



Crossway Chapel, Fox Valley

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS

Lesson 1: The Word of God



THE WORD OF GOD: THE BASICS OF THE BIBLE

In the Beginning...

Welcome to Crossway's study of "Gospel Foundations." You are about to embark on a journey where you will learn some of the most essential truths the Bible presents for life. The "gospel," as you may know, simply means "good news." From the very beginning in Genesis 1:1 all the way to the very last page, God offers His great message for creating a relationship between humanity and Himself. It is a message of forgiveness, grace, mercy, and peace offered through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for a fallen world. It is in fact THE GOOD NEWS!

But to embrace the message, we all have to trust the source. Wherever we are on our particular spiritual journey, at some point we have to believe that the Bible is not just a book that is outdated or irrelevant for life. We have to believe that is not just one option or one opinion for how to live as the one true God desires. We have to believe that these hundreds and hundreds of pages are not just information but revealed for life TRANSformation. We have to believe that it is actually *God Himself speaking* if we're really going to listen and see our lives truly changed by the things we learn.

Our greatest prayer for these studies is that you and other "truth investigators" will know the joy and delight that comes from being rescued from sin and placed into a relationship with God...the God who speaks to you in His Word, *the Bible*. From the point we enter into that relationship, we will grow to love Him more when we more fully understand our need for Him as it is described *in the Bible*. We will grow to love Him more when we see just how infinitely lovely He really is *from the Bible*. We will grow to love Him more when we understand just how deep HIS LOVE is for us as described *in the Bible*. In fact, we can find everything we need to know *about Him* and every lesson we need to learn *from Him* in the 66 books *of the Bible*. That's what this specific study is all about – understanding the basics of how we should view the Bible and seeing it as the very WORD OF GOD itself.

So be encouraged and enjoy the journey. Ask God in your own words to speak to you and help you along the way. Anticipate a new, refreshed, and exciting view of His Word, the Bible.

FIRST things FIRST:

Some things covered in the study ahead...

Overall, the message of **THE BIBLE** is about God and His work through His Son Jesus Christ.

THE BIBLE is God's word to be understood by ALL of His people. While it is the privilege of pastors to spiritually lead, *shepherd and help* with understanding the Bible and its application to life, it is a myth that only clergy with years of formal education can properly understand it.

THE BIBLE is not simply another piece of great literature that can be placed alongside the likes of Homer, Shakespeare, and Charles Dickens.

THE BIBLE is not a book that can be ignored without eternal implications.

THE BIBLE is not a collection of stories, myths, or allegories that were written to make various points about morality.

THE BIBLE is not "a matter of one's own interpretation." It was written by men moved by the Holy Spirit of God with an intended meaning to be understood and applied to life.

THE BIBLE is not a book of religious rules or pithy sayings intended to give little bits and pieces of moral knowledge to mankind.

THE BIBLE should never be viewed just as a wealth of INFORMATION *about* God but as truth for life TRANSFORMATION *by* God. Knowing the word has got to grow you and make you different.

Preaching and teaching **THE BIBLE** are the highest priority of pastors because of the vital role it plays in the life and growth of Christians.

KEY truths about THE BIBLE

Let's start by laying the foundation of God's Word. The Bible is indeed a special book with a very complicated and detailed history. It has many more wondrous things to say about itself than can be included in this one study. But there are a few things, as we have already mentioned, that make it infinitely more than just another special book. Look up the following passages and answer the questions that go with each one. Most of them require very quick answers. As you discover these key truths about the Bible, you will be laying a foundation of understanding that is vital to forming a high view of God's holy word.

2 Peter 1:19-21

1. Who is THE Author of every prophecy of Scripture?
2. How did God use men to write down the Scriptures?
3. If God is the one who spoke the Scriptures, and God is a perfect God (more in our next study on "The God of the Word"), then is it possible for it to have errors in it?
4. The Scriptures are never a matter of _____
_____.
5. If the Holy Spirit is the one who moved men to write the Scriptures (the Bible), who will help men and women understand the correct meaning of it?

See 1 Thessalonians 2:13 also.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

1. “Inspired of God” literally means “God breathed.” It came from HIS MOUTH (more on this toward the end of the lesson). What percentage of Scripture is “inspired of God?”
2. What is it “profitable for?”
3. What does it do for “the man of God?”

~See Isaiah 40:8 and Matthew 5:18, 19 also.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

1. Who is able to understand what God is saying in His word?
2. How is he/she able to understand?
3. Who is the only one who understands the mind of God?
4. Whose mind must we have if we are going to understand the Bible and its application to life?

~See John 16:12, 13, John 17:17, Hebrews 4:12, and 2 Peter 1:3 also.

Psalm 19:7-14

1. The law of the Lord is _____
And what does it do?
2. The testimony of the Lord is _____
And what does it do?
3. The precepts of the Lord are _____
And what do they do?
4. The commandment of the Lord is _____
And what does it do?
5. What are the remaining descriptions of God's word in these verses?
6. What are the additional things it does for God's servant?

In view of these key truths about the Bible, describe in your own words how we can and should view the following three things and their place in our lives. Take your time and ask God to open your heart to what He has for you at this point in the study:

Personal reading and studying of the Bible -

Applying the Bible to all issues and areas of life (finding our answers for life in God's Word and TRUSTING them).

Regularly hearing the teaching of the Bible -

GOD speaks to us with **THE BIBLE**

As we are seeing, the Bible is infinitely valuable for many reasons but most of all because it is the way in which God speaks to us today. It is the way He shows us what He wants us to know about Himself.

Read the passage below and consider the following questions about the different ways God has spoken throughout History. Write down your answers as you find them in these four verses.

Hebrews 1:1-4

1. How did God first speak to His people? Where do we find those words recorded NOW?
2. How has God spoken to us now, “in these last days?”
3. What has God shown us “in His Son?” There are a few specific things that can be listed from verse 3.
4. What is the most vital part of God’s message for sinners found in verse 3 (*This is the “good news” or gospel referenced earlier*).

JESUS CHRIST is the message of **THE BIBLE**

There's just one main character in God's Word. Read John 1:1-18 keeping in mind what you have learned in Hebrews 1:1-4. Stop and read the entire passage. Then, come back and consider the following:

John calls Jesus three things in these verses. Look specifically at verses 1, 9, 14, and 18. List the three things John calls Him and then describe, from these verses, what He accomplished as each one. This should give you great insight into what it means that "...God has spoken to us in His Son...."

Once you are finished, read over Jesus' talk with the Jews in John 5:30-47. This will fill in the picture even more.

Verses 1 and 14: JESUS is the _____.
What did He accomplish?

Verse 9: JESUS is the true _____.
What did He accomplish?

Verse 18: JESUS is the only _____.
What did He accomplish?

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE SCRIPTURES

Getting a handle on some key Bible terms...

The 66 books of the Bible are known as the “canon, or ‘list,’ of THE SCRIPTURES.” They are the sum total of “THE WORD OF GOD” spoken and recorded by various authors through history (See 2 Peter 1:20, 21 & 2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

THE SCRIPTURES, when they are mentioned in various places in the Bible, are all that God had spoken and moved men to write up to that point in history. For the church today, all 66 books of THE SCRIPTURES are the completed WORD OF GOD. In this way, THE SCRIPTURES and THE WORD OF GOD are one in the same.

As the New Testament opens, the overall message of THE SCRIPTURES becomes clear. There is a final unfolding of God’s revelation to mankind in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He IS the message. This is why Jesus Himself *is called* “THE WORD.” God’s grace and mercy through Christ show us that the whole of SCRIPTURE points to Him and what He does for sinners (See John 5:30-47).

And so, with God revelation completed in this way, we can understand that to know and love the SCRIPTURES is to know and love “THE WORD” Jesus Christ. This is how you received salvation and it is the reason why as a Christian you will *“long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”*

STOP AND THINK

How do you view the word of God? How do the people you know view it? Many people outside AND inside the church think and act as if it is a book that can be evaluated and criticized by the judgment of people. This is precisely why so many conversations about the Bible will end with, “Well, that’s just YOUR interpretation.”

But as we are learning, we must depend on the Holy Spirit of God to give us the CORRECT understanding of each passage we read and study on our spiritual journey. We must depend on Him to open our eyes so that we will see how God means to use His word to make us more like Jesus in every area of life. Whether it’s in our own reading and studying or while hearing the preaching and teaching of the word at church, God has a plan to use His word powerfully for our growth in a personal relationship with Him.

Take a moment and evaluate your own heart toward the word of God. Do you come to it as a critic would or in humble dependence like someone in need of the treasure it offers.

Who is the best picture of your heart toward the Bible...a judge or a undeserving treasure seeker? In what ways do you need to become more like one who is humbly looking for the treasure?

Once again, pause in your life wherever you are on this journey to know God more and ask Him , your Creator, to meet you and teach you what you need to know.

What are a couple of things you are learning about yourself and about your God?

ENDING WITH A RIGHT VIEW OF THE BIBLE

For extended study...

This is all about cultivating a heart that honors and loves God's word. Perhaps nowhere in the Bible is this more on display than in Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible at 176 verses so plan on spending a little bit more time with this one. Don't worry, there's no hurry! You may want to look through it over several days rather than in just one sitting. Carefully read as much of the chapter as you can and consider these general questions as you go. List some of your observations as you read. As always, take a few minutes and ask God in your own words to teach you and show you the treasure in these pages.

Note: If you are studying as a group, take one week for study on your own and save one meeting for discussion of your observations. Another option is to read the chapter as a group and discuss observations as you go. The second option may take more than one meeting.

Psalm 119

What is the writer's heart toward the things God says? How is it expressed?

What are some of the statements he makes about the VALUE of God's word?

What does the writer say about "meditating on" or thinking about what God says?

What are the specific ways God's word helps His people?

How do the “disobedient” or “wicked” view the things God says?

Does your heart toward God’s word “mirror” the heart of the Psalmist in this chapter?

How would you summarize this chapter in one sentence? What does it tell you about the vitality of God’s word for your life?

MOVING ON...DIGGING IN...

If the Bible is really this valuable for life and for getting to know Jesus more each day and your heart is ready to humbly listen and follow, then the next step is to continue digging in!

As you continue on with these studies, pray and ask God to give you a heart to know and love Him more as the Bible tells you more and more about Him each day. Ask God to increase your love and understanding of Jesus Christ and what he does for unworthy sinners. Remember, the Bible is a message about HIM.

As you grow in the knowledge of Him through His word, both your sin and His solution to it will become more and more obvious to you. You will “run” to Christ more zealously and will turn from sin more swiftly. You will be “filled up to all the fullness of God” and will be able to “walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called. (See Ephesians 3:14-4:7).”

Now it’s time to lower the bucket and draw deeply from God’s refreshing resources found in the Bible. As the next study continues, the goal will be to DIG INTO THE **WORD OF GOD** to know and love THE **GOD OF THE WORD** (Lesson 2).

How would you describe your readiness to continue on the journey?

Additional thoughts, questions, conclusions...

KEY VERSES FOR MEMORY AND MEDITATION:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

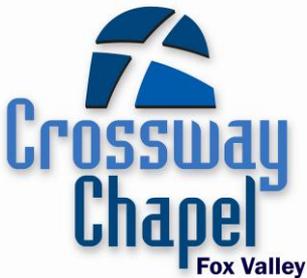
1 Peter 2:2-3

And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:19-21

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!

Psalms 119:11-12



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Serving, loving, and leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

www.crosswayfoxvalley.com - (630) 892-9357