

Firm Foundation: Essentials of the Faith

Session 1 (9/21) – The Word of God: Our Authority & Guide

- **Key Texts:** 2 Tim. 3:14–17; Heb. 4:12; Ps. 19
- **Focus:** Why we trust the Bible, inspiration, authority, sufficiency, and clarity.
- **Discussion:** How does the Bible shape what we believe and how we live?
- **Practice:** Introducing devotional Bible reading & study methods.

Session 2 (9/28) – The Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

- **Key Texts:** Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1–18
- **Focus:** The Trinity—one God, three Persons; why this matters for worship & life.
- **Discussion:** Common misunderstandings of the Trinity.
- **Practice:** Praying to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

Session 3 (10/5) – The Person & Work of Christ

- **Key Texts:** Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–23; Heb. 1:1–4
- **Focus:** Jesus fully God, fully man; His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
- **Discussion:** Why must Christ be both God and man?
- **Practice:** The centrality of Christ in personal faith and church life.

Session 4 (10/12) – The Holy Spirit: God’s Presence with Us

- **Key Texts:** John 14:16–17; Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:16–26
- **Focus:** The Spirit’s role in salvation, sanctification, empowerment, and assurance.
- **Discussion:** Spiritual gifts and fruit of the Spirit.
- **Practice:** Learning to depend on the Spirit in daily life.

[NO CLASS 10/19**]**

Session 5 (10/26) – Humanity, Sin, and Salvation

- **Key Texts:** Gen. 1:26–27; Rom. 3:23–25; Eph. 2:1–10
- **Focus:** Created in God’s image, fallen in sin, saved by grace through faith.
- **Discussion:** What does it mean to be made in God’s image? How does sin distort it?
- **Practice:** Sharing your testimony in light of God’s grace.

Session 6 (11/2) – The Church: God’s People Together

- **Key Texts:** Acts 2:42–47; Eph. 4:1–16; 1 Pet. 2:9–10
- **Focus:** The nature of the church, its mission, leadership, unity, and ordinances (baptism & Lord’s Supper).
- **Discussion:** Why belonging to a local church matters.
- **Practice:** Exploring how to serve, grow, and live in community.

Session 7 (11/9) – Living the Christian Life: Discipleship & Mission

- **Key Texts:** Matt. 28:18–20; Rom. 12:1–2; Gal. 2:20
- **Focus:** Following Christ in daily life—prayer, obedience, holiness, mission.
- **Discussion:** Balancing personal devotion and outward witness.
- **Practice:** Developing a simple rule of life for spiritual growth.

Session 8 (11/16) – The Last Things: Hope for the Future

- **Key Texts:** 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 21–22
- **Focus:** Death, resurrection, final judgment, new creation.
- **Discussion:** How does our hope shape the way we live now?
- **Practice:** Encouraging one another with the hope of Christ’s return.

Firm Foundation – Session 1 (9/21)

The Word of God: Our Authority & Guide

Key Texts: *2 Tim. 3:14–17; Heb. 4:12; Ps. 19*

Introduction

Where do people today look for authority / meaning?

What the Bible Claims for Itself

Psalm 19 ; Hebrews 4:12 ; II Timothy 3:14-17

Inspiration: Divine + human authorship

2 Peter 1:21

Confidence Beyond Internal Claims

Early Christian View of Scripture

OT treated as authoritative (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44–45; 2 Tim. 3:15).

NT writings already recognized (1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:15–16).

How the Canon Formed

OT: settled by Christ's day; Protestant OT = Jewish canon.

NT: recognized, not invented. Criteria = apostolic authority, orthodoxy, catholicity.

Muratorian Fragment (c. 170).

Councils (Hippo 393, Carthage 397) confirmed consensus.

Myths & Reliability

Nicea Myth; Manuscripts; Prophecies; Unity

The Bible's Authority in Our Lives

Authority: God's Word > culture, reason, feelings.

Sufficiency: equips for life & godliness.

Clarity: God intends His Word to be understood. ["Doctrine of Perspicuity"]

Wrap-Up & Challenge

- The Bible is **God-breathed, trustworthy, and transformative.**
- We can trust both its internal witness **and** the historical process of canon recognition.
- **Bible Study Tools Handout** (SOAP, PAPER, SPECS, Swedish Method):
- **Challenge:** Use one of these methods in your daily reading this week.

Bible Study Tools

Practical methods to help you read, reflect, and apply God's Word.

1. SOAP Method

- **S – Scripture:** Write down the verse(s).
- **O – Observation:** What do you notice? Repeated words? Contrasts? Commands? Promises?
- **A – Application:** How does this truth apply to my life today?
- **P – Prayer:** Pray God's Word back to Him, asking for help to live it out.

2. PAPER Method

- **P – Pray:** Ask God to open your eyes to His Word.
- **A – Aloud:** Read the passage aloud.
- **P – Paraphrase:** Restate the verse(s) in your own words.
- **E – Emphasize:** Emphasize different words in the verse(s) as you read aloud.
- **R – References:** Look up any cross-references your Bible may provide / indicate.

3. SPECS Method

Ask what the passage teaches by looking for:

- **S – Sins to confess/avoid**
- **P – Promises to claim**
- **E – Examples to follow**
- **C – Commands to obey**
- **S – Saving grace demonstrated**

4. Swedish Method

Copy out a passage (just a couple verses, or a paragraph, or even a chapter) by hand.

Draw in the margins / spacing the following symbols to mark insights:

Lightbulb*  – Something that stands out / new insight

Question mark  – Something Confusing / Question to explore / Or to ask others

Arrow  – Application / something to put into practice

Cross  – What the text shows about Jesus / the gospel

* Bill uses the Swedish Method quite a bit - sometimes a simple exclamation point is easier and less distracting than trying to figure out how to draw a light bulb, and does just as good a job at indicating things that stand out or particular insights.

Encouragement:

Pick one method and try it this week as you read Scripture. The goal isn't to fill out a worksheet, but to **engage with God personally through His Word.**