

**what is
the bible?**



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

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 in the coming days and weeks, but first...

a few helpful details:

- 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 need to be asking, "**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.*

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, we build our lives on the authority of scripture, so we look to the bible to see what God says about his own word.

- **deuteronomy 12:32; 13:1-4**
- **isaiah 40:8**
- **matthew 5:17-19**
- **john 17:7-8, 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 unchanging, absolute truth.

the authority of the bible is the standard by which we evaluate the truthfulness of every other voice we hear...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 not 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 mcquilkinn**

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 can often be 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 entire 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 verses and how they point to the sufficiency of scripture in the life of a believer.

- **deuteronomy 4:1-2**
- **psalm 19:7-11**
- **psalm 119:97-105**
- **proverbs 30:5-6**
- **matthew 24:35**
- **luke 24:44-45**
- **john 20:30-31**
- **2 peter 1:3-8**

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, ask the Lord to show you other voices 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**
- **isaiah 30:8-11**
- **jeremiah 30:1-4**
- **daniel 9:9-10**
- **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 14:1-7**
- **2 timothy 3:16-17**
- **hebrews 1:1-2**
- **2 peter 1:16-21**
- **revelation 21:5-7**

» *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, when Jesus entered the world as a baby, he 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 enables us to trust 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. it has the power to **soften hearts and change lives** as it reveals God 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.

john 17:17

- » *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 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 the power of God's word.

- **psalm 29:1-9**
- **isaiah 55:8-11**
- **jeremiah 23:29**
- **matthew 4:4**
- **john 1:1-5**
- **2 timothy 3:14-15**
- **hebrews 4:12-13**
- **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 a 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

