

now what?



foundations

knowing God through his word

*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.

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can we know God?

God has given his unfailing word to make himself known to his children. yet, far too often, we depend on other voices to tell us about God instead of knowing him for ourselves through his word.

God is continually pursuing our hearts; our affections for and knowledge of God grow as we spend time with him. **this needs to be our daily pursuit.**

every child of God is able to intimately know God through the scriptures—**we are all called to know him and make him known.** as we grow in our knowledge of him, we also get to invite others to grow in their knowledge of him through discipleship.

foundations was created to encourage an active learning process for discipling relationships. it in no way replaces scripture as the authority on any topic or truth; rather, it is intended to point you to scripture in your growing understanding of God and his word. the purpose of this tool is to assist in laying a solid biblical foundation, equip believers to study the bible, and disciple others to do the same.

a few notes as you begin:

- **engage**

each chapter of foundations includes an introduction and four sections. this format provides a structure for meeting together regularly to study and discuss the word. **consider focusing on just one section of a chapter each week.** this pace will allow you to enjoy several days engaging with the word and reflecting 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

- **pray**

it is the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth (john 16:13); anytime we seek to read or study scripture, **we need to first pray** that the Holy Spirit will illuminate our minds to understand the truths we read and soften our hearts to let scripture transform us.

- **worship**

resist the temptation to treat any of this as an item on a checklist or see this as homework. 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 and enjoy God more. **as we gain a greater vision of God through his word, our worship of him will deepen.**

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 active followers and worshippers of him, not simply spectators and fans.

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**.

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

read slowly, and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you 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 get 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 discipled 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 that kingdom**.

» *Jesus is building his kingdom through our active participation in discipleship. as you start this journey, begin praying now about who God might be leading you to disciple as you grow in him.*

*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

now what?

therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. —colossians 2:6-7

by now you have spent numerous hours pouring over scriptures and delving deeper into the beautiful truths we hold so closely as dearly-loved followers of Christ. meeting with the Lord, learning in community, and enjoying the fruitful conversations of discipleship will have lasting benefits in your own growth and the growth of others.

but...now what? where do we go from here?

whether people realize it or not, everyone operates out of what they think and believe is true about God. in short, **every person has a theology—a belief system about God**. the only question is: what informs that theology? as we study God through his word, as we let his word shape our thoughts and beliefs about him, we will inevitably love him more. **right theology will always lead to worship**.

this journey through *foundations* has been paved with theological matters of first importance. however, if you have simply learned theology but have not been equipped to walk it out, then this has been just another study that ends on itself. **from the beginning, the goal has not only been to grow in knowledge, but also to grow in intimacy with the Lord**. let this resource be a blip on the timeline of your walk with God, but let your life be defined by love for God, love for others, and love for his word. it is to be our daily bread.

and this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his son. whoever has the son has life; whoever does not have the son of God does not have life.

1 john 5:11-12

Jesus commands, “*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength,*” and, “*you shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (mark 12:28-31).

so how do we walk in obedience to these commands?

- **we grow in our love for God** as we grow in our knowledge of him; we know him by learning his word and seeing how he reveals himself in it.
- **we live out our love for God** by living a life of joyful obedience and living in community with his people - the church.
- **we love our neighbors** by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, by serving and sharing our faith with others, and by following Christ’s call to make disciples of all nations.

living as a child of God

being united to Christ changes us. he both frees us and empowers us to live a life of holiness as new creations and ambassadors for him.

the gospel changes everything...especially us. when we surrender our lives to Christ, there is a transfer of ownership: our lives are no longer our own and so the rhythms of our lives will necessarily change. these changes will not come by heavy-handed, legalistic rule, but rather by **our own desires being transformed** more and more to look like those of Christ who is in us—and we in him.

confession

although we are made clean in Christ, we will continue to struggle with sin in this life. **we are forgiven for all eternity because of Jesus, but we are not yet perfected.** our life in Christ is a constant battle between our sinful nature and the Spirit inside us, and our disobedience creates relational distance between us and God. we remain forever his child but the fellowship between us is hindered.

unconfessed sin causes us to feel distant from God. confession of sin will need to become the pattern of our lives as we seek to live in joyful fellowship with the triune God. we cannot allow shame to keep us from confession; instead, as the Holy Spirit convicts us of wrongdoing, we can be quick to admit it and have our fellowship with him restored. we who have tasted his kindness and grace can eagerly run to him with our sin because we know he has already forgiven us.

- psalm 32:5
- hebrews 4:16
- proverbs 28:13-14
- 1 john 1:5-10

» *how difficult is it for you to go to Jesus with your sin?*

repentance

as vital as confession is to our life in Christ, we cannot simply confess our sin and then continue to live our lives unchanged. **we must also turn from our sin and walk in repentance.** as we live in relationship with God, we repent when the Holy Spirit convicts our hearts by making us aware of our sin. repentance is literally turning away from our sin and turning to God.

God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance...

romans 2:4

to be clear: **this is not a call to try harder or do better.** we cannot walk away from our sin in our own power; we need to **ask the Holy Spirit to help us hate our sin** like God does and walk in the holiness which is ours in Christ. although we may continue to stumble in our repentance, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can find freedom from even our most besetting sins. "*where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom*" (2 corinthians 3:17).

- psalm 51:1-12
- acts 3:19-20
- luke 15:3-7
- 2 corinthians 7:8-10

» *from what sins do you need to repent? confess your sin to the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the desire and power to live freed from that sin.*

forgiveness

because we are in Christ, God does not hold our sin against us or have any contempt for us.

in similar fashion, we need to forgive ourselves, confess our sins to one another for accountability, and ask for forgiveness when we sin against others. **confession, repentance, and forgiveness foster restored relationships and keep bitterness at bay.**

as people who have been fully forgiven by God in Christ, we too are to offer forgiveness to those who sin against us. this is not something we can do on our power, but God empowers us to forgive as we have been forgiven.

we are commanded to forgive because harboring unforgiveness can lead to hatred towards fellow image bearers of God. **forgiving others is just as much for us as it is for them.**

- matthew 18:21-35
- romans 4:7-8

there is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.

romans 8:1

- ephesians 4:25-32
- colossians 3:12-17

» *who do you need to forgive, and whose forgiveness do you need to seek?*

communicating with God

any good relationship requires frequent communication to maintain intimacy; our relationship with God is no different. ongoing communication with the Lord involves reading what he says to us in his word, talking with him in prayer, and slowing down while doing both to listen for his voice.

my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

john 10:27

when we read his word, we let scripture inform our prayers to him and listen for his response which will never contradict his word. **the more we dialogue with God, the more we will come to know and love his voice.**

regularly talking with God and abiding in his word will change who we are, how we act, how we think, and how we speak as we grow in relationship with him.

- psalm 119:18-20
- matthew 6:5-13

- john 8:31-32
- john 10:1-16

» *in what ways do you need the Lord to help you grow in communicating with him?*

“if you are a child of God, you don’t lose your status if you have a bad week.”
—tim keller

gratitude & praise

cultivating a life of gratitude and praise changes us even in the most difficult times.

if we focus on ourselves and our circumstances, we see nothing but our own sinfulness and despair. but when we choose to **fix our eyes on the triune God** and thank him for who he is and all the joys he's given us, we will find our sorrow lifting as we speak words of praise and gratitude to him. his love and provision are greater than our pains. we praise him for who he is and he sustains us in him.

sing praises to the Lord, o you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

psalm 30:4

when Christ is our focus, we live every moment more aware of the presence of God and even the mundane becomes worship. we praise God, not because he needs our praise, but because we have been created to worship. **when we behold his holiness and splendor, we can't *not* worship.**

- 2 samuel 7:18-25
- psalm 138:1-8
- 1 thessalonians 5:16-18
- hebrews 12:28

» *what can you praise the Lord for regarding who he is and what he has done for you?*

sharing your story

and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked [...] but God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. —ephesians 2:1, 4-5

in the greek, the original language of the new testament, the word for *gospel* is *euangelion* which means “good news.” this greek word is where we get the english word *evangelism*. evangelism is simply sharing with others the gospel—the good news of who Jesus is and all that he has accomplished in reconciling us to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. **we have been brought from death to life and have been united to Christ. this is good news worth sharing!**

the gospel has forever changed our lives; we are free from the power of sin and death, and we are promised eternity with our savior. **the redemption story forever remains the same**, but the specific ways the gospel has transformed our lives is different for each one of us. the power of the gospel in our lives is the story we have to tell and the one others need to hear. it is in joyful obedience that we get to share the good news of the gospel to the lost world around us—**it is the most important story we could ever tell!**

- acts 1:8
- acts 13:47-49
- acts 20:24
- philemon 1:4-7

» *think about how you first came to Christ and consider the ways he is currently working in your life. write out your story and then pray for opportunities to share it with others.*

living in the family of God

now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 corinthians 12:27

we have been united to Christ, but not only that, we have also been united to one another through the one Spirit who lives in each of us as believers in Christ. even though we are each individually united to Christ and uniquely gifted by the Spirit, **we are to live and operate as the single body of Christ—the church.** we not only need Jesus, but God has created us to need each other as well. it is not good for us to live this life of faith alone.

the church—the bride of Christ and family of God—exists to encourage, teach, challenge, correct, and love his people towards holiness and Christ-likeness. she is also called to demonstrate the love of Christ in service to others. as the church, **we are to display the beauty of Christ in our unified pursuit of the heart of God.**

family

the triune God has eternally existed in holy fellowship; he desires the same for us, his people. God has not simply called individuals to himself—**but he has called us individually to be a part of his royal family in Jesus.** with God as our father, we are brothers and sisters of Christ. this also makes us brothers and sisters of one another *in* Christ.

so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

ephesians 2:19

in the creation account, before God forms eve, he says, "*it is not good that the man should be alone*" (genesis 2:18). although this passage is most often quoted in reference to marriage, it is equally true for the family of God as a whole. **we need each other**, both brothers and sisters, to be the fullness of the body of Christ in this world.

- **matthew 12:46-50**
- **john 20:17-18**

- **1 corinthians 12:12-13**
- **1 timothy 3:14-15**

» *how might seeing other believers as brothers and sisters change how we relate to them?*

spiritual gifts

at the moment of salvation, we are sealed for eternity by the Holy Spirit who also gives us spiritual gifts. we are **each uniquely gifted and equipped** for the work and life of faith to which we have been called—and for which we have been saved. these gifts are given for the benefit of the church so that the people of God are encouraged and equipped, and most importantly, Christ is glorified.

Christ is the head and we are all members of his body—this means there is no hierarchy of believers. no single person is most important, and no single person is expendable. **all are necessary and equally valued in the body of Christ.**

there are a variety of gifts and not one of them should be looked down upon as less important than any other. **the Spirit produces gifts in each person as he chooses**, intentionally. no gift is meant to be hoarded or flaunted; every gift should be exercised with love for our brothers and sisters, and for the unity of the church.

so, if our spiritual gifts are vital to the church, how do we find out what they are if we are unsure? first and foremost, **ask the gift giver himself!** pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal the areas where he has uniquely equipped you to serve God and the church.

- romans 12:3-8
- 1 corinthians 12:4-11
- ephesians 4:11-16
- 1 peter 4:8-11

» *where do you see your passions and abilities converging for the good of the church and the glory of God?*

» *what are you already doing for the common good, or what do you frequently find yourself compelled to do?*

servicing

God's love for his children is deeper than we can fathom. he desires for us to share his heart for his children by serving one another. he cares for each of us personally, and **often he cares for those in his body through the hands and hearts of us, his children**. when we serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are serving God, too.

as each has
received a gift,
use it to serve one
another, as good
stewards of God's
varied grace

1 peter 4:10

the son of God became incarnate, in part, to show the world who God is. we too, as the body of Christ, are to **show Christ to the world in how we live and love and serve**. the eternal perspective God has given us as his children enables us not to live for ourselves but to live to serve those around us. the grace and love which God continually pours into our hearts as we abide in Jesus overflows into a fountain of grace and love to the people God brings into our lives.

when we see the array of pain and suffering in this world, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the weight of it all.

it is not possible for one person to provide for all the needs or comfort all the hurts or help all the people; **it takes an army of individuals to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this broken world**. we need each other because the world needs us—together.

- matthew 20:25-28
- matthew 25:35-40
- john 13:12-17
- james 2:14-17

» *when have you seen the heart of God displayed through an act of service?*

“the doctrine of salvation declares the good news that we belong to God. the doctrine of the church declares the good news that we belong to one another.”
—jen wilkin & j.t. english

giving

Jesus gave everything, including his very life, in order to reconcile us to God. as his disciples, we get to reflect that same selfless heart. we have been so richly blessed in Christ; regardless of how much or how little we have in the here and now, **in humility we surrender all that is ours to God and his purposes.**

God does not need our money, but he is a generous giver and desires for us to be as well. **he has called us to mirror his generous heart** by gladly supporting the church and the ministries he uses to serve so many. when we think of all that God has given us, it becomes our joyful response to give and support our local church and the work God is doing in and through it.

do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

hebrews 13:16

- malachi 3:8-10
- luke 12:32-34
- 2 corinthians 9:6-15
- 1 timothy 6:17-19

» *do you find it difficult to give? why or why not?*

worship

worship should be woven into every facet of the life of the church. we worship as we sing, collectively lifting our voices and hearts to our king; **we also worship as we pray together, learn together, and serve together.**

the Spirit inside us compels our hearts and minds to worship the only one who is worthy of all adoration. **ultimately, we worship because he is worthy** and, in fact, we have been created for that very purpose.

- john 4:21-24
- acts 2:42-47
- hebrews 10:19-25
- 1 peter 2:9-10

baptism & communion

baptism and communion are the two ordinances instituted by Jesus that we are to do as acts of worship in obedience to him.

we don't *become* God's children through the symbol of baptism; rather, in the obedient act of baptism we are declaring that we already *are*.

in taking communion, we declare our trust in and reliance upon Christ and his sacrifice for the atonement of our sins and the salvation of our souls. we put to death any inclination to live a "Jesus plus ____" life: neither Jesus plus good works nor Jesus plus baptism can save us.

both baptism and communion are meant to retell and declare the gospel story.

Christ alone makes us holy; it is by Christ's blood alone that we are cleansed from our sins and made right with God. we are to be faithful to proclaim his atoning death and resurrection until he returns in these acts of worship!

- matthew 3:13-17
- luke 22:14-20
- romans 6:1-4
- 1 corinthians 11:23-26

» *what questions do you have about baptism and communion?*

elders

in order to lead the church in these acts of worship, God, in his wisdom, has given his church pastors and elders, not as dictators and rulers, but **as shepherds to guide and care for God's people**. God gives specific guidelines in scripture for who is qualified for this weighty role and calling. their responsibility is great; our responsibility is to respect, honor, support, and pray for them.

- 1 tim. 3:1-7
- titus 1:5-11
- hebrews 13:17
- 1 peter 5:1-5

and i will give you **shepherds after my own heart**, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

jeremiah 3:15

» *according to these scriptures, what does God require of elders—both as qualifications and responsibilities?*

mission

the mission of the church, indeed the goal of every believer, should be to know God and make him known. **this mission is both local and far-reaching—across the street and across the globe.**

Jesus came as God in the flesh to make God known to the world he so loves. he still desires to make himself known through his children—the church. shortly before Jesus returned to heaven, he gave his disciples the enormous task of making more disciples by teaching the whole world about him.

as disciples of Jesus, we get to know, follow, and enjoy him both here and for eternity. **discipleship is a life-long endeavor** in which we not only grow in our knowledge and affections for Christ, but we get to invite others to join us in following him as well. the command Jesus gave his disciples is the command he still gives us today—**the mission has not changed.**

» *why is discipleship the critical mission of the church?*

» *where is God calling you to join him in the mission of discipleship?*

*Jesus came and said to them, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that i have commanded you.** and behold, i am with you always, to the end of the age."*

matthew 28:18-20

studying the bible

for ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it. —ezra 7:10

the bible is living and active and reveals to us what can be known about God. we don't simply read the bible—**we get to enjoy God by meeting with him in his word.** we study and consume it as our daily sustenance.

as we come to the bible, we must always remember that it is a book written *by* God and *about* God. **we see ourselves more truly as we see him more fully.** with that in mind, when we read, we ask ourselves first “*what does this say about God?*” before we ever begin to consider “*what does this say about me?*”

so how do we study God's word?

there are many different ways to approach the study of a book or passage of the bible, and it can be tempting to overcomplicate it. one simplified way is to focus on answering three questions using the acronym:

O-U-R observe • understand • respond

taking notes, underlining, and highlighting while reading increases critical thinking, recall, and engagement with the text. to this end, it is helpful to print out the book or passage, double-spaced—this leaves ample room for writing comments and questions as well.

observe—what did the author say?

it is highly beneficial to first read through an entire book or passage of the bible to get the overall view of what's being communicated.

we see and understand scripture more clearly when we first **take time to discover the basic context** for the book or passage. study bibles and commentaries are useful in helping us gather background information:

- **who:** who wrote the book and what is their background? who was the original audience?
- **when:** when in human history was it written? what was happening at this point in history?
- **where:** where in the world was it written?
- **why:** why was it written? what were the particular circumstances surrounding the author and audience at this time?

after we lay this groundwork, we are then ready to observe the text by reading it repetitively, out loud, in a variety of translations, over time, while noting or highlighting details:

- **words:** what specific words and phrases does the author use intentionally or repeatedly?
- **actions:** who is doing what; where and how are they doing it?
- **context:** how does this passage fit with the surrounding verses and with the story of the bible as a whole?
- **characters:** how is God and each person named and described?

understand—what did the passage mean to the original audience?

read slowly and ask the Spirit to guide your understanding. when we **read a passage carefully and repeatedly**, we see significant details intentionally recorded in scripture that we might otherwise miss.

every passage of scripture had to mean something to the original audience before it could ever mean something to us. it is important to **make an effort to understand the author's original audience and intent**. in doing so, we will comprehend the scripture more fully and avoid unintentionally taking a verse or passage out of context.

- *what conclusions can you draw from what you have observed?*
- *what did this message mean to its original audience?*

after spending considerable time in the text, evaluate your conclusions and gather insights by using tools outside of the text:

- **cross references**: scripture helps interpret scripture. a study bible or bible app can give additional passages to consider that are related to the passage being studied.
- **word meanings**: grasping the wider meaning—or possible other meanings—for original words can help with understanding the passage more fully.
- **commentaries**: find reliable commentaries by trusted authors to help with your understanding.

every time we read the bible, we build upon truths we have learned and ideas he has shown us. like anything else, the more we study God's word, the more it becomes second nature to see the character of God and the unity of his word on every page.

respond—how will i respond to what i read and understood?

- **worship**: *what has this shown me about God's character and the gospel?* the whole bible is pointing us to God, so we want worship to be our first response.
- **meditate**: *what verse or verses can i commit to memory and continue to reflect on this week?*
- **follow**: *in what ways is God calling me to follow him in obedience as a response to what i have seen in scripture? where is he calling me to repent?*

now what?

now that you have seen a framework for how to study the bible, the best way to grasp what you have learned is to apply it as you read the word—**choose a book of the bible to walk through together**, utilizing this study process. as you grow in your confidence to study God's word and your enjoyment of meeting with him there, he will equip you to help others do the same. this is the call and pattern of discipleship:

for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

ephesians 2:10

love God, love others, and be a disciple who makes disciples for the rest of your days.

helpful outside resources

- **bibleproject.com**: short videos explaining books and passages in scripture
- **blueletterbible.org**: commentaries, background information, original language
- **esv.org**: in-text cross references
- **gotquestions.org**: commentary in a q & a format
- **ligonier.com**: commentaries and sermons by scripture reference or by topic
- **matthiaslot.com/sermons**: compilation of sermons over many books of the bible
- **netbible.org**: translation notes and commentary

final thoughts

throughout this journey, you have spent valuable time with God in hundreds of passages spanning over 50 books of the bible. as you **continue to abide in his word**, he will continue to make you increasingly confident in your faith and better equipped to study the bible on your own.

he has created us to know and love him and then make him known. **we have the word of God and the Holy Spirit**—therefore, we have all we need to follow Christ's command to make disciples.

being a disciple is a call to keep learning. we can never learn all there is to know about God and his word, nor does he expect us to. he simply calls us to a humble dependence on him and a willingness to share what we've learned so others can come to know and love Jesus and walk in his ways.

*come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,
and i will give you rest. **take my yoke upon you, and
learn from me, for i am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.***

matthew 11:28-29

