NCFCA Apologetics Preparation for Monument Members

Season 22 Monument Release #3



Directions: Work through the source material in this download to help you understand this week’s selection of apologetics prompts. This release addresses approximately 5% of the total number of prompts you will need to be prepared for in your next tournament, so keep up the studying from week to week to ensure your knowledge in Apologetics. This week’s prompts are:

WHO IS GOD? (Part 2 of 2)

13. What is God's sovereignty and why is it significant?

14. What is God's grace and why is it significant?

15. What is God's holiness and why is it significant?

16. What is God's immutability and why is it significant?

17. What is the Holy Spirit's role and why is it significant?

For a list of all the prompts for the year and all other downloads for NCFCA apologetics, visit your download page at <https://club.monumentmembers.com/ncfca-apologetics/download-category/ncfca-apologetics>.

God’s Sovereignty *by Zack Seals*

What is God's sovereignty and why is it significant?

Bible Verses

*Over Nature & Weather:*Ps. 104; 105:16; 135:7; 147:7-20; 148; Job 9:5-10; 26:5-14; 37:1-24; 38:8-38; Mk. 4:39, 41

*Kings & Nations:* Dn. 1:2, 2:37-38; [4:25](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Daniel%204.25),30,32; 5:18,20,21; Is. 10:5-13; 40:23-24

*People & their Hearts:* Gn. 20:6; Prv. 21:1; 16:9 Ex. 3:21-22; 12:35-36; 34:23-24; Dt. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; Jgs. 7:2-3,22; 1 Sm. 2:6,15,20; 2 Sm. 17:14; 1 Kgs. 12:15; 20:28-29; 2 Chr. 13:14-16; Ez. 1:1, 5; [6:22](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezra%206.22); 7:27; Is. 45:4-5; Acts 4:27-28; 2 Cor. 8:16-17; Rv. 17:17

*Evil in General:* Gn. 50:20 (cf. Ps. 105:17); Ex. 4:11 (disease & disability); [Job 2:10](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%202.10) (cf. [Js. 5:11](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%205.11)); 42:2; [Ps. 115:3](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.%20115.3); [Prv. 16:33](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.%2016.33); [21:31](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2021.31); [Is. 45:7](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.%2045.7) (virtually all of Is. 42-48); [Lam. 3:37-38](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lam.%203.37-38); [Dn. 4:32](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Daniel%204.32), [35](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Daniel%204.35); [Am. 3:6](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Amos%203.6); [Mt. 10:29-31](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%2010.29-31); [Acts 4:27-28](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%204.27-28); [Eph. 1:11](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.%201.11); 2 Cor. 12:7[[1]](#footnote-1)

Quotations

“This is the essence of God’s sovereignty; His absolute independence to do as He pleases and His absolute control over the actions of all His creatures. No creature, person, or empire can either thwart His will or act outside the bounds of His will.” - Jerry Bridges, Author

“Sin cannot dethrone God. That is what sin aims to do, but it misses its mark. Sin brings guilt to a man, but it does not bring him one ounce of sovereignty. God rules even when men imagine they are defying Him.” - Tom Well*s*, Author

“What is fate? Fate is this - *Whatever is, must be.* But there is a difference between that and Providence. Providence says, *Whatever God ordains, must be;* but the wisdom of God never ordains anything without a purpose. Everything in this world is working for some great end. “ - C.H. Spurgeon, 19th century Pastor

Recommendations

*Is God Really In Control* by Jerry Bridges; *Four Views on Divine Providence*, Counterpoints Zondervan; *The Providence of God* by Paul Helm; *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J.I. Packer; *The Sovereignty of God* by A.W. Pink; *The Many Faces of Evil* by John Feinberg

Commentary

As is evident from the Scriptures above, there is a wealth of options one can take with this topic theologically.  It must be remembered however, the task at hand is apologetic in nature.

*Definition:* It must always be the apologist’s goal to make clear that their beliefs are derived from the Bible first and foremost, rather than defined by men and then found in the Scriptures. The most helpful way of doing this is to begin by briefly summarizing the list of verses given above. Pick at least one from each category above and quickly cover the breadth of God’s sovereignty by explaining each verse. One succinct definition of sovereignty that John Feinberg provides is “sovereignty can be defined as God’s power of absolute self determination”.[[2]](#footnote-2) That is to say when the biblical data is examined it is observed that nothing determines God’s choices other than his own nature and purposes. God’s sovereignty is self-determining which therefore means it is entirely free and unconstrained by human choices. Additionally, God’s sovereign will is entirely efficacious and cannot be thwarted by any creaturely will. Everything that he plans will come about (Ps. 115:3). The grounds of this universal sovereignty are in God’s absolute ownership of all that he has created (Ps. 50:10), including humans (Prov. 21:1, 1 Sam. 2:6).

*The objection:*Naturally, the tension arises how this comprehensive view of sovereignty allows for human free will. The problem, it is commonly assumed, is that if God is the one ultimate influencing the decisions of the human heart than a man’s choices are not ultimately left up to him and therefore he is not morally responsible. Without getting into too much detail,[[3]](#footnote-3) this objection assumes a particular view of freewill that renders the biblical definition of the sovereignty of God given above incompatibile with moral responsibility. Theologically speaking, there are two ways one can define human freewill. It is either *compatible* with God’s determining of future events[[4]](#footnote-4) through human choices (call this theological determinism) or it is *incompatible* with God’s determination. Many incompatibilists argue that freewill is incompatible with any kind of determinism because it is necessary to have the ability to do otherwise in order for an action to be free. They would say, for example, the speaker’s choice to address the question on the sovereignty of God in their speech instead of another option presented is because *all factors being considered* (including God’s intentions and efforts) they had the equal ability to choose this particular subject or some other topic presented. This idea is called the principle of alternative possibilities and is widely popular in the American culture today.[[5]](#footnote-5) Basically, it claims an action is only free, and therefore morally responsible, when alternative possibilities are equally available at the time of the choice. God’s sovereignty in human actions as presented in the prior section rules out the principle of alternative possibilities. There then seems to be an inherent conflict either with our formulation of God’s sovereignty or with the philosophical view of freewill that appears so intuitive.

*Answering the objection and thus showing the significance of God’s sovereignty:*The closest Biblical explanation that can be given in resolving this age old dilemma is to deny the incompatibilist view of freewill stated above and affirm a view of freewill called *compatibilism.* Numerous texts in the bible teach that man’s actions are determined by the desires of their heart[[6]](#footnote-6) and that their actions will flow from their heart. “Freewill” then is not about having the ability to do otherwise but rather a “free” will is one that is able to act in accordance with its desires. What’s so important about this definition is that it allows for both man to be free and therefore morally responsible for his actions and yet also have their actions determined by God. The best example of this in the Bible is found in Isaiah 10. In this chapter God is using the wicked nation of Assyria to bring judgment on his own people Israel and the way he does so has fascinating insights into the Biblical view of moral responsibility and freewill. In describing the king of Assyria’s actions in v. 5-6, the author makes it clear that it is because of *God’s* action that the king is acting the way he is. Yet, incredibly, in v. 12 God says he will still judge the arrogant king of Assyria as guilty of having a prideful heart. Shockingly, in v. 15 God goes on to compare the king as a simple tool that he can use to bring about his purpose and yet still be justified in judging the king for having a wicked heart!

One must be clear there this is picture is nothing like the common caricature that this view makes humans out to be robots who simply receive divine commands with no will of their own. Quite contrary to this picture man is responsible precisely because he is doing what he wants to do in following his will/heart even if that state of the heart was, in some sense, intended by God. Of course, there is no use in speculating as to the exact mechanics of how this divine causation works in the human heart because it would be so unlike any level of human causation there would be no way of comparing. Rather, the response should be the same of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:35 that “all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’” At the end of the day, man has no right to question God’s authority to rule in the way he does or judge and hold us accountable for our actions in the way he does. This is a wonderful release of control for the human mind to rest in knowing that God is totally able to rule without hindrance from his subjects. Jerry Bridges pastorally notes that “If God is not sovereign in the decisions and actions of other people as they affect us, then there is a whole major area of our lives where we cannot trust God; where we are left, so to speak, to fend for ourselves.”[[7]](#footnote-7) A.W. Pink also notes, “What is God’s remedy for dejection at apparent failure in our labours? This–the assurance that God’s purpose cannot fail, that God’s plans cannot miscarry, that God’s will must be done. Our labours are not intended to bring about that which God has not decreed.” Of course, this should never lead one to a passive life of complacency. That mindset flows from an unbiblical fatalism[[8]](#footnote-8) rather than a careful balance between God’s action and man’s responsibility. Finally, Paul argues in Ephesians 1 that the very purpose of God working all things according to the counsel of his will is because it will then be brought to “the praise of his glory” (v. 14). May the Christian find sweet praise in knowing that God can and will use all means possible to make His name gloriously known throughout this earth in both the just punishment of the wicked and the salvation of the undeserving.

God’s Grace *by Joshua Johnson*

What is God's grace and why is it significant?

Bible Verses

Hosea 6
John 1:14, 17
Acts 20:32
Romans 3:22-24; 5:15-17, 20; 6:1-2
2 Corinthians 8:9; 12:9
Ephesians 1:7; 2:4-5, 8-9
Titus 2:11-14
Hebrews 2:9

Quotations

“Only the Christian faith presents God’s grace as unconditional…If you’re not stunned by the thought of grace, then you aren’t grasping what grace offers you, or what it cost Jesus.” –Randy Alcorn

“Men may flee from the sunlight to dark and musty caves of the earth, but they cannot put out the sun. So men may in any dispensation despise the grace of God, but they cannot extinguish it.” –A. W. Tozer

“Christ is no Moses, no exactor, no giver of laws, but a giver of grace, a Savior; he is infinite mercy and goodness, freely and bountifully given to us.” –Martin Luther

“Grace isn’t about God lowering His standards. It’s about God fulfilling those standards through the substitutionary suffering of the standard-setter.” –Randy Alcorn

Recommendations

*Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem (Chapter 36, Section D.)

The Grace and Truth Paradox by Randy Alcorn

The Principle of the Path by Andy Stanley

http://www.gotquestions.org/grace-of-God.html

Commentary

The grace of God distinguishes Christianity from every other religion. Unlike Mormonism, Islam and other religions, which require works to attain salvation, Christianity affirms that God provides salvation through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. And this sacrifice reveals God’s unmerited and undeserved love for mankind, or His grace.

However, we cannot see or appreciate the beauty of the grace of God unless we understand what we have been saved from. The skeptic needs to understand the need for grace. Why does grace matter? Because all of us have a problem: sin. We have all said, done, and thought things which offend God.

So while there are many ways to approach this critical point of salvation and of the gospel, a good start when explaining grace would be to begin with a discussion of original sin and the depravity of man. Think of your own struggles and consider explaining how God has saved you from your own sinful nature through the grace of God and the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. Testimonies and personal stories are often powerful. They can reveal your heart and compassion.

Also, think about discussing the nature of the grace of God. Ephesian 2:8-9 tells us that the grace of God is a gift from Him. Most of us have received Christmas gifts or birthday gifts. Are you required to accept a gift when it is offered? No. You can reject a gift. Sometimes people return gifts that they do not like or exchange them for something else. But the grace of God is a gift of immense value. Salvation by grace through faith saves our souls and gives us eternal life with God. It is undeserved, unmerited, and unconditional, yet God willingly offers it to every person in the world. Every human being has an opportunity to accept or reject God’s precious gift of grace.

Blessings to you as you explain the meaning of God’s grace and why it matters!

 God’s Holiness *by Luis Garcia*

What is God's holiness and why is it significant?

Bible Verses

Exodus 15:11

Leviticus 11:45, 19:2, 20:7-8

1 Samuel 2:2

1 Chronicles 16:29

Psalm 47:8; 99:5, 9

Isaiah 6:1-8

Habakkuk 1:12-13

2 Corinthians 7:1

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 4:7

1 Peter 1:13-16

1 John 1:5-9

Quotations

“The serene, silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of God.” –Blaise Pascal

 “To say that God is holy is to say that He is set apart, distinct from us. And because of His set apart-ness, there is no way we can ever fathom all of who He is. To the Jews, saying something three times demonstrated its perfection, so to call God ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ is to say that He is perfectly set apart, with nothing and no one to compare Him to. That is what it means to be ‘holy.’” –Francis Chan, *Crazy Love*

Recommendations

*The Holiness of God* by R.C. Sproul

*Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem

*No One Like Him* by John Feinberg, Chapter 8, under “Holiness”

http://carm.org/dictionary-holy

http://gracequotes.org/topic/god-holiness

Commentary

God being holy is God being God. In a sense, the nature of God being holy is Him being self-defining. He is absolutely separate from all of creation in purity and transcendence, and He is the object of absolute devotion. Nothing can be compared to Him. Holiness is the idea of God truly being set apart.

Fundamentally, God’s holiness is significant because if God is impure or can commit evil, we no longer have any sense of morality. As the definer and ultimate example of morality, if God were to violate His own law, He would be an inconsistent being. His holiness is the proof and assurance of the purity and wisdom in all He does and is. However, in all technicality, if God were evil, we couldn’t do anything about it and probably wouldn’t recognize it. God’s holiness is powerfully convicting as it is the contrast of Him and us.

From the holiness of God, we find three specific reactions that result: distinction from comparison (we utterly unlike God in His grandeur and beauty; we clearly were made for Him and He is our awe-inspiring Creator), realization of our sin (He is so pure, and we are so filthy because of our sin nature and lifestyle of rebellion), and reverent praise in word and action (every knee will bow and every tongue will confess to His greatness and to His name). All of these are great avenues to take with this topic, exploring the relation and reaction of God’s holiness to the world and to the calling of believers.

God’s Immutability *by Luis Garcia*

What is God's immutability and why is it significant?

Bible Verses

Deuteronomy 7:9

1 Samuel 15:29

Psalm 11:3; 90:2; 102:27

Malachi 3:6

Luke 6:47-49

Hebrews 6:13-19; 13:8

Quotations

“One of two things causes a man to change his mind and reverse his plans: want of foresight to anticipate everything, or lack of foresight to execute them. But as God is both omniscient and omnipotent there is never any need for Him to reverse His decrees.” –A. W. Pink

 “My hope is built on nothing less/ Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness./ I dare not trust the sweetest frame,/ But wholly trust in Jesus’ Name./ On Christ the solid Rock I stand,/ All other ground is sinking sand;/ All other ground is sinking sand…His oath, His covenant, His blood,/ Support me in the whelming flood./ When all around my soul gives way,/ He then is all my Hope and Stay.” –The Old Hymn, *My Hope is Built* by Edward Mote, 1834

 “The doctrine of God’s immutability is of the highest significance…Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in Him alone, for only He is pure being and no becoming. Hence, in scripture God is often called the Rock.” –Herman Bavinck, Dutch Theologian

Recommendations

*Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem, pg. 163-168

*No One Like Him* by Paul Feinberg, Chapter 6, under “Immutability”

http://gracequotes.org/topic/god-immutability/

Commentary

One of the best things to emphasize in this card is what is well said in the quotation from Herman Bavinck. The Dutch theologian compares God’s unchanging nature to His title of being the Rock. God being the Rock is a frequent image throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms (which remember are God’s people pouring out their hearts, reflecting on the truth of the Scriptures, and responding accordingly). Therefore, you can bring in the parable of the rock and sand in Luke 6:47-49, showing how all of life and creation are in constant change (shifting sands) but God does not (the solid Rock). He is our anchor. He is our strong foundation. Interestingly though, the image of the rock in this parable is actually focused more on the man’s obedience after hearing the Word preached to him. The close connection between a man’s devotion to God in his life and God’s unwavering promise should not be ignored. The man who dwells and lives on the Word of God—the gospel—will have a life that is built on the immovable foundation of God Himself. Consider Psalm 11:3. This verse is the words of wicked. They know the significance of that sturdy foundation. If God is whimsical, what ground do His people have to place confidence and trust. We are weak and hopeless without Him. Moreover, if He lost His perfection—His steadfast nature, He too would be corrupted like His fallen world. There would be no guarantee to anything of who He is but would be much like the pagan deities throughout history.

Holy Spirit *by Luis Garcia*

What is the Holy Spirit's role and why is it significant

## Bible Verses

(See Commentary)

## Quotations

“When Satan attacks, strike back with the sword of the Spirit.” –Art Rorheim

“When I read that Jesus said that we will do even greater things then he did (john 14:12) I was perplexed. I don’t know about you, but I haven’t raised anyone from the dead recently. I haven’t walked on water in a while either…Jesus wasn’t saying that we would do even more impressive magic tricks, he was talking about Love. When Jesus left he gave us the Holy Spirit and the ability to show his God-sized Love to people that need it desperately.” –Matthias J. Barker

## Commentary

Before going into answering this question, it is necessary to make a short analysis of the word “role.” Unlike humanity, God is unlimited in what He does, and trying to fit the Holy Spirit into a specific roleplay is insulting to the infinite power and creativity of God, and, worse, it leaves too much room for limiting our idea of what God is capable of. Theologians agree that the Holy Spirit is equal in power to the Father and the Son, meaning that in immanence and transcendence He is equally unlimited. With that in mind, we can then move on to what the Holy Spirit does. An interesting note to be made is how much the Holy Spirit seems to love spontaneity. The Holy Spirit is often overlooked as a being full of personality and desire for friendship. Of the three members of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is the most likely to randomly show up at your house (Ezekiel 3:24), to push you onto center stage (Mark 13:11), to give you a warm hug to make you happy and inspired (Luke 1:41), to promise someone a delightful mysterious surprise (Luke 2:26), to dress up in the best costume for an occasion (Luke 3:22), be patient in teaching you something new (John 14:26), orchestrate an unexpected party full of wise words in conversation (Acts 2:4), someone who sees the best in you and wants you to be your best (1 Corinthians 12:1-11), and who is intuitively understanding when you’re going through pain or joy (Acts 15:8, Romans 8:26-27). While a friend like this is fun-loving, the Holy Spirit is also someone who is infinitely deep, and nothing can be hidden from Him. God knows our hearts even better than we do, and a friend who loves you and knows you so well will not let big issues be set aside (Psalm 139:23, Jeremiah 12:3, 17:9-10). The Holy Spirit is a companion who you can’t help but be painfully honest with, who knows how to make you be your very best. That very best thing is this: that you will be made into a warrior (Ephesians 6:10-18). On a doctrinal level, the “role” of the Holy Spirit of God is to mediate, to complete the work of sanctification, and to exhort, but don’t let these words of doctrine limit you from knowing the personality of the Holy Spirit in your own life.

1. I have modified this list originally found here: http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/the-sovereignty-of-god [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Although if the reader is interested, Feinberg has an excellent discussion of this subject in his magnificent work *No One Like Him.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Eph 1:11, Acts 4:27, 2 Corinthians 12:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Thaddeus Williams thorough analysis of this view and how prevalent it is in society in *Love, Freedom, and Evil*. (2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Proverbs 4:27, Ezekiel 36:26, and Luke 6:45 to name a few. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Trusting God*, 1988, p. 45 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See the Spurgeon quotation above. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)