn't go through the door!

Then, for the cart and hauling it to the chapel, Billy offered the man six shillings for the cupboard. Rather than lose all seven shillings for a cupboard that was worthless to him, the man accepted the six shillings and agreed to haul the cupboard.

"Bless the LORD," said Billy, "'tis just like Him. He knew I couldn't carry it myself, so He got this man to carry it for me."

Can you identify the acts of providence in this story? What circumstance did God bring about to get a pulpit for the chapel? How can seeing God's providence over this circumstance help you to trust Him more in the future?

—Story adapted from *God Made Them Great* by John Tallach. (Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 65-72. Used by permission of Banner of Truth.



God's Plans Work Together Perfectly

MAIN IDEA

- **God is sovereign over all circumstances and orders them to work out His plans perfectly.**

MEMORY VERSE

O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?
—Deuteronomy 3:24

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Deuteronomy 3:24
- 2) Proverbs 21:1
- 3) Isaiah 26:4
- 4) Luke 2:1



LESSON SUMMARY

Some of the things we see as mistakes are actually the ordering of circumstances by God to fulfill His purposes. The prophets prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. But Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth. Was this a mistake?

God never makes mistakes, and He is never surprised. God ordained circumstances such that Caesar Augustus ordered a census. So Joseph, who was of the line of David, had to go with Mary to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5:2.

All these circumstances worked to show God's glory and providence over rulers, nations, and the timing of events. He orders all circumstances so His plans work out perfectly. There are no coincidences in God's kingdom.

With your son or daughter, thank God that He can be trusted to order all the circumstances of your life, and rehearse the providence definition.

God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working
to uphold and govern all creation
to fulfill all His purposes
for His glory

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Esther 2:5-11, 16-23.

- **What circumstances did God work for Esther, the king and Mordecai?**

Discuss the rest of the story of the book of Esther.

- **What was God working through these circumstances?**
- **How did God's plan work out perfectly?**

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Have you ever doubted God's providence or plan? Do God's plans ever fail? As you read the Bible this week, write about some of the things that God has planned. Then, write about how God accomplished His plan. Was it in a way you expected? Why would God work out His plans perfectly in ways we don't expect?

**SEEING GOD AT WORK****In the Presence of the King**

by Noël Piper

The old man walked up to the pulpit in the college chapel, which was filled with students and teachers. He himself had been a teacher and a college president for many years. He was Dr. V. Raymond Edman. Thousands of people knew God better, and trusted and loved God more deeply because of Dr. Edman's teaching and writing.

His sermon that morning was called "In the Presence of the King." He told us the story of being invited into the presence of the king of Ethiopia a few years earlier. He talked about what kind of clothes he had to wear, about learning the proper way to act and the proper way to speak, about learning how to stand and bow to show honor to the king. Everyone in the chapel could guess that he was preparing us to think about how much more glorious God is—the King of all kings. We knew he wanted us to think about whether we had made our preparations to stand before the throne of the King of the Universe.

As Dr. Edman began to describe the splendor of the throne room and the glory of the king, he stopped,

stood very still for a moment, and then fell to the floor. The chapel was silent. We were stunned. Just a moment before, Dr. Edman had been telling us about meeting a king...and now he was just about to enter the presence of the Great King.

Why did God do it that way? Why did it happen to Dr. Edman in front of us all, instead of quietly at his home? What made Dr. Edman choose to tell us about being "In the Presence of the King"? Why did the college chaplain schedule Dr. Edman for this particular morning? Why did God end Dr. Edman's description at the very moment when he was describing the glory of the throne room of the king?

Only God knows all the answers to those questions. But we could see that He was giving something to the 2,000 of us in the chapel, and to the people who were listening on the radio, and to the thousands around the world who soon would hear the story of Dr. Edman's death. He wanted to show Himself to us as the greatest King in the universe. He wanted us to know His glory and power. He wanted us to see Him.

Was it a mistake that Dr. Edman died before he was able to finish his message that morning? How does this story show how God's plans are perfect? Is there a time when God did something unexpected that showed you more of His glory and power?



God's Timing Is Perfect

MAIN IDEA

- **God's timing is perfect.**

MEMORY VERSE

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.—Psalm 90:2

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Joshua 10:7-14
- 2) Psalm 90:2
- 3) Acts 8:26-35



LESSON SUMMARY

God is the Creator and Master of time. He sees the beginning and the end of all things. Every single thing in the universe has been ordered by God. His order is perfect. His timing of all things is ideal. And His plans are eternal.

In a battle between Israel and the Amorites, God threw the Amorites into confusion and then sent large hailstones on them. But the Israelites fell short of a full victory as the end of daylight drew near. So Joshua asked God to stop the sun, and God—the Master of time—stopped the movement of time, displaying His glory.

God perfectly timed Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian to enable Philip to explain Isaiah's words and share the Gospel. The Ethiopian believed as they came upon some water and was baptized.

Sometimes we don't see the perfection of God's timing, or understand why God has timed something the way He has. But that does not mean God has made a mistake. God never makes a mistake, and His timing is always perfect.

Though God sometimes seems to delay more than we think necessary, His timing is perfect. With your son or daughter, pray for the faith to believe in His perfect timetable. Praise God that His plans and His timing work out perfectly.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Genesis 22:1-14 and discuss the following questions.

- How did God provide for Abraham and Isaac?
- Was His timing perfect?

Ask your child to explain God's timing to you.

- Why do you think God waited until the last moment to provide the ram?
- Does God sometimes do that in our lives? Why?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Why is God's timing always perfect? Write about why the character of God insures that His timing is perfect.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

What If They'd Been On Time?

by Noël Piper

"My dad is never late!" the boy exclaimed. "Well, there was one time he was late—a long time ago when he was a college student. And my mom was late, too. Only she wasn't my mom then. They didn't even know each other yet.

"They walked into the church entryway at the same time, and they had to stand outside the sanctuary and wait till the preacher finished praying. My dad (only he wasn't my dad yet) looked at her, and she looked at him. He gulped and said, 'May I sit with you?' She said, 'Sure!'

"Then, after church, they sort of walked out together, and walked back toward the college together. It was lunchtime, so he gulped again and said, 'Do you want to eat together in the dining hall?' She said, 'Sure!'

"Well, that's how it all began. That's how my parents met each other and started to fall in love—just because they were both late to the same place at the same time.

"I wonder what God did to make them late? Maybe Mom went back to sleep after the alarm rang. Or maybe she walked slowly because God made the flowers along the way so beautiful. Maybe Dad's phone rang just as he was walking out of his room. Or maybe he stopped to help someone along the way. I don't know what happened, but somehow God made my Mom late and my Dad late—and he's never late.

"Just imagine if it had never happened! What if they'd both been on time to church and had gone in to sit with their regular friends? What if they'd both been late to church, but one of them was way, way later? What if Mom had been late, but Dad had been on time, as usual? They wouldn't have met, fallen in love, and gotten married. I wouldn't even be here! God sure has great timing!"

How was God's timing in this story perfect timing? Was there a situation in which you thought the timing was wrong? What happened? Do you now see that the timing of that situation was perfect? Ask your parents to tell you about a time when they saw how perfect God's timing was. Ask them how God, in His perfect timing, helped them to meet each other. Ask God to have faith in His perfect timing in your life.



God's Providence and Man's Choices

MAIN IDEAS

- **Man is free to make real choices.**
- **Man is accountable and responsible for his choices.**
- **Man is not free in that he is finite, fallen, and governed by God.**
- **Man is a slave to sin outside of Christ.**

MEMORY VERSE

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."—John 8:34

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Genesis 2:16-17
- 2) Genesis 3:12-13
- 3) Deuteronomy 30:19-20
- 4) Joshua 24:15
- 5) Psalm 103:19
- 6) Psalm 115:3
- 7) John 8:34
- 8) Romans 7:21-25



LESSON SUMMARY

If God is sovereign over everything—especially over man's heart and man's way—does man have free will?

Genesis 2:16-17 indicates that before the Fall man had the freedom to choose to obey or not to obey. So, in the sense that man is free to make real, willing, meaningful choices—that man can accept one thing and reject another—man has "free will." Man thinks, chooses and acts, and our choices determine outcomes—actual things happen in the real world because of the choices we make.¹

Because man is free to make choices, we cannot blame our choices on other people or other influences, but must bear the responsibility for our choices. We see this demonstrated in the Garden when God did not accept the excuses made by Adam and Eve.

However, man does not have total freedom. Our will is limited, not free:

- Man's will is limited in that man is finite (e.g., man does not have the choice to grow a tail).
- Man's fallen nature restricts man's will—man is free only in the direction toward sin. Only when God's grace rescues man from his bent toward sin, is man able to choose good rather than evil.
- Man is governed by God. He is not free to act outside of God's providential government of all things, but is under God's control.

So the answer to whether man has free will is "yes...and no." Only God is totally free. He does whatever He pleases. He is the ruler of all things and is subject to no one or nothing. He is free to act according to His pleasure, because He is not limited in any way (Psalm 115:3).

With your son or daughter, praise God for His intervening grace to turn rebellious hearts to Him and incline them to what is right. Praise God for His sovereign control over the world and over our sinful hearts.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?—Jeremiah 17:9

Discuss with your child how the heart influences our choices.

...no one understands; no one seeks for God.—Romans 3:11

Ask your child to explain why man must have a new nature in order to choose what is godly. But even after the Fall, man is free to make real choices (Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Joshua 24:15).

1. Augustine describes this as God has given man "reasonable self-determinism": Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 193.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Read the following quote and think about it this week. "In and of himself the natural man has the power to reject Christ; but in and of himself he has not the power to receive Christ."—A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*²



What is the "natural man"? Why does he only have power to reject Christ? Why can't the natural man receive Christ? What hope is there for the natural man? Why is God's grace that rescues man from his own sinful heart such a glorious thing? What would you be like without the grace of God? Write your thoughts in your journal. Then use these thoughts to help you pray today.

SEEING GOD AT WORK**But I Want to Go Fishing!**

by Noël Piper

Saturday afternoon—Twelve-year-old Barnabas' tackle box and rod-and-reel were packed in the back of the station wagon. Bass and bream and catfish! They were all waiting for him in Grandma's pond, 1,100 miles from home. He already had been picturing the early mornings when he'd slip out of the house and down the hill to sit on a stump among the pines on the bank and catch a fish for dinner.

And he'd been dreaming that maybe he'd be the famous fisherman who'd catch the legendary granddaddy of bigmouth bass—the one that always gets away, the one with the mouth the size of a coffee can...the one that had broken his line last year!

But now, only halfway there, in the middle of nowhere, they were sitting by the road in a flood of radiator fluid. They weren't going anywhere for a couple of days. What a way to begin vacation—just sitting and waiting for a service station to open! What a waste of good fishing days!

Monday afternoon—When they started out again, Mom and Dad were praising God for His providence in this weekend—for the hospitality of a "good Samaritan" couple who took them home for the weekend and to their church on Sunday, for their host's friend who had a new radiator for them, and for their host's experience as an airplane mechanic, which meant he could install the radiator in the car.

And Barnabas? Their "Good Samaritan" host and his stories had reminded Barnabas of what his grandpa had been like. He even lived out in the country. He even had a pond way out behind the house. Barnabas was praising God for the catfish! The largest fish he'd ever caught in his whole life!

With God, there is no "middle of nowhere"—he is everywhere. With God, there are no details too small. Yes, God was arranging bigger puzzle pieces so that the family had a place to stay and so that the car was fixed and so that they all arrived safely at Grandma's. But He didn't forget the little detail of a great fish for a 12-year-old.

How was Barnabas' will blocked? What limited Barnabas? What purposes do you think God could have had in changing the family plans in this story? Does God always make sure that things work out according to your plans? How are His plans better for you? Why is it hard for us to submit to God when He doesn't do things the way we want them done? Why can we trust Him? Ask God to help you surrender your will to Him and give you the faith to trust His plans for your life—even to the smallest circumstances.

2. Pink, A.W. *The Sovereignty of God*. (Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986, reprint of 1928 edition), 100-101.



God's Providence Over Prayer

MAIN IDEAS

- **God's providence and prayer are not contradictory.**
- **God ordains prayer as a means to fulfilling His purposes.**
- **Although God responds to prayer, prayer doesn't change God's ordained purposes.**
- **Prayer is a petitioning of God, recognition of who God is, an expression of our trust in Him, communion with God, and submission to His purposes.**
- **Prayer has the potential to change us.**

MEMORY VERSE

I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.—Psalm 57:2

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Psalm 57:2
- 2) Romans 10:17
- 3) Philippians 4:6-7
- 4) James 5:17-18



LESSON SUMMARY

What difference do our prayers make? Or do they even make any difference at all? If God is sovereign, then why should we pray?

In Psalm 57:2, the psalmist recognizes both the sovereignty of God and the need to pray: I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. So from this text it is obvious that prayer and God's sovereignty are not contradictory things.

But sometimes they seem contradictory if we have a wrong view of prayer. Prayer is not giving God information, as God knows all things; it is not negotiating with God or attempting to persuade the transcendent, as God is unchangeable, having established His purposes before the foundation of the world.

So if God is unchangeable and His purposes stand, does prayer accomplish anything? Why should we even pray? We pray because God has ordained not only the end of things, but also the means to the end. He has ordained that He work and responds in answer to prayer.

[God] is the Giver not only of the answer, but first of the prayer itself.¹

We should pray with fervency and faith, because God will accomplish great work through our prayers. Prayer changes things! There are five "ion" words that describe what prayer is, and what is changed by prayer:

- **Petition:** Prayer is making our requests known to God and humbly presenting them to him.
- **Recognition:** Prayer is understanding who we come to when we pray—we are coming to our Father who is all-powerful, unchanging, loving, and sovereign.
- **Expression:** Prayer is our expression of confidence in God.
- **Communion:** Prayer is spending time with God, getting to know Him better.
- **Submission:** Prayer is submitting ourselves to God's purposes; through prayer, God changes our hearts

Ask God to give you a heart and the discipline to pray. Spend some time praying with your son or daughter, recognizing Who you are praying to, expressing your confidence in Him, communing with Him, and submitting to His will.

1. Forsyth, P.T. *The Soul of Prayer*. (Blackwood, South Australia: New Creation Pub., 1999), 12.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Ask your child to explain what Psalm 57:2 teaches about prayer and God's providence over all things.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and discuss the following questions:

- What does "praying without ceasing" mean?
- How does verse 18 show you God's providence?
- What does it show you about submission to God's purposes?
- How does understanding God's providence help you to "give thanks in all circumstances"?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write out three prayers this week. Where do you see self-centeredness in your prayers, and where do you see God-centeredness in them?



SEEING GOD AT WORK

An Urge to Pray

by Sally Michael

How could an old woman in Rhode Island (in the United States), have a part in saving the lives of two children in Ecuador (in South America)?

A missionary and his family were having a picnic with another family at a reservoir in Ecuador. The children were rowing a boat on the lake, and the adults were visiting. It was a beautiful, sunny day, and the children were having fun in the boat—so much fun, that a three-year-old on shore decided that she wanted to join them in the boat. They rowed close to the edge, but because the edge of the reservoir was sloped, the boat was a fair distance from the three-year-old girl. Her father called to her to wait for his help, but she was anxious to get aboard, so she stepped out and missed the boat.

Gasping for breath and screaming hysterically, she slipped under the deep water, as her father looked on helplessly. A severe arthritic from childhood, he maneuvered himself on crutches but was unable to help his daughter.

A young boy on the boat dived in after her and was able to grab the little girl. But she was flailing her arms hysterically, and he had a hard time holding on to her. By then the boat had drifted away. Unable to hold the hysterical child and swim for the boat, his energy exhausted, he started going under.

At that moment, the boy's father glanced at his watch to see how much time the children had on the rental boat, and then looked over toward the children and saw the danger. He ran to the reservoir, jumped in, and saved both children.

A few weeks later, a letter arrived in Ecuador from a friend in the United States. This older woman asked what they had been doing on a certain date at a certain time. She had been compelled to pray for them. She prayed fervently for them until the burden passed.

What was the time and date she asked about? It was the same time the father had looked at his watch. She was praying when the children were drowning. God had put it in her heart and guided her to pray until the danger passed.

Who compelled the woman in Rhode Island to pray? Was God ignorant of the situation in Ecuador? Did she need to pray to persuade God to save the children? Why do you think God had her pray? What does her praying exactly at the time of the trouble show us about God's providence over prayer? What does it show about prayer?



All Things Work for Good for God's Children

MAIN IDEAS

- **Nothing is outside of God's providence; all things are controlled by God.**
- **All things work for good for God's children.**

MEMORY VERSE

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
—Romans 8:28

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Job 1:13-19
- 2) Job 42:1-6, 12-13
- 3) Psalm 112:4
- 4) John 19:10-11
- 5) Romans 8:28-29



LESSON SUMMARY

Because God has planned all things and controls all things, nothing is “outside of His plan” (Romans 11:36). If even one thing were out of God’s control, we would not be able to trust Him. If there were even one action that was beyond God’s control, God would not be all-powerful.

When Jesus was brought before Pilate, Pilate thought that he had the power to release or to crucify Jesus (John 19:10). But Jesus rightly corrected him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11). God is in control at all times, and Pilate was merely fulfilling God’s purposes.

God has given believers an amazing promise in Romans 8:28 regarding His sovereign control over our lives as well: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Every single thing that has happened to you, is happening, and will ever happen to you will be good for you—if you are a child of God.

Why then do unpleasant things happen to Christians? In Romans 8:29, God defines “good” for us—that we would be “conformed to the image of His Son.” As seen in the life of Job, even the hard things will bless those who love God.

With your son or daughter, thank God that He controls all things and works them for the good of His children. Read and meditate on Romans 8:28-29, then rehearse the completed providence definition:

God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working
to uphold and govern all creation
to fulfill all His purposes
for His glory and the good of His children.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Psalm 112 with your child and answer the following questions.

- What blessings are promised in this psalm?
- Who are these promises for?
- Does this psalm say that there will be no troubles for those who fear the Lord? What does it say?
- Why does the Christian need not fear bad news? Explain.

With your son or daughter, discuss a time in your family's life that was difficult.

- How did God use it for good in our lives?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write about something that is difficult in your life. How might God work this out for good? Can you commit this situation to God and trust Him in it?



SEEING GOD AT WORK

Out of Gas, But in the Hands of God

by Sally Michael

It wasn't a problem, we thought. My husband could fulfill his Sunday morning pastoral responsibilities and still get to the camp where we were speaking for a family week conference before the evening meeting began. We even had time to stop for lunch on the way. What we didn't have time for—and didn't plan into our schedule—was running out of gas!

The car sputtered and lost power. We eased to the side of the road. We were not going any further. But when we looked around, there wasn't much chance of finding a gas station for miles. We were in the middle of farm country. Fields stretched along both sides of the road. How far could it be to the first gas station and how long would it take? Most definitely longer than we had. There was little time to spare if we were to make our speaking engagement.

Why was this in God's agenda for us? What purpose could He have in it? Well it was in God's hands, and after committing our situation to Him, my daughter and husband set out on foot for the next farmhouse.

Surprisingly, it wasn't long before my husband and daughter returned with a gas can! How did they get the gas so quickly? The first farmhouse they came to had a gas pump in the front yard! The farmer used it to fuel his farm equipment. We put the gas in the tank, drove to the farm house, filled up the car, paid the farmer, and were on our way in time to make our speaking engagement. But now we were much more aware of God's hand in our lives, and full of awe of a God who watches over His children. What a way to start a series of speaking engagements!

Share how something that you thought was bad worked out for good in your life. Do we always see the good quickly? What can help you to trust God while you wait for Him to show you the good He is working?



Trusting in the Providence of God:

Believing that All God's Purposes are Right

MAIN IDEA

- **Faith is believing that all God's purposes are right.**

MEMORY VERSE

*The LORD is righteous
in all his ways and kind
in all his works.*

—Psalm 145:17

SCRIPTURE

- 1) 2 Kings 5:1-15
- 2) Psalm 145:17
- 3) Isaiah 29:16
- 4) Isaiah 45:9
- 5) Jeremiah 32:40
- 6) Romans 11:33



LESSON SUMMARY

When we complain about something God has done in our lives, we are questioning His wisdom and goodness. God has things He is doing in this world, and He has a perfect way to fit us into His plan. Sometimes it is hard to understand what God's good purposes are, but we can believe that all God's purposes are right. We just need to wait and see God work out His perfect will.

Naaman's leprosy was actually used for good. It brought him to faith in God, and it was a means for God to show His glory. Even the captivity of Naaman's young maid was not a mistake, but was actually part of God's eternal purposes.

We can look at circumstances and wrongly question God's wisdom. Or we can cover our mouths, guard our hearts, and remember that God has the right, power, wisdom, and righteousness to govern the world.

We also need to realize that God's purposes are never fully revealed in this life. All His providences are incomplete in the present. So we must reserve judgment, as we only see a small piece of God's plan.

God's promise to His children is that He will always do good to them. The greatest good He can do for believers is to put the fear of Him in them, so that they never turn from Him (Jeremiah 32:40).

Ask God for a humble heart and for the grace to guard your heart against judging Him or questioning His wisdom or goodness. Pray for a submissive heart that recognizes God's right to govern the world and your life. Praise God that His purposes are always right, and with your son or daughter, ask Him to give you the faith to trust Him.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?—Isaiah 29:16

Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, "What are you making?" or "Your work has no handles?"—Isaiah 45:9

In what ways are you tempted to resist God's purposes in your life?

Why is this a foolish thing for us to do?

Discuss a time you resisted God's will and what was the outcome.

Why would it be important to memorize the following verse?

The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.—Psalm 145:17

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Imagine that you are one of the disciples seeing Jesus being crucified. Write about how you think you might feel. Then write how you might feel after you know Jesus has been resurrected. Do the circumstances look the same? Has what happened changed, or has your understanding of what happened changed? What is more trustworthy, your feelings or God's truth? What lesson have you learned about God's providence?



SEEING GOD AT WORK

A Nuisance or a Blessing?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a great preacher of the 1800s, was scheduled to preach in Halifax, England, on a Wednesday during a heavy snowstorm. Five to six thousand people were present to hear Spurgeon preach in the afternoon. In the evening Spurgeon preached again. As people were leaving, and only about a hundred people were present, a huge beam broke and a portion of the balcony crashed to the floor. Only two people were injured—with broken legs.

What if the beam had split earlier? Many more people would have been in the building. If they had not been injured by the falling debris, they could have been injured in the panic of thousands of people trying to get out of the building.

Charles Spurgeon saw the providential hand of God in the timing of the accident, as well as in the circumstances God orchestrated. This is what he wrote later, "All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow seemed to leave a mass of snow and water together. This ran through the roof on us, to our miserable annoyance, and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God's providence. But if it had been a frost instead of a thaw, the place must have fallen several hours before. And then your minister and the greater part of his congregation would probably have been in the other world."

What was originally seen as a nuisance—dripping water—and a "hard providence" from God was actually God's providential hand of blessing, removing stress from the roof.

Do you know of an accident that could have been a lot worse than it was, or an accident that was prevented? Or perhaps you know of something you thought was a nuisance that ended up being a blessing? Discuss these stories together, and how they prove the trustworthiness of God. Pray that God would give you a deeper trust in His purposes and His providence.

—Story adapted from 2200 Quotes From the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon compiled by Tom Carter, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), 169-170. Used by permission of Baker Books.



Trusting in the Providence of God:

When you Can't See God's Hand, Trust His Heart

MAIN IDEAS

- **Faith is trusting God's heart when you cannot see or understand His providential hand.**
- **Standing on the promises of God's Word and remembering His past mercies is a way of fighting for our faith.**

MEMORY VERSE

From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.—Isaiah 64:4

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Joshua 1:9
- 2) Psalm 77:1-9, 11-15
- 3) Psalm 94:14
- 4) Psalm 103:11
- 5) Psalm 145:9
- 6) Isaiah 64:4
- 7) Jeremiah 29:11
- 8) Jeremiah 32:40
- 9) Lamentations 3:22-23
- 10) Romans 8:32
- 11) Hebrews 13:5b



LESSON SUMMARY

Though God loves all mankind, He especially loves His children (Psalm 145:9; Psalm 103:11). If you are a Christian, God loves you with an everlasting love and is committed to doing good to you. However, there are times when Christians don't feel God's love. In those times, Christians must stand on the way things really are, trusting the truth, not their feelings.

Asaph expressed his feelings of being rejected by God in Psalm 77, but he determined to remember the past faithfulness of God—dwelling on the truth rather than on his feelings.

In times of despair we, too, can dwell on the past faithfulness of God and trust His promises while we await the unfolding of God's good plan for us, remembering:

From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.—Isaiah 64:4

When we can't see God's hand—when we don't understand what He is doing—we can trust His heart.

Thank God that He loves you with an everlasting love. This is amazing! God will never stop loving His children! Ask Him for the grace to believe the truth and to keep your feelings in the proper place. With your son or daughter, praise God that His heart is always inclined toward His children, and ask for faith to trust Him when you can't see His hand.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Romans 8:31-37. Ask your child to list all the things that cannot separate us from God's love. **Do you think Paul wrote this to encourage people to trust God when they don't see the purposes of His providence?**

Share with your child about a time when you did not understand what God was doing in your life. Explain how you fought the fight of faith.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

What does it mean to you when it says in the lesson “When you can't see God's hand, trust His heart”? Do you trust God's heart? If you don't trust God as much as you want to, what can you do?

Read the words to the William Cowper hymn, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*, and discuss the meaning of the hymn with a parent.



God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea
and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
of never failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs
And works his sovereign will.

You fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
There hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter
And he will make it plain.

SEEING GOD AT WORK

Where Are You, God?

by Sally Michael

Doesn't God know what I am going through? Is He working in this? He seems so silent. Where are you, God? Thoughts like these went through my mind once again as I lamented my situation. My husband and I were nine months into an adoption process for an Ecuadorian baby girl, and we still did not have a birth certificate for the baby. After nine months, we hadn't even made it through the first step!

Another month passed—and still no birth certificate. “Where are you, God?” I asked again.

His answer? “I am right here—where I have always been. I have been at work through all the time you did not see My hand. All the time that you thought I was silent, I was working out my plan in your life.”

My high school Spanish teacher came running up the hill to my parent's house in Quito, Ecuador. Huffing and puffing, she was hard to understand. But she was talking about a birth certificate, and that was enough to catch my interest and make my heart skip a beat.

She had a friend in an office connected to the office that handled birth certificates. Although the birth certificates for the past year were not yet filed, she was

willing to start filing them so that she could find the birth certificate for our baby. A few weeks later, we had the birth certificate in hand.

I was ashamed. I had accused God of not knowing or caring about my situation. I had asked Him where He was. I could not see Him working for me. But He had been working for me and for this adoption before a baby was even born, before I even graduated from high school, and I am now convinced, before the foundation of the world. Of the four Spanish teachers in my school, He placed me in the class of the teacher with a friend who could help us 14 years later. He made me a good Spanish student and grew an affection between my teacher and myself. He made her aware of our adoption and gave her the willingness to help. He placed her friend in a strategic position to help us. And somewhere along the line, He orchestrated the meeting of these two women. God had been at work before I even knew there was a need for Him to be at work!

Yes, God was at work accomplishing His purposes even though I could not recognize His work. But it wasn't until later that I realized that He was doing another work. He was not only bringing an adoptive child into our home, He was also teaching me to trust Him.

God is working even when we don't see His hand. Much of His work is hidden work. Is there a situation in your life that you need to trust God to work out? Pray about it and ask God to give you faith in Him. If you aren't struggling now, have you had a situation like this in the past? Thank God for carrying you through. Perhaps you may need to repent of mistrusting Him. Or, pray that God would give you an unshakable trust in Him so that when the storms of life come and you can't see His hand at work for you, you will trust His Fatherly heart.



Trusting in the Providence of God:

Submitting to the Will of God

MAIN IDEA

- **Trusting in the providence of God means submitting to His will.**

MEMORY VERSE:

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!—Psalm 143:10

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Deuteronomy 10:12-13
- 2) Deuteronomy 29:18-21
- 3) Psalm 143:10
- 4) Luke 5:1-11
- 5) Luke 22:42



LESSON SUMMARY

Though God knows exactly what He is doing and His ways are always right, we often proudly and foolishly question and even resist what God is doing in our lives. If we would rightly trust God, we must believe three biblical truths:

- God is completely sovereign.
- God is infinite in wisdom.
- God is perfect in love.

The way we react to what God is doing in our lives will show whether we truly believe that He is completely sovereign, infinitely wise, and perfectly loving. We can measure our faith in God by our level of obedience to His commands.

Simon gives us an example of obedience to Jesus' commands and respect for His authority in Luke 5. The disciples had been fishing all night, but caught nothing. Yet Jesus commanded them to "put out into the deep and let their nets down." Simon's answer was, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets" (Luke 5:5).

Jesus calls us to this same kind of trust and obedience. He asks us to lay down our wills and follow Him—even when we don't understand what He is doing. May God give you this kind of heart. May you trust Him regardless of the way things appear, knowing that He is completely sovereign, infinite in wisdom, and perfect in love.

With your son or daughter, pray for a heart attitude like Jesus, which says not my will, but yours be done.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Philippians 1:12-18 together and discuss the following questions.

- **What is Paul's situation?**
- **What is his attitude toward the will of God or God's assignment for his life?**
- **Why is this his attitude?**

Talk about a difficult assignment God had for you or your family. Share about your attitude toward what God had willed for you and what you would change about the experience if you could.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

**SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING**

Each day this week, write about at least one personal experience that made you think about God being responsible for all circumstances in our lives. How did knowing that God is in charge make you respond? Did your response please God? Write out Psalm 143:10 in your journal and pray it every day.

SEEING GOD AT WORK

Anywhere But the City

by Sally Michael

"God, I will go anywhere you want me to go, but I won't go to the city. I'll go to Africa if you want, but not to the city. I don't want to raise my children in this situation." I prayed silently as I walked back to the church after dropping off the Bible club children I taught on Friday nights in Brooklyn, New York. I was trying to let God know my terms. They weren't that bad—I was giving up quite a lot, I thought. After all, I was willing to go to Africa—almost the limit in my college-aged mind.

For a while everything seemed to be going along fine. I graduated from college, married a wonderful man, and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota so that my husband could attend seminary. In my husband's first year of seminary, we had to take a piece of equipment to a service center in the heart of Minneapolis. The children were playing in the streets. They were dirty—both their bodies and their mouths—and no one was watching them. I couldn't wait to get back to the seminary campus.

During the third year of my husband's seminary training, he did an apprenticeship at an urban ministry in Minneapolis. Uh oh. This was feeling a little more uncomfortable.

During that year, we visited my husband's coworker in his home. It was located in what, at the time, was the second highest crime district in Minneapolis. As I stood in his dining room, I had the overwhelming

feeling that someday I would be living in that apartment and my husband would be working for the ministry where he was apprenticed. That night, God did an amazing work in my heart—and six or eight months later my husband and I were living in that apartment and he was working in that ministry.

God prepared me for that move in many ways. First, He taught me that He is the boss, not me. He placed a copy of Dave Wilkerson's book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, in my hands and in my heart. And he brought me in contact with people in need through the ministry where my husband was involved.

We later bought a house in the inner city. And a few weeks later, I passed a service center a few blocks from our home. I mentioned it to my husband that evening.

"You've been there before. Don't you remember going there when I was in seminary?" he stated.

"No, I haven't," I replied. "That one was in a crummy neighborhood!"

It took a bit of convincing for my husband to persuade me that this was the same service center. The neighborhood hadn't really changed. God had changed my heart.

Is there areas of your life that you are withholding from God? Is there anything God is calling you to do that you are resisting? Whose plan is the right plan? Pray that God would give you a willing heart that trusts His plans.



Looking for the Providence of God in All Things: Meditating on the Works of God

MAIN IDEAS

- Often we don't rejoice in the works of God because we don't see, remember, or understand them.
- To rejoice in the works of God, we must learn to meditate on His works.

MEMORY VERSE

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.—Psalm 143:5

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Psalm 103:2
- 2) Psalm 111:2
- 3) Psalm 143:5
- 4) Isaiah 55:9
- 5) Matthew 16:5-9
- 6) Romans 11:33



LESSON SUMMARY

Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.—Psalm 111:2

The wonders of God's creation are amazing! His works are everywhere, but we are often blind to them. Often we don't see God's works of providence because we don't take time to stop and meditate on what we see.

We need to be intentional or we will not remember God's works of gracious providence. Taking the time at the end of each day to rehearse God's benefits that day is a helpful practice that keeps us aware of God's providence.

We often don't understand God's works because His ways are so different than ours and we are limited by seeing only pieces of the plan He is orchestrating. "God is His own interpreter" and may, in time, give us understanding.

We will never see the great works of God unless we stop to SEE, REMEMBER, and UNDERSTAND some of what He is doing or He has done. Psalm 143:5 tells us how to take time to reflect—to meditate—on all that God has done.

Review God's benefits to you this week. Meditate on His works. Isn't God amazing! When you are tempted to question God this week, remind yourself that "God is His own interpreter"—someday we will understand what we now see dimly. Determine to slow your life down and in quietness commune with God.

Take time now with your son or daughter to meditate on the works of God. Rejoice in His goodness, wisdom, and power.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Read Psalm 103 with your son or daughter. Discuss the benefits this psalm tells us about. Then help your child think of specific things in his or her life or in the life of your family that reflect this psalm. For example, how has the Lord been merciful and gracious to your family?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

At the end of each day, reflect back on your day, and rehearse the benefits of the Lord that day. Then write about some you especially want to remember.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

Remember God

by Carrie R. Zeman

Charlie Horton was sitting down to lunch at the Minneapolis Fire Department garage when the gong on the wall began clanging. He tossed his sandwich—pickled herring on rye, which his Norwegian landlady loved and Charlie was too polite to refuse—back onto the piece of newspaper in which it had been wrapped. The series of long and short clangs was a code for the location of a triggered firebox. Charlie was surprised to recognize the alarm for his own neighborhood.

Six shaggy draft horses had been harnessed, ready to receive the hose wagon with its big brass water tank by the time Charlie and his fellow fireman pushed out of the garage onto the street. A teamster hitched up the wagon, and the horses started with a bell-ringing lurch. Hose Company Number 6 galloped toward the column of smoke smearing the sky above Addison's Addition—a neighborhood where many Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian immigrants like Charlie's landlady lived. As the wagon veered onto 12th Street, Charlie could see that it was not a house on fire. It was the First Swedish Baptist Church.

The team pulled up to hitching posts along the street, and the firemen jumped out of the wagon before the wheels stopped turning. Charlie clutched the brass nozzle under his arm, pulling the waxed-linen hose behind him. Hook and Ladder Company Number 3 had arrived just before Charlie's company, and were climbing ladders that rested on the church's brick walls. Charlie and his hose man followed them up the ladder. The Hook and Ladder men swung fire axes, quickly hacking holes in the roof. Charlie aimed his hose through a hole while men down on the tanker wagon pumped up the water that streamed out onto the fire. The firemen knew it was too late to save the church. But next door stood the wooden houses of dozens of people who lined the sidewalk, watching for sparks that could send their own homes up in flames. Through the smoke, Charlie saw his landlady praying with others from the First Swedish Baptist Church.

The men on the roof could feel the heat of the fire licking up through their thick-soled leather boots. "It's time to get off of here!" the Hook and Ladder captain shouted. "Hose Company, too!" Charlie and his hose man kept pouring water on the fire while firemen scrambled down the ladder off the roof. Then it was their turn. Charlie turned off the nozzle. His friend backed the wet hose down the ladder.

Charlie coughed in the smoke that still swirled about him, waiting for the ladder to clear. Then the roof beneath his feet began to groan and pitch. Charlie almost fell as the roof swayed beneath his feet and he reached for the chimney for stability. But before his hand even touched it, the chimney crumbled, collapsing onto the sidewalk in a hail of bricks and soot. Charlie was thrown to his knees as chunks of the roof began caving, falling into the flames below. Finally, the trembling stopped, and Charlie heard a voice shouting up at him, "Ladder! The ladder!" He opened his stinging eyes just wide enough to see the top of a ladder poking up through the smoke at the edge of the roof. He groped for the top rung and scrambled down blindly. Then his feet touched the ground, and he thought nothing had ever felt so solid.

The captain led Charlie to the sidewalk across the street, where he sat coughing, watching the two fire companies extinguish the fire. Someone handed him a kerchief and he gratefully wiped the soot from his eyes. Behind him, he heard the soft syllables of church members talking in Swedish. Then he felt a hand on his shoulder and he heard his landlady's voice: "You look good at that, son," she said in English, pointing to the burned-out church building. "You look good at that and for always you remember God." Charlie stared at the building for a long minute, seeing nothing but the smoking shell of the ruined church, wondering how she could look at so great a loss and see God. Then his eyes wandered up the wall to where the roof had been. Only one small piece of roof had not caved into the fire: the corner on which Charlie had been standing.

Although Charlie's landlady was not a real person, this is a true story based on newspaper accounts and photos from 1885. We don't know if Charlie knew God before the fire, or if he came to believe in Him afterward. But if you could meet him, what would you tell him about God's providence? What great works of God in this story can you remember and think about? What should be your response to God as you look at His works? Pray for this kind of response.



Looking for the Providence of God in All Things: Seeing the Big Picture

MAIN IDEAS

- **God is the center of everything in the universe.**
- **Those who know Christ are crucified with Him.**

MEMORY VERSE

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.—Galatians 2:20

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Jeremiah 1:5, 17-19
- 2) Galatians 2:20
- 3) Colossians 1:15-18



LESSON SUMMARY

A microscopic view of the world evaluates everything based on how it affects “me”—what I like and want. While everything in life was created to revolve around a center, we are not that center. The pattern in the universe points to the Creator, not the created ones (Colossians 1:15-18).

We can be so preoccupied with our microscopic view of our own little kingdom of needs and wants that we don’t live for what we were intended to live for: the glory of God. Both Jeremiah and Paul show us that we were created to live for God’s glory regardless of the cost. Paul tells us the secret for doing this: dying to self, giving up our own ambitions and desires to live for Jesus’ desires. This is the only way to find real and lasting joy.

With your son or daughter, pray for a heart that desires God’s glory above self. Commit yourself to living for Christ, and rejoice in God’s providential plan for your life as you review the providence definition.

God is PRESENT and ACTIVE in all His creation.
His EYE is watching, His HAND is working
to uphold and govern all creation
to fulfill all His purposes
for His glory and the good of His children.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Students, it is your turn to share with your mom or dad what you have been learning in this study.



I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.—Galatians 2:20

Explain Galatians 2:20 to your mom or dad, and tell them what missionaries packed their belongings in long ago. **What was John Calvert’s reply to the sea captain?**

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Reflect on where you want to center your life. Would anything have to change? Write your thoughts in your journal.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

The Same Class

by Sally Michael

She was always older than most of the rest of the children in her class. Why? It didn't bother her, but she did wonder why it was so. Was it just because she had an October birthday and missed the school cut-off? Or did God so order her birthdate to coincide with His plan for her life?

He, on the other hand, had a July birthday. So he entered school at barely five years old. His parents probably should have kept him home another year; he was very active...and not at all interested in school. But they didn't. Was it just a coincidence—or was God at work, orchestrating His plan for this boy's life?

Thirteen years later, they both attended the same college, but didn't really know each other well, even though their sisters were roommates.

Their sophomore year in college, she was asked to chair the committee making a homecoming display for the sophomore class. Only sophomores were permitted to work on the project. She was a busy college student—taking a full load of classes and working 15 to 20 hours a week. She didn't have time for class displays!

But God had something else in mind. Her good friend had asked her to be in charge of the committee. Not wanting to disappoint her friend, she told her she would “think about it.” Later she went to her friend's room to tell her that she really didn't have time to head up a display committee...and left a few minutes later saying that she would work on the display. She couldn't believe the words came out of her mouth!

One thing was certain, if she had to get this display done, she was going to enlist the help of every sophomore she could. This display was not in her plan, and she would see that it got done as quickly as possible so it was out of her life!

When she went to the cafeteria for lunch, he was coming down the steps when she was going up the steps. Should she ask him to help? He was a sophomore. But she didn't know him. But this display had to get done. She might as well ask.

He wasn't interested in class displays. In fact, of all the things he could do on a Saturday afternoon, working on a class display would have been his last choice. He politely listened—with no intention of helping with a display. He headed back to the dorm—displays were not on his radar screen! Then he turned around; maybe he could give one afternoon to his class and say he had put in his time.

He got to know her. She got to know him. One afternoon became many afternoons. She was impressed with his skill, his manners, his character... The more he got to know her, the more he liked her. If they had been in different classes, they wouldn't have worked together. Being in the same class was not a coincidence. It was God's way of bringing them together.

After graduation, they got married. Twenty-two years later, he inspired her to write a curriculum on the providence of God so that children would know that God works in all the circumstances of their lives. In everything that happens, we should ask with anticipation, “God, what are you up to?”

We do not always know what God is doing through the circumstances of our lives. But we do know that nothing escapes His notice. His plans are always right. And He always accomplishes His plans. Talk about the times you have seen how His hand has been at work in your life. Then talk about the things that are still a mystery to you. Pray for a heart of trust to believe that the mysteries are working for your good. Pray that you will live for God's glory and die to self.



Looking for the Providence of God in All Things: See Jesus

MAIN IDEAS

- **In everything that happens to us, we should see the hand of God; we should see Jesus.**
- **If we have God, we have everything.**

MEMORY VERSES

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

—Romans 11:34-36

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Psalm 73:25-26
- 2) Romans 11:34-36
- 3) Philippians 3:8-9



LESSON SUMMARY

Behind everything that happens to us in life...is GOD. Nothing can happen to us that is not ordained by God. In all of the circumstances of life, our response should be to see God at work—trusting His wise and loving hand of providence.

Paul counted the loss of all things as rubbish for the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus. If Jesus is our treasure, too, no matter what happens to us, we have all we need.

Is Jesus your greatest treasure? With your son or daughter, pray that all things would be counted as rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Discuss Romans 11:34-36 with your son or daughter.

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.—Romans 11:34-36

In what ways do we presume to be God's counselor? Why do we do that?

What could we possibly give to God? What do these phrases mean:

- "from him" are all things
- "through him" are all things
- "to him" are all things

Ask your child to explain what it means to "see Jesus" in all things. Have him or her tell you the story of the boy and the bike, or of Mabel in the nursing home.

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write about your understanding of the providence of God. How has this study helped you? Where do you need to grow? Write about the kinds of responses you can have to situations when you “see Jesus” in them.



SEEING GOD AT WORK

J.I. Packer's 11th Birthday Present: The Tale of the Bicycle and the Typewriter

by Justin Taylor

How can a dent in the head be God's blessing to someone?

James Innel (J.I.) Packer is a teacher, an author, and one of the most respected and influential theologians in North America...and God used a dent in his head received in a childhood accident, to fulfill His purposes for Dr. Packer.

In September of 1933, at the age of seven, J.I. Packer had "a violent collision with a truck, a bread van." The result—damage to the frontal lobe of his brain with a chunk of his skull missing—was a three-week stay in the hospital, followed by six months of recovery away from school. From that time until he went off to Oxford University, he had to wear a protective plate over his injury and to refrain from participating in all sports. Already a loner, Packer withdrew into solitary activities like reading and writing.

Alister McGrath picks up the story:

Every schoolboy of the period longs for the day when he would own a bicycle of his own. Usually around the age of eleven, at the point when a schoolboy would enter senior school, parents would mark their son's "coming of age" by giving him a bicycle as a birthday present.

Packer dropped heavy hints that he expected to receive a cycle, like all his friends.

However, his parents knew that they could not yet allow their son to have a bicycle. If he were to have any kind of accident, the earlier injury could lead to something much more serious, and potentially fatal. But what could they give their son instead?

On the morning of his eleventh birthday, in 1937, Packer wandered down from his bedroom to see what present awaited him. The family had a tradition of placing birthday presents in the dining room of the house. He expected to find a bicycle. Instead, he found an old Oliver typewriter, which seemed to him to weigh half a ton. Although it was old, it was nevertheless in excellent condition.

It was not what Packer had asked for; nevertheless, it proved to be what he needed.

Surprise gave way to delight, as he realized what he could do with the unexpected gift. It was not more than a minute before he had put paper into the machine and started to type. It proved to be his best present and the most treasured possession of his boyhood.¹

To this day, Packer continues to type all of his manuscripts and correspondence on an old-fashioned typewriter. He has never used a computer.

I'm thankful for a God who does not always give us what we want, but always provides what we ultimately need.

Behind the events of J.I. Packer's life is Jesus. Where do you see Jesus in this story? How did God use J.I. Packer's accident to fulfill His purposes in Dr. Packer's life?

J.I. Packer defines God's providence as: "The unceasing activity of the Creator, whereby in overflowing bounty and goodwill, He upholds His creatures in ordered existence, guides and governs all events, circumstances, and free acts of angels and men, and directs everything to its appointed goal, for His own glory."

Explain his definition. Do you think J.I. Packer saw the hand of Jesus in his accident and as a blessing from God? Why? How did the accident and the gift of the typewriter bring glory to God? How can you bring glory to God today.

—Story reprinted from Justin Taylor's "J.I. Packer's 11th Birthday Present: The Tale of the Bicycle and the Typewriter." May 29, 2012, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2012/05/29/j-i-packers-11th-birthday-present-the-tale-of-the-bicycle-and-the-typewriter> (Accessed July 24, 2012).

1. McGrath, Alister. *J.I. Packer: A Biography*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1997), 6. (Emphasis placed by Justin Taylor.)