

The background features a repeating pattern of organic, watercolor-style shapes in three colors: a deep navy blue, a warm terracotta brown, and a soft, dusty rose pink. These shapes are scattered across the white background, creating a textured and artistic feel. A central white rectangular box contains the title text.

**D W E L L I N G**  
ON GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

# Getting Started

## Overview of the Week:

Our theme for the week is dwelling on the sovereignty of God. John Piper defines God's sovereignty as "his right and power to do all he decides to do." God, because of who He is, can do and act as He pleases. There is none who can stop Him because He is all powerful, and there is none who should stop Him because He is right and perfect in all that He does. These ideas bring us to the complimentary idea of God's providence, meaning his "wise and purposeful sovereignty" (Piper). As we studied last week, God's wisdom exceeds that of any other. This wisdom is a key element in His sovereignty. God is not merely ruling over His creation with an iron fist; rather, He justly rules with full wisdom, justice, and grace.

## How Do I Prepare?

This week, we're going to look at several psalms that feature the theme/idea of the sovereignty of God. We will study Psalm 93, 47, 115, and 121 this week. As always, on day 5, you will have the opportunity to reflect on the studies of the week and choose one of those passages to dig into more deeply for self and communal application.

## Memory Verse of the Week:

"The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established. It shall never be moved" (Psalm 93:1, ESV).  
On the next page, write or "Scripture doodle" your memory verse.

## Prayer of the Week:

On the next page, write out a prayer to the Lord, praising Him for His sovereignty and power. Use Psalm 47 to guide you as you write this prayer.

## Songs of the Week:

"Come Praise and Glorify," Sovereign Grace; "He Shall Reign," Hillsong Music; "You Hold It All Together," Maverick City Music; "Sovereign Over Us," Shane and Shane; "How Great You Are," Sovereign Grace  
Link to playlist: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3BEh5j9yeffglo4EbmVrQW>

**Week Four Memory Verse:**

**Week Four Prayer:**

# Day One: Psalm 93, God is the Sovereign, Eternal King

## 1. Pray

Before we begin reading and examining God's Word, let's ask the Lord to lead us in the study of His Word.

## 2. Examine

As we begin our study on dwelling on the sovereignty of God, we'll start by taking a look at Psalm 93. Read the Psalm in its entirety.

<sup>1</sup> The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;  
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.

<sup>2</sup> Your throne is established from of old;  
you are from everlasting.

<sup>3</sup> The floods have lifted up, O LORD,  
the floods have lifted up their voice;  
the floods lift up their roaring.

<sup>4</sup> Mightier than the thunders of many waters,  
mightier than the waves of the sea,  
the LORD on high is mighty!

<sup>5</sup> Your decrees are very trustworthy;  
holiness befits your house,  
O LORD, forevermore. (ESV)

## The Context:

Psalms 93 is included in book four of the psalms, which is the section of psalms that demonstrate hope that although a Davidic King is no longer on the throne, there is still hope in God's coming kingdom. The 17 psalms in this section focus around the idea of God's sovereignty, bringing great hope and encouragement to the people of Israel. There is no heading included with this psalm in the original text, and no author is given.

The psalmist begins with the statement, "The Lord reigns," showing that it is the Lord alone who reigns. No others are listed here in this psalm, not Satan, not mortal kings. God alone reigns. The verb "reigns" is an active verb, meaning that this is a purposeful, active reign, not a passive one. In addition, this verb is in the present continuous tense, meaning that it encompasses all time periods. God reigned in eternity past, reigns in the present, and reigns in eternity future. There has never been nor will there ever be a time in which the Lord does not reign.

The psalmist goes on to describe the Lord's attire. Of course, this is a figurative attire that demonstrates God's majesty and reminds us again that He is actively reigning. The description is not of a God who is in casual, everyday clothes; He's not in sleeping garments. No, He is "robed in majesty," wearing His kingly garments and a belt of strength. This belt implies that He is clothed with armor as well as kingly robes. The psalmist uses this kingly imagery to teach us that God is the ultimate ruler, who rules with both majesty (dignity and beauty) and strength.

In His majesty and strength, God established the world, which cannot be moved, as is evidenced by its continued existence to this very day. God, who established the world, has been reigning on His throne from old, since before the earth's existence and will continue to do so eternally. God has a right to rule over the earth because He is the One who created it. The psalmist goes on to praise God for the eternity of His reign, showing that even before the earth was created, God existed and was the sovereign king.

Beginning in verse 3, the imagery moves from that of God on His throne to flood waters rising and the sea churning. Images of flood waters and stormy seas would have solicited emotions of fear within those reading this psalm. Floods are one of Israel's most fearsome natural disasters. Every year, flash floods come through the Negev desert, causing people to be stranded, injured, or even killed. Stormy seas, also, would be a fear-inducing image for many Israelites, as fishing was a common occupation. To the left of Israel is the Mediterranean Sea, which would have occasional sea storms, as all seas do. However, in Israel's northern region is the Sea of Galilee, which is known for its abrupt and violent storms. Even large fishing boats with seasoned fishermen could be in danger due to these storms.

The purpose of placing this fearsome imagery directly after the image of the all-powerful God reigning on His throne in majesty and strength is to show God's sovereignty over nature. While mankind may be able to have elements of control over certain aspects of life, nature is always outside of man's control. Even nature, however, is ruled over by God, as He is the Creator of all things, including the natural world. Thus, in times when the flood waters rise and the waters in the sea rage, God continues to reign. This passage demonstrates that regardless of how difficult a situation may appear from the human perspective, it is never beyond the realm of God's sovereignty. As verse 4 states, "Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty!" (ESV).

The psalm closes with these words: "Your decrees are very trustworthy; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore" (Ps 93:5, ESV). It is one thing for a sovereign ruler to have the right to rule and another for him to have the strength and dignity to do so. It is quite another for a sovereign ruler to be one who is trustworthy and holy, thereby allowing his or her subjects to have confidence in the way that the ruler leads.







3. It is likely that the idea of God's sovereignty is not new to you. So why is it that we still worry over the future and what will happen to us and connected to us?

4. Take some time to reflect on the majesty, beauty, sovereignty, and faithfulness of God. Write out some incidents from your personal life in which you have seen God's hand at work when things were clearly beyond your control. Take some time to praise God for His sovereignty and to thank Him for how He is always at work in the world.

# Day Two: Psalm 47, The Power, Might, and Beauty of God's Reign

## 1. Pray

Before we begin reading and examining God's Word, let's ask the Lord to lead us in the study of His Word.

## 2. Examine

As we begin our study on dwelling on the sovereignty of God, we'll start by taking a look at the psalm as a whole. Read Psalm 47 in its entirety.

<sup>1</sup> Clap your hands, all peoples!  
Shout to God with loud songs of joy!  
<sup>2</sup> For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared,  
a great king over all the earth.  
<sup>3</sup> He subdued peoples under us,  
and nations under our feet.  
<sup>4</sup> He chose our heritage for us,  
the pride of Jacob whom he loves. *Selah*

<sup>5</sup> God has gone up with a shout,  
the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.  
<sup>6</sup> Sing praises to God, sing praises!  
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!  
<sup>7</sup> For God is the King of all the earth;  
sing praises with a psalm!

<sup>8</sup> God reigns over the nations;  
God sits on his holy throne.  
<sup>9</sup> The princes of the peoples gather  
as the people of the God of Abraham.  
For the shields of the earth belong to God;  
he is highly exalted! (ESV)

## The Context:

Psalm 47 is written by the Sons of Korah and addressed to the Chief Musician. The exact context is unknown, though most agree that it was likely written after a great victory. One suspected victory is that of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:15-23. Regardless of its historical context, the psalm is clearly focused on the future ascension of the Messiah to His throne and to His coming reign over all the earth.

Psalm 46 does help to supply some literary context for the passage. That psalm included a call to warring nations to stop their wars and to acknowledge the kingship of God. Here, in Psalm 47, we see this idea taken a step further: God invites these pagan nations to not only acknowledge God's kingship but also to submit to His rule and join in praising Him (Wilson, *NIV Application Commentary on the Psalms*). Psalm 47, thus, is a call for all peoples of the world to unite under the common authority of God and to join together in praise to Him.

This psalm is written in two stanzas: 1) Psalm 47:1-5 and 2) Psalm 47:6-10. In the first stanza, the psalmist focuses on praising God for how he subdues pagan nations before Israel. In the second stanza, the psalmist focuses on God's kingly reign over all peoples of the world. Both stanzas begin by calling readers and hearers of this psalm to join together in praise to God, the sovereign king. Each stanza ends with the image of God being exalted or raised up.

The psalmist opens this text by urging its readers and hearers to clap their hands together. At first read, this may seem like nothing more than rejoicing through the clapping of hands. And while this may be the full meaning, another very likely read of this phrase is the idea of joining hands together in agreement or covenant. Clapping hands together in agreement was actually the most traditional use of this phrase during Old Testament times; however, rejoicing through the clapping of hands is also seen in Scripture (see Nahum 3:19 for details). It is clear that whether or not there is a covenant implied via this clapping of hands or not, the psalm is certainly calling its audience to join in vibrant praise to the Lord, as shown through the second half of verse 1: "Shout to God with loud songs of joy!" (ESV).

The rest of this first stanza goes on to give reasons why its hearers should vibrantly praise God. First, the psalmist reminds us that God is worthy of fear and respect because of how great a King He is. His might is seen through His subduing, or overcoming, the surrounding nations. Note the inclusivity and confidence the psalmist has in this verse. He is praising God for ruling over Israel and looking forward to the day when God is the accepted ruler of all the earth. The psalmist goes on to praise God for choosing a blessed inheritance for His children. Again, the psalmist demonstrates trust and confidence in God, knowing that whatever the Lord has chosen will be good and beneficial. He then closes this stanza with a reminder that God has ascended His throne not in silence but with a shout and the trumpet, a symbol of strength and victory.

The second stanza begins with another call to worship: "Sing praises to God!" (Ps 47:6, ESV). He again calls on the hearers and readers of this psalm to praise God for reigning over all the earth. He makes mention of God's holy throne. God doesn't reign like an ordinary earthly king, who sometimes rules wisely and sometimes makes mistakes. No, God is perfect in all that He does, and His reign reflects that. He is perfect, and He is good! Here, we have a beautiful image of diverse peoples coming together in unity, no longer at war, praising the God whom they serve.



3. Read Psalm 46, and then read Psalm 47. How does the concept of God prevailing over pagan nations in Psalm 46 inform your reading of Psalm 47?

4. Read the following passages: Ephesians 1:3-14, Hebrews 9:15, Hebrews 11:8, 1 Peter 1:3-4, and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What is the heritage, or inheritance, that God has for His people?

5. What does verse 9 tell us about who will be praising God in the future?

## Reflection and Application

Psalm 47 is a beautiful psalm that teaches us better how to praise God. This psalm isn't one of quiet meditation but is instead one of joyful, loud, exuberant praise to the Sovereign King! The psalmist is overcome with joy because of how God has helped him and the Israelites with their immediate need of winning a battle. This praise then grows into praising God for ruling over all the earth and causes the psalmist to yearn for the day when God is praised as the Ruler that He is by all nations. I hope that you have been encouraged by these words and also challenged to have a larger picture of God and a wider scope for why He deserves our praise. I also pray that this psalm helps you to think beyond your current community of believers and also yearn for the day when people from all nations, tribes, and tongues will bow together in praise to the Lord Almighty.

1. Compare the way worship looks in this psalm and the way your own personal worship typically looks.

2. When you find yourself praising God, what is generally the cause of that praise? Is this similar or different from what we see in the psalms we've been reading thus far in the study?

# Day Three: Psalm 115, God's Unique Reign

## 1. Pray

Before we begin reading and examining God's Word, let's ask the Lord to lead us in the study of His Word.

## 2. Examine

Today, we will focus on how God's reign is unique in that no other being or person reigns in the way that the Lord reigns. Keep this idea in mind as you read Psalm 115 in its entirety.

<sup>1</sup>Not to us, O Lord, not to us,  
but to your name give glory,  
for the sake of your steadfast love  
and your faithfulness!

<sup>2</sup>Why should the nations say,  
"Where is their God?"

<sup>3</sup>Our God is in the heavens;  
he does all that he pleases.

<sup>4</sup>Their idols are silver and gold,  
the work of human hands.

<sup>5</sup>They have mouths, but do not speak;  
eyes, but do not see

<sup>6</sup>They have ears, but do not hear;  
noses, but do not smell.

<sup>7</sup>They have hands, but do not feel; feet,  
but do not walk; and they do not make  
a sound in their throat.

<sup>8</sup>Those who make them become like them;  
so do all who trust in them.

<sup>9</sup>O Israel, trust in the Lord!  
He is their help and their shield.

<sup>10</sup>O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord!  
He is their help and their shield.

<sup>11</sup>You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!  
He is their help and their shield.

<sup>12</sup>The Lord has remembered us; he will bless us;  
he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the  
house of Aaron;

<sup>13</sup>he will bless those who fear the Lord,  
both the small and the great.

<sup>14</sup>May the Lord give you increase,  
you and your children!

<sup>15</sup>May you be blessed by the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth!

<sup>16</sup>The heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the  
earth he has given to the children of man.

<sup>17</sup>The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any  
who go down into silence.

<sup>18</sup>But we will bless the Lord from this time forth  
and forevermore. Praise the Lord! (ESV)

## The Context:

Psalm 115 is one that the Israelites would sing during the Passover feast. What is especially interesting about this psalm (and other Egyptian Hallel<sup>1</sup> psalms, as it is categorized), is that due to its ceremonial use during the Passover, this is one of the psalms that Jesus and His disciples likely would have sung on the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested. Bible scholar James Montgomery Boice contends that this psalm is likely meant to be sung liturgically, claiming it is meant to be sung by alternating groups of worshipers: the priests, the high priest, the people, and so on" (*Enduring Word Bible Commentary*).

This psalm opens by drawing attention away from those reading the psalm and placing it on the One who deserves it: the Almighty God. The psalmist refers to God as "Lord," showing submission before Him and also praises Him for his steadfast love and faithfulness. The psalmist recognizes that God alone is worthy to be praised because of who He is. He is a God who has love that extends from Himself and that endures faithfully; it doesn't wax and wane like the fickle love experienced on earth.

Beginning in verse 2, the psalmist contrasts the praiseworthy nature of God with that of the false gods and idols of the surrounding nations. He asks the rhetorical question, "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'" (Ps 115:2, ESV) because he realizes it is abundantly clear that the God of Israel is reigning and ruling over them. The God of Israel, unlike false gods, was not made by human hands. The One, True God is not only capable of seeing, hearing, and communicating, but He created these senses! He is the Creator of those who fashioned the false gods with their hands. So, it is no wonder that the psalmist balks at the idea of people having more faith in an idol than of the True God of the universe.

In verse 8, the psalmist shows the implication of following false gods: "those who make them become like them" (ESV). What a true statement: humans reflect that which they worship. The psalmist points out that there is great danger in worshipping false gods. Alexander Maclaren explains it this way: "Worship is sure to breed likeness. A lustful, cruel god will make his devotees so. Men make gods after their own image, and, when made, the gods make men after theirs. The same principle which degrades the idolater lifts the Christian to the likeness of Christ" (*Enduring Word Bible Commentary*).

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this is not a type listed in the ESV Study Bible's categories. That's because it is a descriptor given relating to the way the psalm is used rather than relating to its content.

The psalmist, therefore, urges God's people to trust in the One, True God in verses 9, 10, and 11. He begins by calling on Israel as a whole, then on the house of Aaron, and then on all who fear the Lord. It is likely that this progression of people who should trust in the Lord reflects a call to the Israelites and then to the priests and then to both Jews and Gentiles. In each call, the psalmist also uses the refrain, "He is their help and their shield" (ESV). This refrain reminds the hearers that God, unlike false idols, provides help and security for those who trust in Him.

In verses 12 and 13, we see a remembrance of God's blessings that He has brought upon Israel, the priests, and all the people of God. The psalmist wisely remembers God's past faithfulness to encourage himself and his hearers that God, who has always been faithful, will remain faithful. Verses 14 and 15 offer a blessing over the readers / hearers of this psalm in which the leader requests that God bless their entire households greatly. He then offers a reminder that it is God alone who can rain down blessings, not false gods or idols that others around them serve. God alone can provide these blessings because He is unique above all. He alone created the heavens and the earth.

God's authority on earth and in heaven remains the focus in verse 16 wherein the psalmist explains that God's reign in heaven is carried out directly by God Himself (and is, therefore, perfect). He has chosen in His sovereignty and wisdom to give dominion over the earth to His children (see Genesis 1:26-30). Thus, here, we see that God's sovereign rule is carried out by flawed, imperfect beings, on a fallen world. Although the dominion that humanity holds over the earth is greatly flawed, God still remains the ultimate ruler and is not distant or removed from His children.

The psalmist closes out the psalm by calling on the hearers again to praise God, noting that our bodies may only praise God while they are still living. (Our souls, of course, will continue praising Him for all of eternity). But the psalmist gives a sense of urgency to the end of this psalm by stating that we have a limited amount of time to praise the Lord here on earth. We should, therefore, use this time well by giving God the glory He is due and encouraging others to do the same.

## Your Turn to Dig In

1. Read verse 1. What is the basis for God being the One who deserves all praise and glory?
2. What are some reasons people today claim there is no God? What explanations do they give? How can this psalm help us to see that the claims of mankind that there is no God or that God is different from the God of the Bible are false? What evidence do you have to offer?
3. Remember that this song was likely one that was sung at Passover, a feast commemorating God's faithfulness in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. In Deuteronomy 5:15, 6:21, 15:15, and many other passages, God instructs Israel to reflect on what God has done for them. Read these passages, then explain why you think the Passover especially was a crucial moment on which the Israelites were instructed to reflect.

4. Look at the contrast seen between the false idols and the One, True God. List out the differences between them as stated in Psalm 115.

5. Why does remembering that God is a help and shield draw out praise of Him?

6. In what ways do you see the goodness of God reflected in this psalm? Why is it important that the Great, Sovereign Ruler be good?

## Reflection and Application

Psalm 115 teaches us that God is unique; that is to say, He is holy. There is none like Him, and His sovereignty is just one of His unique attributes. No other person, being, spirit, etc. has a right to rule over all of Creation like the One, True God because He alone created it. He, alone, is a deity who has the ability to watch over, protect, love, and deliver His people. There is none like Him, and praises be to Him that He is not only the rightful ruler of the world, but He is the rightful, good ruler. And as such, He deserves our praises now and forevermore!

1. When I read Psalm 115, I can't help but think of one of the Godliest men I know. Anytime he would do something for me or someone else (which was multiple times a day, as he is incredibly generous, kind, and helpful), we, of course, would thank him. He, in turn, would respond: "Don't thank me; thank the Lord." This simple phrase still sticks with me today and is so convicting because it reminds me that even the good deeds that I do are nothing compared to what the Lord has done for us. And these good deeds are only good because they are fruits of the Lord's work in my life. As James 1:17 tells us, "Every good and every perfect gift is from above" (ESV). What is your natural tendency when it comes to receiving the praises of others? Do you choose to accept the praise given, or do you point the praise and honor back to God? If you, like me, struggle with returning these praises back to the Lord, what is something you can do to work towards giving God the glory He deserves?

2. Read verse 8. Now, take some time to reflect on your own life. We know that we become more like the God or god that we serve. What is your life a reflection of? Who or what are you becoming more like? Why?

3. Recount times when God has been faithful to God's people (list examples from the Old or New Testament, from your own life, and from those in your community of faith). After listing several examples, offer up praises to God for His faithfulness.

# Day Four: Psalm 121, Implications of God's Reign

## 1. Pray

Before we begin reading and examining God's Word, let's ask the Lord to lead us in the study of His Word.

## 2. Examine

We have spent several days studying God's sovereignty as seen in the psalms. Today, let's turn our attention to Psalm 121 to see the implications of His sovereign reign. Read the psalm in its entirety before we look at it more closely together.

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.

<sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD is your keeper;  
the LORD is your shade on your right hand.

<sup>6</sup> The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD will keep your going out  
and your coming in from this time forth  
and forevermore. (ESV)

## The Context:

Psalm 121 is considered a psalm of ascent.<sup>2</sup> The typical understanding of these types of psalms is that they were often sung when believers would travel on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In modern use, these psalms have often been used before going on a journey, especially a missionary journey. David Livingstone was known for reading this psalm, along with Psalm 135, prior to journeying to Africa as a missionary in 1840.

The image that is given in this psalm is that of climbing up into the hills on the way into Jerusalem to worship God. During ancient times, it was common for people to sing as they traveled, especially when going on pilgrimage. Evidence of this is seen in Isaiah 30:29: "You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel" (ESV). Travelers going to Jerusalem had to go through the hills to get to the city. Going into the hills was generally a fearful time for those going on these religious pilgrimages as they viewed the hills as being one of the most dangerous parts of their journey for a few reasons. Standing at the foot of the hills, the pilgrims would see a 2,000 feet ascent staring them in the face, making the journey itself daunting and physically challenging. During this journey, they would be exposed to the elements, even when sleeping. It was customary for them to sleep outside as a reminder of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, placing them even more exposed to nature and their surroundings. In addition to this physical danger, there is the danger of thieves, who were known to hide in the hills during this time. Another danger is that of Satan and his demons and principalities. The hills are sometimes referred to as the "high places," which were the most common places for people to set up offerings to false gods and idols. One example of this is found in Jeremiah 3:23: "For in vain you look for salvation in the hills," a reference to false gods. Ancient people believed that demons were more prevalent in the hills, as there were sacrifices made to false idols in that area.

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<sup>2</sup> Note that the ascent psalm, similar to the Egyptian Hallel psalm, is not a type listed in the ESV Study Bible's categories. That's because it is a descriptor given relating to the way the psalm is used rather than relating to its content.

The original audience of this psalm would have been reflecting on these immediate, literal dangers but also on figurative “hills” or “mountains” they may come across in their daily lives, as well. We as modern-day believers can see the figurative dangers that are represented in these hills. We experience the dangers of our own flesh, the devil and his principalities, and the world itself.

As the psalmist pictures these dangers before him, the first question he asks himself is where his help comes from (verse 1). This rhetorical question acts as a reminder to set his sights not on what he literally sees ahead of him but instead on the One who is able to rescue him and help him when danger is present. He doesn't merely remind himself to trust in the Lord and try to “drum up” this trust within himself. Instead, he thinks on specific truths about God to renew his trust in the Lord. For example, he reminds himself that his help isn't resting upon himself but rather in God, who is powerful enough to have created heaven and earth. He then reminds himself that this All-Powerful Creator is always available. He never slumbers or sleeps. God is the one who keeps him and who offers shade and protection from physical harm and spiritual harm.

A “keeper” in ancient times refers to the person who would keep watch in the night to make sure that people were not overtaken by thieves, wild animals, or enemies while they slept. Remember, those who would be on journeys going towards Jerusalem would not stay in shelters but, rather, would be exposed to the elements. As you may expect, it wasn't uncommon for a keeper to dose off here or there, leaving those whom he was supposed to keep watch at risk. God is the perfect “keeper” of us as we never have to worry about His eye being removed from us due to a need for rest or sleep. The psalmist closes out the psalm by recounting how God keeps us perfectly from various types of harm, whether this be physical harm or spiritual harm. God and no one else is the ultimate keeper of our life.



## Reflection and Application

1. When you experience fear or anxiety or find yourself in the midst of “real and present danger,” what is your first instinct? Why? What should it be, based on the words of this psalm?
2. Have you ever had times where you struggle to sleep at night, worrying about a particular situation or danger? During times like these, how might you instead rely on God for your protection and care? Why is it wiser to rest in His security rather than replaying your worries in your mind while you should be sleeping?
3. What keeps you up at night? Why? How can you turn your concerns over to the Lord, and why is that a wise thing to do?

## Supplementary Reading with Questions

Read the brief article below from Dr. John Piper entitled “A Brief Theology of Sleep.”

At 5:00 a.m. Sunday morning the world is not dark, but there is no color. Everything is black and white and grey, except for the orange light on the garage across the street that shines through my bedroom window. There is no breeze, and the poplar leaves are caught like a snapshot in stillness. The stars are gone but the sun is not up yet; so you can't tell if the grey sky is overcast or clear. Very soon we will know.

I sit on the edge of my bed trying to develop a theology of sleep. Why did God design us to need sleep? We sleep a third of our lives. Just think of it: a third of our lives spent like dead men. Just think of everything being left undone that could be done had God not designed us to need sleep. There is surely no doubt that he could have created us with no need for sleep. And just think, everyone could devote himself to two careers, and not feel tired. Everyone could be a “full-time Christian worker” and still keep his job. There is so much of our Father's business we could be about.

Why did God imagine sleep? He never sleeps! He thought the idea up out of nothing. He thought it up for his earthly creatures. Why! Psalm 127:2 says, “It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved in his sleep.” According to this text sleep is a gift of love, and the gift is often spurned by anxious toil. Peaceful sleep is the opposite of anxiety. God does not want his children to be anxious, but to trust him. Therefore I conclude that God made sleep as a continual reminder that we should not be anxious but should rest in him.

Sleep is a daily reminder from God that we are not God. “He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4). But Israel will. For we are not God. Once a day God sends us to bed like patients with a sickness. The sickness is a chronic tendency to think we are in control and that our work is indispensable. To cure us of this disease God turns us into helpless sacks of sand once a day. How humiliating to the self-made corporate executive that he has to give up all control and become as limp as a suckling infant every day.

Sleep is a parable that God is God and we are mere men. God handles the world quite nicely while a hemisphere sleeps. Sleep is like a broken record that comes around with the same message every day: Man is not sovereign. Man is not sovereign. Man is not sovereign. Don't let the lesson be lost on you. God wants to be trusted as the great worker who never tires and never sleeps. He is not nearly so impressed with our late nights and early mornings as he is with the peaceful trust that casts all anxieties on him and sleeps.

## Questions about Piper's Article

1. Why did God create us with a need for sleep?
2. Why does the psalmist call lack of sleep "vanity" in Psalm 127:2? If we believe we must continue working late into the evening and rise early in the morning in order to accomplish all of our tasks, what does this say about our view of ourselves? Our view of God?
3. I'm not sure about you, but this is quite a convicting reading for me. I really struggle with staying up too late and rising too early, trying to get as much done as I possibly can. This often leads to me being worn out and getting burned out quite quickly. Why is burning the candle at both ends a sin before the Lord? Read Romans 14:23 as you seek to answer this question.
4. What practically do you need to do in your life to help you live more aligned with a biblical theology of sleep?

## Day Five: Week Four Debrief & PERCH Study

This week, we have focused on dwelling on the sovereignty of God. We have seen that He is ruling on His throne, that He is active and involved with His people, and that His rule extends throughout the entire earth to all of creation. It is not only people who must obey His laws, but nature itself bows to the laws of God, for He is the One who created all things. I hope that this study of God's sovereignty has encouraged you and challenged you at the same time. Now, take some time to reflect on the truths we've studied in a passage of your choosing.

### Debrief Week Four Using PERCH

Choose a passage from one of the psalms we read this week. It can be an entire psalm, or it can be a small portion of a psalm. If you chose a shorter passage, write out the passage below. If you choose a longer passage, choose key verses and keywords to write below.



**Change:** Prayerfully ask God how you can apply this passage to your life. Prayerfully consider what changes you need to make in your actions or beliefs in order to make the application of this passage to your life. Write these below.

**Help:** Prayerfully consider how you can help others using this passage. How can you share it with them? How can you spread the Truth of this passage to both believers and non-believers?

