foundations:
pursuing Christ through discipleship

what is the bible?

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for no one can lay a foundation
other than that which is laid,
which is Jesus Christ.

1 corinthians 3:11

ml
matthias' lot church

loving him
& loving his.

why discipleship?

the story of God is the story of a king saving his people and building his eternal kingdom—a kingdom that is made up of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. his is an ever-expanding kingdom, and it includes us as **disciples of Jesus**.

before Jesus returned to heaven after his resurrection, he commanded his disciples to go and make disciples who would then make disciples (*matthew 28:19-20*). you are reading this, in part, because they, as well as generations of other men and women, were obedient to that command. Jesus' command to make disciples applies just as much to us today as it did to his original followers. he desires disciples, not merely converts. he wants us to be followers and imitators of him, not simply spectators and fans.

as you use this resource, do not let this be simply a cognitive exercise. discipleship is not knowing more about God, but rather it is **knowing God intimately** and **daily surrendering your life to his lordship**. read slowly, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you more and more of who God is and his steadfast love for you specifically. pray that your heart and mind would be moved to worship as you meet with God in his word.

this is the essence of discipleship: **follow me as together we follow Christ.**

in order to love God we must know him, and as our knowledge of him grows, we are to make him known. as members of the body of Christ, we get to spur one another on towards Christ-likeness. this is the essence of discipleship: follow me as together we follow Christ. the commandment hasn't changed: we are to be discipled to make disciples who make disciples. his kingdom is made up of people who know and love him—and you are a part of that kingdom.

don't skip this!

this is meant to be a resource for you to use as you walk through your discipling relationships. it in no way replaces scripture as the authority on any topic or truth, but rather is to be supplemental in your growing understanding of God and his word. our hope is that this will equip you to study the bible on your own so that you can teach others to do the same.

a few notes as you begin:

- **pray!**
  it is the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth (*john 16:13*), so anytime we seek to read or study scripture, we should first pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate our minds to understand the truths that we will read and to soften our spirit that we would also let scripture read us.

- **slow down!**
  the end goal of this is not that you would finish it in a timely manner, but that you would know God and worship him more. it will be beneficial to move slowly through each section, allowing yourself to sit in and reflect on the scriptures that you read.

- **be free!**
  resist the temptation to treat this as a checklist item or see this as homework. do not feel the pressure to finish any portion of this in a single sitting or even to look up every scripture reference. each section has an introduction and then is broken into four components to provide a structure for getting together weekly to study and discuss the word, but you are welcome to move through it at whatever pace works for your discipling relationships. everything is provided for your benefit—feel free to use it in the way that works best for you as the Spirit leads.

teach me your way, o Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
unite my heart to fear your name.

psalm 86:11

what is the bible?

the life of a disciple of Jesus begins with knowing God through his self-revelation—his word, the bible. as Jesus followers, we look to the bible as our final authority for life and truth, but what exactly is the bible? and how do we know we can trust it?

we will let the bible speak for itself, but first, a few basics:

- the bible is made up of 66 books: 39 in the old testament and 27 in the new testament.
- in its original text, the old testament is written in hebrew, with some sections being written in aramaic, and the new testament is written primarily in greek.
- the bible, while one book, is made up of different writing styles and genres: narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, gospels, epistles, and apocalyptic.
- while written by over 40 human authors over a span of 1,500 years, every word of the bible has been given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

apart from God's written word, we would have no way to intimately know him. the bible is God's self-revelation of his character and the story of his faithfulness to his people. it is also his plan of redemption through his son, Jesus Christ, who is king of the kingdom God is building. anytime we read his word we should be asking ourselves, "*what does this scripture tell me about God and his character?*" because the entire bible is all about him.

for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures **we might have hope.**

romans 15:4

authority

as we begin, take a minute to consider and make note of what you currently know or believe about the bible.

» what have you been taught about the bible?

» when you think about the bible, what questions come to mind?

» as we begin to talk about the authority of scripture, it is helpful for us to first understand what is meant by the term *authority*. How would you define the word *authority*? does authority conjure up positive or negative connotations for you? why?

as followers of Christ, we believe that the bible is our final authority, so we turn to the bible to learn what it has to say about itself.

- **deuteronomy 12:32**
- **isaiah 40:8**
- **matthew 5:17-19**
- **john 17:8, 17**
- **romans 15:4**
- **1 thessalonians 2:13**

» what do these scriptures say about God's word? was any of this new or surprising to you?

» drawing from what you read, why is it imperative that we believe wholeheartedly in the authority of scripture?

» what are some qualities of a life lived in submission to the authority of scripture? what does this mean for your daily life?

ultimately, we submit to the authority of the bible because we have surrendered our lives to the authority of God, and the bible is the very word of God.

"the very word *authority* has within it the word *author*. an author is someone who creates and possesses a particular work. insofar as God is the foundation of all authority, he exercises that foundation because he is the author and the owner of his creation. he is the foundation upon which all other authority stands or falls." —**r.c. sproul**

"since God is the author, the bible is authoritative. it is absolute in its authority for human thought and behaviour. 'as the scripture has said' is a recurring theme throughout the new testament. in fact, the new testament contains more than two hundred direct quotations of the old testament. in addition, the new testament has a large and uncertain number of allusions to the old. new testament writers, following the example of Jesus Christ, built their theology on the old testament. for Christ and the apostles, to quote the bible was to settle an issue." —**robertson mcquilkin**

sufficiency

scripture is authoritative above all other sources, but consider this question:

» do you believe the bible alone is enough for us to intimately come to know and worship God? why or why not?

when we speak of the sufficiency of scripture, we mean that the bible alone is God's word and nothing else is necessary for each of us to know him—no additional teachings or books will teach us more about God than that which the bible has already revealed. there is often a largely unspoken belief that only pastors and theologians can really understand the bible, and the rest of us need to rely on them to tell us what it says. but rest assured: the whole word of God is written for all the people of God for all time. it is closed and complete; we are not waiting on any further revelation or new word from God.

the bible, being the very word of God, is enough for each of us to know and follow God. and scripture interprets scripture, so when we come across a passage where the meaning is unclear, looking up cross references will often give us a fuller understanding. consider these scriptures and how they point to the sufficiency of scripture in the life of a believer.

- **deuteronomy 4:2**
- **psalm 19:7-9**
- **psalm 119:105**
- **proverbs 30:5-6**
- **matthew 24:35**
- **luke 24:44-45**
- **john 20:30-31**
- **2 peter 1:3**

commentaries and other outside sources can be useful in helping us grow in our understanding of God's word, but they should never replace God's word in our minds and hearts nor should we ever elevate what we read outside of scripture above scripture itself. only the Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God. the words of mere humans can never tell us more about God than God himself has revealed to us in his word. not everything that is written or taught about God is necessarily true or faithful to God's word. that is why it is crucial that we, as followers of Christ, become intimately familiar with our holy scriptures so we can quickly spot false teaching. what do these verses tell us about teachings that go against scripture?

- **mark 13:22-23**
- **galatians 1:6-9**
- **colossians 2:8**
- **2 timothy 4:3-4**

» in what ways does our culture and the world tell us that scripture isn't enough?

» why is it important to believe in the sufficiency of scripture? what dangers could we encounter if we don't?

"the sufficiency of scripture means that scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly." —**wayne grudem**

authorship

the 66 books of the bible were written by approximately 40 human authors, but the bible is also one book written by one author: God. this was not a collaborative effort where God contributed some and human authors contributed the rest; God the Holy Spirit was inspiring every word of scripture through the individual personalities and writing styles of those whom he chose for the task of penning his word. in scripture, we receive the voice of God in human words.

since the beginning of time, God has been speaking. he is a God who loves to communicate with and longs to be known by his children, and he's still speaking to us today through his written word.

in the old testament, God communicated his message to and through prophets, priests, and kings who then wrote as God's mouthpiece to his people.

- **numbers 12:6**
- **2 samuel 23:2**
- **daniel 9:9-10**
- **isaiah 30:8**
- **jeremiah 30:1-2**
- **hebrews 1:1**

in the new testament, God communicated to and through disciples, witnesses, and church leaders who wrote personal accounts and letters to churches. additionally, the new testament contains the very words of Jesus himself.

- **2 timothy 3:16**
- **2 peter 1:16-21**
- **hebrews 1:1-2**
- **revelation 21:5**

» what do you see in these scriptures that speaks to the divine authorship of the words written by men?

» we must keep in mind that both the old and the new testament were written with the divine authority of the same triune God. why is this important as we consider the authorship of scripture?

the tension of the divine and the human authorship being contained in one book is ultimately not something we can fully comprehend. similarly, in his incarnation, Jesus, who is the word made flesh, embodied both the divine and the human in one being: both fully God and fully man. this is a mystery. our faith requires that we accept what we cannot understand, because if we understood fully every aspect of our faith, then it would not, in fact, be faith at all. rather, it would simply be knowledge.

the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. —**deuteronomy 29:29**

"God the father is the giver of holy scripture; God the son is the theme of holy scripture; and God the spirit is the author, authenticator, and interpreter of holy scripture." —**j. i. packer**

power

the bible is unlike any other book ever written because it is the very word of God. the bible has the power to soften hearts and change lives and give us access to the one who has revealed himself to us through his word. God is still speaking to his children through his written word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

» if you read the bible as the very voice of God rather than merely print on a page, how would that change how you interact with scripture?

» what needs to change for you to begin to come to the scriptures expecting to hear God's voice?

in genesis 1, we see the repetition of "*and God said*" followed by action; whatever God spoke became reality. the same voice that spoke creation into existence speaks to us today through the written word of God. as you read the verses below, notice all the ways you see God's word is powerful.

- **psalm 119:105**
- **isaiah 55:11**
- **jeremiah 23:29**
- **matthew 4:4**
- **john 1:1-3**
- **2 timothy 3:15**
- **hebrews 4:12**
- **1 peter 1:23-25**

» how would you define *power*? what does it mean to you that God's word has power?

» how have you experienced the power of God's word in your own life?

God's word has the power to renew our minds and transform our lives. we have access to that power every single day as God invites us to know his power through his word.

» pause and reflect on the supernatural gift of God's word and how he desires to reveal himself to you through it. thank him for it, confess to him any struggles you have with it, bring to him any questions you have about it, and ask him for greater understanding and an insatiable hunger for it.

"we must make a great difference between God's word and the word of man. a man's word is a little sound, that flies into the air, and soon vanishes; but the word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God, and endures everlastingly."
—**martin luther**

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loving him
& loving his.