

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Living out the gospel with
one another in our homes

John 12:37-50 - Keith Fitzpatrick

Jesus performed many signs and wonders before the people and many believed, but many did not. John reminds his readers of the words of the prophet Isaiah, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts.” Further, John acknowledges that some believed, but loved the glory they received from man more than that of the Lord.

Jesus then cries out regarding his unity and authority with the Father, that those who believe in Jesus also believe in the Father who sent him. However, those who reject Jesus also reject the Father.

Pastor Will’s big question this week came in form of a question, he asked, “Why do people not believe?” He stated, “God *will* harden hearts,” and he asked, “Does God have a right to elect? Is God’s election good and just?”

Isaiah 6:10-11

Make the heart of this people dull,
and their ears heavy,
and blind their eyes;
lest they see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”
Then I said, “How long, O Lord?”

Pastor Will pointed out the beauty and difficulty of the doctrine of *man’s responsibility* and *God’s sovereignty*. God elects us in his sovereignty before the creation of the world and allows us to freely choose him.

- 1) Discuss in your groups duality and unity of this doctrine without the pressure of fully understanding it. Do you believe that man is responsible and yet God is sovereign? Do you struggle with it?
- 2) How would you describe the sovereignty of God? What does God’s sovereignty mean to you and how does it feel to be in subjection to it? Is it difficult, comforting, both, something else?

Read Jeremiah 18:4 and Romans 9:19-29

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- 3) How would you describe *grace*? What is the difference between a *gift* and an *entitlement*? Is God unjust for punishing some sinners, but giving grace to others? Discuss the feelings you have about this doctrine, it's ok if it's hard.

God fulfils his sovereign will through the obedience of his people. It has been asked, "why share the gospel with the unbeliever if God sovereignly elects?"

- 4) How would you respond to that question? Read Psalm 96:2-3. Do you feel pressure to covert others in evangelism? Or does God's sovereignty in election remove the pressure of success or failure?

J.I Packer wrote, "*our calling as Christians is not to love God's elect, and them only, but to love our neighbor, irrespective of whether he is elect or not.*"

Think about those people in your life that have heard and understood the Gospel but have not repented and put their faith in Jesus. Lift those names up to the Lord and trust in the glory of his sovereign will.

Book recommendation: *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J.I. Packer