



TEACHER'S GUIDE  
COURSE ONE

# FOUNDATIONS

**CORE TRUTHS**  
TO BUILD YOUR LIFE ON

**TOM HOLLADAY & KAY WARREN**







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## FOUNDATIONS TEACHER'S GUIDE | COURSE ONE

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# FOREWORD

## WHAT FOUNDATIONS WILL DO FOR YOU

I once built a log cabin in the Sierra mountains of Northern California. After ten backbreaking weeks of clearing forest land, all I had to show for my effort was a leveled and squared concrete foundation. I was discouraged, but my father, who built over a hundred church buildings in his lifetime, said, “Cheer up, son! Once you’ve laid the foundation, the most important work is behind you.” I’ve since learned that this is a principle for all of life: you can never build anything larger than the foundation can handle.

The foundation of any building determines both its size and strength, and the same is true of our lives. A life built on a false or faulty foundation will never reach the height that God intends for it to reach. If you skimp on your foundation, you limit your life.

That’s why this material is so vitally important. **FOUNDATIONS** is the biblical basis of the purpose-driven life. You must understand these life-changing truths to enjoy God’s purposes for you. This curriculum has been taught, tested, and refined over ten years with thousands of people at Saddleback Church. I’ve often said that **FOUNDATIONS** is the most important class in our church.

## WHY YOU NEED A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR LIFE

- *It’s the source of personal growth and stability.* So many of the problems in our lives are caused by faulty thinking. That’s why Jesus said the truth will set us free and why Colossians 2:7 says, “Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life” (CEV).
- *It’s the underpinning of a healthy family.* Proverbs 24:3 says, “Homes are built on the foundation of wisdom and understanding” (TEV). In a world that is constantly changing, strong families are based on God’s unchanging truth.





- *It's the starting point of leadership.* You can never lead people farther than you've gone yourself. Proverbs 16:12 says, "*Sound leadership has a moral foundation*" (The Message).
- *It's the basis for your eternal reward in Heaven.* Paul said, "*Whatever we build on that foundation will be tested by fire on the day of judgment... We will be rewarded if our building is left standing*" (1 Corinthians 3:12–14 CEV).
- *God's truth is the only foundation that will last.* The Bible tells us that "*the sound, wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . are the foundation for a godly life*" (1 Timothy 6:3 NLT) and that "*God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone*" (2 Timothy 2:19a NLT).

Jesus concluded his Sermon on the Mount with a story illustrating this important truth. Two houses were built on different foundations. The house built on sand was destroyed when rain, floods, and wind swept it away. But the house built on the foundation of solid rock remained firm. He declared, "*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on the rock*" (Matthew 7:24). The Message paraphrase of this verse shows how important this is: "*These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life . . . They are foundational words, words to build a life on.*"

I cannot recommend this curriculum more highly to you. It has changed our church, our staff, and thousands of lives. For too long, too many have thought of theology as something that doesn't relate to our everyday lives, but **FOUNDATIONS** explodes that mold. This study makes it clear that the foundation of what we do and say in each day of our lives is what we believe. I am thrilled that this in-depth, life-changing curriculum is now being made available for everyone to use.

—RICK WARREN, AUTHOR OF *THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE*





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**FOUNDATIONS** is the result of 20 years of faithful ministry by hundreds of people at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. We are deeply grateful for those who have both participated in these studies and led in the teaching of the truth. While it would be impossible to thank them all by name, their ministry has made an imprint on the material you hold in your hand and, even more, on the lives of those whom they have taught and ministered to.

We also wish to acknowledge a group of God's servants who often go unnoticed. We thank God for the theologians of the church. For thousands of years, their ministry has helped God's people to keep their feet on the bedrock of God's truth. We did not quote many long theological excerpts in this material, choosing instead to use quotes from pastors and writers that would help to illustrate the truth. But make no mistake, every one of these quotes and every page of this material rests upon the faithful work of theologians.

—TOM HOLLADAY AND KAY WARREN





# BRING IT TO LIFE!

Get ready for a radical statement, a pronouncement sure to make you wonder if we've lost our grip on reality. *There is nothing more exciting than doctrine!*

Track with us for a second on this. Doctrine is the study of what God has to say. What God has to say is always the truth. The truth gives me the right perspective on myself and on the world around me. The right perspective results in decisions of faith and experiences of joy. *That* is exciting!

The objective of **FOUNDATIONS** is to present the basic truths of the Christian faith in a simple, systematic, and life-changing way. In other words, to teach doctrine. The question is, *Why?* In a world in which people's lives are filled with crying needs, why teach doctrine? Because biblical doctrine has the answer to many of those crying needs! Please don't see this as a clash between needs-oriented and doctrine-oriented teaching. The truth is we need both. We all need to learn how to deal with worry in our lives. One of the keys to dealing with worry is an understanding of the biblical doctrine of the hope of Heaven. Couples need to know what the Bible says about how to have a better marriage. They also need a deeper understanding of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, giving the assurance of God's love upon which all healthy relationships are built. Parents need to understand the Bible's practical insights for raising kids. They also need an understanding of the sovereignty of God, a certainty of the fact that God is in control that will carry them through the inevitable ups and downs of being a parent. Doctrinal truth meets our deepest needs.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR BRINGING DOCTRINE TO LIFE

Teaching the deep truths of the faith can become a matter of complicated formulas and outlines. But it doesn't have to be that way. We have put together suggestions for teaching doctrine in a way that brings the truth to life. If you're already an experienced teacher, we hope you'll find one or two new ideas. If you're just starting to teach, consider what is described on these pages as your lifeline as





you begin sharing the most exciting message in the world: the truth about God.

1. ***Make it personal.***

- Talk about your doubts.
- Be vulnerable.
- Tell stories about your life.
- Think about the difference these teachings will make tomorrow.

2. ***Don't try to make the mysterious simple or the simple mysterious.*** Some truths are beyond our ability to grasp (the eternity and Trinity of God, for instance). Don't try to simplify a truth that has been grappled with for the last 2,000 years; if you do, you'll inevitably leave out part of the truth as you try to make it "clearer." Feel comfortable with the fact that the Bible has some big truths in it. Doctrine sometimes is like a math equation, easily solved. But more often it's like a beautiful symphony; the longer you listen, the more you are awed by both its complexity and its simplicity.

Watch out for the opposite as well, the temptation to make everything too complex. A common mistake in teaching doctrine is using a complex picture to illustrate a simple truth. Look at Jesus. He knew how to use the simple things of everyday life to picture the deep truths of God. Jesus used birds to picture God's love (Matthew 6:26), flowers to picture God's blessings (Matthew 6:28–32), and seeds to picture God's Word (Matthew 13:4–9). You get the picture! Keep it as simple as possible.

3. ***Teach knowing that the truth will set people free.*** As you prepare for each session, and then right before that session begins, tell yourself, "Someone is going to be set free in a way that I may never know, but in a way that will have eternal impact!" Jesus promised that this will happen when he said, "*The truth will set you free*" (John 8:32). The truth of Christ has the power to break through the lies that keep us locked up.
4. ***Teach with passion in your voice.*** Having led a number of people as they taught this material, we can tell you that a common struggle is to teach with passion. What you are





teaching is so important that Satan will tempt you to doubt the effectiveness of what you are saying even as you say it. You'll have the sinking feeling that no one is getting anything worthwhile out of it. Believe God's promise that the truths you are teaching change lives and your listeners will hear passion in your voice.

5. **Connect with those you are teaching.** Every time you talk on the phone, you're "connected" to the person at the other end of the line. But if suddenly the connection is lost, communication ends. The same is true when you're teaching. Throughout this teacher's guide you will find a number of teaching tips to help you stay "connected" with those you are teaching. Two of the best — keep the study personal and teach with passion in your voice — have already been mentioned.

As we close this section of personal encouragement to you as a teacher, it is our prayer that the words of Ecclesiastes 12:10 will be true of each of us. *"Indeed, the Teacher taught the plain truth, and he did so in an interesting way"* (NLT). We pray that God will use you to teach the truth in such a way that it becomes clear to people's minds and captures their hearts. We pray that your relationship with God will be refreshed as you share with others these truths that will never fail us.

— TOM HOLLADAY AND KAY WARREN



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## FEATURES OF THE GUIDE

Throughout this teacher's guide you'll find resources designed to help you as a communicator. Our hope is that these will be invaluable for those new to teaching and a refresher for those who have been teaching for some time.

The following is a summary of the features and resources in this guide.

1. **Teaching material.** We've laid out this material to make life as easy as possible for you as a teacher. For each study you will find extensive teaching notes to guide you through what you will say. You'll want to add your own ideas and reflect your own personality, of course, but these materials are designed to be ready to teach. We've prepared the doctrinal outline for you, found good illustrations of that doctrine, and even helped you think through the application of this doctrine to everyday life. These materials will give you a significant head start as you teach these doctrinal truths.

A few things you should know about the format:

- The teaching material follows the outline given at the beginning of each study.
- To help you keep track of what is in the participant's guide without having to keep both guides open as you teach, all of the material that is common to the participant's and teacher's guides has been set in the teacher's guide in a bold font. Material that appears only in the teacher's guide has been set in a regular font.
- To help you to not miss any of the fill-in-the-blank answers where participants have blank lines in their guide, those answers are underlined and in bold capital letters in this teacher's guide. We use fill-in outlines for two reasons. First, because we want people to remember what is being taught. Studies show that we forget 95 percent of what we hear after 72 hours. That's a



depressing statistic for any teacher! However, we forget only 30 percent of what we hear and write down after the same time period. The second reason we use fill-in outlines is so that the participant will have a reference to go back to later. This reference is made more personal when it is partially written in their own handwriting. (We suggest you use the PowerPoint slides contained on the CD, which give not only the outline for each study but also the answers for the fill-ins.)

- Our goal in the teacher's guide is to help you make the truth clear. With that in mind, we've used material from a variety of sources: classic illustrations, quotes from church leaders, simple pictures, and personal applications. Our hope is that even if some of these sources don't fit your style, others will be of significant help. We encourage you to take a risk; try something new as a teacher. It's the only way to grow.

2. **Highlight sections.** Throughout this study you'll see four types of sidebar sections designed to help participants connect with the truths that God tells us about himself, ourselves, and this world.

- **A Fresh Word:** The "big words" of doctrine make many people nervous. Throughout this study we'll take a fresh look at these words, including words such as *omnipotent* and *sovereign*.
- **A Closer Look:** We'll take time to expand on a truth or look at it from a different perspective.
- **Key Personal Perspective:** The truth of doctrine always has a profound impact on our lives. In these sections we'll focus in on that personal impact.
- **Acting on the Truth:** James 1:22 says, "*Do what God's teaching says; when you only listen and do nothing, you are fooling yourselves*" (NCV).

3. **Teaching tips.** We've interspersed more than 60 tips throughout this guide to strengthen your skills as a communicator. These teaching tips will help you to keep people's attention on the truth you are teaching as well as help you to keep your attention on God while you are teaching.





4. **Discussion questions.** You'll find discussion questions at the end of each study. We've discovered that teachers have very distinct opinions on how to use them. Some like to use the questions throughout the study, interspersing discussion during their teaching. Others like to complete the teaching, then give people an opportunity to discuss. There is no right or wrong way; it's a matter of individual preference, taking into account the needs of the group. For those who prefer to intersperse discussion with teaching, you'll find sprinkled throughout each study suggestions for places where you can interrupt the teaching to discuss specific questions.
5. **Split-session plan.** In each of the numbered studies, we've indicated a place where you can split the study into two sessions, if needed. Each full study is designed to take about 45 minutes for the teaching segment, with adequate time for discussion questions after that. The split-session plan allows you to teach each half of the study in 20 to 25 minutes, with time for discussion questions at the end. You'll find a closing story or challenge before the split point and, to help you get the next session going, an interesting (we hope) introduction.
6. **Added material in an appendix.** A few studies have additional material in an appendix at the end of that study. In some cases this material is referred to in the study. In most cases, however, the appendix answers questions that may grow out of the study. It is meant not to be taught but to be referred to as a resource for those who want to know more.
7. **Memory cards.** There is a memory card for each of the 11 core truths in this study. Each card states the essence of the doctrine on one side, with a key verse concerning that doctrine on the other side.



## SUGGESTED FORMATS

This material is best taught in a large group, then discussed in small groups. Below are three formats in which the material has been used.

### FOUNDATIONS BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM

**FOUNDATIONS** can provide a year's curriculum for any Bible study group. (Several thousand members of our church, Saddleback Church in Southern California, have gone through **FOUNDATIONS** in this format.)

Instead of seating people in rows, have everyone sit around tables in groups of eight to 12. Round tables work best. When the program begins, assign each person to a group in which they will stay throughout the whole series of studies. This adds an important relational element to the study of doctrine since participants will be listening to the teaching and discussing the questions with the same people the entire year. Recruit and assign a leader and an apprentice leader for each group to guide the discussion time and to care for group members.

Below is a suggested schedule for a weekly two-hour Bible study program. On the CD we've included a number of other programming resources for this program.

1. 10–15 minutes of music
2. 5–10 minutes for announcements/memory review
3. 45–50 minutes for teaching
4. 20–30 minutes for discussion in groups
5. 10–15 minutes for prayer in groups

### SUNDAY SCHOOL OR SMALL GROUP

Given the limited time available for most Sunday school classes and small group meetings, we advise you to use the split-session plan, taking two weeks for each study.





## MIDWEEK OR SUNDAY NIGHT SERVICES

Start with 15 minutes of singing, followed by 40 minutes of teaching, which is capped off with 15 minutes of discussion in small groups. Or allow 60 minutes for teaching and intersperse discussion questions as you go.







# INTRODUCTORY STUDY

## LIFE-CHANGE OBJECTIVES

- To trust in the power of God's truth to change your life.
- To anticipate in faith the changes that learning doctrine will make in you.

### SUMMARY TEACHING OUTLINE

#### Developing a Christian Worldview

#### Why Learn Doctrine?

- ◆ Because knowing the truth about God helps me know God better
- ◆ Because knowledge is an essential foundation
- ◆ Because doctrine feeds my soul
- ◆ Because knowing the truth enables me to serve others
- ◆ Because knowing the truth protects against error
- ◆ Because how I think determines how I act
- ◆ Because I am commanded to:
  1. *Study the truth*
  2. *Live the truth*
  3. *Defend the truth*

**Warning: Knowledge all by itself can be very dangerous!**



# DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

## TEACHING TIP

One quality of great teachers is their ability to connect with their students. As you teach, one of your primary jobs is to keep your listeners tuned in to what you are saying. Give them a sense of relationship with you. Refuse to allow them to slip into an “I’m watching and listening as if this were a TV show” mode! Keep them connected to and relating to you as the teacher.

In order to connect, you must focus on the people you are teaching rather than on yourself as a teacher. Be less aware of yourself and more aware of those you are talking to. It’s amazing what a difference praying a simple prayer can make: “Lord, help me to not think about how my words sound as I teach but to focus instead on the needs of those I’m teaching.”

**Note:** This introductory study and the wrap-up study are the only ones without a split-session option. We suggest that you do this study in one sitting and give those present an opportunity, as you close, to commit to studying this material. If you’re teaching this material in a shorter time frame, we suggest you shorten the last part of the section titled “Because knowledge is an essential foundation” as well as the next section titled “Because doctrine feeds my soul.”

Welcome to **FOUNDATIONS**. In this series of studies, we’re going to talk about one of the most important aspects of everyone’s life. It is at the center of how we live. It determines the decisions we make, how we treat the people we love, the emotions we experience throughout the day, and the eternal impact we make. I’m talking about our “worldview,” the set of beliefs that form the “glasses” through which we see the world.

There are four classic worldview questions that we must grapple with:

1. Who am I?
2. Where am I?
3. What’s wrong?
4. What’s the remedy?





We'll find clear answers to those questions in this study series. To get us started, let's start with a simple example — the color red — and have some fun. I'm going to divide you into four groups, each holding a different worldview related to the color red. Those on my left and at the front, your worldview is that you hate the color red. On my right and at the front, the driving force in your view of the world is that you love red. On my left and at the back, your most cherished belief is that there is no such thing as the color red. And on the right at the back, your worldview is that we should all get along with each other regardless of what we think of the color red.

Now, with these worldviews in mind, let me ask you a question. How would you like to have a red apple? Quick! Shout out your answer!

Can you feel the energy that a worldview creates? If I'd asked that question before I outlined your different views, you would have answered it based on whether you were hungry or whether you liked apples. But now we're all focused on the color of the apple. Whether you recognize it or not, whatever is at the center of your worldview becomes the basis for the way you feel about issues and the basis for the decisions you make.

### **TEACHING TIP**

**Obviously, this illustration will be even more effective if you have a red apple to hold up.**

That's why one of the most important things about you is your worldview. And yet most of us have haphazardly put together that worldview. Things we were taught as we grew up, the opinions we hear, truths we've been taught from the Bible — they all get thrown together into a worldview stew. Often the result is a view of the world that is more ours than God's. The good news is God doesn't want it to stay that way; he doesn't want to leave us in the dark. God wants to give us his knowledge, his insight. We can see this clearly in the fact that he sent his Son and gave us his Word. God wants us to know him.





Look at Philippians 1:9–10:

***And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.***

PHILIPPIANS 1:9–10

Circle the words “knowledge and depth of insight.” Our love and our ability to choose what is best are not ultimately a matter of feelings or even experiences. They grow out of the knowledge and insight we have about life.

Charles Colson says:

*The term worldview may sound abstract or philosophical, a topic discussed by pipe-smoking, tweed-jacketed professors in academic settings. But actually a person’s worldview is intensely practical. It is simply the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the “big picture” that directs our daily decisions and actions.<sup>1</sup>*

Look at Jude 1:20:

***But you, dear friends, must continue to build your lives on the foundation of your holy faith.***

JUDE 1:20 (NLT)

This is the theme verse for this study. Circle the words “foundation” and “faith.” Your view of this world is determined by the foundation that you choose to build your life on. Build your life on making money and you’ll have one view of the world. Build on being popular and you’ll have an entirely different view of what’s happening around you. The foundation God wants us to build our lives on is faith in him.

Another word for worldview is *doctrine*. Stay with me. Don’t let your mind go down the wrong path when you hear the word *doctrine*. Many of us can’t think of anything more dry or boring. We envision a pastor lecturing on and on in a monotone voice while most of the students sleep.





## **A FRESH WORD**

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### **What Is Christian Doctrine?**

**Christian doctrine is an ORGANIZED SUMMARY of what the BIBLE TEACHES about the most important issues of life.**

Or, to put it another way, doctrine is the study of what God has to say about questions such as:

- ◆ How do I determine right from wrong?
- ◆ What happens to me when I die?
- ◆ Why do bad things happen to good people?
- ◆ Why do people act the way they do?
- ◆ Where do I find the life that I long for?

There's certainly not anything dry or boring about that! Charles Swindoll says this about doctrine:

*What roots are to a tree, the doctrines are to the Christian. From them we draw our emotional stability, our mental food for growth, as well as our spiritual energy and perspective on life itself. By returning to our roots, we determine precisely where we stand. We equip ourselves for living the life God designed for us to live.<sup>2</sup>*

Another word you're going to hear a lot in this study series is *theology*.

**A working definition of theology is: FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING.**

The word *theology* literally means “the study of God.” Study is an important part of theology; you can have no theology without study, without seeking understanding.

Christianity is a thinking faith! If you are not asking questions, you're not growing in faith. In fact, it's my hope that this study will stir up some questions! However, questions by themselves are not enough; we have to also seek the answers. This is a study that will often make you think, and that's not always easy. Someone has said,





“Anyone who gives people the illusion that they are thinking will be loved by them, whereas anyone who actually prompts them to think will be hated.”<sup>3</sup> Thinking about the truth is like exercising; we tend to resist it at first but enjoy its benefits afterward.

**Discussion question 1 (on page 42 at the end of this study section) can be used here.**

You may have come to this study series for many different reasons. You may have questions. Not just questions about where verses are found in the Bible but deep questions about life. You want to reconcile your faith with the questions that arise from the mess of everyday life.

You may have doubts. You may even be unsure whether you believe in God.

I’m glad you’re all here and invite you to dig into the truths of God. You may have heard someone say in regard to the Bible, “Don’t think about it; just accept it.” I want you to know that we’re not going to do that here. God’s truths can stand the closest scrutiny. You don’t have to check your brain at the door when you come to church. After all, God made our brains!

You may just want to know more about the Bible; you’re interested in what it has to say. As we study the Word of God together, you’re going to find that the Bible is filled with answers. It often might not say what you expected to hear, but it will always have the ring of truth.

Whatever the reason for your coming here, you won’t be the same person you are now when you complete this study series. I say that not because I think I’m a great teacher. The truth is I’m a person struggling to learn and to fit God’s truth into my life, just like you. The promise of change isn’t in the teacher but in the subject we’ll be talking about. God’s truth has the power to change everything — sometimes in an instant, more often slowly but certainly.

Now I want to whet your appetite for what God is going to do in your life by sharing with you seven reasons why we need to learn doctrine.





## WHY LEARN DOCTRINE?

Because knowing the truth about God helps me **KNOW GOD BETTER**

J.I. Packer said,

*We are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place . . . for those who do not know about God.*<sup>4</sup>

—J. I. PACKER

Living in this world without knowing God is like driving a car with the windows blacked out. It doesn't matter how hard you step on the accelerator or what direction you steer, you keep running into things and you never get anywhere.

We all have a deep desire to know God. You even hear it in phrases like “Oh God” or “My God” that people utter when they are shocked. The good news is God wants us to get to know him! That's why he sent Jesus, his Son, and has given us his Word.

Let's put this in perspective. Knowing truths about God is not enough to give you a relationship with him. We all know people who know truths about the Bible and about God but don't really know him in a personal way. Still, to get to know God better and better, you and I must learn more and more of the truth about him. The desire to read God's Word to learn about him is a sign of your love for God. Imagine a college student saying to his girlfriend back home, “I received the 23 love letters you wrote to me this semester and intend to read them as soon as things settle down a bit. But I really do love you!”

If you're going to get to know God, you have to know the truth about him. You cannot develop a relationship with God based on your guesses or wishes about what he is like. Healthy relationships are built on the truth. You can't know someone if you believe a lie about them.



Proverbs 2:2–5 says:

*Listen carefully to wisdom; set your mind on understanding. Cry out for wisdom, and beg for understanding. Search for it like silver, and hunt for it like hidden treasure. Then you will understand respect for the LORD, and you will find that you know God.*

PROVERBS 2:2–5 (NCV)

God has made us all for a purpose, yet sometimes we miss the most important purpose for which we were made. You weren't made primarily to . . .

- have a successful career.
- produce wonderful children.
- write great books.
- stop injustice in the world.
- have your roses featured in “Better Homes and Gardens.”
- make a lot of money.

You were made primarily to know God.

*Knowing God will make you wise;  
Knowing God will open your eyes;  
Knowing God will give you hope;  
Knowing God will help you cope.*

—KAY WARREN

There is a second reason why it's worth your time to learn God's truth.

Because knowledge is an **ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION**

Look at Hebrews 6:1–2:

*Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction [doctrine] about washings [baptism] and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*

HEBREWS 6:1–2 (NASB)





We all build our lives on a foundation that guides the decisions we make and the direction we take.

Sometimes we try to build our foundation on the opinions of others. But we get a lot of differing opinions.

Sometimes we attempt to make our feelings our foundation: “Do I feel like doing it?” This is a very popular one! Sometimes I feel like doing the wrong thing! Sometimes I just don’t feel like doing the right thing. Is anyone else like that?

Sometimes we try to build our foundation on traditions. It has worked for others; it has to work for me.

But the only foundation that is strong enough to build on is knowledge of God. Just as you have to know your ABCs before you can read and write, you have to know the truth about G-O-D before you can live right.

You know that old phrase “Ignorance is bliss.” It’s not true! If I drive through a town going 55 and get pulled over by a police officer who tells me I didn’t see the 35 mph sign, my ignorance is not bliss! If I see a bottle marked “strychnine” in my cabinet and decide it would be good flavoring for a chocolate cake, my ignorance would take my life.

Ignorance can put us at risk. And ignorance of God’s truth is incredibly dangerous. Our joy is at stake. Our families are at risk. Our place in eternity is at risk.

Building a good foundation for life takes a great deal of time. And, to be honest with you, it’s tough work. To build a foundation you have to get down and dig. I honor you for being here. By taking part in this study series you’re saying, “I’m willing to dig in. I’m willing to do the tough work. I want God to build a lasting foundation for my life.”



We all need to know answers to questions like:

- How do I grow as a Christian?
- How can I be sure that I'm saved?
- How do I handle the fact that there is evil in the world?

Only the Bible has the answers.

Look at the next two passages. One is in Ephesians; the other is in Matthew. One talks about life without a foundation; the other talks about the value of a foundation.

### Life without a foundation

*... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

EPHESIANS 4:13-14

### TEACHING TIP

One of the most important skills to develop in teaching doctrine is the skill of reading a Bible verse out loud. Remember, you're never telling the truth in purer form than when you read from the Bible. Yet it's easy to fall into the trap of reading a passage quickly to get to what you want to say. Equally distracting is reading so dramatically it sounds like you're an actor in a Shakespearean play. Don't just read Ephesians 4:13-14; communicate it! Remember to:

- ◆ Read slowly. (But not too slowly.)
- ◆ Read naturally. (Let your personality shine through.)
- ◆ Read clearly.
- ◆ Emphasize key words.
- ◆ Read passionately. (When you know you mean it, your listeners will know, too.)
- ◆ Make the reading of this passage an expression of your love for the Lord.





This passage in Ephesians presents two clear pictures of what life is like without the foundation of God's truth:

1. "Tossed back and forth by the waves."

Without truth I am vulnerable to **CIRCUMSTANCES**.

Think of a small fishing boat helpless in a raging sea. That's what life in this world is like without the anchor of God's truth.

2. "Blown here and there by every wind of teaching."

Without truth I am victimized by **FALSE TEACHINGS**.

Think of what it would be like to be caught in a hurricane. That's you and me without God's truth.

**Life with a foundation**

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."*

MATTHEW 7:24-25

Circle the words "on the rock."

Did you notice the two things Jesus said our foundation is built on? It's built on *hearing* "these words of mine." But it's also built on what? Yes, on *putting* those words "into practice." It takes both! So in this study series, we're not going to just hear the truth, we're going to challenge each other to put the words into practice.

It's all too easy to have a "three little pigs" faith. We build our lives with the straw or the sticks of our own ideas and emotions. It's just easier and quicker to do it that way. But then the troubles of life inevitably come along to "huff and puff and blow our faith down." Not that I think we should get our theology from fairy tales, but in this case I'd encourage you to be like the pig that built with brick!



There's a third reason to know doctrine.

## Because doctrine feeds my soul

Have you ever gone on one of those liquid diets? What happens? In just a few days you would sell your firstborn child for a carrot, anything with some crunch in it! You hunger for solid food. That's a sign of maturity; you need solid food to sustain you.

Doctrine is solid food for our soul. I was going to call it “soul food” but knew you all would groan! Look at Paul's encouragement to Timothy:

***In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.***

1 TIMOTHY 4:6 (NASB)

This nourishment of our soul is not automatic! We have to choose to eat this solid food. We have to chew for a while on some of the truths in the Bible in order to understand them. In Hebrews we are warned very clearly that if we don't decide to dig into God's Word, we'll remain baby Christians. Baby Christians are believers who always seem to have so many needs that they can never meet the needs of others.

***For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature.***

HEBREWS 5:12-14 (NASB)

In that passage, circle the words “need again” and “have come to need.” The new Christians, to whom this letter was written, had taken a step backward! You need solid food not only to keep growing in faith but also to sustain the spiritual life you already have. If you stop feeding on God's Word, don't think you'll stay where you are. Without God's Word, your spiritual life will weaken.





It's through continued feeding on God's Word that we are built up.

***“And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace,  
which is able to build you up.”***

ACTS 20:32 (NASB)

Discussion questions 2 and 3 can be used here.

## **Because knowing the truth enables me to serve others**

Paul tells us that knowing God's truth shows us how to live a godly life of serving God's people. The Bible is a how-to manual for God's servants.

***If you give these instructions to the believers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, as you feed yourself spiritually on the words of faith and of the true teaching which you have followed.***

1 TIMOTHY 4:6 (GNT)

First you feed yourself, then you serve others by sharing with them what you have learned.

Would you like to encourage others? Look at Titus 1:9:

***He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.***

TITUS 1:9

One of the keys to real encouragement is knowing the truth of God. Without God's truth, your encouragement is just your words — and that's pretty weak encouragement.



Suppose a friend shows up on your doorstep one evening filled with discouragement over a tough situation at work — or maybe your friend is out of work. How are you going to provide comfort and encouragement? Invite them in to watch a motivational YouTube video? Make a banana split? Pat your friend on the back and say, “It’ll be okay”? To which your friend probably would say, “How do you know it’ll be okay?” And that question pinpoints the difference between our saying that things will be okay and what God promises. It’s entirely different to remind a friend that God says he will never fail us or forsake us — that’s encouragement your friend can bank on. Then you can make the banana split!

### **Because knowing the truth protects against error**

***So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.***

**COLOSSIANS 2:6-8**

Once you get rooted in God’s Word, it will be difficult for anyone to throw you off with a false doctrine.

For example, in order to drive a car, you don’t have to know anything about an internal combustion engine. You just push the gas pedal and the car goes. Likewise, you don’t have to know all of the truths we’re going to study to become a Christian. All you have to know and believe is that Jesus loves you, that he died for your sins, and that he was resurrected to give you new life.

But let’s get back in your car. Let’s say you’re driving down the street and the car starts to make a horrible sound. You think the sound is coming from the engine but you’re not sure. Spotting an auto repair shop, you pull in and ask a mechanic what might be wrong. The mechanic tells you, “You need to fill your gas tank with water. That will fix everything.” At that point, even a little bit of knowledge about cars would be of great help to you.





The best way to protect yourself against errors of any kind is to know the truth. Agents at the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing are taught to recognize a counterfeit bill not by looking at counterfeits but by staring at new money eight hours a day, looking for flaws. Once you know the truth, you can spot a counterfeit every time.

Look at Hebrews 5:14:

***But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.***

HEBREWS 5:14

Circle the words “trained themselves.” Once you train yourself, then you are ready to train others!

**How can we equip ourselves and our kids for survival in a disintegrating culture? With TRUTH firmly believed, clearly taught, and consistently lived out.**

**Because how I think determines HOW I ACT**

***Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life.***

PROVERBS 4:23 (NCV)

Beliefs determine behavior. Thoughts result in actions.

If I were to tell you that I had taped a hundred-dollar bill under one of the chairs in this room, you would all check the bottom of your chair. At least, if you believed me you would.

Let me stretch this illustration a little. We live in a world that tells us, “Here’s where to find the hundred-dollar bills.” So we spend our lives struggling to find fulfillment in our job or satisfaction in our vacations, and all we come up with is old bubble gum! The amazing thing is we often keep going back to the bottom of that chair again and again. You’d think we’d have learned the first time, but our beliefs keep determining our actions.



You cannot change the way you act without changing the way you believe.

God's truth changes the way we act. It will change the way you parent. It will change the way you work, the way you handle your business. It will change the way you think about the future and the past. It will change you.

## **Because I am commanded to:**

### **1. STUDY THE TRUTH**

***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.***

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 (NASB)

**Knowing the truth enables you to better *use* the truth.**

Second Timothy 2:15 isn't just for pastors; everyone is to learn how to accurately handle God's Word. The Bible doesn't tell us that all of us are to be teachers; that's a gift some have and others do not. But the Bible does tell us that we are all responsible to know the truth for ourselves. We're not to rely on just what others tell us. We are to study the truth for ourselves.

### **2. LIVE THE TRUTH**

The prayer in Psalm 25 is a prayer you could pray every day of your life:

***Teach me to live according to your truth, for you are my God, who saves me. I always trust in you.***

PSALM 25:5 (GNT)

Listen to what Titus 1:1 says:

***I have been sent to bring faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives.***

TITUS 1:1 (NLT)



There are two important facts in this verse. First, to live the truth, you have to know the truth. Second, to know the truth, you must first learn the truth. You wouldn't expect to pick up a trumpet and know how to play; you'd have to learn. It's the same with God's truth. You and I can't keep God's command to live the truth unless we take the time to learn the truth.

If we don't give our hearts to learning the truth, we become like Sheila. Interviewed about her faith, she revealed the self-centered attitude that many struggle with. She said, "I believe in God, but I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheila-ism. Just my own little voice."<sup>5</sup> That so-called faith might carry her a long way, but she has no idea what direction it will carry her! Depending on your spiritual instincts is not enough, if you've never taken the time to learn the truth.

### 3. **DEFEND THE TRUTH**

The Bible demands that every one of us be ready and able to defend the truth of God's Word:

***Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.***

1 PETER 3:15 (NASB)

Notice that the Bible even tells us what attitude to have as we defend the truth. A lot of people "DEFEND THE TRUTH!" in loud capital letters, with an overbearing and even angry attitude. The Bible tells us to be reverent toward God and to be gentle toward others as we defend the truth. You'll discover that people who are confident about the truth, who have built a good foundation, are able to defend the truth with gentleness and a quiet reverence. It's those who are unsure who have to yell the loudest.

Before we leave this talk about the value of God's truth, I want to give you one warning.



## **WARNING: KNOWLEDGE ALL BY ITSELF CAN BE VERY DANGEROUS!**

Knowledge is the foundation, but it is just the beginning. Many believers fall into a subtle trap. Satan, knowing the magnificent things that God can build in our lives on the foundation of knowledge, sets a snare for us. He tempts us to think, “You really know a lot. In fact, you know *much* more than the guy sitting next to you in church. You may even know more than the pastor! You ought to be proud of how much you know.” Satan is trying to get you stuck on your knowledge. But what’s the use of a foundation if you never build anything on it?

How do you make sure you don’t fall into this trap?

**Knowledge must be balanced with DISCERNMENT.**

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-10

Discernment is the ability to see how the knowledge you’ve gained is to be used in living. We’ve all known people with great knowledge who can’t seem to make it work in their own lives: the physician who is a chain smoker or the college psychology professor who has had five divorces.

**Warning signs of knowledge without discernment: Knowledge remains theoretical; one person or group becomes a person’s exclusive source of knowledge.**

Those without discernment easily fall prey to the personality of a false teacher.



## Knowledge must be balanced with GRACE.

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 PETER 3:18

You have to grow in both grace and knowledge. The knowledge of some people seems to have pushed all of the grace right out of them.

### **Warning signs of knowledge without grace: Learning more about God without growing closer to God; legalism.**

Legalism, as many of you know, is the result of thinking you can grow closer to God just by keeping rules — or by forcing rules on others. Rules never produce growth. Never! Christianity is not a religion of rules; it's a relationship with God.

## Knowledge must be balanced with LOVE.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:2 with me:

*If I . . . can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing.*

1 CORINTHIANS 13:2

Nothing, nada, zilch, zero, goose egg — that's pretty clear, isn't it? You don't have to be a math expert to add that up.

First Corinthians 8:1 tells us why knowledge without love is so dangerous:

*Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.*

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1

Knowledge is not the problem; the problem is the lack of love.

Let me tell you a story. It was required in Jesus' day that you take care of your aging parents, even if it was a financial burden. A group of religious men called the Pharisees found a way around that. They



would call a portion of their income or wealth “dedicated to God.” Since God was more important than their parents, they would not have to spend that portion on their family. Of course, since these Pharisees were serving God, they could then justify spending the money on themselves in a variety of ways.

How does this true story make you feel? Maybe you’re thinking, “I would never act like that!” Remember, knowledge puffs up. If instead you and I are able to think, “Lord, show me how I let what I know become an excuse not to love,” we’re on our way to the attitude Jesus wants us to have. Why do you think the New Testament is filled with stories of the judgmental Pharisees? Not so that you and I can feel morally superior to them! God put those stories there because all of us tend to act like the Pharisees.

**Warning signs of knowledge without love: Knowledge leads to intolerance of others; growth in knowledge leads to a growth in pride.**

Discussion question 4 can be used here.

We’ve looked at seven convictions and one warning regarding investing our hearts and time in knowing God’s truth. It’s an investment that pays eternal dividends!

Now look with me at the chart titled “Building a Foundation That Lasts,” which outlines what we study together in the three **FOUNDATIONS** courses. These areas of doctrine are the foundation of a Christian worldview. We live in a time when many people — even many Christians — build their worldview on a poor foundation. But doing so is frustrating because your worldview keeps letting you down. You don’t have to live with that frustration; God wants you to learn and love and live his truth, building on the only foundation that lasts: God’s truth.

Look at the three headings across the top of the chart: learn it, love it, live it. The hard fact is that if you’re not willing to live the truth that you’ll be learning, all of your studying will be a waste of time. We learn the truth to be able to live it!





Let me read through the topics we'll be looking at in this course, and I'll leave the rest of the chart for you to look at more closely when you go home.

## **TEACHING TIP**

This first study ends with a call for commitment. There are three important things to keep in mind when asking people to make a commitment:

1. ***Be confident.*** You're not trying to sell people a bad insurance policy; you are inviting them to make a commitment that will forever change their lives for the better. Your confidence is strengthened when you see yourself as God's representative.
2. ***Be clear.*** People need to know what they are committing to. Be careful not to ask for two or three different kinds of commitments at once; that always causes confusion.
3. ***Be compassionate.*** Love the people you are talking to with all your heart as you ask them to make a commitment to obey God.

As I read each topic, I invite you to affirm in your heart your desire to learn that doctrine so that you can love it and live it.

It will take some work. It won't be easy. But the work will be worth it. You'll never regret it.

You cannot leave a knowledge and conviction of these truths to chance; it starts with a commitment. That commitment is not to me as a teacher or even to this study series; that commitment is to God, the author of truth.

Will you make that commitment with me now?

- The Bible: The Bible is God's perfect guidebook for living.
- God: God is bigger and better and closer than I can imagine.
- Jesus: Jesus is God showing himself to us.
- The Holy Spirit: God lives in me and through me now.
- Creation: Nothing "just happened." God created it all.



- Salvation: Grace is the only way to have a relationship with God.
- Sanctification: Faith is the only way to grow as a believer.
- Good and Evil: God has allowed evil to provide us with a choice. God can bring good even out of evil events. God promises victory over evil to those who choose him.
- The Afterlife: Heaven and hell are real places. Death is a beginning, not the end.
- The Church: The only true “world superpower” is the church.
- The Second Coming: Jesus is coming again to judge this world and to gather God’s children.

Pray with me.

*Father, thank you for sending your Son and giving me your Word so that I can know the truth about you and your world. I want to love your truth. I desire to be a person who knows how to live your truth. And so I commit myself to give my heart and my time to learn your truth. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

## TEACHING TIP

You may want to provide a commitment card for participants to sign at this point. It would say something like this: “I want to learn and to love and to live God’s truth. By God’s grace I commit to be at each of the **FOUNDATIONS** studies, to memorize the 11 core truths and verses, and to discuss these truths in a group with others.”

I encourage you to bring a friend with you next week because we all need God’s truth in our lives.





## BUILDING A FOUNDATION THAT LASTS // THREE LEVELS OF TRUTH

Here's a brief look at what we'll be studying together. This chart helps you to see the different levels of learning that go along with grasping a truth. Being able to quote a truth does not mean I've fully grasped that truth.

	TO GRASP A DOCTRINE I MUST...	LEARN IT (UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH)	LOVE IT (CHANGE MY PERSPECTIVE)	LIVE IT (APPLY IT TO LIFE)
COURSE 1	<b>THE BIBLE</b>	The Bible is God's perfect guidebook for living.	I can make the right decision.	I will consult the Bible for guidance in my decision about _____.
	<b>GOD</b>	God is bigger and better and closer than I can imagine.	The most important thing about me is what I believe about God.	When I see how great God is, it makes _____ look small.
	<b>JESUS</b>	Jesus is God showing himself to us.	God wants me to know him better.	I will get to know Jesus through a daily quiet time.
	<b>THE HOLY SPIRIT</b>	God lives in me and through me now.	I am a temple of God's Holy Spirit.	I will treat my body like the temple it is by _____.
COURSE 2	<b>CREATION</b>	Nothing "just happened." God created it all.	I have a purpose in this world.	The reason I exist is to _____.
	<b>SALVATION</b>	Grace is the only way to have a relationship with God.	I am an object of God's grace.	I'll stop seeing _____ as a way to earn my salvation. I'll begin doing it simply in appreciation for God's grace.
	<b>SANCTIFICATION</b>	Faith is the only way to grow as a believer.	I grow when I see myself in a new way.	I'll spend more time listening to what God's Word says about me and less time listening to what the world says about me.
	<b>GOOD AND EVIL</b>	God has allowed evil to provide us with a choice. God can bring good even out of evil events. God promises victory over evil to those who choose him.	All things work together for good.	I am battling evil as I face _____. I will overcome evil with good by _____.
COURSE 3	<b>THE AFTERLIFE</b>	Heaven and hell are real places. Death is a beginning, not the end.	I can face death with confidence.	I will have a more hopeful attitude toward _____.
	<b>THE CHURCH</b>	The only true "world superpower" is the church.	The best place to invest my life is in God's church.	I need to make a deeper commitment to the church by _____.
	<b>THE SECOND COMING</b>	Jesus is coming again to judge this world and to gather God's children.	I want to be living alertly for him when he comes.	Someone I can encourage with the hope of the Second Coming is _____.





# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Since this is your first time together as a group, take a few minutes to get to know each other. Share your name, where you were born, and one reason you decided to participate in this study.
  
2. When did understanding the truth about the Bible first become important to you? Tell about a time when knowing a truth was a real lifesaver. How has a truth about God and faith . . .
  - helped you deepen your relationship with God?
  - kept you from making a terrible mistake?
  - made you better able to serve God and others?
  - encouraged you in a time of trouble or temptation?
  - given you a new sense of freedom in your life?
  
3. If doctrine is so important, why do you think so many people seem to have a negative attitude toward the teaching of doctrine? Why do people so often see doctrine as something dry and boring, or loud and dogmatic?
  
4. Discuss things you can do to make sure your knowledge does not get out of balance. Don't just talk about what others should do; talk about what *you can do*. List two or three specific things that will help you and your group keep your knowledge balanced with love and grace and discernment.