



foundations

pursuing Christ through discipleship

what is the bible?

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foundations

pursuing Christ through discipleship

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

1 corinthians 3:11



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 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 bible?

what is the bible?

the life of a disciple of Jesus begins with knowing God through his self-revelation—his word, the bible. as followers of Jesus, 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.

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?*

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 also unveils his plan of redemption through his son, Jesus Christ, who is king of the kingdom God is building.

God, in his benevolent love and grace, has made himself known to his image bearers through his written word. the bible teaches us everything we need to know to love and follow God. 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 to talk about the authority of scripture, it is helpful to first understand what is generally meant by the term authority. how would you define the word? does it conjure up positive or negative connotations for you? why?*

as followers of Christ, 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?*

the bible is authoritative; it is the definition of absolute truth.

the authority of the bible is the standard by which we evaluate the truthfulness of every other voice out there...including our own. the bible is not primarily a list of rules to live by because God is not merely concerned with our right behavior—**he is jealous for our hearts and our minds.**

we must always seek to understand what God is saying in his word and not infuse our own meaning into the text. the bible is authoritative and infallible; our interpretation of the bible is not. we are never to use scripture to support our own desires and agendas. rather, as we read God's word with the help of the Holy Spirit, **our minds will be renewed, our hearts will soften, and we will change to become more like Christ** as we live in response to the authority of scripture.

- **deuteronomy 30:11-20**
- **psalm 40:6-8**
- **psalm 119:160**
- **jeremiah 7:23-24**
- **john 8:31-32**
- **james 1:21-25**

» *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.**

“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 mcquillkin**

sufficiency

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

» *throughout your life, what has most informed your knowledge of God?*

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. 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 1:3-4**

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 the bible 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?*

» *now, with a greater understanding of the sufficiency of scripture, spend time with the Lord and ask him to show you other sources you have relied on to inform your knowledge of him.*

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 23:1-2**
- **daniel 9:9-10**
- **isaiah 30:8**
- **jeremiah 30:1-2**
- **habakkuk 2:1-3**

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.

- **luke 4:16-21**
- **john 14:1-6**
- **2 timothy 3:16-17**
- **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.

both of these truths are a mystery. our faith requires that we accept what we cannot understand, and this faith is a gracious gift from God.

*so faith comes from hearing,
and hearing through the word of Christ.*

romans 10:17

power

the bible is unlike any other book ever written because it contains the very words 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.

*sanctify them
in the truth,
your word is truth.*

» *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?*

john 17:17

» *what needs to change in order for you 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 29:1-9**
- **isaiah 55:10-11**
- **jeremiah 23:29**
- **matthew 4:4**

- **john 1:1-5**
- **2 timothy 3:14-15**
- **hebrews 4:12**
- **1 peter 1:22-25**

» *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 his word.*
- *confess to him any struggles you have with it.*
- *bring to him any questions you have about the bible.*
- *ask him for greater understanding and an insatiable hunger for his word.*

*for the word of the cross is folly to those who are
perishing, but to us who are being saved
it is the power of God.*

1 corinthians 1:18



loving him
& loving his.