

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Foundation for Faith: The Scriptures Inspired

Foundation 1: WE BELIEVE the Bible is the verbally inspired and only infallible (incapable of being wrong) and authoritative (having authority over beliefs and conduct) written Word of God (2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:21).

The Scriptures of the entire Bible are inspired of God. The Holy Spirit moved the original writers of the Bible to fully record exactly what He wanted them to record—even down to their word choices. In doing this, He did not set aside their intellect, experience, or vocabulary, but powerfully engaged it for His purposes. This explains how there is diversity in the manner that each author wrote, but each text remains equally inspired by God. Regardless of a variety of authors, our Bible is *infallible* and *authoritative*. Because God is perfect, His Word cannot be wrong, and it has the final say over what we believe and how we behave.

And so, we believe that (1) the Scriptures are God’s Word and way of revealing himself to humankind, (2) they are infallible (never wrong), and (3) they are the divinely authoritative guide for our faith, belief, and way of living (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:21).

The Significance of This Foundation: If we don’t agree that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and is therefore authoritative, we have no dependable standard on which to base our lives. Instead of having a guide that is fixed and reliable, everything becomes relative and uncertain. However, since God does not change as do the shifting shadows (James 1:17), we can be certain that His truth also remains steadfast, enduring all time, generations, and cultures.

Question: What truths from God’s Word do you have the most trouble believing or receiving? Why?

Question: What truths from God’s Word have been the most transformative or meaningful in your life? Why?

Activate - Followers of Jesus are meant to do more than just stick to a list of rules. Instead, we’re called to the adventure of growing in a personal relationship with our Savior. As we know from our human relationships, one way of getting to know someone better is by being a good listener. Part of listening to God is reading and meditating on His Word. As you read God’s Word this week, remember to stop and listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

Challenge - God has spoken to us through His written Word, the Bible. He also spoke through His Son Jesus, the Word that became human. God calls us to learn and obey His message to us. The more we study the Scriptures, the more complete our view of God will be and the deeper our relationship with Him will grow.

DAY 1 – GOD’S WORD IS INSPIRED Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

In group time, we explored how the Bible is inspired. Much like a musician breathes into an instrument to produce a melody, God breathed into the biblical authors to produce His Word. He inspired every verse, every story, and every concept.

LISTEN to God through His Word **Question:** What does it mean to you that God’s Word is inspired?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How do these verses reinforce our foundational truth that the Scriptures are inspired?

LIVE God's Word Question: What is one area of your life right now where God's Word can teach, correct, or equip you? Take time to look up what the Bible says about that area.

Day 2 – GOD'S WORD IS PERFECT Read 2 Peter 1:20–21.

In group time, we looked at how the Bible is infallible or perfect. It's incapable of error. One way God's Word confirms its infallibility is through prophecy and fulfillment. Here is just one of hundreds of Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the Bible. In Acts 2:4–6 after Jesus' followers were first baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter reminded the crowd that the prophet Joel had predicted this would happen hundreds of years before. (See Acts 2:14–18.) People were baptized in the Holy Spirit exactly as the Scriptures said—and this prophecy continues to be fulfilled today!

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: Is it significant to you that prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled as proof that the Bible is true and infallible? Why or why not?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How do these verses reinforce our foundational truth that the Scriptures are inspired?

LIVE God's Word Question: The prophets proclaimed God's message as the Holy Spirit moved them. What is the message God wants you to share with someone?

DAY 3 – GOD'S WORD SPEAKS TO US Read Psalms 119:105.

In group time, we looked at how the Bible was written by more than forty writers over about fifteen hundred years, yet its message is remarkably consistent. That's because God inspired what they wrote in order to teach us through His Word. We looked at how the Bible teaches us many things. For example, it:

- *Tells us where we came from (Genesis 2:7);
- *Explains our purpose (Genesis 1:26–28);
- *Encourages us (Hebrews 12:1–3);
- *Teaches us wisdom (Proverbs 9:10); and
- *Describes our ultimate destiny (Revelation 21:26–27);
- *Gives us practical life instructions (Matthew 7:12);
- *Warns us (Hebrews 10:26–31);
- *Equips us for good works (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What is one area in the list above that you would like God to speak to you about? Read that verse or verses and note what it says to you.

LEARN from God's Word Question: How do these verses reinforce our foundational truth that the Scriptures are inspired?

LIVE God's Word Question: As we read God's Word, it will change us. Reflect on how God has used His Word to guide you in the past. What do you need His guidance for now?

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Foundation for Faith: The One True God

Foundation 2: WE BELIEVE there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 14:16–17).

God has revealed himself as having always existed without any outside cause or agent bringing Him into being (Revelation 1:8). He is the Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1) and the One who redeems, saves, and rescues people from sin and its painful consequences (Isaiah 43:11). God has further revealed himself as a single Being (Deuteronomy 6:4), consisting of three interrelated Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22). This concept of one God or Being of three Persons is called the Trinity.

The terms *Trinity* and *Persons* as related to the Godhead are not found in the Scriptures, but they are in harmony with Scripture. Read the passages below for a deeper understanding of this concept.

- There is one God: Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6, 24
- The Father is God: John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6
- The Son (Jesus) is God: John 20:28; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8
- The Holy Spirit is God: Acts 5:3–4; Hebrews 3:7–11
- The Father is eternal: 1 Chronicles 16:36; Malachi 3:6
- The Son is eternal: Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:2, 10–12
- The Holy Spirit is eternal: Job 33:4; Psalms 104:30; Hebrews 9:14
- Three distinct Persons: Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4–6

The Significance of This Foundation

Recognizing God as the one true God is necessary for developing a proper relationship with Him.

Understanding His nature is important for relating to Him in the most appropriate way. It is contrary to the clear statement and meaning of Scripture to speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three gods or as three modes in which the one God has revealed himself. Through the centuries, such misguided teachings have created division and devastation in the Church. Though the concept of a “three in one” Trinity has no parallel in the human world, it is absolutely scriptural and essential to a proper understanding of the multifaceted nature of God.

(Numerous other Scripture references support the nature of the one true God and the relationship between the three Persons, including: Zechariah 14:9; Matthew 1:21–23; 11:25–27; 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 1:1–2, 14, 18, 29, 49; 5:17–30, 32, 37; 8:17–18; 14:16–17; 15:26; 17:11, 21; Acts 2:32–36; Romans 1:1–4, 7; 14:11; 1 Corinthians 1:24; 15:24–28; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:8–9; Hebrews 1:1–13; 7:3; 12:2; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:22; 1 John 1:3–4; 2:22–23; 3:8; 4:1–5, 10, 14; 2 John 3, 9; Revelation 1:13, 17; 4:8–11; 5:6–14; 7:9–10.)

Question: How are you displaying your worship of the one true God in your daily life?

Question: How would you explain your decision to put your faith in God as Savior and Lord to a non-Christian?

Activate It’s not enough to simply acknowledge that there is one true God. Every believer must also choose to submit to Him as the Lord of their life. Some think of this as a one-time decision. But the choice to make God the Leader of your life happens moment by moment. It is made up of numerous life choices and deciding to make them according to what you believe is His will.

Challenge As significant choices and options occur this week, be intentional about trying to allow God to be Lord over your life. If there’s time, pause and pray before deciding. Let your life reflect that He is *your* one true God.

Day 1-There Is One True God Read Deuteronomy 6:4. In our group time, we learned that there is one God revealed in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This can be hard to understand, but the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly present in Scripture. God is three Persons in perfect relationship with one another, sharing the same essence and substance, and completely unified as one God. We do not worship many gods or even three gods, but one true God.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: In John 17:20–23, Jesus prayed that His followers would be as united as He is with the Father. How can the Trinity be a model for how you can be united with other believers?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How does the Deuteronomy passage you read reinforce our foundational truth that there is one true God?

LIVE God's Word Question: If someone is struggling to believe there is only one true God, what would you say to them?

Day 2-God Is Eternal Read Revelation 1:8. The Bible makes it clear that God is eternal; He has always existed (Genesis 21:33; Psalm 90:2; John 17:5). The universe has a beginning and an end, but God doesn't. This can be difficult to comprehend, because as finite humans we have a short lifespan in this world. Not only is God eternal, but He knew the end from the very beginning (Isaiah 46:10). God's eternal nature is a certainty upon which we can build our faith.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: How does God's eternal nature and knowledge give you confidence to trust His promises?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How do these verses reinforce our foundational truth that there is one true God?

LIVE God's Word Question: What are some areas of your life where you need to trust that God has an eternal plan? How can you demonstrate your trust in God in those areas today?

Day 3-God Is the Exclusive Savior of Humanity Read John 3:16; 14:6. Because there is only one true God, the only way for salvation is the path that He made available. Salvation only comes through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5). God paid a high price to offer us the gift of salvation through Jesus' work on the Cross, making Jesus the only option we have for eternal life.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What are some ways you can express your gratitude to Jesus for the price He paid for your salvation?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How do these verses reinforce our foundational truth that there is one true God?

LIVE God's Word Question: Who is someone in your life who needs to hear about God's offer of salvation in Christ Jesus? How could you share the good news with that person?

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Foundation for Faith: The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

Foundation 3: WE BELIEVE in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, in His personal future return to the earth in power and glory to rule a thousand years (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1; Philippians 2:9–11).

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has always existed. He is without beginning or end (Revelation 1:8). In order to complete His earthly sacrificial mission, He became human by being born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31, 35). He lived a perfect life, absolutely without sin (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). While on earth, Jesus worked many miracles through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:22; 10:38). In order to restore fallen humankind, He died on the Cross to pay for sins (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He was raised from the dead by the supernatural power of God (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:4). Since His resurrection, Jesus has been exalted (honored), and is seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33; Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 1:3). Jesus claimed to be deity (Mark 14:61–63) and was proclaimed as deity (John 20:28).

The Significance of This Foundation The supernatural birth of Jesus, His sinless life, and the miracles He performed all give proof that He is the divine Son of God. He came to earth in human form and gave himself as the ultimate Sacrifice for our sins. No death of a natural human could provide forgiveness of sin and offer salvation for all humanity.

Knowing that Jesus came from God, actually is God, and returned to God's presence after His death and resurrection assures us that our salvation and restored relationship with God is not only logical, but a reality.

Question: Do you have doubts about Jesus being God? If so, how are you dealing with those doubts?

Question: In what areas of your life are you holding back from fully trusting in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Question: Is Jesus just a teacher or good moral example to you, or have you made Jesus the Lord of your life? (If you need to take that step, ask your group leader or another believer to pray with you.)

Activate -Followers of Jesus are not meant to simply learn and follow a list of rules. Instead, we're called to the adventure of developing a personal relationship with our Savior. From our human relationships, we understand that one way of getting to know a person is by being a good listener. Part of listening to God is reading and meditating on His Word. Make a daily practice of spending time in His Word.

Challenge-If we believe John 3:16 is true, then our life and actions ought to reflect that belief. Everyone around us needs to know the solution to the terrible problem of sin—Jesus is the only answer.

This week, look for an opportunity to have a significant conversation with a friend, family member, or coworker about Jesus, and His claim to be Lord. Sharing our faith is an important part of living out our beliefs. It becomes easier and more natural every time we share. Your story is a beautiful example to those around you. Many would love to hear what Jesus is doing in your life.

Day 1—God the Son Became Human Read [Hebrews 4:14–16](#). In group time, we looked at how God the Son became fully human. Hebrews tells us that Jesus is our High Priest. He is next to God the Father, speaking on our behalf. Jesus was fully human, and He sympathizes with our weaknesses and identifies with us in our struggles. He knows what it is like to experience the challenges of life, and He cares about our needs.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What does it mean to you that God the Son became human?

LEARN from God’s Word Question: How do these verses reinforce our foundational truth of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ?

LIVE God’s Word Question: Because Jesus understands our feelings and struggles, how does that give you confidence as you pray?

Day 2— God the Son Conquered Death Read [Romans 8:11](#). In group time, we discussed the importance of the resurrection to the Christian faith. Jesus did not remain dead. Paul wrote that Christ’s resurrection was done by the power of the Holy Spirit—the same Spirit dwelling within every believer! Christ’s resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit is proof that when we die, we will also be raised to eternal life.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What role did God the Holy Spirit have in the resurrection of God the Son?

LEARN from God’s Word Question: How does this verse reinforce our foundational truth of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ?

LIVE God’s Word Question: Who in your life needs to hear about the good news of Jesus’ resurrection? How could you share this with them?

Day 3— Choose God the Son as Your Lord and God Read [John 20:26–29](#). When Thomas heard the news about Jesus’ resurrection, he doubted what his friends had told him. The news that a friend had returned from the dead would have certainly been hard to believe. Some Christians today still struggle with doubts about the extraordinary claims of Jesus. Notice that Jesus didn’t rebuke Thomas, but met him in his doubts and offered him evidence. When we struggle with questions about our faith, Jesus doesn’t lose patience with us. He meets our doubts and questions with compassion.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: Why did Thomas have doubts about the resurrection?

LEARN from God’s Word Question: How do these verses reinforce our foundational truth of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ?

LIVE God’s Word Question: What doubts about Jesus do you struggle with? Ask Jesus to meet you in your doubt and give you reassurance.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Foundation for Faith: The Fall of Man

Foundation 4: WE BELIEVE man and woman were created good and upright in the image of God. However, sin entered the world by their voluntary disobedience leading to humankind's separation from God both physically and spiritually (Genesis 1:26–27; Romans 5:12–19).

God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.” From the beginning, humans were patterned after God’s goodness. However, by voluntary transgression, those humans fell and incurred—for all generations—both physical death and spiritual death, which is separation from God. Jesus’ ministry on earth demonstrated His desire for people to repent and the importance of turning from our sinful way of thinking.

The Significance of This Foundation

All of us sin because we are sinners. As a result of Adam and Eve’s sin, we are born with a sin nature (Psalm 51:5). Because of our sin, we are destined to physical and spiritual death (Romans 5:12). For this reason, we all must be born again (John 3:7), receiving what God’s Son Jesus did on the Cross for us. The only way to receive salvation from our sin is through His death (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:2). Some reject this foundational truth and believe that people can be good enough to deserve or earn heaven on their own merits. Scripture reveals that is far from the truth. The actual truth is, all humans need salvation and no one can experience salvation except through Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Question: Do you have sin in your life that is currently separating you from God? If so, what do you think will be the impact of that sin—on yourself and others?

Question: Are you willing to make things right between you and God? Why or why not?

Activate - Followers of Jesus are not meant to simply memorize and follow a list of rules. Instead, we’re called to the adventure of developing a personal relationship with our Savior. From our human relationships, we know one way of getting to know a person is by being a good listener.

Challenge - In your personal devotions and prayer time this week, try to incorporate additional listening time. During that time, be open to areas where God may want to bring correction to your life. Even if you’re not sinning, there are always adjustments to be made that lead to being a better follower of Jesus.

Day 1—Adam and Eve Chose Sin Read Genesis 3:6–13. Adam and Eve knew God’s commands, but they made a willing choice to disobey Him. When Eve sinned, her first instinct was to encourage Adam to join her in her rebellion against God. Sin not only affects us, but also those around us who can get drawn into our sins. Sin damages people’s relationships with God and with others.

***LISTEN to God through His Word* Question:** What effects of sin do you see in these verses?

***LEARN from God’s Word* Question:** How could a person’s sin affect others?

LIVE God's Word Question: What results has sin had in your own life?

Day 2— Sin Brought Separation Read Genesis 3:22–24; Romans 3:23. Adam and Eve's sin resulted in a distance between people and God that didn't exist before. It also hurt people's relationships with each other. Fear and shame replaced perfect love. Isolation replaced perfect relationships. Life was replaced by eventual death. Rather than taking responsibility and repenting, Adam and Eve blamed each other, the serpent, and even God. Sin's consequences are severe, and continue to impact people today.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: How did Adam and Eve's sin affect their relationships with God and each other?

LEARN from God's Word Question: Why do you think Adam and Eve chose to blame others rather than repent of their sin? Do you think anything might have been different if they had?

LIVE God's Word Question: What effects does sin have in the world today?

Day 3— Sin Is Overcome through Jesus Read Genesis 3:14–15; Romans 5:8. Even though Adam and Eve rejected Him, God had a plan to save them. God's plan would cost Him greatly, but He loved Adam and Eve so much that He was determined to undo the results of their rebellion and reestablish right relationships with His children. Even as God pronounced judgment, He promised that one of Eve's descendants would reverse the effects of sin. That promise is found in the prophetic words of verse 15. This promise would be fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What evidence do you see in these verses that God loves His children?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How did God offer Adam and Eve hope for the future?

LIVE God's Word Question: What evidence of God's love do you see in your life?

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Foundation for Faith: The Salvation of Man

Foundation 5: WE BELIEVE the only means of being cleansed from sin is through the precious blood of Christ. We receive access to that by having faith in Jesus, repentance, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit for personal salvation ([Luke 24:47](#); [John 14:6](#); [Romans 8:16](#); [Titus 3:5](#)).

Salvation is deliverance from spiritual death and enslavement by sin in this life and the promise of eternal life in the next. God provides salvation for all who believe and accept His free offer of forgiveness. Our only hope of redemption from our fallen sinful state is through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son—blood that was shed as Jesus died on the Cross (an account recounted by four of His contemporaries: Matthew [chapter [27](#)], Mark [chapter [15](#)], Luke [chapter [23](#)], and John [chapter [19](#)]).

In response to placing faith in God and accepting His freely given salvation, a person experiences the washing of regeneration (or spiritual rebirth), the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, and is declared righteous (right with God). *Regeneration*, *renewal*, and *justification* (justified, or made right with God) are words describing what happens at salvation. At the moment of salvation, a person becomes heir to God's promised hope of eternal or everlasting life ([Luke 24:47](#); [John 3:3](#); [Romans 10:13–15](#); [Ephesians 2:8](#); [Titus 2:11](#); [3:5–7](#)).

The Significance of This Foundation The death and resurrection of Jesus guaranteed our salvation. Jesus' life was the perfect sacrifice ([Hebrews 4:15](#))—and only sacrifice ([1 John 2:2](#))—to bring about this salvation. He was sent to provide a way for us to inherit eternal life. This eternal life can come only through Jesus ([John 14:6](#)), so all who believe in Him will gain eternal life ([John 3:15–16](#)). There is no other way for us to be saved ([Acts 4:12](#)). As a result, we can be confident that the one true God has made a way for our eternal salvation.

Question: Are you sure of your salvation? If not, what's standing in the way of you turning to Jesus for salvation today?

Question: What's been the most significant change in your life after receiving Jesus' gift of salvation?

Question: What sacrifices might you need to make in response to the sacrifice Jesus made for you?

Activate -The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross must be more than just a moving story to us. His sacrifice requires something of all who believe. You and I don't deserve to be alive and filled with hope for eternity, but we are. And that must change how we live.

Challenge - In light of Jesus' sacrifice, what is one thing He is asking you to sacrifice? You may need to give up a bad habit, end an unhealthy relationship, or give a gift to your church or a ministry. Identify one sacrifice you can make this week—and make it. Don't do this to attempt to earn God's love or even to prove your love for God. Do it because God's love is freely yours. Let your worshipful response be one of sacrifice.

Day 1—Jesus Was the Sinless Sacrifice Read [John 19:4-6](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [Titus 3:5](#). In group time, we talked about how Jesus died for our sins, even though He was not guilty of any sin himself. Jesus was the only Person who ever died that did not deserve death. This is because sin leads to death ([Romans 6:23](#)) and every human, except Jesus, has sinned ([Romans 3:23](#)). Even the Roman governor Pilate declared that Jesus was

innocent. But because He was innocent, He was able to take the penalty for sin and become the sinless sacrifice for our sins.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: Why is it important that Jesus was not guilty of any sin?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How did Jesus' death benefit all of humanity?

LIVE God's Word Question: How can you show gratitude for Jesus' selfless sacrifice for your sins?

Day 2— Jesus Was the Final Sacrifice Read Hebrews 10:10–13; John 14:6. In group time, we discussed how Jesus finished the work needed to offer salvation with His death on the Cross. In the Old Testament, priests constantly offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. But because Jesus was the perfect sacrifice, His death provided once for all time everything necessary to provide salvation from sin. Our forgiveness from sin is not based on what we do, but what He has already done. He is the only path to salvation and eternity in heaven.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: How was Jesus' sacrifice different from the Old Testament sacrifices?

LEARN from God's Word Question: Why is Jesus the only way that people can be saved?

LIVE God's Word Question: How does Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice give you assurance of your salvation?

Day 3— Jesus Conquered Death Read 1 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Peter 1:3–5. The story of Jesus does not end with His death on the Cross. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof of His identity and power. When Christians remember the empty tomb, their response should be offering praise to God for the amazing gift He gave. Jesus' resurrection provides assurance to His followers that one day we will also be raised from the dead to be with Him forever.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What did Jesus' resurrection prove?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How can we be confident that Jesus rose from the dead?

LIVE God's Word Question: What hope does Jesus' resurrection provide for His followers?

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Foundation for Faith: The Ordinances of the Church

Foundation 6: WE BELIEVE that the Bible directs all believers to participate in water baptism by immersion and in Holy Communion (Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 11:26).

The ordinance of baptism by immersion in water (not sprinkling) is commanded in the Scriptures (Mark 16:16). All who repent and believe on Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord are to be so baptized. This act of baptism symbolically declares to everyone that the old sinful nature and lifestyle of the baptized believer died with Christ at salvation. A new spiritual being has been raised with Christ through His resurrection to live a new life (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47–48; Romans 6:4).

The Lord's Supper or Communion, consisting of bread and the fruit of the vine (grape juice), is a memorial of Christ's suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26). In eating and drinking the symbols of Christ's suffering and death, the believer expresses their awareness that through salvation they have been made right with God and share the divine nature of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4). The ordinance also looks forward to Christ's second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26) as a reminder to proclaim the Lord's death "until he comes!"

The Significance of This Foundation Water baptism and Communion are not simply religious customs. Water baptism embodies the central message of the Christian faith. It's a one-time event in which the new believer announces publicly that they are now a child of God who has identified with Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection. Communion embodies the central message of the Christian faith. The Early Church celebrated Communion often (Acts 2:42–46). It reminds us of our free salvation through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and should be observed often throughout our life.

Question: How would you explain the importance of water baptism to someone else?

Question : Carefully examine your heart. Do you know of any sin you need to confess to God before you take Communion the next time?

Activate - Have you been baptized in water? If you're a Christian, then what are you waiting for? Water baptism is an important next step after salvation. It's an act of obedience to God. It's spiritually significant and a public declaration of your new life in Christ.

When was the last time you shared Communion? While Communion is something you typically participate in at church, you don't have to wait for your pastor to determine the time and frequency of this act of worship. You can also take Communion as often as you like with other believers and remember together Jesus' amazing gift.

Challenge - If you're a Christian who has never been baptized in water, talk to a Christian friend, pastor, or church leader about it as the next step on your faith journey. It will be a special moment for you and for your church family!

If you have been baptized in water, find a time to celebrate Communion with a small group of believers. This could be as small as a few friends or family members. Use bread or crackers as the symbol of Jesus' body. Use grape juice as the symbol of His blood. After you have gathered these elements, read 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 before taking Communion, and then spend some time in prayer together.

Day 1—An Outward Symbol of an Inward Change Read Matthew 28:19; Acts 16:13–15. In our group time we looked at Lydia's conversion to Christianity. God worked on Lydia's heart while Paul preached the gospel, and Lydia responded by believing Paul's message. In the New Testament church, when people accepted Christ,

they were baptized in water. Salvation always came first. Water baptism is the outward proclamation to the world of what God did internally. Like rings at a wedding, water baptism is an outward sign of the commitment Christians have made to follow Jesus.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What connection does Jesus make between becoming a disciple, one of His followers, and being baptized in water?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How would you put in your own words the relationship between water baptism and being saved?

LIVE God's Word Question: How would you explain to a friend the importance of being baptized in water?

Day 2— A Symbol of Our Union with Christ Read Romans 6:3–8. We discovered how water baptism connects believers to Jesus' death and resurrection. Baptism by immersion in water is a terrific illustration of the work Jesus Christ does in our heart at salvation. Our sinful old self dies and is buried with Christ, and then God gives each believer a new life by the power of His Spirit. This also points believers toward their future resurrection from the dead.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: How does baptism by immersion illustrate the work Jesus does in a believer's heart?

LEARN from God's Word Question: What promise of ultimate hope for Christians is reflected in water baptism?

LIVE God's Word Question: How can your new life in Christ be demonstrated to others this week?

Day 3— Communion Focuses Our Heart on Jesus Read 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. We connected communion with the Jewish celebration of Passover—the remembrance of God's miraculous salvation of the children of Israel from slavery. Communion reminds believers of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross and the price He paid to defeat sin and death. During Communion, each believer should examine their heart for sin and for issues that might separate them from other believers. Finally, Communion also looks forward to the day when Jesus returns, and all believers gather with Him for a celebratory meal (Revelation 19:6–9).

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: How do the two elements of Communion remind us of Jesus' death?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How does Communion celebrate the unity of believers with each other and with Christ?

LIVE God's Word Question: Why is a regular reminder of Jesus' sacrifice valuable to your daily walk with Him?

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Foundation for Faith: The Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Initial Physical Evidence

Foundation 7: WE BELIEVE that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is given to believers who ask for it. This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of new birth. Spirit baptism gives believers power to live and serve God and gifts to fulfill the mission of the Church. With the baptism in the Holy Spirit comes experiences such as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit, a deepened reverence for God, an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work, and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8; 2:4).

Foundation 8: WE BELIEVE that the first sign a believer has been baptized in the Holy Spirit is that he or she has spoken in a language that was not learned and was given by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:4–10, 28).

The Significance of These Foundations Embracing the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a major focus of the Pentecostal movement. Jesus felt it necessary to tell His disciples that His going away and giving them the Holy Spirit was good. The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, empowers us to do the works of Jesus. We shouldn't think of the baptism in Holy Spirit as some sort of merit badge or reward. Rather, we should understand how the Holy Spirit enables us to live on earth, as we share the good news of Jesus with a hurting world. Just as the disciples had much to learn about Jesus during His time on earth, we have much to learn about the Holy Spirit.

We should also remember that speaking in tongues is not the destination; rather, tongues are the first sign that we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. God gave us a sign as security in knowing that we are baptized, and we can now focus on His mission and minister in the power of the Spirit.

Question: If you've not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit, what is preventing you from seeking this gift?

Question: If you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, how often do you pray in tongues or feel the Spirit's guidance in your life? Are these areas in your life that God may want to increase?

Question: Who is a Christian you know who may need to hear that Spirit baptism is for them regardless of their faith background?

Activate - Aim to open your life to every aspect of the Holy Spirit. The key is to keep seeking all God has for you. As He does wonderful things in your life, don't let that lead you to comparing yourself with others. We shouldn't think any less of those who have not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Even Jesus' disciples had to wait to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. We also should never think that being baptized in the Holy Spirit makes us better than any other believer. The Holy Spirit simply makes us far better than we would've been without Him.

Challenge - Take time this week to seek the Holy Spirit and all that He has for you. If you're not baptized in the Holy Spirit, ask (again) for God to fill you. If you have been baptized, take time to pray in your prayer language. Allow the Holy Spirit to pray through you for what's on His heart.

Day 1—The Promise of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit Read Acts 1:4–5, 8. Jesus commanded His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and not begin sharing the gospel widely until they received the Spirit's baptism. He knew that the baptism in the Holy Spirit would equip them to accomplish the mission He had assigned. As a result, the Spirit gave the disciples boldness to preach about Jesus in spite of overwhelming persecution. For believers today, the baptism in the Holy Spirit provides the same power for witnessing.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What effects did Jesus say the Spirit's baptism would have on the disciples?

LEARN from God's Word Question: Why did Jesus think that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was important?

LIVE God's Word Question: How can the Holy Spirit give you power to share the gospel with others?

Day 2—The Provision of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit Read Acts 2:38–39. Everyone who believes in Jesus should seek the gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In these verses, Peter made it clear that God's gift of the Holy Spirit was not limited to Jews, but to people of all races and all generations. God has no favorites. He makes His good gifts available to all His children.

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: What qualifications does Peter list in Acts 2:38 for someone to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

LEARN from God's Word Question: Do you think some people feel as if their background disqualifies them from being baptized in the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

LIVE God's Word Question: What advice would you give someone who is curious about the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Day 3—The Purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit Read Galatians 5:22–23. The Holy Spirit not only gives us power to share our faith, but He also helps us to become more like Jesus. These verses are just a few of the qualities the Holy Spirit can help to grow in your life. If you have extra time, look at what God's Word says about these other ways the Holy Spirit helps us:

- We are filled with power. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8)
- We live a life of overflowing fullness of the Spirit. (John 7:37–39)
- We experience a deepened reverence for God. (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28)
- We have an intensified dedication to God and His work. (Acts 2:42; 4:8–10)
- We have a more active love for Jesus, for His Word, and for the lost. (Matthew 28:18–20)
- We can possess a supernatural boldness to share God's Word. (Acts 4:31)
- We live a life of thanks and deeper concern for others. (Ephesians 5:18–21)
- We minister in the gifts of the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:4–11).

LISTEN to God through His Word Question: Which of these ways the Holy Spirit helps us is easiest for you? Which is the most difficult?

LEARN from God's Word Question: How would you summarize why the baptism in the Holy Spirit is so important for believers?

LIVE God's Word Question: How has the baptism in the Holy Spirit affected your life?