

**what is
the story?**



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 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 arbitrary and disconnected. nothing could be further from the truth. the bible was written by many different human authors, but ultimately it 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. our first parents brought sin into the world, fracturing creation and our access to a holy God. **although this grieved God, it did not surprise him.**

in the sovereignty of his divine will, God had already predetermined to send Jesus 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 sometimes 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 as 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**
- **psalm 90:1-2**
- **isaiah 40:21-28**
- **isaiah 45:18**
- **jeremiah 32:17**
- **romans 1:19-20**

- » *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 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.

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

- » *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?*

fall

at the beginning of time, all of creation was absolutely perfect. there was no sickness or death or disaster or war, and adam and eve lived in unhindered intimacy with both God and each other. everything was perfectly good—but it didn't take long for perfection to be shattered by evil.

» **read genesis 3:1-15** and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a greater understanding of the severity of the fall.

there is an enemy. satan was once an angel who desired to usurp God's authority and become like God. in righteousness and justice, God cast him out of heaven; now satan lives with bloodthirsty disdain for God and us, his people—because we have been made in his image.

- **isaiah 14:12-15**
- **ezekiel 28:11-19**
- **luke 10:17-20**
- **revelation 12:7-12**

just as he desired to become like God, satan now prowls around echoing the lie that humankind can become like God as well. he has been destined to hell, and he is determined to bring as many people with him as possible.

in the garden of eden, satan came as a serpent to deceive adam and eve. although eve was already made in God's image, **satan led her to believe there was more godlikeness to be had**—that God was actually holding out on them.

their entire existence thus far had been lived in the presence of God's goodness; **they had never known evil**. but satan, the deceiver, made evil look more appealing than obedience to God. eve, and adam along with her, took the bait. they ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **they disobeyed God**.

» *which of the enemy's lies do you struggle with most frequently?*

» *in what sinful ways have you desired to be like God?*

in this one single act of disobedience to God, their relationship with both God and each other was fractured. **all of creation would now feel the effects of sin in the world**. death had entered into life's reality as a result of their first sin. all of humankind would now, for all generations, be marred with this sin nature.

humanity had fallen from perfect, intimate communion with their divine creator.

- **genesis 3:23-24**
- **isaiah 59:1-13**
- **hosea 6:6-7**
- **ephesians 2:1-3**

the fall ruined everything. God mercifully removed adam and eve from eden to prevent them from eating from the tree of life and, consequently, live in their sin forever. the garden of eden was now guarded by a flaming sword and cherubim with no hope for adam and eve to return—at least not on their own merit...

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**
- **jeremiah 17:5,9**
- **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.”

genesis 3:15 (NIV)

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.**

- **job 19:23-27**
- **micah 5:2-4**
- **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. he 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. Christ 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.**

restoration

the world, as it was created, has been fractured and marred by the curse of sin. what God created in perfection, evil has broken. God created us for intimacy with him; sin shattered that relationship and brought with it death. Christ has redeemed his people from the clutches of darkness, **but for now he leaves us here to be his light** to those around us still enslaved to sin. in our in-between existence, we live with an ever-increasing awareness of the brokenness that surrounds us.

- **genesis 3:16-19**
- **romans 8:19-25**
- **2 corinthians 5:1-4**
- **2 timothy 3:1-7**

- » *where do you see the effects of sin in your life and the world around you?*
- » *in what ways do you feel the tension of living in the already-and-not-yet of your redemption?*

the darkness will not last. much like the old testament believers, we are journeying towards our promised land. one day Jesus will return and wipe away all darkness, and he will be for us our eternal light in the new jerusalem.

- **john 1:4-5**
- **john 14:2-3**
- **acts 1:6-11**
- **1 corinthians 15:50-58**
- **hebrews 11:13-16**
- **revelation 22:1-5**

it will not always be like this. the brokenness and sin and turmoil and pain all have an end date. **Jesus is coming back.** he has promised he will return for his own as a bridegroom for his bride. God has promised to dwell with his people for all eternity. in the restoration of all things, **the earth and everything in it will be made new.**

- **2 corinthians 5:17**
- **1 john 3:2**
- **revelation 19:1-16**

and i heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”

revelation 21:3

- » **read revelation 21:1-27 and contemplate the beauty of our future hope.**

on that great day when Christ returns for his bride—the church—we will exhale into eternity, stand before our king in our glorified bodies, and see our savior face-to-face as we fall to our knees in worship.

“come, Lord Jesus!” (revelation 22:20)

- » *as you contemplate the hope of the new creation, what is the response of your heart and soul?*
- » *how has reading about the story of scripture given you a greater understanding of the continuity of the whole bible?*

