

CHRISTIANITY

101

FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

“Christianity 101: Foundations” is intended to serve as a Biblical guide for living a Christ-following life. This book has been written in two sections: Foundational Doctrine and Doctrines of Worship. Foundational Doctrine is an outline seen as the basis of a Christian’s life. The second section, Doctrines of Worship, covers various acts of worship found in Scripture that we offer to the Lord to honor Him. These acts are discussed with a realization that offering our lives to God as a living sacrifice is what He truly desires as worship (Romans 12:1). Throughout the book at the end of many of the chapters you will find discussion points. These questions are for reflection and application of the various topics covered.

While it is our hope and prayer that “Christianity 101: Foundations” will help a new believer grow and develop a closer walk with God, it is designed to be a discipleship tool. Therefore, it is also our hope and prayer that you will use this resource as God grows you to help someone else who is new in their faith to grow as well.

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Foundational Doctrine



The Bible: What Is It, Who Wrote it, & How Do I Read It?

What is the Bible?

The Bible is the Word of God and the foundation on which followers of Christ should base all that we say and do. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." This makes the Word of God a trustworthy authority for all matters of life.

The Bible teaches us that God is perfect and holy in all of His ways (Leviticus 20:26, 1 Peter 1:16, Revelation 15:3), therefore His Word is also perfect and holy. 2 Samuel 22:31 says, "As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the Lord is tested." Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent." Because of what the Bible teaches us about God, we believe that the Bible is infallible and inerrant—it is incapable of and free from error.

Along with being infallible and inerrant, according to Hebrews 4:12, we believe that the Word of God is "living

and active.” Though many throughout history have tried to destroy the Bible, we believe that God has preserved and protected His Word and will continue to do so. Our God is eternal; therefore, His Word is also eternal (Isaiah 40:8, 1 Peter 1:24-25).

Who wrote the Bible?

Over hundreds of years, God inspired numerous writers to record His words. 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

How do I read the Bible?

There are a couple of things that are important to know about the Bible when reading it. The first is that, while some of the books are in chronological order, most are not. For example, in the Table of Contents of any Bible, you will find the books of Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel, in that order. However, chronologically, these books would be Daniel, Esther, then Nehemiah.

Secondly, it is important to understand that between chapters and verses numerous years may pass. The story of Noah is a good example. In Genesis 5:32, the Bible tells us that Noah was 500 years old when he became a father. Genesis 7:6 says that Noah was 600 years old when the flood came, and in Genesis 9:28 we see that Noah lived 350 years after the flood. There are 97 verses from Genesis 5:32 to Genesis 9:28 and we have all 950 years of Noah’s life recorded.

Thirdly, comprised of sixty-six books, the Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Another word for testament is promise or covenant. The Old Testament uses history, poetry, and prophecy to tell of God's covenant with those who would follow and believe in His promise of a Savior. The New Testament uses eye-witness accounts, letters to the early church, and prophecy to tell the story of God's fulfillment of His promise of a Savior through the person of Jesus Christ.

In the table below, you will find a breakdown of both Old and New Testament books and the categories into which they fall. This will help in understanding what you are reading when you open the Bible.

Old Testament	
Genesis - Deuteronomy	The Books of the Law
Joshua - Esther	Historical Books
Job - Song of Solomon	Poetic Books
Isaiah - Daniel	Major (Lengthy) Prophetic Books
Hosea - Malachi	Minor (Short) Prophetic Books
New Testament	
Matthew, Mark, Luke & John	The Gospel (Eye-witness) Books
Acts of the Apostles	The Book of Early Church History
Romans - Philemon	The Letters of Paul
Hebrews - Jude	General Letters to Believers
Revelation	The Book of Prophecy

As we read the Bible today, each book is broken up into chapter and verse. It is important to keep in mind that these books were originally written in historical account, poetic verse, and letter form. It was not until the AD 1500s that chapter and verse were added to the Bible. The reason for adding chapter and verse was to assist the reader in

memorization and, most importantly, reference.

Another very important thing to keep in mind while reading the Bible is context. Men have leveraged the Scripture for their own gain; they have held people in bondage under rules that are not found in the Bible at all; they have misled countless numbers of people for generations by abusing and misusing the truth of the Word of God. For example, Matthew 7:1 says, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." If we look only at this verse, all that we learn is that we are not to judge and if we do, we will be judged. However, that is not what Christ teaches here at all. In the verses that follow in Matthew 7:2-5, Jesus says, "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." We see what is truly meant in verse 1 by reading the surrounding verses. Christians are not told here to not judge; they are told to not be hypocritical in their judgment. We must read Scripture in proper context and be willing to look deeper than only one verse so that, as Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:15, we can accurately handle the Word of truth.

Discussion Points

Do you own a Bible?

Do you believe that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God?

Do you spend daily time reading your Bible? If not, when will you start?



Who Is God?

Father, Son, & Holy Spirit

When attempting to understand God and His complexity, we have to remember that He is an infinite being, having no beginning and no end, and we are finite beings, having a beginning and an end. We gain knowledge and understanding of God through observing His creation (Romans 1:20) and examining His Word (Hebrews 1:1-2). The Word of God is the only true revelation of the character and nature of God. Malachi 3:6 says, “For I, the Lord, do not change...” Though many throughout time have claimed additional Divine revelation—there is none. At various points throughout the Bible, God says that we are not to add to His words (Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18).

The first place we see an example of one God being multiple parts is in Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’” The fact that God chose the words “Us” and “Our” reveals, in His own words, that there are multiple parts to God—but how many and who are they?

Throughout the Bible, we see God in three distinct parts or persons. They are God the Father, sovereign in

Heaven; God the Son, Jesus Christ in flesh on earth and in heaven; and God the Holy Spirit, the Helper sent to convict and sanctify. The word that has been used by man since the 4th century AD to explain this is *trinity*. The word trinity will not be found in the Bible, but the demonstration of God in three persons is plainly visible throughout Scripture.

Jesus tells His disciples in John 14:16-17, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper . . . that is the Spirit of truth." This Scripture perfectly illustrates the three persons of God. Jesus, the Son, is asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples.

In verses 19 and 20 of that same chapter, Jesus says, "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." We see here that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God. However, they act on their own and separate of each other, always for one unified purpose. One beautiful illustration of the trinity is Christ's baptism, as seen in Matthew 3:16-17, when all three parts of God are present and functioning, individually, at the same time. The Father speaks unseen from heaven validating Christ as the Son; Christ the Son is silent while being baptized; and the Holy Spirit is seen in the form of a dove, descending on Christ.

Who is the Father?

The first thing we learn from the Bible about the Father is that He is our Creator. The very first words of the Bible state in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God, being our Father and Creator, created us for His glory (Isaiah 43:7) and in His image (Genesis 1:26).

Along with being our Creator, God the Father is a mighty warrior. In Psalm 24:8 David asks, "Who is the King of glory?" and then declares, "The Lord strong and mighty, the

Lord mighty in battle.” We see an amazing example of the Father being a warrior on our behalf in 2 Chronicles 20. The nation of Judah was being invaded by an overwhelming force that they had no power to stand or fight against. In verse 15, the Father says to them, “Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God’s.” In verse 17, the Father says, “You need not fight in this battle, station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf.”

David declares the refuge that the Father is and the strength He provides in Psalm 18:2, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

Along with being our Creator, a warrior on our behalf, and our refuge and strength, the Father is just and holy. 1 Peter 1:15 reminds of what Leviticus 11:44 says, “For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.” Since the Father is holy, He is unable to look favorably on sin (Habakkuk 1:13). The Father desires to have a relationship with His creation; however, because of our sin, a way had to be made for us to be reconciled to Him. Jesus Christ is that way (John 14:6).

Through all of these things, we see that God the Father is sovereign above all. Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.” James 1:17 says that, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” Jesus tells us that we are to pray to “Our Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). In Matthew 6:4, 6 & 18, Jesus Christ shows us that the Father sees what is done in secret and Hebrews 4:13 tells us that, “there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

The Father is God, but the Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Son?

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Father validates Christ as the Son when at the baptism of Jesus a voice from heaven is heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

While most think only of the Son as Jesus the man, born of a virgin, crucified, buried, and risen from the dead, we must understand that the Son was present long before He was born on the earth. We see this in Micah 5:2 when Micah prophesies of the birth of Christ: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." Jesus has existed eternally, since before the creation of the world, and will exist for all eternity.

Not only has Christ existed since before creation, John 1:1 states that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:14 tells us that Jesus is the Word: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus was there in the beginning speaking creation into existence. John 1:3 & 10 tell us that all things have come into being by Him and nothing has come into being without Him and that the world was made through Him. The Bible tells us in Colossians 1:15-16 that, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens, and on earth." Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus that, "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power." The Bible also shows us that Christ

has been given all judgment by the Father (John 5:22) and will be present at the end of time to judge all of mankind for eternity (Revelation 22:12).

Colossians 2:9 tells us that in Christ "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form," and 1 Timothy 1:15 says, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Jesus, the Father's only Son, became flesh so that humanity had a means of reconciliation with the God who created them. Hebrews 4:15 says that Christ is able to sympathize with our weaknesses as "One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." This is the very reason that Christ became the sacrifice for our sin. The separation between God and man started with the initial sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. The price of sin can only be paid for by death (Romans 6:23). This is a debt that we all owe; but Christ has canceled that debt (Colossians 2:14) by His death on the cross, for anyone who would believe in their heart that God raised the Son from the grave and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9). The Son is the atoning sacrifice for our sin and the way of reconciliation to the Father. However, the power of Christ is not found in his birth or death, but in His resurrection! "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

The Bible also shows Jesus as an advocate for us, seated at the right hand of God (Luke 22:69, Colossians 3:1). 1 John 2:1-2 implores us to live a life free from sin; but that if we do sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." The Bible is very clear: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has

been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

Jesus is the man who was born, died for our sins, and rose victorious on the third day; but He is more than just a man. Jesus is God, but Jesus is not the Father or the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is mentioned all throughout Scripture starting in Genesis 1:2: "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." He was present at the time of creation and is still present in our lives today. The Holy Spirit enters the believer upon salvation. Ephesians 1:13 says, "after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation . . . you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." By this sealing, God marks us as His and gives us the Spirit "as a pledge of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14).

Empowerment, conviction, intercession, and spiritual gifts are just a few of the ways the Holy Spirit works in the life of a believer. Romans 8:11 says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." The same Spirit of power that raised Christ from the dead lives in us. In situations where we do not know what to say, the Spirit speaks for us (Mark 13:11). He convicts us of sin in our lives, pushing us toward God's righteous standard (John 16:7-8). He knows what is best for us and prays to God the Father for us (Romans 8:26). The Spirit also gives gifts or abilities to believers to be used "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Some of these gifts include wisdom, healing, prophecy, and tongues. Spiritual gifts are to be used to strengthen the church. If used improperly, these gifts have no benefit and are useless to the church. Scripture teaches us that the Spirit

gives different gifts to different people but, no matter the gift or ability He gives us, each should be used “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12), and for the “edification of the church” (1 Corinthians 14:12). The mysteries of God are never-ending. John 3:8 says, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” We will not understand all of the things that the Spirit does in us—inspiring continual awe and a need for faithfulness to His will.

The Holy Spirit is God, but the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son.



Heaven, Hell, & Satan

Heaven:

The Scripture teaches that heaven is a literal, conscious place of physical perfection and spiritual bliss in the presence of God (Revelation 21:1-3) for all of those who are redeemed by Christ.

Mark 16:19 tells us that after Jesus had given the disciples instructions, "He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God." There are two encounters by people in the book of Acts seeing and hearing from Jesus in heaven. The first is Stephen who, as he was dying, saw the heavens open and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). The second is Saul, who was blinded on the road to Damascus. A voice called out to him. When he questioned who the voice was, the Lord responded, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).

We have assurance from the Bible that when we pass from this life, if we have believed and confessed in Christ for salvation, we will be united with the Lord and reunited with saved family and friends for eternity with the Lord. This

causes us to grieve with hope and joy at the death of a loved one who was a saved believer in Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

Revelation 21:4 says that in heaven, “[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” This is the hope that the salvation of the Lord brings.

Hell:

For as wonderful as heaven sounds, we can be assured that hell is not. The final consequence for any unredeemed sinner is eternal separation from God in hell (Luke 12:4-5, Revelation 20:15). The Scripture teaches that hell is a literal, conscious place of physical torment and spiritual agony (Luke 16:19-31).

In Matthew 25:41, speaking of the judgment of God on mankind’s sin, Jesus says, “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Hell was not originally created for or intended for humanity. However, because of our sin, Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”

Though we sometimes are misled to believe that Satan is the ruler of hell, it is important to remember that God is the Lord of heaven and hell. Hell is the final resting place of Satan when God calls all things into judgment and puts him away for eternity. Revelation 20:10 says, “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire . . . and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Satan:

It is very important for the believer and follower of Jesus Christ to understand who Satan, or the devil, is. He is not a mythical cartoon character with horns and a pitchfork. The Bible tells us that the devil is our adversary and that he “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). In John 10:10, Jesus refers to Satan as a thief saying, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” In John 8:44, Christ says that the devil is the father of lies, a murderer, and that he does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

Who, then, is the devil? In Luke 10:18 Jesus says to His disciples, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.” The only accounts of anyone falling from heaven that we have in the Bible are found in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. In Ezekiel 28:12-14, we see the description about someone called, “The King of Tyre.” In this description there are many indicators that this king was not a mortal man. We see it said of this king, “You had the seal of perfection,” and “You were in Eden, the garden of God.” These verses show him as having been covered with every precious stone. Verse 14 says that he was “on the holy mountain of God.” Isaiah 14:12 refers to him as “star of the morning, son of the dawn.” Mankind is much more familiar with the Latin name for these terms—Lucifer.

In Ezekiel 28:15-16, we see that unrighteousness was found in him, that he was internally filled with violence, and that he ultimately sinned. In Isaiah 14:14, we find record of him saying, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” We see here that the sin that filled Lucifer was the pride and idolatry of himself above God. Ezekiel 28:16 finishes with God saying, “Therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of

the stones of fire.”

Satan’s sin caused him to be cast from heaven. There are many contradictory teachings as to where he is now. Some say that Satan is in and the ruler of hell. However, as we learned in our study of hell, this is not true.

So where is Satan now? The Bible is clear that he was cast down from the mountain of God, but this did not create the inability for Satan to come before God. We see an example of this in Job 1:6-7, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, ‘From where do you come?’” God’s response to Satan’s presence does not show alarm or surprise; it is a simple question. In Satan’s answer, we learn a little bit about where he is. Continuing in Job 1:7: “Then Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.’” This is obviously not an isolated case, as it happens again in Job 2:1-2. We learn here that Satan is in heaven at times and on the earth at times.

The Scripture does not end there with the reality of where Satan is. In the account of Jesus’ life, Matthew 4:1 shows us that Christ was led into the wilderness “to be tempted by the devil.” In John 13:27, the Bible tells us that before Judas betrayed Christ into the hands of the Jewish leaders to be crucified, “Satan then entered into him.”

One of the most telling passages of where Satan is and what he is doing can be found in Revelation 12:10. Here, Satan is called the “accuser of our brethren” (or believers). It says that he “accuses them before our God day and night.”



Salvation

Scripture tells us that God created mankind in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27). When man was created and placed in the Garden of Eden, sin and death were not a part of the world and “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). God told Adam and Eve that they could eat “freely” of any tree in the garden except from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” and that if they ever disobeyed His command, they would “surely die” (Genesis 2:15-17). Satan tempted Eve with the exact fruit that God told them not to eat. She ate and gave it to Adam; he ate, and so they sinned against God (Genesis 3:1-6). “Through one man sin entered into the world, . . . and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). From that point on, humanity has been born sinful, separated from God, and in need of salvation from the coming judgment and wrath of God upon the sinner (Romans 3:10, 23). The Scripture declares that it is for this very reason that God sent Jesus—to redeem us from our sins (Matthew 1:21, John 3:16, Ephesians 2:1-6, 1 Peter 1:18-19).

From Scripture, we learn that it is by grace we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ and that this is God’s gift

to us (Ephesians 2:7-8). To be saved means to be freed from the eternal consequence of our sin by receiving forgiveness and eternal life in Heaven with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20, 1 Peter 1:3-4). This is something that God desires for all of humanity. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

The Bible is very clear—Jesus is the only way to salvation. In John 11:25-26, Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” In John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

The Bible is also clear that you cannot earn salvation. Some may say that they will just “do good” and God will save them, but there is no amount of good things a person can do in order to be saved. Ephesians 2:9 says our salvation comes “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Jesus Christ alone has the power to save the soul.

The Bible is clear about how a person is saved. Romans 10:9-10 says, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” Romans 10:13 says, “for whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Discussion Points

Have you believed in your heart that Jesus died and rose again for your sins and confessed with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord?

If you have not called on the name of the Lord to be saved, the following prayer is a guide to help you do that right now. However, it is important to remember that these words alone do not save you. It is the genuine belief in your heart and the confession of your mouth that brings about the salvation of the Lord.

“Lord, I acknowledge my sin before you. I admit to the need for a Savior in my life. I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ was crucified, that he died, was buried and rose again from the grave to save me from my sin. I confess, Jesus, that You are Lord and I ask that you forgive me of my sin and save my soul. In Jesus name, Amen.”



Baptism: Why, What, & Who?

Why be baptized?

For those who believe and confess Christ as Lord and Savior, baptism is obedience to His commands and a way to bring glory to the Father. It is very important to understand that faith in Jesus Christ and belief and confession in Him as Savior and Lord of your life is the only means that we have for salvation. John 14:6, Acts 4:12 and Romans 10:9-13 are just a few examples in Scripture that show this to be true.

According to the Bible, all those who have believed and confessed Christ as Lord should be baptized (Mark 16:16). However, baptism does not save the soul, nor is baptism Scripturally required to be saved. Baptism is obedience to Christ. In the believer's life, it is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is not merely a symbolic act; it is the identification of the believer as belonging to Christ. Baptism is a powerful tool in the life of a believer to testify to the saving grace of God.

We see that baptism is not required for salvation by looking at the thief on the cross at the crucifixion of Jesus.

In Luke 23:42-43, the thief never had the opportunity to be baptized; but Christ told him that on that very day, he would be with Him in paradise. The thief's faith saved him. We also see that baptism is not proof of salvation through Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8:4-24. Simon believed the Good News of Jesus Christ that was being preached and was baptized. Later he revealed that his motive was to make money and profit from the things of God. Peter then told Simon to pray to the Lord for forgiveness and went on to rebuke him in verse 23 by saying, "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." Simon's reply is even more telling of his lack of genuine salvation when he says, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

In Matthew 28:19, Christ tells His disciples to go "and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." This is the command for every disciple of Christ to be baptized and to baptize others who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

What Does Baptism Look Like?

According to Scripture, baptism is full immersion in water. The original Greek word used in the Bible for baptism literally means to immerse, submerge, or dip repeatedly. Our Biblical foundation for this is found in Matthew 3:16, and again in Mark 1:10, in the account of Christ himself being baptized. In both accounts, we see phrases like *come up from the water*. We see the same language in Acts 8 with the account of Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch. In verse 38, it says they both "went down into the water"; and in verse 39, "they came up out of the water."

According to the Bible, to be baptized is to be immersed in and come up out of the water, after having believed and confessed Christ as Lord and Savior of your life. We see this in

many instances, most notably with the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip in Acts 8:36. Upon the eunuch's belief and confession it says, "As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?'"

Who is baptism for?

All throughout the book of Acts, there are accounts of people believing in Christ and immediately being baptized. Acts 2:41; 8:12 & 38; 16:14-15; and 18:8 all illustrate people believing and immediately being baptized. According to Biblical example, baptism is for any person who has believed in their heart and confessed with their mouth that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior and has sought His forgiveness for the sin in their life.

Discussion Points

If you are saved, have you been baptized?

If not, what is preventing you from being baptized?



What Is The Church?

Many times the church is viewed as a brick and mortar building where people meet to worship God and learn from the Bible. However, when Christ first used the word church, He was not referring to a building. Rather, He was referring to all of those who would believe in and confess Him as Lord and Savior.

In Ephesians 5:25-27, the church is likened to being the bride of Christ. This passage teaches husbands how to love their wives, by loving them "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

Staying within the picture of marriage, by God's design, the husband is the head of his wife. Colossians 1:18 tells us that Christ is the head of the church: "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything." This clarifies what Christ's role in the church is

and what our role is to be. Christ is the head, who is leading and directing the body. The church, as the body of Christ, is to follow His direction in all that it does. It is Christ who commissioned His followers with His Good News to preach to the world.

Often people will ask if being an active part of a local church is necessary. They may feel like they do not need to go worship God or spend time with other believers. This goes against what the Bible teaches. Hebrews 10:23-25 states, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." This verse makes it very clear that we are to be gathering together with other believers, encouraging and being encouraged in our walk of faith before the Lord.

The fundamental function of the church is found in Matthew 28:19 and will be discussed in greater detail in the second part of this book. In Matthew 28:18-20, just before Christ ascends into heaven, He gives His disciples the following instructions: "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" This commission is to be the focus of every follower of Christ and every gathering of Christ's people.

Along with the illustration of the church being the bride of Christ, the Bible says that the church is the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 says that in the body of Christ there are many members and that each member has a very specific function within the body, in order to carry out the Great Commission. For example, a pastor is not more

important than a nursery worker. Yes, the pastor may have more responsibility than the nursery worker, but the two work together to support the entire body. 1 Corinthians 12:14-15 illustrates this idea perfectly: "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body." Every person in the body of Christ has value and responsibility.

It is of great importance to remember that, while we attend and are active parts in local churches, the church is global. It is a multi-cultural community of believers from all walks of life, nationalities, and social/economical standing. Believers in the United States of America may not worship anything like believers in Korea, who may not worship anything like believers in South Africa, who probably worship nothing like believers in India. The body of Christ is not limited to our small view of the world.

Discussion Points

Are you a functioning member in the body of believers?

If not, what is keeping you from being a functioning member in the body of believers, or are you neglecting the body of Christ?

Doctrines of Worship



Devotion to Scripture

Devotion to Scripture may be summed up easily as daily time spent reading and studying God's Word. However, devotion to Scripture goes much further than just reading and studying. In the beginning of Foundational Doctrine, we learned that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is...profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

In James 1:22 we are told, "prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." We must be so wholly devoted to Scripture that it actually steers and controls our thoughts and actions. In Luke 11:28 Jesus says, "blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Obeying the Word of God brings the blessing of God on the life of a believer. In Matthew 7:24-29, Jesus compares those who hear and act on His words to a wise man. He compares those who hear and do not act on them to a fool.

Many Christians struggle with how to live a life for God and how to know what we are supposed to be doing for Him. When we read the Word of God, He tells us and shows us how to live for Him. Throughout all of Psalm 119, the author points to how devotion to God's Word will do the following: give us strength in weakness (verse 28), light our path and guide our feet (verse 105), keep us from sinning against God (verse 133), and give us peace (verse 165). Hebrews 4:12 tells us that "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." When we are wholly devoted to God's Word, we will live a life for God, directed by His very words. When we read the Bible, we are not just reading a book with words and pages; it is God revealing Himself to us directly.

Devotion to Scripture was something that the early church believers took very seriously. We see in Acts 2:42, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching..." The apostles' teachings were the commands of Christ—the very Word of God.

Being devoted to Scripture builds our relationship with God. As Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), we should endeavor to know as much of God's Word as possible. The prophet Jeremiah said, "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16).

Discussion Points

What does your daily devotion to Scripture look like?

What evidence is there in your life that shows your devotion to Scripture?

Where in your life are you lacking devotion to Scripture?

In regards to the three previous questions: in what ways will you improve your devotion to Scripture?



Fellowship: Relationships In The Church

In John 13:34-35, Jesus tells His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." As followers of Christ, His love should be displayed in our relationships with all people, especially those relationships within the church. The Bible teaches us that, as believers, we have a responsibility to each other. We are to hold each other accountable, encourage each other, and support one another. Galatians 6:1-2 says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."

As a believer, fellowship is the cultivation of relationships with other believers. In Acts 2:46, Luke describes some of the church's fellowship: "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple." This verse shows us the unity among the early church believers. Godly fellowship can only exist within a unified church. As believers, we are to have the same goals

and desires (Philippians 2:1-2). Continuing on in Acts 2:46, early believers spent time “breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” The early believers genuinely enjoyed each other’s company, sharing in communion and also sharing everyday meals. We are told that the church was “praising God and having favor with all the people” (Acts 2:47). The early church was in fellowship with each other simply by praising God and serving Him as one. The passion they had for the Lord brought them together and fostered godly relationships. The writer of Hebrews tells the church in Hebrews 10:24-25, “let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” It is incredibly important for the church to meet together and love and encourage each other. The Lord brings us to a body of believers because it is impossible to sustain life outside of the body. Just as if a hand or foot was severed from the human body and could not function, so it is for the believer when disconnected from the body of Christ. As we stay connected to the body of Christ through worship and fellowship with other believers, we gain strength and grow in our walk with the Lord.

Discussion Points

Are you isolated from the church body? Within the church body?

Do you have growing relationships with people in the church?

In what ways will you seek to become more connected with fellow believers?



Communion Proclaiming His Death Until He Comes

Communion, also called the Lord's supper, is a practice that the church is commanded to do in Scripture. It is for the remembrance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sin, and it is for all who have believed in and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord. Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:14-20 all show that Communion was first instituted and commanded in the Scripture when Jesus shared a last meal with His disciples before His death. This meal is commonly known and referred to as the "last supper." Jesus, while taking both the bread and the wine, described the imagery of the death He would soon die (Luke 22:19-23).

Communion focuses the church on the power of Jesus' death for the redemption of their sin (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Through Scripture, Christ not only commands that we observe Communion; He also gives specific direction as to how the church ought to observe it (1 Corinthians 11:23-32). During the sacred observance of Communion, an element or portion of unleavened bread, symbolizing Christ's body, is distributed to the church. Along with the bread, a cup of the fruit of the vine, symbolizing Christ's blood and typically

represented with wine or grape juice, is also distributed to the church. Though instruction on observing Communion are specific, there is no biblical command as to when and how often Communion is to be observed.

Scripture calls those who may be moved to partake in Communion to a time of self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28). The purpose of this time is to purify ourselves of sin through prayer and repentance. Anyone harboring sin that they are unwilling to repent of should not participate in Communion. The Scripture warns that those who participate in Communion with an unrepentant heart are at risk of sickness and even death (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). For the church, Communion is a time to worship in unity as we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Discussion Points

Are you harboring sin in your life that would keep you from partaking in communion right now?

How long will you delay before taking action on this sin in your life?



Prayer & Fasting: Drawing Closer To God

What is prayer?

Prayer is communication with God, and is a vital part of a believer's walk. The basis of Christianity is God's desire for a reconciled relationship with fallen mankind. Prayer not only brings about the beginning of this relationship, it fosters the growth of it as well. Many people think of prayer as a tool to ask God for needs in their life or for help in various circumstances they find themselves in. However, through prayer we are able to develop an intimate relationship with the Lord.

Some may say or think that prayer is something to be done only at a certain time or in a specific place. However, we have the ability to come to God in prayer at any time, anywhere. Paul told the people at Ephesus in Ephesians 6:18 to "pray at all times." Though we are able to go to God in prayer at all times, it is good to have a specific time that we set aside to pray. When a law was put into effect in Daniel 6 that no one was to pray to any god other than the king, verse 10 tells us that Daniel went upstairs in his house with his

windows open toward Jerusalem and knelt three times a day “praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.”

Although prayer is a time for us to go before the Lord with various types of requests and petitions, it is necessary to not consume our prayer time with only making requests of God. In John 10:14, Jesus calls himself “the Good Shepherd” and His followers “the sheep” (John 10:2-3). He says that the “sheep follow Him because they know His voice” (John 10:4). If we spend all of our time speaking to God but not allowing time for Him to speak to us, how will we know His voice? In Matthew 6:7-10, Christ teaches us how to pray and says not to “use meaningless repetition,” but that when we pray, we should seek for God’s kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. In doing so, we yield ourselves to a Holy, Sovereign God.

How do I pray?

Throughout the Bible we see examples of public prayer, people gathered together with the intent of coming before God with a specific request or purpose. However, and more often, it is something done in private between us and the Lord.

Again in Matthew 6:6, Jesus says, “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

We see examples throughout the gospels of Christ getting alone to pray before God (Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, and Luke 6:12).

In Matthew 6:9-13, Christ teaches us very clearly how to pray. Using the acronym of P. R. A. Y. (Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield) and applying it to this passage can help the believer understand how to approach the Lord in prayer.

PRAISE	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
REPENT	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
ASK	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread." "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
YIELD	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

What is fasting?

Fasting is another step taken in prayer. Scripturally, we see that a fast is used for seeking the Lord in a specific situation. We see it used in Acts 14:23 when Paul and Barnabas prayed over newly appointed elders in the church and commended them to the Lord.

A common thought when the word fasting is mentioned is that someone is going to go without food for a certain period of time. In the Bible, most fasting is from food, but not necessarily all food. In Daniel 1:12, Daniel, in not desiring to be defiled by the king's food and to serve in proving that God would sustain he and his friends, asked the king's attendant that they be served only vegetables to eat and water to drink. We see this again in Daniel 10:1-3 when a message was

revealed to Daniel. He says, “I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all.”

Although food is what we see most commonly fasted from in Scripture, this is not always the case. In 1 Corinthians 7:5, Paul is teaching the Corinthian believers that they should not deprive their spouses of sexual intimacy. He says, “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” This simply illustrates the point that it does not need to be food that is given up for a fast. The object of fasting is to deny yourself a source of pleasure or distraction in order to spend additional time seeking the Lord more intently.

In Matthew 6:16-18, Christ says, “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face.” We are told that we should maintain our personal hygiene and let our fasting be done in secret and noticed only by God. Fasting is not about how spiritual you are, that would be pride and God opposes the proud (James 4:6).

Fasting is done by believers desiring to pursue God’s favor, protection, deliverance, and power (Ezra 8:21-23, 31-32). Fasting can also be done in order to seek the Lord’s forgiveness. There is no specified length of time in Scripture for a fast to be carried out. Esther called for a three day fast (Esther 4:16). Daniel, as we saw, fasted for three weeks. Jesus fasted for forty days as seen in Luke 4:2. In Scripture, fasting is found to be a very useful and effective way for a believer to draw closer to God.

Discussion Points

Do you have an established daily prayer life? What does it look like?

Can you speak to the effect of prayer in your life?

Are there steps you should take to improve your prayer life? If so, what are they?

Have you ever considered giving something up for a time in order to seek the Lord in a greater way?



Praise: Giving God Glory

The life of a Christian is to joyfully praise God, by declaring His glory, honor, and power, in good and bad times. Though praise to God can and should be offered in various ways, for our purpose here we will look at praising God with song and in sorrow. Throughout Scripture, praise is continually given to God. In the book of Psalms, which is often viewed as the book of praise, we see verses like, “my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent” (Psalm 30:12), and “I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name” (Psalm 63:4). Praise is outward glorification of our Heavenly Father, the reason we were created (Isaiah 43:7). 1 Peter 2:9 says of those who have believed and confessed in Christ as their Savior, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Psalm 150 is an incredible example of praising God. David writes, “Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD." David writes this psalm with passion, love, and excitement for who God is. This same passion should fill us with joy and cause us to sing and declare the things our God has done for us.

In Colossians 3:16, we are called to let the word of Christ dwell within us and to encourage one another "with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." We are called to praise in order to glorify God. By doing so, we draw closer to the purpose for which He created us. Our praise can also be used by God in drawing others to His faithfulness, truth, and love.

Though easy to joyfully praise God in good times, it is also important to remember that we must joyfully praise God in our sorrow as well. The Bible is full of laments before God. The entire book of Lamentations was written as a lament before God because of the sin of the people of Israel. There is praise to be given to God in the midst of very hard and difficult circumstances. In Acts 16:22-30, we read the story of two men, Paul and Silas, who are imprisoned for preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. The story says that at midnight, in the middle of the prison, Paul and Silas began praying and singing hymns of praise to God. Suddenly an earthquake struck the jail and they were freed. The account of the man Job, in Job 1:13-22 and Job 2:7-10, shows his lamenting praise for the harm that comes upon his family and the physical affliction of his body.

As believers, we will be praising God now and for all eternity. John writes of eternity in heaven in Revelation 5:13, "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the

Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'"

Discussion Points

Do you joyfully praise God in the good times and in the bad times?

Do you encourage other members of the body by living a joyful life of praise?

In what ways, other than song, do you praise God?



Stewardship

We must understand that the time, abilities, resources, finances, and standing in society that we have been given are gifts to us from God. In John 3:27, John the Baptist responds to people questioning the growing following of Christ over his own following and he says, “a man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.” John the Baptist attributed the following that he had to God alone and like Job, realized that God gives and takes away (Job 1:22).

In 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul tells the church at Corinth, “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” No one should give simply because they are forced to (compulsion) or with the wrong attitude (grudgingly). Each person should seek God in determining what to give in the areas of their time, abilities, resources, finances, and standing in society.

As we saw when we learned about the Holy Spirit, each one of us is bestowed with certain gifts to use for the benefit of the church. 1 Peter 4:10 tells us, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as

good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” This verse is saying that, first and foremost, God has given grace to those who have believed and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord. We are to be good stewards of this grace by using the special gift that God has given us in order to serve one another.

We are to honor God with the things He has entrusted to us, whether great or small. We see this in Matthew 25:14-28 in the parable of the talents. The third servant was given one talent and did nothing with it. He was counted as wicked, lazy, worthless, and was ultimately thrown out.

Where we spend our time, abilities, resources, finances, and standing in society shows what we have placed value on. Matthew 6:19-20 says, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.” Our stewardship should not be wasted on the meaningless pursuits of this world, but rather should be spent on furthering the kingdom of Christ and looking forward to our eternal reward in heaven with God. Matthew goes on to say in verse 21, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Discussion Points

Are you responsibly using the time, abilities, resources, finances, and standing in society to honor God?

If not, how will you change in order to honor God by responsibly using what He has given to you? If so, how?



The Great Commission: Preach, Baptize, & Disciple

Before Jesus' ascension into heaven, He gave His followers very specific instructions to be carried out here on earth. Mark 16:15 tells us that we are to, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." We are to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that lost sinners in the world "may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [God]" (Acts 26:18).

Matthew 28:18-20 goes even further in explaining this job description. Jesus says to his disciples, as well as to you and I, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." In these verses, Christ tells us that He has been given all authority. We, in light of His authority, are to go to all nations and make disciples, teaching them all He has commanded.

There are three distinct commands that Christ gives to His followers in these two passages: to preach His Good News, to baptize new believers, and to disciple them in His teachings.

In these passages, when Christ says words like world and all creation, where does He mean? In Acts 1:8, Jesus says to His disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." If we take our cue from this direction, we need to begin evangelizing in our home communities. This is what Jerusalem was for the disciples. Simply following this direction, we spread out from our home communities to neighboring towns, eventually reaching across our own nation. The ultimate goal of the Great Commission is that we would reach to the "remotest part of the earth."

Christ then reassures His disciples, as well as you and I, that He will be with us "to the end of the age" and that we do not need to fear. The need for Christians to do this is stressed in Romans 10:13-15: "For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" These verses show us that unless Christians take up the command of Christ to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel," sinners will not be able to hear the Good News. If sinners don't hear the Good News, they cannot have the opportunity to believe. If they do not have the opportunity to believe, they cannot be saved.

It is our hope and prayer that you will take what the Lord teaches you through His Word and apply it to your life. By doing so, you will begin leading others to Christ, thus fulfilling the commission He gave us.

Discussion Points

Where and how are you, the follower of Christ, carrying out The Great Commission in your life?

