



foundations

pursuing Christ through discipleship

what is the story?

05



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

1 corinthians 3:11

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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 these words as a result of their obedience and the obedience of generations of men and women after them.

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 worshippers of him, not simply spectators and fans.

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

as you use this resource, do not let this be merely a cognitive exercise. discipleship is not simply knowing more about God, but rather it is **knowing God intimately** and **daily surrendering your life to his lordship**.

read slowly. ask 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.

in order to love God we must know him. 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 through discipleship.

this is the essence of discipleship: follow me as together we follow Christ. the commandment hasn't changed—we are to be disciplined to make disciples who make disciples. his kingdom is made up of people who know him, love him, and follow him. **if you belong to him, you are a part of this kingdom**.

so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

ephesians 2:19-20

don't skip this!

foundations was created 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 it is to be supplemental in your growing understanding of God and his word. the purpose of this tool is to assist in laying a solid biblical foundation as well as equip believers to study the bible and disciple 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 need to first **pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate our minds** to understand the truths we will read and **soften our hearts** to let scripture transform us.

- **slow down!**

resist the temptation to treat any of this as an item on a checklist or see this as homework. do not feel the pressure to finish any portion in a single sitting or even to look up every scripture reference listed.

the end goal of this resource is not that you would finish any of it in a specific timeframe, but that you would **grow to know God and worship him more**.

- **be free!**

each section of *foundations* includes an introduction and four parts to provide a structure for getting together regularly to study and discuss the word. consider focusing on just one of these parts each week. this pace will allow you to enjoy several days reading and meditating on the scriptures as you reflect on what the Holy Spirit reveals to you before you meet to talk about it.

however, you are welcome to **move through it at whatever pace works for your discipling relationship**. 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
story?**

what is the story?

the bible is one book made up of 66 smaller books. these books vary in genre; they contain stories, poems, wisdom, prophecies, instructions, and laws. the whole bible was written over a span of 1500 years, so it can seem that the content is perhaps anecdotal and disconnected. nothing could be further from the truth. the bible was written by many different human authors, but ultimately has one divine author. **this is all God's story, and it is all about him.**

scripture tells **one overarching story of a faithful God who pursues his people relentlessly**—literally moving heaven and earth to dwell with those who are his. every smaller story recorded within the pages of scripture serve both to show the depravity of all people and humanity's desperate need for a savior. these accounts paint a picture of just how inadequate the greatest heroes in history were to even save themselves, let alone anyone else.

undergirding each story is the resounding theme that we need a savior and the declaration that the true savior is coming.

from the beginning of time, he has purposed to create a people for his own possession. however, our first parents brought sin into the world, fracturing creation and our access to a holy God.

God, in his steadfast love, determined to reconcile us to himself and redeem our lives for his name's sake; one day he promises that **all things will be made new** as evil is put to death and we are able to live in the presence of our savior for all eternity.

the narrative of scripture moves from creation to the fall of adam and eve, followed by centuries of God promising a coming redemption which is fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

however, that is not the end of the story.

in the end, we are promised that God will be faithful to restore all things to their intended perfect design in the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. he will eternally dwell with his people—which has been his divine plan since before time began.

creation → fall → redemption → restoration: this is the story of the bible

"i am the alpha and the omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

revelation 1:8

creation

there was a time when time did not exist. we cannot comprehend this—and it makes our brains hurt if we try. absolutely nothing existed—except God...

then God spoke. the beginning of creation was now permanently fixed in time.

» **read genesis 1:1-2:3** to familiarize yourself with the creation story. even if you have read it a thousand times before, read it again, slowly, asking the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see and a heart to understand more deeply the wondrous works of our praise-worthy creator.

- **day 1**— heavens, earth, light, darkness
- **day 2**— sky
- **day 3**— land, sea, plants, vegetation
- **day 4**—sun, moon, stars
- **day 5**—birds, sea animals
- **day 6**—land animals, mankind

notice how the second three days of creation correlate to the first three days: this is commonly referred to as *forming and filling*. **God first forms what he will then fill.** our God is meticulously intentional in all his works.

- » *what did you notice as you read the creation story?*
- » *how do you see God's intentionality in his creation—and in your own life?*

the biblical authors repeatedly make reference to God being creator. in doing so, they are affirming his power, his greatness, and his eternal sovereignty. **Lord over creation and Lord over all**, we serve a God who transcends both time and space, as well as our understanding.

- **job 38:4-11**
- **isaiah 45:18**
- **psalm 90:1-2**
- **jeremiah 32:17**
- **isaiah 40:21-28**
- **romans 1:20**

- » *what comfort or assurance do you have when you consider God as creator of all?*
- » *how have these verses increased your confidence in God's power and sovereignty?*

each of the first six days ends with the repeated refrain, “and there was evening and there was morning.” not so with the seventh day. on the seventh day of creation we are told that **God rested from his work**. not only did he rest from his work, he declared the seventh day holy—set apart from the other days.

he did not rest because he was tired or in need of a break; God rested as both a pattern and an invitation for us to cease from our work and rest in him. unlike the first six days, God never declares the end of the seventh day. **we are to rest in him daily** as we await our seventh day rest of eternal life with him.

- » *do you regularly find rest in God? how might you practice continually abiding in him?*
- » *have you ever thought of eternity with God as a continuation of the seventh day of creation?*
- » *how does this impact how you view eternity?*

so then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

hebrews 4:9-10

redemption

the effects of the fall spread to every corner of the earth. a gaping chasm now existed between the creator and his creation. as a result of the fall, **we became a race of people who are persistently against God.** the separation was so great and the sin so all-consuming that, left to ourselves, we could never again even desire relationship with God.

we could never save ourselves...

- genesis 6:5
- ecclesiastes 9:3
- ephesians 2:12
- ephesians 4:18

...we needed a redeemer.

God was not surprised by adam and eve’s sin. he already had a plan for redemption in place. following their disobedience, clothed in their garments of shame, **they heard the first whisper of hope—the first glimpse of the gospel.** God declared that satan would not get the last word—there would be a son who would crush the head of the enemy.

“i will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

the entire old testament weaves together the story of God’s people with the repeated promise that a day was coming when his son, the messiah, would make everything right and the people of God could once again be with God.

genesis 3:15 (NIV)

- job 19:23-27
- micah 5:2-5
- isaiah 7:14
- isaiah 9:2-7
- daniel 7:13-14
- zechariah 9:9-10

- » *imagine being an old testament believer awaiting the fulfillment of God’s promised son. how do you think this waiting might have impacted your faith?*
- » *how does recognizing the complexity of their hope-filled longing encourage you right now as you wait on the Lord?*

- habakkuk 2:3
- 2 peter 3:9

finally, after centuries of waiting—at long last—the **promised son was born.** Jesus, immanuel, had come in the flesh to be God with us and save us from our sins. Jesus lived the perfectly holy life we could never live and died the death that we deserved in order to make us right with God. he then rose from the dead so that we can be with God forever. he paid the penalty for our disobedience to God and set us free from slavery to sin.

he is our redeemer—and we are the redeemed.

- leviticus 17:11
- isaiah 61:1-3
- john 8:34-36
- romans 6:3-23
- colossians 1:13-14
- hebrews 9:11-12

if this were a map, there might be a star indicating *you are here.* the story of the bible is not over: we are still living in the time of redemption. **Christ is still redeeming his people.**



loving him
& loving his.