

biblical FOUNDATIONS

for a life of growth in Jesus

Biblical Foundations
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Welcome!

This material is intended to deepen your love for Jesus Christ by helping ground you in foundational concepts of the Christian faith. It is simply amazing to stop and realize that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us. The Word of God is indeed a wonderful treasure, and as a disciple (follower) of Jesus, you will be growing in your love for Him for the rest of your life as you dive into this treasure. On top of that, God wants to use you to help others grow in their love for Him as well. We hope your investment of studying this material fuels your love for Jesus as well as your passion to give these truths away to someone else!

2 Foundational Passages of Scripture

One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:35-40 (known as "The Great Commandment")

"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."

Matthew 28:18-20 (known as "The Great Commission")

2 Introductory Questions

Question #1 - What do you hope to get out of studying this material?

Question #2 - Name three people you know who could benefit from going through this material?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foundation #1 Growing in God's Word

Foundation #2 The Amazing Gift of Salvation

Foundation #3 The Trustworthiness of God

Foundation #4 Understanding the Holy Spirit

Foundation #5 Encountering Jesus

Foundation #6 Experiencing Community

Foundation #7 Engaging the World

Foundation #8 Excelling in Stewardship

Foundation #9 Equipped to Multiply

Appendix A The S.O.A.P. Devotional

Appendix B Preparing and Sharing your Testimony

Appendix C 28-Day Bible Reading Plan

Appendix D Suggested List for Further Reading

Give it Away A guide to help you share these truths
with someone else in a one-on-one setting

Foundation # 1 "Growing in God's Word"

Passages: 2 Timothy 3:16-17 James 1:21-25
 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 Hebrews 4:12
 Psalm 119:9-16 Joshua 1:8-9

Please study these verses and then answer the following questions. Be concise in your answers. List specific principles that you glean from your study of these passages and give the accompanying scripture reference.

1. Do a S.O.A.P. devotional through **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (Page 6)**
2. What does it mean that "all scripture is inspired by God"? What are the implications of this truth on how you view the role God's word should play in your life?
3. How does the word of God relate to our spiritual growth as followers of Christ?
4. What are some reasons why we can "delight" in the word of God (Ps 119:16)? What keeps you from delighting in the truth of God's word?

5. Why is it not enough to simply know God's word? What is God after when we spend time in His word?
6. What does it look like to "meditate" on the truth of God's word (Joshua 1:8)? Why do you think this is an important part of our daily walk with Christ?
7. How are you currently growing in your understanding of God's word? How are you applying His word to your life right now?
8. What are some of the hindrances that keep you from seeking and treasuring the truth found in God's word?

9. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

S.O.A.P. DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Observations:

Applications:

Prayer:

Foundation # 2 "The Amazing Gift of Salvation"

Passages: Ephesians 2:1-3 Ephesians 2:4-10
 Romans 1:18-21 Romans 3:21-24
 Romans 3:23 Romans 5:8-9
 Romans 6:23 Romans 8:1
 Romans 5:12 Romans 8:28-39

1. Why is salvation necessary? What is the problem that exists between mankind and the God of the universe?
2. What is the natural condition of all people? Are they neutral in their attitude towards God? What does sin do to a person's heart towards God?
3. Why was the death of Jesus Christ necessary to bring us back into a right relationship with God? What did Jesus accomplish for you on the cross?

4. What does it mean to be "justified"? How can we be justified when we are indeed guilty of sin and deserving of death?
5. Why is the phrase "But God..." so important in Ephesians 2:4? What does the word "grace" mean in Romans 3:24?
6. What are the results of our salvation? What do we get as a free gift as the result of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf?

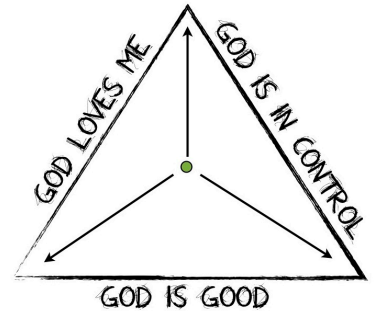
7. Why is remembering what God has saved you from (questions 1 and 2) so important for the kind of life and love we live for Him? How does a fresh remembrance of the gospel impact the way we grow on a daily basis (our sanctification)?
8. How does this study impact your love and worship of God? What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

Foundation # 3 "The Trustworthiness of God"

Passages: 3 Foundational Truths about the Character of God

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| - God is in Control | Ephesians 1:11, Psalms 115:3, Proverbs 16:9, Dan 4:35 |
| - God is Good | Psalm 86:5, 106:1, 145:9 |
| - God Loves You | John 3:16, Rom 5:8, 1 John 4:14-19 |

1. What strikes you about these 3 foundational truths? How do they fuel your faith in the trustworthiness of God?



2. Why is it critical that God be completely sovereign over all things? Why might this truth about God (that He is in control) be unsettling apart from the other two truths?
3. What are circumstances that tempt you to doubt the goodness of God? Why is it critical to live by faith in the goodness of God in those times?

4. The Bible is clear that because of what Christ did on the cross, and because of your faith in Him, God has a settled, unwavering, and passionate love for you. How does this truth impact your heart?
5. These foundational truths about God's character provide a "safe place of faith" for us. Which of these three truths are you tempted to doubt most often, and why? How do our emotions impact the way we think about God? Why is it important to remember that God's character is the same no matter how we "feel" on a daily basis?
6. Do a S.O.A.P. devotional through **Romans 8:28-32 (Page 10)**. How do you see all of these truths about God come together in that passage? What wonderfully personal promises does God make to you in this passage and how can you cling to them in faith on a daily basis?
7. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

S.O.A.P. DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Romans 8:28-32

Observations:

Applications:

Prayer:

Foundation # 4 "Understanding the Holy Spirit"

Passages: John 14:16-17 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
 John 7:37-39 1 Corinthians 6:18-20
 Titus 3:4-7 Galatians 5:16-25
 Ephesians 1:13-14 Ephesians 5:15-21

1. According to John 14:16-17, what did Jesus promise to His followers regarding the Holy Spirit?
2. According to these verses, what is our relationship to the Holy Spirit? Why is it important for us to know that the Spirit of God dwells in us?
3. According to these verses, what does the Holy Spirit do in our lives?
4. Why is it important for us to understand the battle within us between the Holy Spirit and the flesh? How are we called to fight this battle?

5. Why is it important that we pursue growth and holiness in the power of the Holy Spirit rather than the power of our own flesh? What happens if we try to fight flesh with flesh?
6. What does it mean to “walk” in the Spirit (from Galatians 5) and to “be filled” with the Spirit (from Ephesians 5)?
7. What are some ways you can practically yield yourself to the Holy Spirit on a daily basis? How will you know if this is happening?
8. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

Foundation # 5 - Defining Marks of the Christian Life

"Encountering Jesus"

Passages: Luke 10:38-42
Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16
Matthew 6:7-13
Matthew 11:28-30, 1 John 1:8-9, Hebrews 4:14-16,
Philippians 4:6-7

1. Why is the account of Mary and Martha so applicable to us today? What keeps you from "sitting at the feet of Jesus" and seeking His presence?
2. What do we learn about prayer from the example of Jesus? Why is it significant that Jesus sought intimate time with the Father through prayer? How does this encourage and challenge you?
3. In Matthew 6, Jesus gave us an example of prayer. What are important components of this prayer? How can you use these components in your own prayer to cultivate intimacy with Him?

4. According to these passages (Matthew 11:28, 1 John 1:8-9, Hebrews 4:14-16, Philippians 4:6-7), what are we promised we will find at the feet of Jesus?
5. What are some practical thoughts you have about making intimate time with Jesus a part of your daily life? What needs to change in your life to make this happen?
6. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

Foundation # 6 - Defining Marks of the Christian Life "Experiencing Community"

Passages: Acts 2:41-47
John 13:35, Romans 12:9-18, 1 John 3:13-18

1. Do a S.O.A.P. devotional through **Acts 2:41-47 (Page 17)**
2. Describe the atmosphere and "feel" of the early church as described in Acts 2. What were these people committed to? What was God doing in their midst?
3. What keeps us from experiencing that same picture described in Acts 2?
4. The passages in John 13, Romans 12 and 1 John 3 call us to "love one another" as followers of Jesus. What are the characteristics and effects of the love we are called to have?

5. Scripture uses the phrase "one another" to describe the way we are to relate to each other in the body of Christ. Do a search through the New Testament on that phrase and make a list of the "one-anothers" you find. Use an online tool like www.blueletterbible.org to do the search.

6. What do these "one-anothers" tell you about the kind of relationships we should be fostering with others? What changes need to take place in order for you to experience these "one-anothers"?

7. How are you currently experiencing Biblical community within the church family at MVC? What are hindrances that keep you from experiencing authentic, intimate and meaningful relationships with others in the church body?

8. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

S.O.A.P. DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Acts 2:41-47

Observations:

Applications:

Prayer:

Foundation # 7 - Defining Marks of the Christian Life "Engaging the World"

Passages: Luke 5:27-32, Luke 19:1-10
2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Matthew 5:14-16

1. Luke 19:10 tells us that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was "lost". What does it mean for a person to be lost?
2. What do the accounts about Levi and Zaccheus teach us about Jesus' heart for the lost? What keeps us from having the same heart?
3. What is the "message of reconciliation" that we are to share with others? What qualifies us to give that message to others?

4. What picture does the word "Ambassador" create in your mind? What does it mean to be Christ's ambassador? What keeps you from living that role on a daily basis?
5. Matthew 5:14 says that as followers of Christ, we already are lights for Him. How well are you shining Jesus to the world around you? According to this passage, what is one of the primary ways that our light shines? What is the end-goal in being lights for Him?
6. What keeps us from spending time with those who need to know Jesus? What will it require to shine in close enough proximity to the "lost" so that they will see our good works?

7. Who are three people the Lord wants you to share your "transformation story" with? Look at Appendix B for ideas on how to write out your transformation story to be ready to share it with others.
8. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

Foundation # 8 - Defining Marks of the Christian Life

"Excelling in Stewardship"

Passages: 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Matthew 25:14-30

Time – Ephesians 5:15-16, 1 Peter 4:1-5

Talents – 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:4-27, Romans 12:3-8

Treasures – Matthew 6:19-24, 1 Timothy 6:6-11 & 17-19, Proverbs 3:9, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

1. What is the key point in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15? Why is an understanding of this so important to the way we live our lives? How does this truth impact the way we view and use our time, talents and treasures?
2. The passage in Matthew 25 is a parable about the kingdom of heaven. What does it say about those who are faithful servants of God? How does the phrase "well done good and faithful servant" in vs. 21 and 23 encourage and motivate you?
3. What are some things that God has entrusted to you as His child? How are you caring for, or "stewarding", these things on His behalf?

4. What do the passages say about how to be a wise steward of your "Time" and the way you live your life?
5. What do the passages say about how to be a wise steward of your "Talents" and the abilities and spiritual gifts God has entrusted to you?
6. What do the passages say about how to be a wise steward of your "Treasures", or the financial resources God has blessed you with?
7. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

Foundation # 9 - Defining Marks of the Christian Life

"Equipped to Multiply"

Passages: Mark 8:34-48 Matthew 28:18-20
 Luke 14:25-35 2 Timothy 2:2

1. The word "disciple" simply means learner or follower. According to Jesus' words in Mark 8 and Luke 14, what does it look like to be a true disciple of Jesus?

2. According to Matthew 28, the mission and purpose of the church is to "make disciples." Disciples of Jesus are always doing two things simultaneously: (1) growing in their own relationship with Christ, and (2) helping others grow in their relationship with Christ.

How are you currently growing in your relationship with Christ? Who is God using to mentor you along the path of spiritual maturity? What is your plan to keep growing after this study is over?

Who are you currently pouring into in order to help them grow in their relationship with Jesus? Or, who could you be pouring into? How is God using you in their lives?

3. The making of disciples starts with non-disciples, with sharing the gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus.

How did God work in your life when you were not yet a disciple? What people and events and circumstances did He use to show you the hope of the gospel?

In that same fashion, how are you currently involved in reaching out to those who don't yet know Christ?

4. How is the "reproductive" nature of discipleship illustrated in 2 Timothy 2:2? What prevents you from multiplying what Christ has given to you into the lives of others?

5. What has the Lord put on your heart regarding your own growth as a result of this study? What specific action step will you take in order to move these truths from your head, through your heart, to your hands?

Appendix A

The S.O.A.P. Devotional

A simple tool for digging in to God's word to learn and be transformed

SCRIPTURE:

What Scripture have you chosen and why? Read the passage through several times, praying for God to open your heart to its truth and to guide your study of His word.

OBSERVATIONS:

What simple observations have you made after reading this passage?

What are key words in the passage? Are any words repeated for emphasis?

What words do you need to define in order to understand this passage?

Who was writing, and who were they writing to? Why were they writing?

What can you determine about the societal and historical context of the time?

What differences and what similarities do you see between yourself and our modern times with the people and times in which this was originally written?

What does this passage reveal to you about God and His unchanging character?

What does this passage reveal to you about mankind, and what do you learn about yourself?

APPLICATIONS:

What "timeless" principles are found in this text, and how do they apply to your life today? What does this passage teach you about God and how you should act in light of who God is? What is God revealing to you through this passage of scripture?

What simple step of obedience can you proactively take to put into practice what you have just learned?

Write this down in a simple statement.

PRAYER:

Write out a simple prayer of response to God in light of what you just read. Reflect back to Him anything you learned about His character, and then express your desire to put into practice what you just summarized above, asking for His grace and help.

S.O.A.P. DEVOTIONAL

Scripture:

Observations:

Applications:

Prayer:

Appendix B

Preparing and Sharing Your Testimony

Any subject matter can be presented more effectively by careful organization. A carefully prepared testimony, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can be of immediate and effective use in nearly every witnessing situation. It should be our desire to present Christ in such a clear, attractive, yet simple way, that those who hear will not only want to know Him too, but they will also know “how” to know Him personally.

Do:

1. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5,6).
2. Follow a three-point outline: “My Life With Christ”
 - a. Life before knowing Christ.
 - b. How you came to know Christ (be specific).
 - c. Life after you received Christ (changes He has made—what He means to you now).
3. Emphasize point c. above if you became a Christian as a small child.
4. Begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence and close with a good conclusion. Include relevant, thought-provoking, secular facts and experiences.
5. Write in such a way that others will feel associated with you in past and present experiences.
6. Give enough details to arouse interest.
7. Use at least one, but at most two, Scripture verses.
8. Edit carefully and rewrite as necessary before final draft.

An important portion of your testimony will be what seems to fairly simple, positive changes in your life. But these day-to-day things communicate the transforming power of God to people.

Don't:

1. Use Christian jargon. Words such as “saved, convicted, converted, born again, and sin” do not communicate truth to the average non-Christian. Though these words and phrases are precious to us, they are so often misunderstood and consequently ridiculed by non-Christians.
2. Be too wordy, beat around the bush, or emphasize how bad you used to be.
3. Speak in glittering generalities. Avoid words like “wonderful, glorious,” etc.
4. Mention church denominations.
5. Speak critically or negatively about any other individual or group.
6. Give the impression that the Christian life is a “bed of roses.”

When you are asked to share your Personal Story, be sure to:

1. Share it with loving enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
2. Speak loudly and clearly in a natural, relaxed tone of voice (avoid ministerial "twang").
3. Avoid mannerisms when you speak, such as: rubbing your nose, jingling coins in your pocket, swaying, clearing your throat and using "uh's" and "ah's."
4. Avoid arguing and other high pressure methods of getting a "decision" for Christ.
5. Remember that men are "born of the Spirit," not through the persuasiveness of logic of men, though God may use both.
6. Avoid preaching at people. Present your testimony, not a "preachimony."
7. Smile often! Ask the Lord to give you a happy, radiant face.
8. Memorize your testimony and practice it until it becomes natural.

Life story worksheet

Goal: Crystallize and Organize Your Life Story

Avoid: Christianese and Clichés

Negative Statements—People and Organizations

Stereotypes

Before I received Christ I lived and thought this way:

2 or 3 sentences—View of life—attitude about God, church, faith. Choose one key area, principle or problem. Example: Lack of direction, purpose, pride, lust, etc.

How I received Christ—Be Specific:

(2 or 3 sentences—Circumstances, people events. 1 to 3 Scriptures maximum)

-Try to articulate the Gospel as clearly as you can here

After I received Christ, these changes took place—Be Specific:
(2 or 3 sentences—What is the most striking change?)

Desires:

Attitudes:

World View/Presuppositions:

Actions:

Inner Life:

Appendix C

Suggested Reading Plan for
Further Personal Bible Study

28-Day Reading Plan Through 1 John, Mark, Colossians & Ephesians

- ☐ Day 1 - 1 John 1
- ☐ Day 2 - 1 John 2:1-17
- ☐ Day 3 - 1 John 2:18-29
- ☐ Day 4 - 1 John 3
- ☐ Day 5 - 1 John 4
- ☐ Day 6 - 1 John 5
- ☐ Day 7 - Mark 1

- ☐ Day 8 - Mark 2
- ☐ Day 9 - Mark 3
- ☐ Day 10 - Mark 4
- ☐ Day 11 - Mark 5
- ☐ Day 12 - Mark 6
- ☐ Day 13 - Mark 7
- ☐ Day 14 - Mark 8

- ☐ Day 15 - Mark 9
- ☐ Day 16 - Mark 10
- ☐ Day 17 - Mark 11
- ☐ Day 18 - Mark 12
- ☐ Day 19 - Mark 13
- ☐ Day 20 - Mark 14
- ☐ Day 21 - Mark 15

- ☐ Day 22 - Mark 16
- ☐ Day 23 - Colossians 1
- ☐ Day 24 - Colossians 2
- ☐ Day 25 - Colossians 3-4
- ☐ Day 26 - Ephesians 1-2
- ☐ Day 27 - Ephesians 3-4
- ☐ Day 28 - Ephesians 5-6

Appendix D

Suggested Reading List

Living the Cross-Centered Life by C.J. Mahaney

This is a great book about keeping focused on the “good news” of the gospel and keeping a fresh love for Jesus each day.

The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus by John R. Cross

This book provides a wonderful overview of how the Bible is put together, helping see how it is ultimately a single story about God’s plan to redeem us from our sin through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Treasure Principle by Randy Alcorn

This book highlights that everything we have has been entrusted to us by God and we are called to steward and use them for the furtherance of His kingdom, living with an eternal perspective.

Humility by C.J. Mahaney

This book calls us to deal with the root of pride in our lives, while living as Jesus called us to - humbly loving and serving others.

The Reason for God by Tim Keller

This book gives a great overview of the “reasonability” of the Christian faith in light of the many intellectual objections to faith that exist in our culture today.

Time to PASS IT ON!

A guide to help you walk through these foundations with another in a one-on-one setting

IDENTIFY SOMEONE you know who would benefit from studying these truths and getting more established in their relationship with Jesus.

SHARE THE PURPOSE with them, which is to study foundational principles of Christianity for the purpose of growing in your love for Jesus and applying these truths in faith on a daily basis.

DEFINE THE PROCESS for them by asking them to meet with you once a week for the next 10 weeks.

At Your First Meeting

- Spend time sharing what God taught you and how He grew you through this study.
- Ask them the two introductory questions at the beginning of this workbook, which are
 - (1) What do they hope to get out of this study?
 - (2) Who are three people they know that would benefit from going through this study as well?
- Ask them to commit to making this a priority for the next 10 weeks, and express your commitment to them.
- Spend time walking through a S.O.A.P. devotional together of John 15:1-11 as a way to introduce them to simple Bible study. Help them make applications and encourage them to come up with simple action steps.

Keeping the Main Thing in Focus

The goal of studying this material is that it would move from our heads, through our hearts, and to our hands. Or, another way of saying this is that the truth of God's word would fuel devotion and love for Him, that manifests itself in the way we live our lives. What we think about God, how we love God, and how this impacts our lives are the most important things about us.

Practical Leading Tips

- Probe deeper in necessary areas to seek clarity and true understanding.
- Be an active listener and ask good question.
- Welcome questions and don't give a "know it all" perception.
- Be humble enough to say you don't know if a tough questions comes up, but see it as an opportunity for you to grow.
- Share ways that God is challenging/growing you in these topics/areas.
- Don't move on to the next question simply for the sake of "getting through" the material. Make sure there is at least a base level of understanding before moving on.

CHALLENGE THEM TO REPRODUCE what they have just learned by leading someone else through this study. Offer to help them along this journey if they need it.

THIS IS DISCIPLESHIP...

The call to be a disciple (a learner, a follower) of Jesus is a life-long process. As disciples of Jesus, we will always be growing for the rest of our lives. AND we will always have something to offer to help others grow at the same time. As God grows you in your love for Him, He wants to use you to help others grow as well.

...and IT IS VIRAL!

A virus is infectious, contagious, and can spread very rapidly in the right environment. This is how the message of the Gospel moves through the working of the Spirit of God, transforming lives along the way. Step out in faith and let God use you to help someone else grow in their relationship with Jesus!