



This is an excerpt from *Foundations*, a collection of Bible study guides designed for new believers and those who wish to learn the basics of the Bible. This PDF includes the first chapter, *Salvation*. You are free to make and distribute printed and/or digital copies of this PDF, provided you do not edit it in any way.

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Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

FOREWORD

Foundations: Bible Truths for Christian Growth was initially used at Grace Church of Mentor and its church-planting ministries. The study was well-received and proved to be helpful for both infant and mature believers. The lessons eventually attracted a wider audience, prompting us to publish them in their present form.

This study bears the fingerprints of the entire staff of Grace Church and countless others who made recommendations and corrections that were extremely helpful. The combined pastoral staff agreed on the final content. It was our aim to produce a discipleship series that is biblically astute and theologically accurate, yet easily understood. We recognize that the studies will be beneficial only to the extent that they prompt believers to study and apply God's inspired and sufficient Word (2 Timothy 3:16).

Ours is a day in which an increasing number of professing Christians are biblically illiterate. We pray that the Lord will use this series as one step in alleviating that problem. It is our hope for individuals that these studies will help you to become grounded in the basic, life-changing truths of Scripture. It is our hope for churches that this study will be a useful tool in your discipleship ministries. For us, they have especially filled a void in our efforts to follow up with new converts, enabling us to be as aggressive and effective in our edification as in our evangelism.

May the Lord be magnified!

BASICS FOR THIS STUDY

The Bible is one large book broken down into two sections – the Old Testament, before Christ came to earth; and the New Testament, Christ's life and work after He came to earth.

The Bible is comprised of several books usually named for the author (John), the recipients (Galatians), or type of Scripture included (Psalms or Revelation).

When referring to a Bible passage, we list the small book title, the chapter number, then the verse number. This is the reference to the verse. For example, John 1:1 is the book of John, chapter one, and verse one. Some short books do not have chapters but instead would list only a verse like Jude 24 (book of Jude, verse 24). Likewise, the study may refer to a full chapter like John 1.

Some books may have similar names, like John and 1 John or 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Make sure that you find the right book noted in your study. You will have difficulty finding the answers otherwise!

When studying Scripture, you may see a reference to only a portion of a verse, such as 1 John 2:1a. This is the book of 1 John (not John), chapter two, verse one, and only the first section up to a major punctuation mark (like a period, colon, or semicolon). The small letter “b” refers to the second section, “c” the third, etc.

The content of the *Foundations* book is based on the New American Standard version of the Bible. Any other version may be used; however, the specific words and blanks from Scripture may be different than another version.

As with any Bible study, partnering together with another Christian (preferably one who has more experience studying the Bible) helps immensely! If you have no spiritual mentor, ask a pastor to work with you in this study. If you cannot work with another person, please contact Grace Church of Mentor with any questions that you may have.

God's Gift to You

1

SALVATION

Do you know that the Bible has a lot to say about you? It does! Although it doesn't mention you by name, it does have something to say about every member of the human race, including you. It contains some good news, some bad news, and some great news. Let's start with the good.



SCRIPTURE is unlike any other book. It is not primarily a history book. Nor is it a rulebook. It is far more than a “roadmap” for life. Scripture is first and foremost the self-revelation of God. It is God’s autobiography – His communication to mankind about Himself. Therefore, it is appropriate to begin this series of Bible studies with several foundational truths about God:

- **God is eternal.** He is without start or end (Psalm 90:2).
- **God is absolutely holy.** He is set apart from everything that exists; there is no other like Him (Isaiah 6:3).

- **God is completely sinless.** He cannot allow sin in His presence (Habakkuk 1:13).
- **God is all-powerful (Psalm 86:10).**
- **Thankfully, God is also good (Psalm 86:5).**
- **God is absolutely just.** Everything He does is right (Psalm 145:17)
- **God is love (1 John 4:8).**

Scripture assumes God's existence and reveals Him to be the Creator of everything that exists. Acknowledging God as the Creator of all is essential to everything else Scripture teaches. Read **Genesis 1:1**. This is the first verse of the Bible. What does it say? _____

According to **Genesis 1:27**, from where did you come? _____

Although it is commonly taught today that mankind is the result of countless years of evolution, Scripture teaches clearly and repeatedly that "all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (**John 1:3**).

Psalm 19:1 tells us that the heavens and all of creation "are telling of the glory of God." **Romans 1:20** concurs, saying that creation teaches two key lessons about God: that He exists and that He is powerful. It concludes by saying that those who reject God and His creative power are "without _____."

The Bible's teaching that you are created by God is not intended merely to solve the question of mankind's origin. Rather, it has two implications that are very great for you personally:

1. Because God made you, you are accountable to Him.

If you were merely the product of chance as evolution teaches, you would be your own master. You would be answerable to no one. But because you are a creature, you must give an account of your life to your Creator. The Bible records that time of judgment in **Revelation 20:11-15** and refers to it as the Great White Throne. According to verse 12, both “the great and the small” will appear before God to be judged. Who does that indicate will give answer to God?

What does **Hebrews 9:27** say to reinforce this fact? _____

2. Because God made you, He owns you.

Colossians 1:16 again teaches that “by Him (Christ) all things were created, both in the heavens and the earth.” It concludes by saying that “all things have been created _____ him and _____ him.”

Read **Revelation 4:11**, a record of the worship of Christ in heaven. Why is God worthy to receive worship – “glory and honor and power”? _____

From this verse, why do you think God created you? _____

God wants to have fellowship with you and know you. Read the Bible’s account of creation in **Genesis 1-3**. As far back as the Garden of Eden, God’s pleasure was to walk and talk with His creatures

(**Genesis 3:8**). Just as God was with Adam and Eve in the garden, He wants you to be with Him in Heaven forever! That’s



Principle: Because God created you, you will one day appear before Him as your Judge.

THE CHIEF END OF MAN

The Shorter Westminster Catechism is a statement of Bible doctrine that has been especially useful for the instruction of new believers since the 17th century. It asks students the purpose of God in creation: “What is the chief end of man?” The pupils respond with an answer that is biblically accurate and personally challenging: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” Not only did God make you, but He made you for Himself!

the good news.

Sadly, Adam and Eve broke their fellowship with God when they sinned (**Genesis 3:6**). Because of their sin, every person is now born a sinner (**Romans 5:12; Psalm 51:5**). That’s the bad news.

YOU AND SIN

You are not only a sinner by birth – you are a sinner by choice.

Explain **Romans 3:10-11** in your own words. _____

Now read **Romans 3:23**. How many people have sinned? ____



Principle: God loves you and created you to glorify Him.

1 John 3:4 defines sin as breaking God’s law. What is God’s law? _____

Give some examples of sin from **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**. _____

It is popular today to say that man is basically good, yet Scripture teaches that every man, woman and child is a sinner. How does **Jeremiah 17:9** describe the heart? _____

Isaiah 53:6 summarizes the sinfulness of all people as intentional and determined rebellion against God. Like sheep, we have each “gone astray” from God and chosen our “own way” rather than His way.



Principle: You are a sinner both by birth and by choice.

The fact that you’ve sinned is bad news, but it gets worse. Read the following verses and explain what they teach about the effects of sin:

Isaiah 59:2 _____

Revelation 21:27 (this verse is talking about heaven)

Romans 6:23 is a very important verse regarding you and your sin. It says that “the wages of sin is death.” What is a wage? _____

According to this verse, because you sin, what do you deserve? _____

The Bible speaks of two deaths. The first is physical death. God promised Adam and Eve that if they sinned, they would “surely die” (**Genesis 2:17**). However, there is a far worse death than physical death, and that is spiritual death. Because of Adam and Eve’s sin, they were immediately

dead spiritually and would eventually die physically (see **Ephesians 2:1**).

Before salvation, a person is spiritually dead – even though they are physically alive. When an unbeliever dies physically, he is condemned permanently. How does the Bible describe permanent, eternal condemnation in **Revelation 20:14-15** and **21:8**? _____

The truth of eternal damnation is hard for most people to swallow, but the Bible teaches that everyone who has sinned deserves to be punished for that sin forever in the lake of fire. Many people think that hell and the lake of fire are just for men like Hitler or Charles Manson. But the Bible says that hell is not just for murderers; it is for sinners! The fact is, because you sin, you deserve to be punished for eternity in the lake of fire. That is not just bad news – it is terrible.

Many people try to compensate for their sin by doing good works. They reason that if they do more good things than bad, they'll go to heaven. The problem is that Scripture teaches that no one can earn heaven. **Romans 6:23**

HELL IS TEMPORARY, BUT...

Revelation 20:14 says that hell will one day be cast into the lake of fire. Hell is a terrible but temporary place of judgment where sinners await the Great White Throne. It could be compared to a county jail where criminals await trial. However, following the trial of sinners at the Great White Throne, they will be cast with hell into the lake of fire – a place of eternal torment. Those who go to hell at their death will be punished in the lake of fire for eternity.



Principle: Sin separates you from God and makes you deserving of the lake of fire.

teaches that eternal life (with God in heaven) is a “gift.” Can you earn a gift? _____

Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**.

The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace (undeserved kindness) through faith (trust in God). What does verse 9 say? What does it mean?

What are some things that people do to try to earn heaven?

So far the news has been very bad. We all have sinned. Because of that sin, we deserve judgment. Further, there is nothing we can do to earn salvation. If that were all that Scripture said, it would be a tragic book.

Thankfully, it goes on. The Bible says that God made a way for you and all other sinners to avoid the lake of fire. You deserve hell, but you don’t have to go there. That’s the great news!

YOU AND JESUS

The Bible has much to say about who Jesus is:

- **He is eternal (John 1:1-2).**
- **He is God (John 1:1).**
- **He is the _____ (John 1:3).**
- **He became “flesh” (John 1:14).** What do you think that means? _____

- **He is absolutely sinless (Hebrews 4:15).**

Romans 5:8 teaches something else about Jesus. It says that He loves us, His creatures. How did He demonstrate His love for us? _____

Most people know that Jesus died, but very few understand why He died. **1 Peter 3:18** answers that question:

It says that “Christ died for sins once.” When did He do that? _____

Since Scripture teaches that Jesus never sinned, for whose sins did He die? _____

1 Peter 3:18 teaches that Christ died, “the just for the unjust.” Who is the “just” (righteous) One? _____
Who are the “unjust” (unrighteous) ones? _____

Don't miss this important point: Jesus (the Righteous One) died for you (the unrighteous one). He was your substitute. He paid the penalty that you deserve! Remember **Romans 6:23**. Because of sin, you deserve death. Jesus paid that penalty by dying on the cross! Instead of you paying for your sins in the lake of fire, Jesus suffered death one time on Calvary. He paid for your sins!

Now look back at **1 Peter 3:18**. “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that he might _____.”

What great news! Jesus died to pay for your sins so that you can avoid hell and enjoy heaven with Him!

While Christ's death is vital for our sins to be paid, Christ's resurrection from the dead is equally vital for our salvation. **1 Corinthians 15** shows the importance of Jesus's resurrection in two ways. First, the good news of salvation – the Gospel – must include the resurrection. In

1 Corinthians 15:1-7, Paul outlined the gospel message to the Corinthians. Jesus died for their sins (verse 3), but Jesus also was buried and rose again on the third day (verse 4). To verify the resurrection account, Paul listed several witnesses in verses 4-7 who saw Jesus after he raised from the dead. Who were some of them? _____

Not only is the resurrection an essential part of the Gospel message, it is also essential to a Christian's daily faith.

GUILTY YET FREE

Suppose that two brothers immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. The older began his new life by getting a job and a house. The younger, however, was determined to enjoy his new freedom. He spent his days and nights drinking and gambling. One fateful night, he began fighting with a man who had accused him of cheating. In his drunken state, the younger brother drew a knife and murdered the man. He knew that if he were caught he would be hung. He fled to his brother's home.

The police began to search from house to house, looking for the murderer. As the older brother entered his home, he found a pile of blood-stained clothes. Immediately he knew what his brother had done. A few moments later, the police approached the home and found the older brother wearing the bloody clothes. Throughout his questioning and trial, he remained silent. He eventually died for a crime he didn't commit, motivated by love for his brother. He died as a substitute, the innocent for the guilty.

This story is a very small picture of the death which Christ suffered for you. Though innocent, Christ died for the sins of others. Though guilty, the sinner may be free, ransomed by his Substitute's blood.

In the same chapter, Paul confronts those who denied the resurrection by writing that “if Christ had not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and _____ is in vain” (verse 14). Even further, if Jesus were still dead, then “your faith is _____; you are still in your sins” (verse 17).

Our faith is not worthless, because Jesus is alive! While we celebrate the resurrection at Easter, every day should be a celebration of his life. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus gives the victory over the power of sin and death!

YOU AND SALVATION The Bible teaches that you will live somewhere forever – either in heaven or the lake of fire. Jesus died to allow you to go to heaven. Although people teach that there are many ways to heaven, the Bible teaches that there is only one way. Read **John 14:6** to find out what it is. _____

Jesus is offering a tremendous gift: freedom from hell and eternity in heaven. Sadly, many people reject Jesus and His offer of salvation. Instead of rejecting Christ, **John 1:12** instructs you to “receive” Him. The key question is this: How can you receive Jesus Christ and His gift of salvation? There are two simultaneous aspects to receiving Christ:

1. You must repent of your sins.

You have offended God by sinning. You now need to turn from that sin and to God – that is what Scripture calls repentance. It is not cleaning up or reforming yourself. Remember, you cannot earn heaven. Instead, repentance is changing your mind about God and sin. It is desiring God instead of your sin. C. S. Lewis puts it this way:

“Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. ...This process of surrender... is what Christians call repentance.”¹

What does **Acts 3:19** require for your sins to be forgiven?

1 Thessalonians 1:9 defines repentance and conversion as turning “from _____ to serve a _____ and _____.”

Indeed, the very move toward Christ demands a move away from sin and idols. Christ replaces your way. He will not be merely added to it.

According to **Matthew 1:21**, from what does Jesus save you? _____

There are some people who believe they are forgiven, yet have never turned from sin. They believe that they have the best of both worlds: they can cling to their sin and refuse to let it go, then

they can go to heaven. However, according to **Matthew 1:21**, Christ saves His people from sin, not just hell. Anyone who has not repented of his or her sin has not been saved! That is not to say that a saved man will not struggle with sin. However, a saved man has changed his mind about sin. He may struggle with it, but he won't relish it.



Principle: Your only hope of salvation is to repent of your sins and trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

Isaiah 55:7 gives a clear picture of repentance. Explain it in your own words. _____

If you have not yet turned from your wicked way, you have not yet been saved!

2. You must trust in Jesus Christ alone.

John 3:16 is probably the most well-known verse of the Bible. It teaches that you must believe in Jesus. That means more than just acknowledging that He lived and died. The word “believe” means to be convinced, to trust or to place your faith in someone. You must realize that Jesus is your only hope of going to heaven and place your faith completely in Him. Not Jesus and good works, not Jesus and baptism, not Jesus and church – Jesus alone.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Faith and repentance cannot be separated. Genuine faith includes repentance, and genuine repentance includes faith. Think of it this way:

Your Way ← God's Way

Isaiah 55:7 pictures you as a rebel who insists on going your own way, the exact opposite of God's way. It then instructs you to “forsake” your way (repentance) and “return” to the Lord (faith).

Your Way → God's Way

In order to be saved, you must turn to God and from sin. If you have not turned from your own way, you have not turned to Christ.

In **Acts 16:30**, a sinful man asks the Apostle Paul and Silas a vital question: “What must I do to be saved?” What was their simple answer in **Acts 16:31**? _____

Read **John 3:36**. Notice that the Bible divides all of humanity into two groups – there is no middle ground. How do the two groups respond to Christ? _____

What happens to each of these groups? _____

You obviously don’t want to be the object of God’s wrath. What do **Romans 10:9 and 13** require of you to be saved? _____

The only way to “call on the name of the Lord” is to speak to Him in prayer. According to **1 John 5:13**, those who have asked Jesus Christ to be their Savior know that they have eternal life. Do you have that assurance? If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, you can do it now, right where you are.

In a simple prayer, acknowledge to God that you are a sinner. Tell Him of your desire to turn from that sin, and ask for His forgiveness. Thank Him for sending Jesus to die for your sins, and ask Jesus to be your personal Savior and to give you the gift of eternal life.

Once you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, it is essential that you mature in your relationship with Christ. Here are some key steps in that direction:

- 1. Although you are a Christian, you will still struggle with sin.** Sin will not remove you from God’s family, but it will remove you from fellowship with God. Fellowship must be restored by confessing sin directly to God as

soon as you are aware of it. This matter will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 3, so keep going!

2. **Begin reading your Bible.** Start with the book of John. Make notes of who Jesus is, what He did, and what He has done for you. The importance of immersing yourself in the Word of God will be addressed in Chapter 5.
3. **Get involved in a church that faithfully preaches the Bible.** The importance of being committed to a godly church will be covered in Chapter 7.
4. **Begin memorizing God's Word on your own.** Memorizing Scripture will help you to better understand it, will prepare you to share it with others, and will help protect you from error and sin. Below are some verses to start learning.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY **John 3:16** – For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:8-9 – For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS What are the three most significant lessons that you have learned in this Bible study? Why are they important?

Answer the following questions to measure your understanding of salvation:

1. Two important implications arise from the fact that God created you. What are they? (page 3) _____

2. How many people have sinned? (page 4) _____
3. Because of your sin, what do you deserve? Be specific. (page 5) _____

4. What is the difference between hell and the lake of fire? (page 6) _____

5. Is it possible to earn eternal life? Why/why not? (page 6) _____

6. In what sense was Jesus your substitute? (page 8) _____

7. Why is Jesus the only way to get to the Father? (page 12) _____

8. What is repentance? (page 10) _____

9. What must you do to be saved? (page 10-12) _____

10. Check off the following verses only when you can say them from memory:

John 3:16

Romans 6:23

Ephesians 2:8-9

Do you believe that you know this material well enough to teach it to someone else? If not, review it until you do!