

**what is union  
with Christ?**





# foundations

*knowing God through his word*

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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**



loving him  
& loving his.

**foundations: knowing God through his word, 2nd edition.**

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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.*

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*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**

# what is union with Christ?

*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...*

**2 corinthians 5:17**

salvation is the unparalleled gift of God given to undeserving sinners by grace through faith in Christ. in saving us, God has called us his own, placed his Spirit inside us, and set us free from the power of sin and the fear of death.

by the abundant grace of God, in Christ:

- we **have been justified** once and for all
- we **are being sanctified** in the here and now
- we **will be glorified** in the life to come as we see our savior face-to-face and reign with him forever

when we think of all we have been saved from, we truly have reason to worship God for all eternity. however, that is only one side of our new reality; not only have we been saved from so much—we **have been saved to be united with Christ**. this union is not simply a biblical metaphor; it is the positional reality of every child of God.

the gifts of the Lord are innumerable and are graciously lavished upon us. yet one gift outshines them all: **in salvation, we are given the gift giver himself!** we cannot get salvation without also getting Jesus. the two are inextricably intertwined.

**if we are not *in* Christ, we are not saved.**

Jesus does not offer salvation; he offers himself. he *is* our salvation. we are united to Christ at the moment of salvation—and because of this beautiful union we are empowered to live out our faith while resting in him.

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**

“we, the unclean, are not just washed; we are in the holy one forever.  
we, the rebellious, are not just pardoned; we are in the king forever.  
we, the sad, are not just encouraged; we are in the blessed one forever.  
we, the defeated, are not just empowered; we are in the victor forever...  
**...union with Christ.**”

—lewis smedes



# united to Christ

the sin of adam alienated us from God; from that point on, all of humankind has been born into adam. every single person who has ever lived and will ever live exists in one of two realities: in adam or in Christ. if we remain in adam, we are an enemy of God and only promised death and hell. but, if we are in Christ, we not only become reconciled to God the father, we receive all the benefits that are his as well.

for as in adam all die,  
so also in Christ shall  
all be made alive.

## ephesians 1:1-14

the truth of our union with Christ is seen throughout the new testament; **it is foundational to both our identity and security.** spend time reading and meditating on **ephesians 1:1-14.** ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind and heart as you read to help you believe more confidently your unshakable security in him and know more deeply his steadfast love for you.

1 corinthians 15:22

- » *take note of every time being in Christ is mentioned.*
- » *what are all the things that are true of you because you are united to Christ? how does this affect your view of your relationship with him?*

the son of God was sent by God the father to reconcile his people to himself. in his incarnation, he came to tear the veil that separated us from God and invite us to abide in him. **this was the divine plan of the triune God from eternity past.**

the father sent the son for our redemption, the son fulfilled the requirements of our redemption, and the Holy Spirit applies that redemption to our lives. **the sending of the son was never a “plan b.”** rather, in accordance with the eternal plan and purposes of the Godhead, God the son left his glory in order to unite himself to us—and us to him.

- » *the incarnation of Christ was the plan from before the beginning of time. how does this impact your view of your salvation?*
- » *the son of God was part of making the plan that would include his incarnation, suffering, and death. what does this reveal to you about the heart of Christ?*

## john 15:1-11

using the tangible metaphor of a vine and its branches, Jesus emphasizes the necessity of being permanently united to him. **branches cannot survive apart from the vine;** neither can we survive apart from our true vine who is Christ. spend time letting the words in **john 15:1-11** cultivate a deeper understanding of the necessity of our union with Christ.

by this we know that  
we abide in him and  
he in us, because he  
has given us of his  
Spirit.

1 john 4:13

- » *pay particular attention to every mention of abiding in Jesus.*
- » *what is the natural growth that results from abiding in him?*
- » *what becomes of those who do not abide?*





# united in life

God is holy, and the only way to have eternal life with him is for us to live holy and perfectly obedient lives. yet, we are all sinners and not one of us could even hope to obtain such righteousness. one single sin separates us from God forever...unless we can claim Christ's righteousness as our own. **if we are *in Christ*, his perfectly-lived life**

**i have been crucified with Christ. it is no longer i who live, but Christ who lives in me. and the life i now live in the flesh i live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

**galatians 2:20**

**becomes ours.** in our union with Christ, what is true of his life, is true of ours as well.

because of Christ's faithfulness, we are now empowered to **live a life free from the bondage of sin.** as we abide in Christ and walk in step with the Holy Spirit, we will increasingly desire to live holy lives. however, we are forever free from any striving to live perfect lives in order to make ourselves right with God. **in our union with Christ, when God looks at us, he sees Jesus' righteousness.**

- 1 corinthians 6:15-17
- 2 corinthians 5:17-21
- colossians 2:6-7

- ephesians 4:17-24
- 2 timothy 2:11-13
- 2 peter 1:3-4

» *what does it look like to rest in Christ's finished work instead of striving to be accepted by God?*

» *what are the practical implications of recognizing that what is true of Christ's life is now true of yours as well?*

the power of our union with Christ is that we can never be separated from him. no amount of sin or lack of spiritual discipline can change the truth that we are in him eternally. **we cannot out-sin God's grace to us in Christ.** our union with Christ is permanent—we are eternally secure.

- john 5:24
- john 10:28-29

- 1 john 2:17
- 1 john 5:13

however, our *communion* with Christ can be disrupted by our sin and lack of time spent with him. it is often in these times that the enemy begins to whisper lies to us about our security in Christ. we begin to doubt the truth of our security when it doesn't *feel* true. this is precisely why knowing the truth of God's word is paramount to living and walking with assurance. **our confidence is not in how we feel, but in God's unchanging declaration that we are in Christ.**

- romans 6:1-11
- romans 8:38-39

- galatians 3:26-29
- 1 john 3:19-24

» *how do you allow what you feel to inform what you believe about your union with Christ?*

» *when do you find yourself most unsure of your security in Christ?*



# united in death

*for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

**colossians 3:3-4**

being united with Christ in death is not just about our physical death and the glory that will follow. **our union with Christ in death also informs how we live our lives in the here and now.** before we were in Christ, we had no reason or ability to not sin. now that we are in Christ, we have a new heart with new desires and are able to resist sin.

**to identify with the death of Jesus Christ means we must die to everything that was never a part of him.**

**oswald chambers**

however, our old self still fights against everything godly; therefore **we must daily die to ourselves** and our sinful desires, and surrender our will to the Spirit. this is a never-ending battle on this side of eternity, but because **Christ died and we are united to him**, we are invited and instructed to die to ourselves that we might live for God.

• **luke 9:23**

• **romans 7:18-25**

• **romans 8:12-13**

• **1 john 2:15-17**

» *how does knowing that you are in Christ empower you to die to your sinful desires?*

» *in what ways have you found freedom in dying to self?*

our union with Christ in life also guarantees our union with him in death. **Jesus took on our sin and guilt in his death that we might be clothed in his righteousness in ours.** we are united with him in death so that we will also be raised to everlasting life. the joy of our union with Christ is that we get to spend our earthly lives and all of eternity with our savior and king. our entire life is found in him alone and **without union with Christ, there is no eternal life.**

**for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**romans 6:23**

• **romans 7:4-6**

• **1 corinthians 15:53-58**

• **2 corinthians 5:14-15**

• **philippians 3:7-11**

• **colossians 2:13-15**

• **1 peter 1:3-7**

» *Jesus came to free us from the fear of death; however, in our frailty, we often still wrestle with it. what fears about death do you battle most frequently?*

» *ask the Holy Spirit to help you surrender those fears to God.*

“Jesus’ death wasn’t to free us from dying, but to free us from the fear of death. Jesus came to liberate us so we could die up front and then live. Jesus wants to take us where only dead men and women can go.” —**erwin mcmanus**



# identity

if we are *in Christ*, we have not only received all the riches of his glorious inheritance, we have also received a new identity. **we are no longer who we once were**—in our union with Christ we are being changed from the inside out through the work of the Holy Spirit who is inside us. the reality of who we are is forever changed.

our relationship to God has not just gone from enemy to redeemed, but... from enemy to **friend...to co-heir of the kingdom...to the very bride of Christ.**

## friend

in sin, we lived in rebellion against God. yet, while we were still in rebellion, God, in Jesus, reconciled us to himself. we have not been transformed from rebels to merely obedient servants; **in Jesus, we are now friends of God.** he has made himself known to us—we can know and relate to him intimately as a friend.

- psalm 25:14
- john 15:13-15
- proverbs 18:24
- james 2:23

» *how would you describe friendship with God? what does it look like for you to relate to God as both king of the universe and your friend?*

## co-heir

God has set his love on us, justified us, and adopted us as his own, making us beloved brothers and sisters of Christ our king. he bases his adoption of us, on the proven character and attributes of his beloved son and our brother, Jesus. **in Christ, he has adopted us and will never orphan us.**

in our adoption, we have become co-heirs of the kingdom with Christ and we are guaranteed to share in his glorious inheritance. **if we are in Christ, all that is his is ours,** and we will reign with him forever.

- mark 3:31-35
- john 1:12-13
- romans 4:13-16
- galatians 4:1-7
- hebrews 2:10-12
- revelation 1:4-6

» *how does thinking of Jesus as your elder brother change how you approach him?*

» *if you are in Christ, God chose you based solely on the faithfulness of Christ. take time to recall all the ways you have seen his faithfulness and let that lead you to worship.*

## bride

marriage between a man and woman is designed to be the most intimate human relationship that exists. paul writes that this relationship is actually a picture of Christ and his church.

**we are the bride of Christ, cherished and eternally secure.**

what God has joined together, no one can separate (mark 10:9, romans 8:38-39).

this is our true identity now, yet we look forward to a day when our redemption is complete. on that day, our bridegroom and lover of our souls will adorn us in his holy splendor, seat us with honor at his table, and welcome us to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

i am my beloved's  
and my beloved  
is mine.

song of solomon 6:3

