

FOUNDATIONS

words
to build
a life on

St John's

18

build upon this rock



FOUNDATIONS

words
to build
a life on

*"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."*

MATTHEW 7:24

FOUNDATIONS: WORDS TO BUILD A LIFE ON

Small Group Study Guide

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CONTENTS

SMALL GROUP ESSENTIALS	2
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK	2
SESSION 1: THE STORY	5
SESSION 2: THE WORD	11
SESSION 3: THE GATHERING	17
SESSION 4: THE WATER	21
SESSION 5: THE MEAL	25
SESSION 6: THE MISSION	29

LEADER'S GUIDE

SESSION 1: THE STORY	34
SESSION 2: THE WORD	35
SESSION 3: THE GATHERING	36
SESSION 4: THE WATER	37
SESSION 5: THE MEAL	40
SESSION 6: THE MISSION	42
ICE BREAKERS	44

SMALL GROUP ESSENTIALS

THE FOUR KEYS

Four key ingredients should be a part of every small group:

The Word of God: Whether we study straight from the Bible or study the Bible through devotional books/guides, we are committed to GROWING from the Word of God in Christ.

Growth: We are here because we want to GROW and see our lives transformed to be more like Christ. As part of this GROWTH we commit to pray for each other. We seek to encourage each other and hold each other accountable in the steps of our discipleship process: CONNECT-GROW-SHARE.

Acceptance: As members of this Life Group we seek to accept each other unconditionally as Christ does each of us, seeking to build strong friendships rooted in Christ.

Confidentiality: Everything shared in this group stays with this group. Gossip and slander are unacceptable. Like Christ, we seek the best for each other.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each session in this booklet corresponds to the video teaching you will be watching with your Life Group. This format is set up for groups that meet for approximately 1 ½ hours. You can make adjustments based on the time limits for your group. Each week the format will be as follows:

Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer (10-15 Min.)

We encourage you to spend a few minutes getting to know each other and reviewing the Essentials of Life Groups.

Setting the Stage (3-5 Min.)

Read the text for the lesson each week. Members are encouraged to bring their bibles and read from their bibles. This can be read out loud as a group, taking turns, or read by one member.

Watch the Video and Respond (20 Min.)

Watch video, and then discuss what insights were gained, or what caught the attention of the members in the group.

Discussion Questions (40 Min.)

Answering all the study questions is not expected or required. Your group may have robust discussion on just a few, or they may move quickly through many. If possible, answer at least one question from each section: Getting Started, Digging In and Application.

Challenge for the Week (1Min.)

Take a few minutes to read through the challenge(s). Consider committing as a group to complete the challenge. As a suggestion, consider holding each other accountable during the week by way of reminders through e-mails, text messages, phone calls, etc.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer (10 Min.)

Please take time to note any praise reports and prayer requests. Please keep these in prayer during the week.

Family Study (families with children 3 yrs-3rd grade)

Feel free to use this family supplement to the Foundations Life Group Curriculum as a way to bring your family together to GROW in God's word. It's set up to be a simple teaching for you to do with your family along with questions and a prayer. The lessons are set up to be able to be delivered differently each week so that you can find out what works best for you. We recommend that you go over the teaching and questions with your children after you have participated in your adult life group. The blessing is something that you can tell your child multiple times throughout the week and will be a good reminder for them about the importance of these foundations in their spiritual walk.



THE STORY

BEFORE YOUR START



Before diving into the study, we encourage you to watch the video entitled “Before you Begin.”



Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer



Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2



Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together.

Genesis 1:26-31; Romans 3:23-26; Revelation 21:1-4



Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?



Discussion Questions

GETTING STARTED

1. What's the difference between fitting God into your story and fitting your story into God's? Can you share any examples from your own life?

2. Romans 1:20 says, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” Have you ever looked at any part of creation and “clearly seen” God? If so, share that with your group.

DIGGING IN

3. CREATION: READ Genesis 1:26-31; Psalm 139:14-16. What do you like most about these verses? What do these verses teach us about human life?

4. FALL: READ Genesis 2:16-17, 3:4-6; Isaiah 53:6; James 1:15. Romans 5:12 states, “When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned” (NLT). When humanity fell and sin entered the world, brokenness spread throughout creation, like a strand of DNA – an inherited trait passed through a family. Pastor Michael mentioned some of the results of living in a broken world. Where do you see the brokenness in creation and in your life?

5. REDEMPTION: Throughout the Old Testament God’s promises or covenants reveal His redemption plan. God promises that the offspring of a woman will conquer Satan (Genesis 3:15). He promised that a seed of Abraham who will bless all nations (Genesis 12:2-3). He promises that a son of David will reign as king forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). He promises a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). How do all these promises solve the problem of separation between us, as sinful people, and our perfect God? READ Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21. What is the focal point of this plan?

6. RESTORATION: "...we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13b). ...There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4). When Jesus comes again, the earth and the heavens will be new, restored and we will have new bodies (1 Corinthians 15). What questions about the future restoration do you have? How could that future promise and reality give you comfort here and now?

APPLICATION

7. Some have used God's big story as a tool to look at their life in relationship to Him. Looking at the key features of humanity's interaction with God, what stage best describes your life right now?

CREATION: Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, are you trying to live on your own steam? Do you think you know more than God? Or don't need him?

THE FALL: Is your life characterized by brokenness and limitation?

REDEMPTION: Are you excited about the grace and mercy for you in Jesus? Do you find a great comfort that you know Christ as your savior?

RESTORATION: Do you see the reign of Jesus working through your life and service to others to bring God's redemption and restoration to others?

8. God created you and has redeemed you in Jesus. He will one day restore every aspect of your life perfectly and completely. Until then, he wants you to help him fill the earth and subdue it with redemption and restoration. How can you bring restoration to others? How can you, like Jesus, challenge religious legalism and go across racial, cultural, social and economic boundaries to be part of the biggest unity movement in the history of the world?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

1. READ John 1:1-18. This is a great summary of the foundation of God's promise and plan. This week, know that you are one of God's chosen. You are part of His plan. It was for you that His son was sent to restore the broken relationship that is the result of sin. Through the sacrifice of His son, you have been redeemed and made righteous in His eyes. He is working to bring restoration not only to you but through you to others. Try beginning each day this week praying David's words in Psalm 139 or committing them to memory. Who needs you to bring to them redemption and the promise of restoration? Pray for them and talk to them this week.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

TEACHING:

Stories are really fun to read and to act out. Some stories are long and big, and some are small and short. Some have heroes or princesses or athletes or builders or talking animals. Did you know that the biggest story in the whole wide world is one that you are a part of?!

The bible tells us about the Big story of Jesus and how much He loves us. God created the world and everything was so good. The very best thing that God made was humans just like you! But sometimes, humans like you and me make mistakes or even do bad things. It hurts to make a mistake or when someone is mean to you. It hurts God too! But he loved us so much that he sent Jesus to take away the wrongs that we have done. Now, because of Jesus we know how to and can love one another just as he loves us, by forgiving people and by being kind. We get to be characters in God's big story who love Jesus and who love others.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite thing that God created?
2. What happened after Jesus died on the cross?
3. What kind of character do you want to be in God's Big Story?

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you that you have included us in your story; a story that is all about Jesus and how much he loves us. Help our family to love one another, and to be examples of love to everyone we meet. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BLESSING:

In your blessing this week, be sure to remind your child that he/she is a part of God's Big story and in His love for them, He is with them, takes joy in them and so do you!



THE WORD

 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together.

Psalm 1:1-3; Isaiah 55:10-11

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions

GETTING STARTED

1. Trevor reminded us how powerful our own words are. Words can build up and tear down. “Words,” Trevor said, “live inside us.” Can you think of examples where words stuck with you and affected your heart and soul (for the good or the not so good)? Think about words in the public square (e.g. t.v., radio, billboards, in conversations, etc.), how do these words affect people’s hearts and souls?

2. Trevor posed these questions in the video, “How do we know we can trust God? How do we know who God is or even why we should trust him?” How would you answer these questions?

3. In Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, the 10 Commandments are actually called the 10 Words –10 simple words, words to build a life on. READ Exodus 20:2. This was actually God’s first word to His people. What important difference does this make when considering the rest of the commandments?

DIGGING IN

4. READ Genesis 21:33; Psalm 119:89; James 1:17; Numbers 23:19. What are some of the characteristics of God that we read in these verses? Now READ John 1:1-3, 14. What does this mean about God’s word?

5. READ Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 6:35; John 8:12. According to the verses you just read, what are all the ways we are affected by the word of God?

6. God’s word is powerful. It is eternal and unchanging; words to build a life on. Simply speaking, God’s Word can be broken down into Law and Gospel. And simply put the Law shows us our sin (READ Romans 3:20); while the Gospel shows us our savior and what God has done for us (READ Exodus 20:2; John 3:16; Romans 5:8 and 1 John 4:10). What are the benefits of each? Which empowers us to be transformed and why?

7. If your group has time, take the LAW AND GOSPEL QUIZ. Mark the following Bible verses with either 'L' for law or 'G' for Gospel. Remember: the Law shows us our sin and the Gospel shows us our savior.

- _____ He was pierced for our transgressions ...and by his wounds we are healed.
-Isaiah 53:5
- _____ Be holy... -Leviticus 19:2
- _____ ...love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! -Matthew 5:44
- _____ Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. -Ephesians 5:25

APPLICATION

8. Can you share a time when God's Word, his law or gospel really spoke to you? Is there an area in your life where you need to hear the Law, to show your sin? Or the Gospel, to show you your salvation?

9. READ Hebrews 4:12. This verse talks about the word of God being alive and active! How have you seen that in your life? Also, a sword is a weapon that can protect you and protect others. How has the Word of God protected you and have you used it to protect and encourage others? How?

10. As read above, some believers have embraced the word of God by seeing it as the Sword of the Spirit (Hebrews 4:12). You need to use all five fingers and your palm to grasp the sword, the Word, firmly and use it in your life.

Hear: Listen to the Bible on App, read out loud, at church etc...

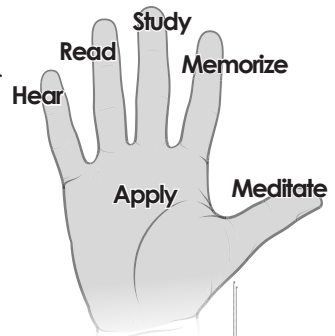
Read: Read the Word thoughtfully and slowly.

Study: Underline, highlight, and write questions/comments in Bible.

Memorize: When you memorize Scripture it comes to you when you need it most.

Meditate: Repeat the verse many times to yourself emphasizing different parts. If you can worry, you can meditate. Worry is running something through your mind and thinking about it nonstop. Meditation is the same thing but with the word of God and his promises and truth.

Apply: How can this verse be lived out in your life here and now?



READ Proverbs 3:1-8 and Colossians 3:16. Talk about all the ways you can keep the Sword of the Spirit, God's teaching and words, "in your heart," and let the "word of Christ" dwell richly in you.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

One hallmark of life as a Jesus follower is to read God's word every day. Can you carve out 15 minutes each day for the next week to read scripture and ponder what you have read? Can you do this with your family as well? Pick a passage (e.g. Ephesians 2:1-10) and grab it with the sword analogy above (Ephesians 2:8 is a great verse to memorize). At the end of this week, assess any changes you have noticed in your life.

You can also sign-up for daily scripture passages, delivered to your email at www.biblegateway.com or daily reading plans at www.youversion.com

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

TEACHING:

The bible is the one place where we know we can always go to hear God speak to us. He uses the words in the bible to remind us just how much he loves us and how we can love others. The bible always points us to Jesus and what he has done for us. There are so many good things to find in the bible that you can read it for your entire life! Good stories that tell us about people who followed God, verses that tell us to sing or that we are unique and wonderful, and so much more.

Try to read some part of the bible with your child every day or put up verses in different parts of the house, so that the word of the Lord is always close in your family.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite bible story?
2. What do you like most about that story?

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for giving us the bible. Help us to read it every day as a family and to be like the people in the bible who listen to you and are good disciples. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BLESSING:

This week in your blessing, be sure to remind your child that God's Word says that they are wonderful, they are loved, they are precious and so very special and you think so too!

THE GATHERING

 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together.

Genesis 2:1-3

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions

GETTING STARTED

1. Pastor Tim explained that there has never been a time in his life where he had a choice to worship or not. What about you? Is your worship story similar or different and what has that meant for your worship life?

2. READ Genesis 2:1-3. Pastor Tim pointed out that God worked very hard for six days (see Genesis 1) and then rested. The seventh day is described in a very important way. How is it described and what do you think these descriptions mean? Do you have a day like this carved out in your week? How do you find rest in your week?

DIGGING IN

3. Worshipping God is connected to the Sabbath and to rest. READ Exodus 7:16, 20:8-11, 31:12-13; Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 4:9-10. Setting aside a day to worship God and rest has been an important expectation for God's people from the beginning. How do these verses connect this important directive? What are all the reasons why God would expect us to follow His Sabbath directive? What is Jesus' point in Mark 2:27?

4. Generally, when we think about worship, we think about church; a building or "house of worship," a place where we go to hear from our pastor, sing songs and hymns, etc. READ Exodus 25:8-9, 40:34-38; 2 Samuel 7:1-7. How would you describe these first assemblies of God's people in the Old Testament? What are some important attributes?

5. READ John 4:19-26. This is the climactic section of the entire discourse, demonstrating the significance of New Testament worship. How many times is the word 'worship' used in this section? How would you describe this new worship? How are we supposed to worship? When will this new worship commence? READ Acts 2:42-47, 5:42. What are some other ways worship is described?

APPLICATION

6. READ 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 25-27; Hebrews 10:24-25. Some Christians think, "I don't believe you have to go to church to be a Christian." What do these verses (and this whole study) lead you to think about that idea?

7. Spend some time answering some of the questions that Pastor Tim asked, “What could you do to clear the clutter out of your Sunday? How would that help you in your life of faith? How would that help with the anxiety you have for family and children? How would regular worship help you bring godly values and behaviors back to your family? How would weekly worship engage you in the words, songs and prayers of eternity?”

8. There is a popular secular movement that encourages people to take regular technology Sabbaths; 24 hours without computers, smart phones, or other electronic devices. Can you imagine?! Do you think this kind of Sabbath is helpful? Why? If you took a technology Sabbath, what would you do with that open time? Compare this to a worship Sabbath – a disconnection from worldly things so that you can connect to Jesus. Which would be easier to do regularly? Why?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

READ Psalm 23. Consider how this Psalm describes a life that is connected to Jesus. Pray about how you can connect your own life in this way. Share this Psalm with people close to you and discuss getting connected. Pray this Psalm every day this week. End your week with a Sabbath that includes worship with your family, friends, and church body.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

TEACHING:

Every Sunday there is church. God's people have been coming together to worship him for a really long time! In church we sing praises to God (what are some of your favorite songs we sing in church?), we read the bible, we pray, the pastor talks, we give gifts, music is played, and we even get to find a special place to sit every week. Going to church as a family is important because at church we get to see that our family is so much bigger than just us, it's made up of all different kinds of people!

This week at church let's try to meet someone new who is part of our church family and introduce ourselves to them. After you do, be sure to tell your pastor or Sunday School leader about the new person in your family that you met.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite part of church? Where do we like to sit in church?
2. What is one thing you wish you could do in church (like read the verses, sing in the choir or give a sermon)?

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for giving us a place where we can come to worship you. Help us to come every week. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BLESSING:

This week in your blessing, be sure to remind your child that they are a part of God's big family. Be sure to tell them that you are so proud of how much they love going to church and learning about God.

THE WATER

 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together.

Ezekiel 36:25-27; Romans 6:3-11

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions

GETTING STARTED

1. Why do we wash things? Have you ever tried to wash something, an article of clothing, a pot or a pan, for example, and you couldn't quite get the stain out? How hard did you try to make it clean – to what lengths did you go? Now think about the lengths to which God has gone to wash the stain of sin out of our lives.

2. Have you been baptized? If so, do you know the date, location and who baptized you? Do you have any pictures, certificates, memories or keepsakes from that great day? Do you have any godparents/sponsors? Are you a godparent/sponsor to anyone?

3. Describe a time when you experienced the profound realization that you are a baptized child of God. How did this change the way you felt and acted?

DIGGING IN

4. READ Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-11. What great things has God done for us in baptism? What died with Christ in our baptism? What rose with Christ in our baptism?

5. Baptism is foundational to a life daily lived in Christ. Martin Luther preferred to say “I am baptized” rather than “I was baptized.” READ Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 8:12-13, 10:45-48, 16:31-33, 18:8. Who commanded baptism? Who is to be baptized?

6. Read Lamentations 3:22; Titus 3:5-6. What is God’s attitude toward us? What is the basis of our salvation? What comfort does this Biblical truth bring to you when your sins weigh heavily upon you?

7. READ 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 26. Through Jesus’ work and the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism we are simultaneously in Jesus and Jesus is in us. What does this mean about our connections to God and to one another?

APPLICATION

8. How can you make your identity as a baptized child of God an everyday part of your life?

9. As we've read in Matthew 28:18-20, we have been commissioned to make disciples by baptizing and teaching. Who in your life is in need of the gift of Baptism? If you have children and grandchildren, have you sought to bring the gift of baptism to them?

10. READ Ephesians 4:4-6. Do you need to be baptized more than once?

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Record the date of your baptism and the baptisms of other family members on the family calendar. Plan baptism celebrations, just as you would plan birthday celebrations. Find your baptism certificate, frame it and hang it up in a place you see every day.

 **Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer**

TEACHING:

Baths and showers are ways that we get clean. God has a way of making us clean too and we call that baptism.

Baptism is such an amazing part of being a follower of Jesus. It's not just water, but water combined with God's words of promise of forgiveness and salvation. In our baptism we are made part of God's family and are given new life, a life that is forever marked as God's child whom he loves! Just like writing your name on things that are yours, God writes his name right on your heart and you are eternally his. Baptism is for everybody and the bible talks about all types of people getting baptized and becoming part of God's Big Family.

Be sure to remind your child about their baptism, describe the day and what happened! And if your child or you haven't been baptized contact your church and they will help you take the next step in your faith journey.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite part of being in God's family?
2. Have you seen anyone get baptized at church?

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for baptism. Thank you for promising to always forgive me. Thank you for saving me and loving me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BLESSING:

This week in your blessing, be sure to remind your child that they belong to God and he loves them; that they belong to you too and you are so thankful that God has given you such a beautiful, gentle, and courageous child.

THE MEAL

 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together.

Exodus 12:1-42; Luke 22:7-20

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions

GETTING STARTED

1. When you consider your personal health and well-being, what are some of the ways you think about improving it?

2. Do you try to get your family together for special meals such as Thanksgiving, birthdays, and Sunday brunch? Why are these meals important to your family? Can you recall a special memory from a family gathering?

3. Thinking specifically about Thanksgiving, this meal is shared within families, but it is also shared by many families eating the similar food on the same day. Do you think about family members who are no longer with you on this day? What about family members who have yet to join the family (new babies, new marriages, new friends...)? When we share the Lord's Supper in church, do you ever think about it in a similar way?

DIGGING IN

4. READ Exodus 12:7, 12-13. What was the purpose of the Passover Lamb? Now READ Isaiah 53:7, 10; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19. What is the important connection being drawn? What is the implied purpose of Jesus' ministry?

5. Exodus (notice Chs. 1-20) is the story of the lengths to which God is willing to go to lead His people to freedom, to rescue them, to create for himself 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (see Exodus 19:6). Exodus chapter 12 is the climax of the struggle to free His people from slavery. READ Exodus 12:7-8. What are the components of the meal? READ Exodus 12:3-5. How do people gather to eat the meal? What is the purpose of this meal?

6. READ Luke 22:7-8, 19-20 and 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. Of all Israel's festivals, Passover (including the days of Unleavened Bread) was the most important theologically. This is the feast that Jesus transformed into a new institution to mark his substitutionary death for the nation. The fellowship with God conveyed by the old sacrificial system would be superseded by the fellowship experienced in the Lord's Supper. What is the new significance of the bread in Luke 22:19 and the cup in 22:20? What was the function of the blood in the Old Testament and what is its function now? Jesus did not hand the meat from the Passover lamb to his disciples. What did he give them instead and why? Do you remember how Pastor Zach explained the new Passover Lamb?

APPLICATION

7. READ Exodus 12:12-14; Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 10:16. Martin Luther wrote that sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper) "are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us." Just as God was truly present for at the Passover, so also Jesus Christ is truly present in the Lord's Supper – as pastor Zach explained, Jesus is there under the bread and also under the wine. Luther also wrote, "Jesus Christ is truly present, to bring believers comfort and life...attributed solely and alone to the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ... and are rightly used when received in faith for the strengthening of faith." Like a regular dose of an essential nutrient, the Lord's Supper makes a difference. Why can we take God at his word on this foundational part of the Christian life?

8. At the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus passes around one cup – the cup of redemption – for everyone to share. Also, Jesus identifies the broken bread as his body. READ Romans 12:4-5 and Ephesians 4:4-5. One cup, one loaf, one body. Discuss just how important it is to understand the oneness in this meal and why it matters for us individually and collectively.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

The first Christians gathered together for a community meal – like pot luck – as part of the entire day of worship, which included singing, scripture reading, preaching, and participation in the Lord's Supper. Consider going out to eat or gathering at someone's house after church this month to strengthen your communal identity in Christ.

 **Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer**

TEACHING:

Some of the most important meals we have are on holidays and we eat them together. Which big meal is your favorite: Thanksgiving turkey, Summer hot dogs, Christmas ham, or Birthday cake?

God knows that eating together and being with one another is important. In church we come together to take Communion. This is an important meal that we do at church when we come up to the altar or table as God's family and take communion, in which Jesus is with us in the bread and the wine and strengthens our faith and forgives our sins. We take communion to remind us that Jesus died for our sins and provides for us everything we need.

If you are interested in having your child take communion be sure to enroll in your church's early communion class.

QUESTIONS:

1. What's your favorite food?
2. What is your favorite thing to talk about when we get together to eat as a family?

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for providing for us everything we need. Help us to trust in you and to be able to share with those who do not have. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BLESSING:

This week in your blessing, be sure to remind your child that you are so proud of who they are becoming, how you see in them generosity, love, and patience. Remind them that God created them to be all those things, and He will continue to be with them as they grow, fed and nourished by His love.

THE MISSION

 Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breakers and Opening Prayer

 Read 'Small Group Essentials - The Four Keys' on PAGE 2

 Setting the Stage

Read the following verses together.

John 4:1-42

 Watch the Video and Respond

As we think about the video lesson we just watched, what insights did you gain or what caught your attention or spoke to you?

 Discussion Questions

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with someone? What happened? What have you learned about talking about your faith to other people? What struggles do you have with sharing your faith?

2. Who has shared the message of Jesus with you? How did they do it?

DIGGING IN

3. Pastor Nathan spoke about Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. This passage reflects the single longest conversation between Jesus and an individual in the bible. This is significant. READ John 4:7-9. These verses open the dialogue. What is the request and why is the woman surprised? What barriers did Jesus break when he talked to her?

4. READ John 1:43-49; John 4:12, 16-19, 28-29, 39. What is similar about Nathanael and the Samaritan woman? What do they do after their encounters with Jesus? What does it take to be someone who shares Jesus with others?

5. How did Jesus change the life of the woman at the well? What was her response to the life changing encounter with Jesus?

6. Witness is generally a legal term. What does a witness do in a court of law? How was the woman at the well a witness? READ Acts 4:13, 18-20. Because we know Jesus, Christians are called to be a "living testimony," through our words and lives. Is testifying to the work of God in Jesus Christ an option?

APPLICATION

7. According to Pastor Nathan, how did the Samaritan woman share the Good News? What is good or bad about her approach? Which part of her approach would be the hardest for you to follow?

8. READ Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 5:7; Acts 1:8; John 13:34-35. What has Jesus called us to do throughout the earth? What are some of the ways we can be a living witness?

9. Consider who may need you to reach out to them. Who would really appreciate you taking the time to see how they are doing? Who needs you to share the story of Jesus in your life? Take time this week to pray for the people that need Jesus and need you to speak up. Pray for opportunities to mention your faith and share the good news.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Step #1 – PRAY. Make a list of family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues who may not know Jesus and start daily prayer for them.

Step #2 – CARE. Seek ways you can show love. For inspiration, consider reading the book, “Love Does” by Bob Goff.

Step #3 – SHARE. Read Acts 16:13-33. See how Paul shares Christ with 3 very different people using different methods for each one. Pray for God to open up opportunities for you to do the same.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

TEACHING:

God has a mission for us! He wants us to go out and to tell people just what he has told us. To tell them all about Jesus and to invite them to church, to read to them the bible, to get baptized, to be a part of God's family and that they too are a part of God's Big Story too! This mission that God has given us is called the great commission and can be found in Matthew 28 (be sure to look it up and talk about it).

Who are some people that your family could invite to church?

Not only do we get to tell people about Jesus, but we can also help them. There are many ways that families can help those who are less fortunate, contact your church to find out how you can SHARE Christ with your words, service, or resources.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is God's mission a secret or are we supposed to tell people about it?
2. What do you think is going to be the hardest part about telling people about Jesus?

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for sending us out to be your missionaries. Give us the courage and the strength to tell others and to share Jesus' love with everyone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BLESSING:

This week in your blessing, be sure to remind your child that God has great plans for them. That he has created them, he has prepared good works for them to do, and He will always be with them. That you are here for them, that you pray for them, that you love them unconditionally and that they are good.



LEADER'S GUIDE

SESSION 1: THE STORY

GETTING STARTED

1. A: The difference has to do with placing yourself or God at the center of life. Often times when we try to fit God into our story we are trying to use him to advance our selfish agenda. When we fit ourselves into his Story, his gift of redemption defines us and we see ourselves working to bring restoration to others. Some specific examples to share from your own life might help discussion.
2. A: Some examples Pastor Mike mentioned: holding a newborn child, watching a sunset, beholding the great natural wonders of the world, etc....

DIGGING IN

3. A: We are made in God's image, we are made with a purpose, and God made all of creation "good." We are fearfully and wonderfully made. God made us and what he makes is wonderful. God has thoughtfully and intentionally created us and has ordained our days.
4. A: From the very beginning, we all have desired to be like "god." We all want to go our own way. We think things like, "as long as what I do isn't hurting anyone else," "there is no right or wrong; what is right for me may be different than what is right for you," and even "all I want is what is coming to me – I want my 'fair' share." This human self-centeredness effects everything; the environment, relationships, our economy – everything. We see wars, terrorism, famine, disease, divorce, drugs, etc....
5. A: If you have time, you can look up all these verse and study them further. Jesus is the focal point. God sent Jesus – perfect, sinless Jesus – to be our replacement in the judgement seat.
6. A: If you have time read 1 Corinthians 15. It's interesting to ponder what it will be like. The future picture is limited but it is completely glorious. Our promise for the future gives us hope to endure challenging times here and now and can compel us to bring this promise to others.

APPLICATION

7. A: This serves as a tool to help you think about your relationship with

God. In reality all four of these may be present in our life but one or two may be dominant. Use this as an opportunity to reflect on your walk with God and also to think about your identity in the redemption and restoration stages.

8. A: Christianity is often labeled as exclusionary. But the reality is that God is calling all people back to him in Jesus! There is more diversity in the body of Christ than any other group in the World. Take time to think about this reality and how God can continue to use you in this way.

SESSION 2: THE WORD

GETTING STARTED

1. A: Answers will vary.
2. A: Answers will vary. Trevor explained that it takes spending time with God and having experiences with God that help us. We spend time with God and experience him through his word.
3. A: When trying to understand how we can trust God, this is a perfect example. God wants what is best for his people. Our God is a God of salvation. Our God wants us to feel loved, secure, cared for. Before God gave His people any directives, rules, or guidelines, he first saved them.

DIGGING IN

4. A: Since God is eternal, the Word must also be eternal. God is unchanging, so the Word of God is also unchanging. God created everything and from the beginning, His word has been there with him. In Genesis chapter 1, God spoke everything into existence, in Exodus 20:1 God spoke “these words,” and Jesus was the living word of God.
5. A: God’s Word, Jesus in words, is our bread of life – nourishment for our souls, and the light for our path – the best guide for our daily lives. Martin Luther said that the “holy scriptures [our bibles] are the manger where we find the Christ child.” If you want to find the words that bring salvation and eternal life, you will find them in your bibles. We should read, contemplate... inwardly digest... the very word of God, daily.
6. A: The law also serves as a curb (Read Romans 2:15), helping us to live in an orderly society, and it guides the Christian life (Read Luke 10:27). While the law guides us, it cannot empower us for a transformed life, only the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus forgiving our sins, can do this.
7. A: Isa 53:5 – Gospel, Lev. 19:2 – Law, Mat 5:44 – Law, Eph 5:25 Gospel

APPLICATION

8. A: Be ready to share a time when the law accused you of something wrong and when the Gospel eased a guilty conscience.
9. A: Answers will vary.
10. A: Answers will vary.

SESSION 3: THE GATHERING

GETTING STARTED

1. A: Answers will vary.
2. A: God finished his work – a big job for sure. He rested, blessed the seventh day and made it holy. To make holy is to sanctify and set apart. Apparently rest and setting apart at least one day a week is very important to God because even He took one day of rest in his work week.

DIGGING IN

3. A: God commands Pharaoh to let His people go so that they might worship God out in the desert/wilderness. God includes a day of rest, the Sabbath, in his 10 commandments. The Israelites had been slaves for more than 400 years, without a day off. God had saved the Israelites from their slavery and not only wanted them to honor a rhythm that included work and rest, but also to spend that Sabbath day in fellowship and relationship-building with one another and with Him (their Saving and Merciful God). Because the Israelites (and all of us) are God's holy possession, he seeks to spend time with us. God designated this day of rest, not for his own benefit but for our benefit. Today, we spend our worship together as God's body of believers (with Jesus as our head), and in connection with and gratitude to God for His saving work through His son Jesus. Rest is also important for our total well-being. Physical, emotional, and spiritual healing all come through rest, relationships, and time with our Lord and Savior. Jesus wants us to remember that the Sabbath is a gift to us, from God. He made the Sabbath, He designed it for our well-being, and He wants what is best for us.

4. A: The setting up of this portable sanctuary, or 'holy place', was very important. Exodus chapters 25-31 detail all of the furnishings; it was beautiful, well ordered, and symbolic. The Hebrew word we have translated "tabernacle" means "dwelling." God dwelled among his people, not in a permanent structure, but rather in a moveable tent-like, impermanent

structure. The point was the relationship and the reminder of just who was at the center of the Israelite community. If people tried to contain God in a fixed structure, then perhaps they would think God could only be found in this man-made structure. Perhaps they would forget that God was with them always and everywhere. He was the head of their community, their leader and guide.

5. A: This is entire section of scripture details the longest conversation Jesus has with any individual person throughout the gospels. The verb ‘worship’ is used nine times in this section (plus the noun ‘worshippers’). We will no longer worship on the mountain (Mt. Gerizim where the Samaritan’s based their worship practices) or in the [Jerusalem] temple (where the Jews centralized their worship). Now, we will worship in spirit and truth. Worship will be anywhere and everywhere, it will be the mark of a life that is dedicated to following Jesus. We will begin this new worship when the ‘hour’ comes, the ‘hour’ of Jesus’ willing sacrifice. The ‘hour’ of Jesus’ cross bears within itself the future worship of all who will be united with him in his hour. The hour of Jesus’ death will be the time in which “living water” is given (v. 10), the new temple will be established, and the church will live and worship with Jesus and in Jesus. See Ezekiel 47: 1-12. Water flows from Jesus, the new temple to “all nations” (Mat. 28:19). People were devoted to teaching, preaching and learning about Jesus Christ, fellowship, community, and prayer; giving of their resources, caring for one another, located in homes and in the temple, praising God, and growing in numbers.

APPLICATION

6. A: God has called everyone to a day of rest, and to spend time with Him on that day of rest. It is for our benefit that God has set it up this way. Everyone is an important part of the body of believers – a.k.a. the church. No one is indispensable, no one is unnecessary. In addition, it is during this time together that we strengthen one another and find greater encouragement.

7. A: Answers will vary.

8. A: Answers will vary.

SESSION 4: THE WATER

GETTING STARTED

1. A: Answers will vary. We want to salvage our materials goods, to make them like new. It can be very challenging to get a stain out of any

material item – stains in carpets may require a professional carpet cleaner, stains in cloths may require special chemicals, you may scrub for hours to get the burnt mess out of a pan. God, on the other hand, went even further for us. He actually sent his son to die for us. That is the greatest of lengths to make us like new.

2. A: Answers will vary.
3. A: Answers will vary.

DIGGING IN

4. A: We receive salvation, forgiveness of sins, and rescue from death and the devil. Our old sinful self is buried – and dies – and a new self-rises alive with Christ. We are in Christ and Christ is in us.
5. A: Jesus commanded baptism. All nations (all people) are to be baptized – no one is excluded, young or old, rich or poor, across all continents and all cultures. This includes infants! Everyone is to be baptized. Men and women, Jews and Gentiles, entire households (moms, dads, kids, babies, servants, grandparents...). Martin Luther reminds us, that as a baptized child of God, “we hang around the child’s neck [and the necks of all the baptized] a mighty, lifelong enemy [of the devil].” “For baptism is our comfort and the doorway to all of God’s possessions and to the communion of all the saints.”

7 REASONS TO BAPTIZE CHILDREN

(share with group if anyone is struggling with infant baptism)

1. GOD IS THE PRIMARY ACTOR IN BAPTISM

...he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit... -Titus 3:5

2. CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED IN “ALL NATIONS”

“...be baptizedFor the promise is for you and for your children”
-Acts 2:38-39
...you and your household....and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.
-Acts 16:31-33

3. CHILDREN ARE BORN WITH ORIGINAL SIN

For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.
-Psalm 51:5

4. CHILDREN MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Jesus replied, “...no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

Jesus answered, "...no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ... -John 3:3,5

5. INFANTS CAN HAVE FAITH!

"Haven't you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, 'You have taught children and infants to give you praise.'" -Matthew 21:16 (quoting Psalm 8:2)

...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. -Luke 1:15

(talking about John the Baptist)

"Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb and led me to trust you at my mother's breast." -Psalm 22:9 NLT

6. BAPTISM IS THE BEGINNING OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...and teaching them

-Matthew 28:19-20

7. BAPTISM IS A NEW TESTAMENT COROLLARY TO CIRCUMCISION

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. ...you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him -Colossians 2:11-12

6. A: God is merciful toward us. Our salvation is based on what Jesus has done – not what we have done. This is an important distinction in some theologies that believe baptism is only an outward sign, something we do for ourselves and God. As scripture shows, God is doing the work, not us.
7. A: Through baptism (and the Lord's Supper and God's Word) we are connected to Jesus. Jesus is inside of us, strengthening us, walking with us, comforting us. But also, we are all (every believer everywhere, for all time) IN Jesus together. We are one body and Christ is the head of this body – his church everywhere on earth. We are all "in this" together. We are all called to carry each other's burdens and rejoice at each other's blessings.

APPLICATION

8. A: Frame your baptism certificate... put it in a place that you see every day so that it reminds you of who you are in Christ Jesus. Have a baptism birthday party every year with your friends, loved ones, sponsors. Make the sign of the cross over yourself and say "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" to remind you of your baptism daily.
9. A: Answers will vary.

10. A: Christ died once; he was sacrificed once for all of our sins, we were buried into Christ's ONE death, through our baptism. There is no need to baptize again. Keep in mind, baptism is not something we do for Jesus; it is entirely His work for us. We are united with Christ in baptism because he stepped into the Jordan and became one of us. Additionally, there is no precedent or evidence of any multiple baptisms in scripture. We are born once and we die once – just like our baptism into a new life and the one death of Jesus.

SESSION 5: THE MEAL

GETTING STARTED

1. A: Answers will vary. Do you think about exercise and healthy-eating? Food that nourishes your body? Consider the Lord's Supper as one pathway to spiritual health.
2. A: Answers will vary. Do these family meals increase connectedness, make your family feel closer, and create opportunities to strengthen the whole family through relationship building? Among people, it seems that sharing meals is an expression of friendship.
3. A: Answers will vary. The Lord's Supper is a connection that churches all over the world share, like a Thanksgiving meal held in individual homes. Not only do we think about the Christians that are sharing the meal with us in our own church, but also those who are in other churches, and those who have gone before us and those who are still to join us.

DIGGING IN

4. A: A perfect, blemish free lamb was used as an offering to God. The blood of this lamb was a symbolic covering – painted on the door lintels – to protect the Israelites from God's wrath as he passed through Egypt. Jesus is called the "Lamb of God." He is the perfect, blemish-free, sin-free offering who takes away the sins of the world. Just as the Passover blood functioned as a shield against Yahweh's wrath, so Jesus' blood serves the same purpose for us today, shielding us from wrath deserved because of our behavior that is directly opposed to God's will (our sins).
5. A: This, the first Passover meal, included a yearling lamb (or goat) and bread made without yeast. The whole community gathered and participated as individuals, families, and neighbors – everyone, at the same time and on the same night. This sacred event, including the

sacrifice of the lamb, painting the blood on the doorposts to protect and set them apart from others who would be judged, was also the institution of a lasting ordinance, a very personal connection to their saving God, to be repeated by God's people. The blood reminded them of God's protection, the unleavened bread their departure from slavery – the overarching theme... God Saves and it is personal to Him and for us.

6. A: Bread, blood, and rescue are at the heart of both the Passover and Lord's Supper. The cup is the new covenant, the blood of the Lamb that is Jesus shed for the remission of our sins. The bread is Jesus' body. Blood of the lamb protects the Israelites from judgement; the blood of Jesus protects all believers from judgement. The bread was like the nourishing manna from heaven, given by God. The sacred Passover meal and the sacred Lord's Supper share a purpose, a backward historical remembrance that should result in thankfulness to God, a participation in and connecting with Christ. Like baptism, this sacrament is a way that God comes to us, through Christ, to strengthen faith, comfort believers, and cleanse us from sin. Instead of handing the disciples the meat from the lamb, he took the lowly unleavened bread and gave it new significance – Jesus presented himself as God's spiritual manna from heaven. Jesus' actions indicated that the death of the Passover lamb was about to become redundant. These were the new days of unleavened bread – newly harvested grain which had never been in contact with yeast – a new life in Christ (unleavened bread), completely distinct from the old sinful life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). Pastor Zach reminded us that the Passover lamb is no longer on the table, because the Lamb (Jesus) is at table, sitting with us, inviting us to join Him in this sacred meal.

APPLICATION

7. A: God was really there at the Passover, as He told the Israelites he would be. Jesus speaks in straightforward and concrete words when he institutes the Lord's Supper. Jesus is really there as He told us he would be. While it is true that Jesus speaks in parables, analogies, and metaphors while he is teaching throughout his ministry, at the Last Supper he is very concrete about all of the events that are about to unfold. Why is this foundational? For many reasons but here are a couple; every day we Christians face difficulties in our lives. We encounter people who need extra patience or kindness; sometimes we are those people. We see things on the news or in our own lives that are faith-testing. For all these reasons and more, we all need to sit at Jesus' table – regularly. And we all need that comfort that comes in the arms of our loving Lord, and the strength of fellowship in our body of believers. All of this happens in this holy meal. We are all in this together, and we are all in Jesus together.

8. A: Answers will vary. In western culture, in particular, we are highly individualistic. We, individually find success, we individually “pull ourselves up with our bootstraps,” as the saying goes. In the bible we read that Christ is in each one of us. And that is true. But perhaps of equal or greater importance is remembering that we are also, as the entirety of Christians, IN Christ together. When we participate in the sacraments, like baptism and the Lord’s Supper, we are participating IN Christ, with all the other Christians in the world. As Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12, we are one body (that is Christ’s body, His church). When one suffers we all suffer, when one rejoices we all rejoice. We are all in this together!

SESSION 6: THE MISSION

GETTING STARTED

1. A: Answers will vary.
2. A: Answers will vary.

DIGGING IN

3. A: The cultural, gender, moral, and religious barriers. He is tired and thirsty and requests that the woman draw him water to drink. The woman is surprised because Jews typically did not interact with Samaritans. Additionally, in ancient times women were by and large second-class citizens – the marriage contract was considered similar to a property contract. This woman’s life was hard – Jesus knows this. That Jesus would address not only a woman, but a Samaritan woman, and do so in an egalitarian way was remarkable (notice John 4:27).
4. A: Nathanael and the Samaritan woman were both skeptical to begin with. Both were awed by Jesus’ intimate knowledge of them. Considering all of the disciples, and other followers of Jesus throughout the bible, and specifically considering Nathanael and the Samaritan woman, it seems that Jesus calls anyone and everyone to follow him, and share the good news.
5. A: He knew her completely and still loved her. He offered her the thing that her soul was searching for in other things. Because Jesus came to her, she was empowered, filled with the spirit, and became a new life in Christ. She told others. She was compelled to share the message with others.

6. A: A witness gives testimony or shares what they have observed. They simply share what they know to be true. This is different than the role of the trial lawyer whose job is to present the facts in a well-rehearsed and convincing manner. The Samaritan woman gave simple instructions telling the people what she encountered and knew to be true. She gave a simple witness, with transparency, simplicity, and bravery. “Come; see a man who told me everything I ever did... Could this be the Messiah?” We as witnesses simply live and speak in a way that represents Jesus well and points people to Jesus.

APPLICATION

7. A: She gave a simple witness, with transparency, simplicity, and bravery. The Samaritan woman told the people who she encountered and what she knew to be true. “Come; see a man who told me everything I ever did.” She shared about how encountering Jesus had changed her life.
8. A: We are sent to be Jesus followers – disciples - who make more Jesus followers. We are to share the gospel, baptize people, teach people everything about Jesus said and did, and we are to show people love and mercy. And we are to do this everywhere – with the people in our own homes and families, with our neighbors right next door, in the towns and cities where we live, in our counties, states, and countries all over the world.
9. A: We should be a witness to our circle of friends, neighbors, family, and colleagues. It has been said that a missionary for God is not someone who crosses the sea; but rather it is someone who sees the cross. We don’t have to cross the sea to be a missionary. A good place to start is to pray for the people in our life who are unbelievers. Seek to love people who least expect it.

ICE BREAKERS

to do with your group if time allows

Take something from your wallet/purse and tell how it relates to you.

Tell about the most positive conversation that you had today.

Tell about the most interesting thing that happened to you today.

Tell about the most humorous incident that you experienced in the last year.

My favorite fun activity when I was a child was...

The thing that drives me crazy is...

We celebrated Easter when I was a child by...

My favorite movie of all times is...

My idea of a great vacation is...

My favorite food is...

If I could visit any era of history, I would visit...

My favorite childhood memory is...

My favorite leisure activity is...

Tell about the best birthday present you ever received.

Share one of the happiest days of your life.

Describe what your day was like today.

If you had to move and could only take three things with you, what would you take?

While growing up I saw God as...

What would you do if someone willed you a million dollars?

If you could do anything you want this time next year, what would it be?

THANK YOU

to all who have contributed to the Foundations curriculum guide and videos and St. John's 2016 Life Group campaign:

Daryl Cole
Kelly Early
Joseph Fryer
Doug Gardner
Kim Hahn
Tyler Harms
Pastor Nathan Hausch
Pastor Michael Hayes
Chris Higgins
Cathy Joeckel
Pastor Tim Klinkenberg
David Kruse
Leann Luchinger
Pastor Zach McIntosh
Christina Meadows
John Primm
Ken Pummill
Michael Robinson
Pastor Bob Rossow
Tim Schumacher
Mary Strack
Leona Tschopp
Trevor Van Blarcom

NOTES

FOUNDATIONS

words to build a life on

Jesus and His Words are the foundation of our faith (1 Corinthians 3:11, Matthew 7:24). The foundations of our life as the people of God are built upon Jesus. This study returns to these foundations and their centeredness in Christ. We may have learned these truths in confirmation and they may be a part of our life as Christians. However, we may have forgotten how deep these foundations truly go. This study aims to deepen our biblical awareness of these foundations of our faith found in the Old and New Testaments as they center on The Foundation, Jesus Christ.

“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.”

Matthew 7:24

This book belongs to:

St. John's Lutheran Church of Orange
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www.stjohnsorange.org
Orange, CA | 714-288-4400

ISBN 978-168419312-7



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