



This midweek study will help students understand how God sovereignly cares for and directs all things for His glory and our good. Use the following outline and activity to lead a midweek event for your students.

Essential Doctrine: God's Providence

Providence refers to God's continuing work and involvement in His creation. This includes God's preservation of the created order, His governance, and His care for His people (Gen. 8:21-22; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Christians believe entire universe is contingent upon God, incapable of existing apart from Him. Christians also believe in God's personal and direct intervention in the world—instead of a hands-off approach to creation—which affects the natural order and the individuals and events within human history.

 **Scripture:** *Genesis 8:21-22; Psalm 4:8; 66:7; 103:19; 145:15-16; Daniel 2:21; Matthew 5:45; Luke 1:52; Acts 17:26; Romans 8:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3*

 **Christ Connection:** *God is not some distant deity who, like a spectator in the sky, watches things unfold below. Instead, He is very much involved in His creation, most notably in the incarnation of Jesus.*

1 God preserves and directs all of creation.
(Gen. 8:21-22; Ps. 103:19; Matt. 5:45; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)

The Bible repeatedly says God is sovereign over the universe He created. He is in control of all things—seasons, weather, events, everything. He not only created everything, He sustains everything moment by moment. The “laws of nature” are simply a description of how God normally runs the world. He is free to do a miracle at any time. God's providence means the world doesn't operate according to fate, but according to His will. Obviously, there's a lot wrong in the world due to sin. God has allowed sin for a time, but He is not the author of sin, and He will eventually create a new heaven and earth free from sin.

2 God governs the world, including all nations and people. (Ps. 66:7; Dan. 2:21; Luke 1:52)

In ways we can't fully understand, God sovereignly rules over the nations, all rulers, and all people. This can seem difficult to believe given how many nations, rulers, and people are in rebellion against Him. While that's true, God still has the last word about what happens in the world. He's still in control. No one can stop His will. This doesn't mean we aren't responsible for our choices—the Bible says we are. However, beneath our choices lies God's providence.

3 God cares for all people, especially those who trust Him. (Ps. 4:8; 145:15-16; Acts 17:26; Rom. 8:28)

The most personal and comforting aspect of God's providence is how He cares for us, His people. He provides what we need to live. He arranges when and where we live. He even brings good out of the bad things that happen to us during this life. Probably the best biblical example of this is the story of Joseph. Joseph was sold into slavery and shipped off to Egypt. He eventually became governor of Egypt, sustaining the people during a seven-year famine. What people meant for evil, God used for good.

Opening Activity

Use the example of how an author or screenwriter can seem a little godlike in that he or she can create a story and generally determine what happens within the story. (Still, even authors say they're not sure what their characters will do. Despite doing the writing, they are often surprised by some of the character's words and actions.)

Then ask students to explain where the analogy breaks down. Here are some ideas: God created everything, including imagination, so unlike human stories that borrow from various things, the story God is writing is truly original. Humans, more than characters in a book, really do have choices. While these choices are real, they are taken into account by God and His plan. Alternatively, ask students to talk about times when they've experienced God's providence—times when they've been aware that life is not random and God is active in their life.

This midweek study will help students understand how God sovereignly cares for and directs all things for His glory and our good. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: God's Providence

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1 God preserves and directs all of creation.
(Gen. 8:21-22; Ps. 103:19; Matt. 5:45;
Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)

Read Psalm 103:19.

- *Why is it sometimes tough to believe God rules over everything?*
Sin and suffering obscures God from our sight. In this world, we see through a glass dimly. There's so much that we don't understand.
- *How can Scripture help us in tough times?*
Scripture gives us a long-term view of life. We see that suffering is temporary and God can bring good out of it in ways we never could have imagined. Joseph's life is a good example of that.
- *What Scriptures are particularly encouraging to you?*
This is personal choice, but many people find the Psalms encouraging. Psalm 103 is a good one. The Book of Galatians is also an encouraging reminder of the gospel.

2 God governs the world, including all nations and people. (Ps. 66:7; Dan. 2:21; Luke 1:52)

Read Psalm 66:7.

- *How is God's providence related to His power?*
God's almighty power enables Him to govern the world as He desires.
- *Why are the rebellious playing with fire?*
Many people in this world who don't love God and are in rebellion against Him seem to be doing just fine. The thing to understand, though, is that God will judge justly sooner or later. Psalm 73 is a helpful perspective in that regard.

3 God cares for all people, especially those who trust Him. (Ps. 4:8; 145:15-16; Acts 17:26; Rom. 8:28)

Read Psalm 145:15-16.

- *Who does God provide for?*
God provides for all living things, including people in rebellion against Him. His common grace extends to all.

Read Romans 8:28.

- *Why is this verse so highly valued among God's people?*
"All things" really means "all things." We don't know how God will work things out, and it might not even happen in this life, but we can trust that He's good and working for our good.

WRAP IT UP

Understanding God's providence is largely what faith is all about. We interpret life according to God's promises and His character. We relax, knowing He is in control and just asks us to trust and obey.

- *Search online and read through the lyrics of William Cowper's classic hymn, "God Moves In a Mysterious Way." Which lines stand out to you most? Why?*