

The Sovereignty of God over **All** of Life

Part 1

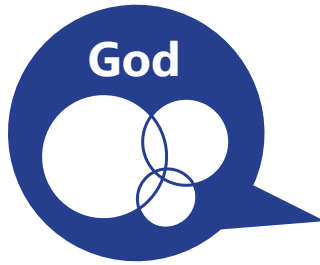
Our Sovereign God


Guest Speaker: Gus Carey

TALKING WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

2025.1.5



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep", too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 What about God's absolute sovereignty... confuses you? ...alarms you? ...comforts you? ...and **why**?

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 2 Looking **exclusively** at circumstances, **how sovereign** does God **appear** to be? **Why** do you think that?
- 3 According to Isaiah 46:9-10, **how sovereign** does God **claim** to be?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 4 Look up "sovereign" at <WebstersDictionary1828.com>? What do you conclude about God?
 - As a group, read and discuss <christianity.com/wiki/people/who-is-joni-eareckson-tada>:
- 5 How does Joni's story **appear to shake** the idea that God is sovereign—or at least loving?!
How does her story **establish the doctrine** of God's absolutely sovereign and limitless love?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Our God has **many** attributes, but let's consider for a moment just these three:
Think of a **tragic** situation—either your own or that of Esther or of Joni.
What words would you use to describe God if he possessed only two of those attributes.
- 6 What if God were all-loving and all-powerful...**but not wise**?
What if God were all-powerful and all-wise...**but not loving**?
What if God were all-wise and all-loving...**but not powerful**?
What would be your response toward a God as he is described in each of those situations above?
- 7 What questions about the idea of God's sovereignty remain for you—and **why**?



1 Don't be deceived by the similarities to the standard discussion-starter question—this question actually should yield valuable insights into the level of biblical literacy within your group (as will question 7). The Bible teaches that God is **absolutely** sovereign over **every** detail in the universe—but many Christians object that this would “make us mere robots” and so they reject this idea. **Don't** argue with those who don't know the biblical teaching, but **do** take note of who may need some remedial attention.

2 **That's** exactly the problem—unless we accept Scripture's additional insights, **all we have** is how things appear to us, and our own limited perspective makes us look like “the masters of our fate and the captains of our souls”. Humans never have absolute autonomy, unacted upon by other forces. For example, non-believers **think** they're only doing exactly what they want to do, but the Bible reveals that they are “held captive by Satan to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26). Believers also, while doing what we wish to do, have been acted upon by God. See 2 Corinthians 8:16-17, where Titus went to Corinth “of **his own accord**”, yet Paul had appealed to him to go, and “**God had put earnestness in Titus' heart** to go”! So, **why** did Titus go to Corinth? Because of **all three** of those factors working together!

3 God is absolutely, 100% sovereign. That is the clear, univocal teaching of Scripture. Look at Acts 2:23 for an example. Question: **Who** killed Jesus?

Answer:

1. **Ultimately**, God did. It was by God's “predetermined plan” that Jesus was handed over.
2. **Immediately**, the Jewish leaders did. “You nailed him to the cross...”
3. **Instrumentally**, the Roman executioners did. “...by the hands of godless men.”

4 Supreme in power; possessing supreme dominion; as a sovereign ruler of the universe. Superior to all others; chief. Supremely efficacious (ie, able to accomplish what he desires).

5 Joni was a believer, a child of God, loved by him...and yet as a 17 year old girl she broke her neck! This means that God decreed that Joni dive into that lake (but **not** against her will—**she** wanted to it) and become a quadriplegic. Why? For his glory and her joy. It didn't look that way at first. Joni had to grow into her understanding of the love, power, and wisdom of God—which she ultimately did. If you doubt this explanation of Joni's story, look at the Book of Job. Did God have anything to do with Job's suffering? Yes—God pointed Job out to Satan and decreed the limits of Satan's abuses (Job 1:6-12 & 2:1-6). The carnal human mind resists the biblical teaching on God's sovereignty; non-believers insist that they are absolutely autonomous, while believers think we need to “rescue God” and “rehabilitate his reputation” by saying that God merely **allows** and **uses** suffering, but does not decree it. But this is **not** what Scripture teaches. See Exodus 4:11& Psalm 119:75!

6

1. If God were all-loving and all-powerful...**but not wise**—he would be **clumsy**, wanting to do us good (loving) and able to do all he desired (power), but doing oafish things that back-fire!
2. If God were all-powerful and all-wise...**but not loving**— he would be **terrifying**, knowing what's best (wise) and able to do anything he desires, but utterly unconcerned for our flourishing—or worse, actively opposed to our flourishing! At best, God would be capricious and unpredictable, doing us good on some days and evil on other days.
3. If God were all-wise and all-loving...**but not powerful**— he would be **pathetic**. Envision this: God says, “I love you desperately and know what's best for you—I just **can't** do it! I'm sorry...”

Our response toward a God as described above would be:

1. To advise him on the proper course of action for our lives (and blame him when he doesn't do it).
2. To hide from him—or to kill ourselves so that he cannot do something more miserable to us!
3. To pity and ignore him.

7 Handle responses to this question as you did # 1 .

In the year 483 BC, the Persian ruler, Xerxes, was not satisfied that his empire stretched from Egypt to India; he wanted more. But he needed more support and funding to take over the world, so he hosted a six-month fundraiser. Some of his officials resented his ambition, and so plotted to assassinate him. Their plot was foiled by a whistle-blower named Mordecai and his cousin, Queen Esther. **The Book of Esther is a display of God's sovereignty even when we don't see it or feel it.** Throughout January we'll explore three "spheres" of human interaction—family, church, and government—to which God has delegated a degree of sovereignty, or we might say, jurisdiction. Today we begin by understanding what God says about his sovereignty by turning to Esther 2:5-7. We first encounter God's sovereignty in the fact that Esther's parents had died. Had they not died, Esther would not have been in position to become queen and save her entire people. That's sovereignty in the sphere of family. Previously in chapter 1 we encountered God's sovereignty over the sphere of government. Xerxes made a foolish drunken decision during his fund-raiser, and God used his evil decision to move Esther into the palace.

We see a similar example of God's sovereignty in the book of Habakkuk (but I'll have mercy and not make you try to find Habakkuk in your Bibles!). Habakkuk complained about the evil behavior of the Jewish people and asked God to do something about it. When God said that he intended to use the pagan Caldeans to discipline the Jews, Habakkuk was shocked. In the end, Habakkuk quit his foolish questioning of God and submits to the wise, sovereign plan of God with these beautiful words of faith: "I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places." (Habakkuk 3:17-19) Many of us feel as Habakkuk did at first, frustrated and upset that God doesn't seem to be paying attention to our situation.

Back to Esther. The drunken Xerxes dethroned his queen, and after a year-long search across the kingdom, God sovereignly caused Esther to be chosen as her replacement (Esther 2:2-3 & 12-14)—even though, contrary to the ways of righteousness, she hid her Jewish heritage and was willing to marry a pagan. God is able to sinlessly use even our sin to accomplish his sinless, sovereign plan. This set Mordecai and Esther in place to protect the Jewish nation. We even see how God sovereignly used insomnia to move Mordecai into a position of influence (chapter 6)! God's sovereignty in the sphere of family even plays a role in this drama: the enemy of the Jews, Haman, is from the Agagite family. God had commanded the Jews to execute Agag—and this no doubt fueled Haman's family feud against the Jews. The straw that broke the camel back was Mordecai's refusal to bow to wicked Haman, who was his superior in the court. Haman tricked Xerxes into decreeing the death of every single Jew, and he had a special, 50 foot gallows prepared especially for Mordecai. It doesn't work out well for Haman! God sovereignly worked out details so that Mordecai is promoted to Haman's role—with Haman serving as the Master of Ceremonies, before he is hung on the gallows he built for Mordecai!

God in his sovereignty will be glorified. We have seen just a few examples of God working details in families so that his choice of people are in place to bring Him glory. We've seen some examples of God working the details among the government – evil rulers, so that rules, regulations. And leaders are in place to bring Him glory, and now we will see how his people have been put in a situation where God demonstrates His sovereignty over His people to bring him glory. When you go through trials, trust God so that others see how good and loving our God is and so that he receives the glory due his name. God's providential care in the Book of Esther involved specific details: death in the family, sleepless nights of a king, personal vendetta of a wicked man, and even disobedient Jews to conduct a symphony of salvation for his people. God, who is absolutely sovereign over all, deserves our worship (Isaiah 46:9-10)! God is faithful even when His people are unfaithful. Providence is the hand of God in the glove of history! When we read the apostle Paul telling us to "be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus", it's hard not to ask, "How can I give up anxiety in grave difficulties and instead give thanks?" How? By understanding God's absolute sovereignty over details both great and small. If Christ is your Savior, you can know that God causes all things to work for his glory and your good. If Christ is not your Savior, then you are trusting your own sovereignty. God deserves to be trusted, to be counted as faithful to us, his people, no matter how bleak circumstances appear.

LAST CHANCE!
Beginning this week!



apologetics • [uh-pol-uh-jet-iks] • *rational defense of Christianity*

Hasn't science disproved God? Isn't faith a leap in the dark?
How can we perceive truth? Can we be good without God?
A merciful God wouldn't allow suffering.
A loving God wouldn't send people to hell...

Who? all TCC adults

What? get equipped to defend your beliefs

Why? because there **really are** convincing reasons for faith!

When? Four weeks, beginning **January 8th**,
Wednesday nights (6³⁰-8⁰⁰pm) **or**
Thursday mornings (9³⁰-11⁰⁰am)
or anytime **On-Demand!**

Where? TCC campus

How? simply **scan here** for complete info



Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*Anybody who's ever been bullied as Esther was knows we need a strong, loyal God!
Let's use the "Five Question Bible Study" method to gain comfort from our Sovereign God!*

Monday— Study Psalm 104:1-4.

Tuesday— Study Psalm 104:5-13.

Wednesday— Study Psalm 104:14-23.

Thursday— Study Psalm 104:24-30.

Friday— Study Psalm 104:31-35.

Saturday— Study Romans 11:33-36.

Need help trusting God's sovereignty?

For free, confidential help, write to:
BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]