

MASTER THE CONTENT OF SCRIPTURE



DISCIPLESHIP 3

The Works and Decrees of God

Armando Rodríguez

Book Introduction

In a culture captivated by chaos, *Discipleship 3: The Works and Decrees of God* offers a refreshing, Scripture-centered reminder that nothing in creation is accidental. Behind the universe's complexity and history's unfolding stands a sovereign, wise, and gracious God. This workbook—structured in the spirit of R.C. Sproul's *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*—unpacks six foundational doctrines that reveal how God works in and through His creation.

From the grandeur of creation to the mystery of providence, from the wonder of miracles to the justice of divine covenants, this study leads disciples into deeper trust and awe. These lessons are not academic detours—they're spiritual maps meant to ground faith, ignite worship, and equip believers to see God's fingerprints in every corner of life. Whether you're a new believer or a seasoned teacher, this guide draws you into the heart of a God whose decrees are eternal, whose covenants are unbreakable, and whose will is always wise.

“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” — Acts 15:18

Workbook Outline (No Page Numbers)

Discipleship 3: The Works and Decrees of God

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Chapter 1: Creation

“The Grand Architect”

A child once asked his father, “Who built the sky?” The father, a skilled architect, took his son to a construction site. “Watch the workers,” he said. “They follow a design. Nothing here is by accident.” He then pointed to the horizon and whispered, “If human builders need a plan, how much more does the universe require a Designer?” The boy looked up at the stars with new awe. “So God built the sky?” “Yes,” his father said, “and everything else too.”

Overarching Question

How does the doctrine of creation reveal the power, purpose, and sovereignty of God over all things?

Major Points

1. **What does it mean that God created *ex nihilo* (“out of nothing”)?**
 - a. *Explanation:* God did not use preexisting material; He created all things by His Word alone (Hebrews 11:3).
 - b. *Relevance:* This truth establishes that God is completely independent and sovereign—nothing exists apart from His will. It also means creation is not divine; only God is.
 - c. *Example:* Just as an author creates a world with words, so God brought forth reality with a word—“*Let there be...*”
2. **How does creation reveal God’s glory and divine nature?**
 - a. *Explanation:* Creation declares God’s invisible attributes—His eternal power and divine nature (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1).

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- b. *Relevance*: Nature is not merely beautiful—it is theological. Every sunrise, river, and atom whispers of God’s character.
 - c. *Example*: The complexity of DNA or the order of the cosmos points not to randomness but divine craftsmanship.
3. **Why is the Creator-creation distinction essential to Christian doctrine?**
- a. *Explanation*: Scripture makes a clear distinction between the Creator and His creation (Romans 1:25). This guards against idolatry and pantheism.
 - b. *Relevance*: It reminds us not to worship created things—nature, people, or even angels—but the Creator alone.
 - c. *Example*: The golden calf episode (Exodus 32) was a violation of this distinction—worshiping something made instead of the Maker.
4. **What are the implications of creation for human dignity and purpose?**
- a. *Explanation*: Humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), with value, responsibility, and purpose.
 - b. *Relevance*: Human worth is rooted not in feelings or function but in divine design. This shapes ethics, justice, and compassion.
 - c. *Example*: A person with disabilities has as much dignity as a genius, not because of ability, but because both reflect God’s image.
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Conclusion

Creation is not an abstract doctrine—it is the foundation of Christian worldview. From it we learn that God is eternal, powerful, purposeful, and good. The doctrine of creation informs how we worship, how we live, and how we see others. All things begin with God, and all things exist for His glory (Colossians 1:16).

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Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean that God created everything “out of nothing,” and why is this significant?
 2. How should our view of nature change if we believe it proclaims the glory of God?
 3. Why is it dangerous to confuse creation with the Creator?
 4. How does the image of God in humanity shape our understanding of justice and human rights?
 5. In what ways can the doctrine of creation strengthen our worship and daily life?
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Scripture References

- Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”
 - Hebrews 11:3 – “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God...”
 - Romans 1:20, 25 – “For the invisible things of him... are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made...”
 - Colossians 1:16 – “All things were created by him, and for him.”
 - Psalm 19:1 – “The heavens declare the glory of God...”
 - Genesis 1:26–27 – “Let us make man in our image...”
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Chapter 2: Providence

“The Broken GPS”

Jenna had always trusted her GPS, but one day it led her down a wrong road into a forest trail. Frustrated and lost, she called her father. Calmly, he said, “I see where you are. Just follow my voice.” Ten minutes later, she was safe. “I had you the whole time,” he assured her. In life, we may think we’ve taken a wrong turn. But God’s providence is never lost. He governs the map and the terrain.

Overarching Question

How does God’s providence govern, preserve, and direct all things for His glory and our good?

Major Points

1. **What is the doctrine of providence, and how is it different from fate or chance?**
 - a. *Explanation:* Providence means God sovereignly sustains and governs all creation with purpose and wisdom (Psalm 103:19; Proverbs 16:9).
 - b. *Relevance:* This doctrine gives us confidence that nothing is random or outside of God’s care.
 - c. *Example:* A coin toss may look random, but even “the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Proverbs 16:33).
2. **How does God’s providence preserve creation moment by moment?**
 - a. *Explanation:* God upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Without His sustaining hand, creation would unravel.
 - b. *Relevance:* This shows our daily dependence on God—not just for miracles, but for every breath.

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- c. *Example:* The rising sun, growing grass, and falling rain all testify to God's continual care (Matthew 5:45).
 - 3. **How does God's providence operate through both ordinary and extraordinary means?**
 - a. *Explanation:* God often works through “secondary causes”—people, nature, events—but He remains the primary cause behind all.
 - b. *Relevance:* This helps us see God's hand in everyday life—medicine, traffic, weather, even closed doors.
 - c. *Example:* Joseph's betrayal by his brothers was an evil act, yet God used it to preserve life (Genesis 50:20).
 - 4. **Can we trust God's providence even when life feels chaotic?**
 - a. *Explanation:* Yes, because God's governance is both sovereign and good (Romans 8:28). Even suffering is not wasted.
 - b. *Relevance:* We are not victims of blind chaos. We walk by faith in a God who rules with love.
 - c. *Example:* Job did not understand his suffering, but later confessed, “I know that you can do all things...” (Job 42:2).
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Conclusion

God's providence is the pillow beneath our heads at night and the compass guiding us through trials. To believe in providence is to believe in a God who is both *able* and *good*—who governs not by detached control but by fatherly care. There are no accidents in the Kingdom. His hand is never absent, even when His ways are unseen.

Discussion Questions

1. How is providence different from fate, luck, or karma?
2. What are some daily examples of God's providential care in your life?

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3. How does the doctrine of providence comfort you during hardship?
 4. What does it mean to say that God uses both ordinary and extraordinary means?
 5. How does God’s providence strengthen our prayer life and trust in His timing?
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Scripture References

- Psalm 103:19 – “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”
 - Hebrews 1:3 – “...upholding all things by the word of his power...”
 - Proverbs 16:9 – “A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.”
 - Romans 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...”
 - Genesis 50:20 – “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good...”
 - Job 42:2 – “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.”
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Chapter 3: Miracles

“The Shattered Watch”

A man’s watch, a family heirloom, fell to the ground and shattered. The pieces scattered—springs, gears, the face. He brought it to a master watchmaker who, to his amazement, restored it perfectly without needing new parts. “It runs even better now,” he whispered. Miracles are like that—when the normal order is interrupted, not in chaos, but by the sovereign hand of the One who designed it.

Overarching Question

What are miracles, and how do they reveal the nature and purpose of God’s intervention in creation?

Major Points

1) What is a miracle, and how is it different from natural events?

- a. *Explanation:* A miracle is a supernatural act of God that interrupts or supersedes the natural order for a specific divine purpose.
- b. *Relevance:* This helps guard us from reducing miracles to coincidences or exaggerations.
- c. *Example:* The parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21–22) wasn’t a windstorm—it was a divine intervention.

2) What is the purpose of miracles in Scripture?

- a. *Explanation:* Miracles authenticate God’s messengers and confirm His message (John 20:30–31; Acts 2:22).

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- b. *Relevance*: They are not magic tricks or entertainment—they are signs pointing to deeper truths about God and His kingdom.
 - c. *Example*: Jesus healing the blind was more than compassion—it revealed Him as the Light of the world (John 9:5–7).
- 3) **Do miracles still happen today, and if so, how should we think about them?**
- a. *Explanation*: God can and does intervene miraculously, but the frequency and purpose differ from the apostolic era.
 - b. *Relevance*: Our faith rests not on signs, but on the finished work of Christ and the authority of Scripture.
 - c. *Example*: When a person is healed after prayer, we rejoice—but we do not build doctrines on personal experiences.
- 4) **How do miracles point us to God’s sovereignty and compassion?**
- a. *Explanation*: Every miracle reveals both God's power over nature and His mercy toward people (Mark 4:39–41; Matthew 14:14).
 - b. *Relevance*: Miracles remind us that God is not distant; He is active, powerful, and tender-hearted.
 - c. *Example*: Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11) showed not only divine power but divine love.
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Conclusion

Miracles are not violations of natural law—they are expressions of a higher law: the will of the sovereign God. They point us to Jesus, the One who has authority over sickness, nature, demons, and death. While miracles inspire wonder, they are always signs pointing to the Miracle-Worker. Our faith doesn’t rest on signs—it rests on the One who gives them.

Discussion Questions

1. How do miracles differ from unusual or surprising natural events?

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2. Why were miracles especially important during the ministries of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus?
 3. How should we respond when we witness or hear of modern-day miracles?
 4. What are some dangers of seeking signs instead of seeking Christ?
 5. How do miracles reveal both the power and compassion of God?
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Scripture References

- Exodus 14:21–22 – “And the Lord caused the sea to go back... and the waters were divided.”
 - John 20:30–31 – “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...”
 - Acts 2:22 – “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs...”
 - John 11:43–44 – “Lazarus, come forth.”
 - Matthew 14:14 – “He was moved with compassion... and he healed their sick.”
 - Mark 4:39 – “Peace, be still. And the wind ceased...”
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Chapter 4: The Will of God

“The Two Maps”

David stood at a crossroads with two maps. One detailed every turn but no destination. The other simply said, “Follow me,” with a path marked out but not explained. He chose the second map. Along the way, doors opened, storms came, people helped, and he was always provided for. At the end, he discovered it was a map written by the King himself—one that required trust, not just direction.

Overarching Question

What does it mean to know and follow the will of God, and how is His will revealed and accomplished?

Major Points

1) What are the different aspects of God’s will in Scripture?

- a. *Explanation:* The Bible distinguishes between God’s **decretive will** (what He ordains), **preceptive will** (what He commands), and **permissive will** (what He allows).
- b. *Relevance:* Understanding these distinctions helps prevent confusion about why bad things happen or why God’s commands are not always obeyed.
- c. *Example:* God ordained Joseph’s suffering (decretive), commanded Pharaoh to do right (preceptive), and allowed evil men to act (permissive) to accomplish His plan (Genesis 50:20).

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2) **How is God's will revealed to us?**

- a. *Explanation:* Primarily through Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16–17), and secondarily through prayer, counsel, conscience, and providence.
- b. *Relevance:* God's will is not a mystical secret but a clearly revealed path in His Word.
- c. *Example:* God's will is for believers to be thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:18), to do justice (Micah 6:8), and to grow in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

3) **What is the relationship between God's will and human freedom?**

- a. *Explanation:* God's sovereign will includes and governs our free choices without violating them. He is not the author of sin, yet nothing thwarts His purpose (Ephesians 1:11).
- b. *Relevance:* This truth fuels trust. Even when we make mistakes, we are not beyond the reach of God's purpose.
- c. *Example:* Jonah fled God's call, but God's will prevailed—not by canceling Jonah's will, but by overwhelming it.

4) **How should believers respond to God's will in their daily lives?**

- a. *Explanation:* By aligning our hearts with His commands and trusting His providence, especially in uncertainty (Romans 12:2).
- b. *Relevance:* God's will is not just for the big decisions but for how we live every day.
- c. *Example:* When a job offer or move arises, the believer should first ask, "Does this honor God?" before asking, "Does this please me?"

Conclusion

God's will is not a maze but a mission. It's not meant to confuse but to comfort, guide, and sanctify. Whether we are in the valley or on the mountaintop, His will is never lost or late. Our calling is to trust and obey, for His will is always for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28).

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Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between God's decretive, preceptive, and permissive will?
 2. How can a believer discern God's will in a specific life decision?
 3. Why is it comforting to know that God's will cannot be thwarted?
 4. What dangers arise when we seek "secret" knowledge of God's will instead of following Scripture?
 5. How can Romans 12:2 shape your daily choices?
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Scripture References

- Genesis 50:20 – "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good..."
 - 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..."
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:18 – "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God..."
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:3 – "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification..."
 - Ephesians 1:11 – "...who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."
 - Romans 12:2 – "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed..."
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Chapter 5: Covenant

“The Unbreakable Promise”

In a small village, two boys made a pact sealed with blood: to always protect each other. Decades passed, and one became a judge, the other a criminal. Facing sentencing, the criminal feared the worst—until the judge stood and said, “Justice must be served, but I will pay the penalty myself.” That day, a childhood covenant turned into a living picture of grace and justice. In Scripture, covenants are far more than promises—they are divine bonds backed by the character of God.

Overarching Question

What is a covenant, and how does God's covenantal relationship with His people reveal His faithfulness and redemptive plan?

Major Points

1) What is a covenant, and how does it differ from a contract?

- a. *Explanation:* A covenant is a solemn, binding agreement made before God that includes obligations, promises, and often a sign. Unlike a contract, a covenant is relational and sacred (Genesis 17:7).
- b. *Relevance:* Understanding covenantal language shows us that God relates to us not as a negotiator but as a faithful Father.
- c. *Example:* Marriage is a covenant, not a business deal—it’s about commitment, not convenience (Malachi 2:14).

2) What are the major covenants in the Bible?

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- a. *Explanation:* God made covenants with Adam (Creation), Noah (Preservation), Abraham (Promise), Moses (Law), David (Kingship), and Christ (Fulfillment).
 - b. *Relevance:* These covenants progressively reveal God's unfolding plan of redemption and point to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15).
 - c. *Example:* The covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3) set the stage for the coming of the Messiah.
- 3) **What is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?**
- a. *Explanation:* The Old Covenant, centered on the law and sacrifices, pointed forward to Christ. The New Covenant, secured by Christ's blood, brings forgiveness, heart transformation, and eternal access to God (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Luke 22:20).
 - b. *Relevance:* Believers live under a better covenant, with a perfect Mediator and eternal promises.
 - c. *Example:* The temple veil was torn at Christ's death—access to God is no longer through a priestly system but through Jesus (Hebrews 10:19–22).
- 4) **How should covenant theology shape the Christian life?**
- a. *Explanation:* It reminds us that our relationship with God is not based on performance but on His promises. It fuels assurance, obedience, and worship.
 - b. *Relevance:* The Christian life is covenantal: we live in response to a divine relationship initiated and sustained by grace.
 - c. *Example:* Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs and seals of God's covenant of grace—reminders of His faithfulness.
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Conclusion

The Bible is not a collection of disconnected stories but one covenantal story of God redeeming a people for Himself. Every covenant leads to Christ, who fulfilled the law, bore the curse, and secured the blessings. Covenant theology teaches us that God binds Himself to His people with invincible love. He is the God who makes promises—and keeps them.

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Discussion Questions

1. How does a covenant differ from a contract?
 2. What are the key features of the covenants God made throughout redemptive history?
 3. In what ways does the New Covenant fulfill and surpass the Old Covenant?
 4. How does covenant theology increase your assurance in salvation?
 5. How do the sacraments function as covenant signs and seals?
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Scripture References

- Genesis 17:7 – “And I will establish my covenant... to be a God unto thee...”
 - Genesis 12:1–3 – “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”
 - Jeremiah 31:31 – “Behold, the days come... that I will make a new covenant...”
 - Luke 22:20 – “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”
 - Hebrews 9:15 – “He is the mediator of the new covenant...”
 - Hebrews 10:19–22 – “Let us draw near with a true heart...”
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Chapter 6: Covenant of Works

“The Garden Test”

Imagine a classroom with just one test—pass it, and you graduate with highest honors; fail it, and everything changes. Now imagine that test being given in paradise, under the kind gaze of a just and holy God. That was Adam’s test. There were no trick questions—just one clear command. Obey and live. Disobey and die. It was a covenant of works, and the entire future of the human race hung in the balance.

Overarching Question

What was the Covenant of Works, and how does it help us understand the fall of man and the need for redemption through Christ?

Major Points

1) What is the Covenant of Works, and when was it established?

- a. *Explanation:* The Covenant of Works was made with Adam in the Garden of Eden. God promised eternal life for obedience and threatened death for disobedience (Genesis 2:16–17).
- b. *Relevance:* This covenant highlights the seriousness of God’s holiness and justice. Adam represented all humanity.
- c. *Example:* Just as a soldier’s actions can determine the fate of his nation, Adam’s obedience or failure affected all his descendants (Romans 5:12–19).

2) What was Adam’s role as covenant representative?

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- a. *Explanation:* Adam was not merely a private individual but a federal head—a representative of all mankind. His success or failure would be imputed to his posterity.
 - b. *Relevance:* This explains why sin and death spread to all men, not simply through imitation, but through representation.
 - c. *Example:* In sports, a team captain's penalty affects the whole team. So too, Adam's fall brought guilt and corruption upon us all.
- 3) **What was the result of Adam's failure to keep the covenant?**
- a. *Explanation:* Adam broke the covenant by disobeying God, bringing condemnation, death, and separation from God upon the human race (Genesis 3:6; Romans 5:18).
 - b. *Relevance:* The fall was not just a moral slip—it was covenantal treason that brought down the entire human order.
 - c. *Example:* Like a building collapsing from a cracked foundation, all of creation was cursed because Adam's covenant stood broken.
- 4) **How does the Covenant of Works point us to Christ?**
- a. *Explanation:* Christ is the second Adam, who succeeded where the first Adam failed. He perfectly obeyed God and fulfilled the demands of righteousness for us (1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:19).
 - b. *Relevance:* We are saved not by our own works, but by Christ's obedience imputed to us under the Covenant of Grace.
 - c. *Example:* Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness mirrored Adam's test—but where Adam fell in paradise, Christ triumphed in the desert.
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Conclusion

The Covenant of Works may seem like ancient history, but it is the stage upon which the drama of redemption was set. Adam failed the test, and we all fell with him. But God, in His mercy, provided a second Adam—Jesus Christ—who fulfilled the demands of righteousness and offers

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us life through grace. Understanding this covenant is the key to understanding why the gospel is not good advice but *good news*.

Discussion Questions

1. What specific command did God give Adam in the Garden, and what was the consequence for disobedience?
 2. Why is Adam considered a representative of all humanity?
 3. How did Adam's failure affect the entire human race?
 4. In what ways does Jesus fulfill the Covenant of Works on our behalf?
 5. Why is it essential to distinguish between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace?
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Scripture References

- Genesis 2:16–17 – “Of every tree... thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree... thou shalt not eat...”
- Genesis 3:6 – “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food... she took... and did eat.”
- Romans 5:12 – “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...”
- Romans 5:18–19 – “By the offence of one judgment came... so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”
- 1 Corinthians 15:22 – “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”