FOUNDATION

LIFE BUILT ON THE WORD OF GOD!

WEEKS 7-10
LEADER GUIDE

FOUNDATION

LIFE BUILT ON THE WORD OF GOD!

WEEK 7

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

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LIFE BUILT ON THE WORD OF GOD!

LIVING FOR JESUS

THE BIG PICTURE

Road travel has become very popular in the past century, but it is not new! Paved roads, as well as road signs, actually date back to ancient Rome. Roads were often marked by stone columns giving the distance to Rome from cities throughout the empire. Later, roads were marked using trees or stones to help navigate paths at crossroads and give distance or directions to neighboring villages. With the invention of bicycles came the development of modern road signs. Being faster and harder to control, the need arose to warn riders of potential hazards. In 1909, the first International Convention on Motor Traffic met in Paris to develop a more universal system of communication between road authorities and road users. In the years since, guidelines have been established to help ensure safety and order on roadways. Road signs have been developed to do one of two things - 1) help maintain steady traffic flow and 2) warn drivers of potential dangers. Regulatory and guide signs help to maintain steady traffic flow. Regulatory signs convey what drivers can or cannot do and at what pace, helping prevent crashes and provide the rules that must be obeyed. Guide signs provide information to help drivers get to a particular

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destination. To avoid danger, warning signs assist motorists who are unfamiliar with an area, alerting them of hazards and changes in road conditions. Road signs are essential to provide information to drivers, create order on roadways, and keep people safe as they travel.

In the Christian walk, we are also given “road signs” to help direct our journey. God’s Word helps to guide, regulate, and warn us, communicating His truth to us as we go through this life. As we study God’s Word, we know and understand what we believe and where we are going in this life and beyond. But it also warns us of the possible dangers that we will encounter through the enemy’s lies and false doctrines that seek to deceive us. This week, we see the importance of God’s Word in our lives as we grow in Him, avoid the hazards and detours in our journey that can result from sin and false teaching, and live a life that is spiritually fit as we encounter Christ and live for Him!

Passages we'll review:
1 Timothy 4:1-10; Psalm 63

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OPENING

(Choose 1 or 2)

What are your favorite ways to stay in shape physically?

What is the most convincing lie or piece of misinformation you have ever fallen for? What made it so believable?

When you think of the word “disciplined”, what immediately comes to mind - something positive and life-giving or something strict and punishing?

DISCUSS

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-5

Do you see any connection between Paul’s warnings about “later times” and what is taking place in our world today? What are some modern-day “deceiving spirits” or cultural narratives that pull believers away from core biblical truths?

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(Open for discussion. False teachers today desire to lead people away from Christ and His truth. They seek to take people from the church to serve their own selfish desires and promote their own agendas. They preach one thing, but live another. They are hypocrites, not following their own teachings. They do not live with integrity.)

Why do you think human nature is so often drawn to such strict, man-made rules, or legalism, as a measure of spirituality, rather than experiencing true gospel-centered freedom?

(Open for discussion. False teachings and man-made rules are often disguised as attractive practices. Following a list of dos and don'ts is often easier, because it doesn't require inward change. True freedom comes only from complete, total surrender to Jesus Christ.)

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How can you practically train yourself to identify subtle theological errors before they can take root in your life?

(Open for discussion. Legalism is based on truth, but it twists God's plan and His Word, distorting God's grace and giving ourselves credit. False teachings and "knowledge" can distract us from the truth, appearing spiritual, but being deceptive and ungodly. We must be careful to guard the truth of God's Word, not allowing compromise and misunderstanding to penetrate and saturate the church. We must trust fully and completely in Christ alone, resting in His righteousness, not our own good works and spend time learning His Word. Our spiritual nourishment must be constant and consistent. We must remain grounded in the truth of God's Word in order to be able to stand against the enemy's deception. When we ignore our spiritual development, we will become powerless and ineffective.)

Paul mentions those whose consciences are "seared", or cauterized, referring to those who had become numb to the effects of sin and hypocrisy. Their consciences had been destroyed, much like scar tissue, feeling no guilt or remorse for their sin.

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How can we keep our own hearts sensitive and open to the conviction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, rather than allowing them to become numb?

(Open for discussion. We must study the Word of God daily and meditate on it, helping us to grow in Christ and lead others. We must strive to live out God's Word and His Will in our everyday lives, as we seek to obey Him and keep a good conscience. Like road signs, His Word gives us directions to living the life of holiness that He has called us to and warns us of the things that will distract and lure us away from the truth. When we don't "practice what we preach", we allow our hearts to become hardened and deaden our consciences.)

Paul taught that everything God created is good and should be received with thanksgiving. How does a daily habit of gratitude change how we view our "everyday" blessings like food, family, and creation?

(Open for discussion. We are to use all that God has provided for us to honor and serve Him. When we do, it changes our mindset and outlook on life from what we can do for ourselves to what He has done for us. It helps us to live for Him rather than for our own benefit.)

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Read 1 Timothy 4:6-10

What are some of the modern equivalents of "irreverent, silly myths" or "old-wives' tales" that eat up our time and take our focus off of Christ? Where do we see them promoted today?

(Open for discussion)

Paul compares physical exercise to training in godliness. Which is harder to maintain - spiritual or physical training? In what ways will good, spiritual training help you avoid deviant or false doctrines? What does practical training in godliness look like in daily life?

(Open for discussion. Good spiritual training, like physical training, must be done regularly and with determination in order to receive the most benefit from it. When we do, we can grow faster and accomplish more for Him. Because our bodies are considered His "temple", they are to be used for His glory and to do His work! Unlike physical exercise, it is beneficial both for this life and for eternity! We can accomplish this by being grounded in Christ Jesus, with our single purpose being to carry out the work of Christ and spread the gospel message.)

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When spiritual growth feels exhausting or discouraging, how does focusing on the character of God renew our strength and energy? How does our daily pursuit of Christ make our present life better, even in the midst of trials?

(Open for discussion. We must remember that our hope is not based on rules, performance, or talk, but on our hope in the living God! Godly character and conduct are worth more than any earthly rewards, but it is not an easy task. We must toil (labor) and strive, or agonize, like an athlete giving everything to win. We must remember that our God isn't distant or disconnected. He is living, active, and present in our daily lives! As a result, we are to work at it by the grace of God and for the glory of God alone! When we remember that He has already given us everything we need to do it, we can trust that He will help us to accomplish it.)

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DIGGING DEEPER

Read Psalm 63

David wrote this Psalm while he was hiding in the wilderness of Judah, likely during his son Absalom's rebellion. Yet in this time of uncertainty and unrest, he didn't focus on fear or complaining, but rather, his desire and longing for God.

When describing his desire for God, David uses intense physical descriptions, "my flesh faints" and "my soul thirsts". What are some of the counterfeit things that we often look to for fulfillment when our souls are actually thirsting for God? What things compete with God for our ultimate satisfaction?

(Open for discussion)

How can a difficult season actually intensify our desire to live for God rather than drive us away from Him, as it did with David in this Psalm?

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(Open for discussion. Because David had a growing, intimate relationship with God, he knew that God was the only true source of strength and satisfaction. Because of his past experiences with God, He knew how God had provided for him and protected him in the past. He had seen God's power and glory, and knew that it would sustain him even in the difficult times.)

"What life does to us depends on what life finds in us, and David had in him a deep love for the Lord and a desire to please Him. Because David had seen God's power and glory in His house, he was able to see Him in the wilderness as well!" [Warren Wiersbe]

Verse 8 exhibits a beautiful dynamic of human effort and divine support. What does "clinging" to God look like in your current daily/weekly routine? How have you felt "His right hand" upholding you recently? Share with your group.

(Open for discussion)

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How does an attitude of praise help to shield us from fear and bitterness when life gets difficult?

(Open for discussion. When we focus on God - who He is and what He has done - it changes our perspective. Rather than looking inward at our own current, temporary struggles, we look toward eternity and the greatness of God and the promise of spending eternity with Him. No matter what we encounter here on earth, we can rest in our future hope! But God is also with us now as we live out this life, and He will guide us and strengthen us as we go through life if we keep our eyes on Him!)

"The Christian Gospel is about "the glory of Christ", not about me. And when it is - in some measure - about me, it is not about my being made much of by God, but about God mercifully enabling me to enjoy making much of Him forever." [John Piper]

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PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- Are there any areas in your life where you have become desensitized to the things God calls wrong? What steps can you take to invite the Holy Spirit to soften your heart again?
- Do you ever create extra, unwritten rules for yourself or others to prove how "religious" or "good" you are? Are there rules you adhere to that God did not make? How does this week's passage challenge that mindset?
- When you look at your schedule, how does the amount of time and effort you put into your spiritual growth compare to the time you invest in your physical health, hobbies, or career? Does it look like you are actively training for godliness, or just hoping it happens by chance?
- When you feel burned out or exhausted, where do you typically look for strength? Is your ultimate hope set on a change in your circumstances or on the living God?

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WEEK 8

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

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DISCUSS

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LIVE OUT YOUR TRUE IDENTITY

THE BIG PICTURE

Florence Nightingale is known as the founder of modern nursing. Born into a wealthy British family in 1820, she had an extraordinary ability for collecting and analyzing data. Unlike most young women of her time, her father was intent on educating his daughters far beyond what was typical for young women in their class at the time. At 16, she felt called by God to a life of service, writing in her diary: “God called me in the morning and asked me would I do good for Him alone without reputation.” Despite extreme resistance and disappointment from her family, she focused on nursing as a way to serve God and others. In a time known as the “dark age” of nursing, it was not considered a respectable vocation, and hospitals were seen as simply a place to die. She is best known for her efforts during the Crimean War. Hearing of horrific conditions for wounded soldiers, Nightingale took a team of nurses to improve medical care at the facility. She found poor conditions, overworked medical staff, lack of supplies, and neglect of hygiene, all of which resulted in mass infection and high death toll. Doctors were initially opposed to the help of her nurses, but eventually accepted the help. Her efforts resulted in established sanitary practices - including handwashing and laundry, proper

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sewage drainage, ventilation, nutritious food supply, and personal connection and empathy with patients, eventually reducing the death rate from 60% down to 2%. Her mathematical acumen and use of diagrams helped improve healthcare around the world, as she later pursued sanitary design of hospitals across Britain, introduced sanitation to working-class homes, established the first secular nursing school in the world - laying the groundwork for nursing today, and published tracts to share medical tips simple enough that everyone could benefit.

Nightingale challenged the rigid systems of her day with a quiet determination to do what God had called her to do. When asked about her success, she stated: “I attribute my success to this - I never gave or took an excuse.” As followers of Christ, we will find resistance from the world around us as well, but we are called to live out our true identity in Christ as we fulfill the calling He has placed on our lives. We are to pursue Christ in such a way that the good inside of us overflows for the world around us to see. This week, we are reminded that instead of resting on the excuses the world gives us, we must rise up and use the gifts, strengths, and unique qualities that God has given each of us to put God’s Word into practice and pass it on for others to see!

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Passages we'll review:
1 Timothy 4:11-16; Joshua 2:1-15; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25

OPENING
(Choose 1 or 2)

When you were younger, who was someone you looked up to, and what made them a good role model?

If someone followed you around with a camera for a week, what habits in your life - good or bad - would they say you are most devoted to?

Who is someone who saw potential in you before you saw it in yourself, and how did they encourage you?

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DISCUSS

Read 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Why do you think age or lack of experience can sometimes be a barrier to leadership or respect? How can someone earn respect without becoming arrogant or defensive?

(Open for discussion)

Paul gave 5 areas for Timothy to exhibit godly living: speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Which of these is easiest to fake in public? Which is the hardest to model constantly in today's culture? Which one requires the deepest inward change?

(Open for discussion. Note: Speech and conduct are observable aspects of life. They provide evidence of what is in our hearts. Love is the motivating factor for what we do, the essence of our Christian life. Faith is our reliance on what God has done and remaining faithful to Him. Purity refers to our sexual conduct and integrity of heart. It encompasses mind, heart, and body.)

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Why is a lived example often more powerful than a position of authority?

(Open for discussion. Anyone can talk the talk, but when we walk the walk, we do more than just speak meaningless words. We put into practice what we claim to believe and allow others to see the difference it can make in our lives. Authority is often just a title or a position of power, but it does not guarantee character.)

"A true follower or disciple of Christ abides, or lives, in what Jesus taught. If we live God's teaching, pursuing Him every waking moment, everyone will see your progress. A life growing progressively close to God, dynamically changing, cannot be hidden. Christianity is not a matter of creed, but of life." [Knute Larson]

What causes believers to either neglect or sideline their gifts over time? What are some common reasons people neglect or downplay the gifts God has given them?

(Open for discussion. We often neglect our gifts due to business, convenience, effort, or focus.)

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The God who calls us also equips us to do His work! On our own, we do not possess what is necessary to serve Him faithfully; it all comes from God alone! As a result, we are to use the gifts He has given us for His glory! We are to give ourselves completely, or immerse ourselves, in them as we commit wholeheartedly to the work He has called us to do!

What is the difference between showing off your spiritual growth and allowing others to naturally see your progress? How does aiming or visible spiritual progress take the pressure off of trying to appear flawless or perfect?

(Open for discussion. Our salvation is not just a single event, but a process. It begins when we follow Christ, but it continues on until we are with Christ for eternity. In the middle of it all, we are to become more like Christ in our character and behavior. God must work in us before He can work through us [Philippians 2:12-13]. This enables us to lead others and set an example for them. This serves to remind us that we will not achieve perfection overnight, but rather, it is a continual process that we must always work at, constantly refining us and helping us to live the way God instructs us as we apply His Word to our lives.)

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Paul pairs life - "yourself"/how we live - with doctrine - "teaching"/what we believe. What happens when someone has strong beliefs but poor character, or good behavior without sound truth? Why is it so dangerous to separate what we believe with how we live?

(Open for discussion. What we believe and how we live should be intertwined. When we have strong beliefs but poor character, we can be very judgemental and legalistic. When we have good behavior but no sound truth, we can be easily swayed or deceived. We need both in order to live the lives God has called us to live as image-bearers of Christ!)

Why do you think Paul specifically tells us to persevere, or persist, in these habits? What makes it so difficult to remain consistent in faith and character over the long haul?

Open for discussion. We must persevere and push ahead because our obedience and commitment doesn't just impact us but those who we lead and even those who don't know Him. Our persistence provides evidence for others to see what God can do!)

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Paul reminds us that our faithful perseverance affects not only our own walk, but also the salvation and faith of those around us. In what ways do our daily choices and spiritual consistency impact the people around us?

(Open for discussion)

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DIGGING DEEPER

Read Joshua 2:1-15

Rahab had heard about the God of Israel and all that He had done for His people. She had chosen to trust in Him even before the spies arrived at her home. Being the only one in the city of Jericho who trusted the God of Israel, God led the spies to her!

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Rahab's background as a prostitute did not disqualify her from being integrated into God's family! Because of her faith in the one true God, she became a de facto Israelite, as did the rest of her family. How do we struggle to let go of our past labels, and how does embracing a God-given identity change how we view ourselves?

(Open for discussion. We are reminded by Rahab's story that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved! When we become children of God and live our lives for Him, we become new creations! [2 Corinthians 5:17])

Not only did Rahab's faith save herself and her family from death and welcome them into the people of Israel, but it had far-reaching effects in the kingdom of God! Rahab's salvation would play a part in the salvation of the world! In Matthew 1, we find that Rahab was married to Salmon and fathered Boaz, who fathered Obed by Ruth. Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered King David! As we trace the lineage through the rest of the chapter, we find Joseph, the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah!

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Read Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25

In Hebrews, we are reminded that because of Rahab's faith in receiving the spies in peace, she did not perish with the rest of her people. James points to her actions as proof of her living faith. She risked her life to hide the spies, because her faith moved her to action.

How do Rahab's concrete steps (hiding the spies, lowering them down the wall, and later tying the scarlet cord in the window for her salvation from destruction) show that our true identity in God isn't just passive belief, but active, identity-driven obedience? How does real faith differ from just agreeing with a set of facts or beliefs?

(Open for discussion. Warren Wiersbe states that "true saving faith can't be hidden for long!" Our faith in God is more than what we know or how we feel. It is based on how we live our lives. We must bear evidence of a life that has been changed by Him!)

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Rahab didn't just seek safety for herself. She used her moment of faith to ensure the safety and inclusivity of her family. How does living out a transformed identity in Christ fuel your desire to see others brought into God's family?

(Open for discussion. When we experience God and His sovereignty, we are reminded of how weak and insignificant we actually are. It is only because of the redemption of Jesus Christ that we can be brought into the family of God. As a result, like Rahab, we seek God's mercy for those we love and desire that they experience His salvation as well!)

PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- **Where has God placed you to set an example right now (at work, at home, at school, among friends)? In what area of your life do you currently feel most challenged to set a godly example?**

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- What gifts, abilities, or passions has God entrusted to you to serve others? How easily do they get neglected in a busy season?

- How do your daily words reflect Christ's character? How do people around you judge your faith? Do your words and actions tell the same story?

- Paul reminds us to "keep a close watch on yourself". Are you actively immersing yourself in spiritual growth, or are you passive in your walk with God? What is one area that might need closer attention?

- Who can you pour into this week and encourage in their faith and walk with God?

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WEEK 9

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

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BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION

THE BIG PICTURE

In Indian Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull, Indiana finds himself caught in sinking sand. When asked if it's quicksand, he responds that no, it is dry sand, so it's not as dangerous unless there's a void, at which point they begin sinking further into the ground. Sinking sand, often called quicksand, occurs when soil or sand mixes with water, acting more like a liquid than a solid. It is called "quicksand" because of how quickly it shifts to this state. Whereas most soils have structure, sand typically does not. Sandcastles only hold together because of the adhesion of the water molecules and sand together. Most quicksand is formed when water seeps up from an underground source and saturates an area of sand. As the liquid increases, the sand begins to float in the water, reducing the friction between the sand grains, compromising its bond. The top layer is often dry, causing it to appear normal until agitated. The water can't escape, and the sand "liquifies", losing its strength and causing objects on the surface to sink. Because quicksand has a higher density than the human body, it is impossible for someone to sink completely. One usually sinks to the level at which the weight of the object is

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equal to the weight of the displaced sand. However, the more you struggle, the more you will sink, as continued movement causes you to sink further down. In order to escape, one must relax the body, allowing it to float in the sand/water mixture. Unlike the movies, quicksand cannot kill someone directly, but can be difficult to get out of and can cause exhaustion.

In life, we may experience spiritual quicksand. Life is full of things that can entrap or frustrate us, but they don't have to fully consume us. In the hymn, “The Solid Rock”, we find the words: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.” In this week’s study, we are reminded that we will inevitably face pressures and difficulties, but when we choose to build our foundation on Christ, we can rest in knowing that He will guide us, correct us, and protect us as we go through this life. He is our source of hope in every situation!

Passages we'll review:

1 Timothy 5:1-16; Ruth 2:1-12; Ruth 4:13-17

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OPENING

(Choose 1 or 2)

When you think of a house built to withstand pressure, what are the hidden foundational elements that matter most when a storm hits?

Have you ever been part of a team, neighborhood, or group that felt like a true family? What specific actions made that bond strong enough to handle conflict or hardship?

When life gets heavy and pressures mount, what is your natural first reaction? Do you tend to isolate yourself, take on too much alone, or lean on others? Why?

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DISCUSS

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-16

Why do you think Paul begins this section about church structure and care with instructions on attitude and relationships?

(Open for discussion. As followers of Christ, we are to be imitators of Him. This means we are to act in His nature. Our attitudes and, consequently, our relationships ought to reflect His character at work in us.)

How does viewing the church as family change how we handle conflict or correction?

(Open for discussion. When we view one another in the church body as family, we are reminded that we have things in common and that we are to care for one another. We are all a part of the family of God, so we ought to respond to one another in love with respect. Older members are to help teach and guide younger members. When we respond in this way, we are able to be witnesses to the world around us.)

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Paul emphasizes that families should take primary responsibility for caring for their own relatives. Why is taking personal and family responsibility such a critical part of building a resilient life and church? How does the way a person treats their immediate family reflect their character when they are under stress?

(Open for discussion. When we take responsibility and care for our own relatives, we are putting our faith into practice. When we don't, we become like those mentioned in Titus 1:16, who "profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works". Our actions speak louder than our words, so how we respond under pressure reflects the true attitude of the heart!)

In verse 6, we see the contrast between someone who is "self-indulgent" and lives for pleasure and someone who puts her hope in God and continues in prayer and service to Him. Where do you find yourself tempted to lean on temporary comfort instead of standing on a lasting foundation built on Christ?

(Open for discussion)

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The habits listed in verse 10 happen in quiet, ordinary, everyday moments. How do these daily habits help to build a spiritual foundation that helps us to stand firm when sudden crises or pressures arise?

(Open for discussion. These habits help us to live in a way that shines the light of Jesus to those around us, so that others may see it and glorify God! Living with a heart that follows after God's desires and His design will bring much joy and purpose in life.)

Paul warns against idleness, gossip, and drifting away from core comments. What are some subtle distractions or habits that tend to weaken our spiritual foundation over time?

(Open for discussion. We can be led astray by many things, including false teachings and focus on the world's values and pleasures.)

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Gossip and meddling can quietly crack the foundation of any group. How do we guard against these things? What can you do to actively shut down any unhelpful talk and steer conversation toward encouragement instead?

(Open for discussion. We must be sure to live in a way that reveals a good testimony - one that will silence the enemy and not give them anything to accuse us of!)

What routines or accountability relationships help to keep you grounded when life feels uncertain or slow? How does having a clear, constructive purpose help you to withstand emotional or spiritual pressure?

(Open for discussion. Without a true, fulfilling purpose, we will begin to waste our time, become idle, engage in gossip, and become busybodies. We must fill our time with works of service, encouraging others and pointing them to Christ, and fulfilling the responsibilities God has given to each of us. We all have the responsibility to be ministers for the Lord wherever He has placed us.)

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DIGGING DEEPER

Ruth's story is one of faithfulness and devotion from a Gentile woman who came to know the living God. After the loss of her father-in-law, brother-in-law, and her own husband, she chose to remain faithful to the widow Naomi and return with her to her homeland and her people. Ruth's devotion to Naomi and her God resulted in a life-changing encounter with the faithful God who had already laid a foundation for her life!

Read Ruth 2:1-12

When life feels overwhelming, it can be easy to want to hide or stand still. How does Ruth's willingness to take one small, practical step forward help her to build resilience? How does our faithfulness in the small, unglamorous duties help us to build resilience during uncertain times?

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(Open for discussion. Being an alien to the land, as well as a widow, Ruth could have doubted that God would provide. Instead, she chose to respond to her situation in faith, trusting that the God she had chosen to follow loved her and would provide for her. Her small act resulted in the beginning of God's amazing plan, not just for Ruth and Naomi, but for the entire world! When we respond as Ruth did - in faith - we will find that our faithfulness in the little things will help build our faith. It will also help us to remember what He has done in our lives when we find ourselves in difficult or uncertain times, because our God never changes!)

Boaz notices Ruth, not because of her status, but because of her reputation for hard work, steady character, and care for Naomi. How do our daily habits shape our ability to stand firm before a crisis ever hits?

(Open for discussion. When our circumstances in life apply pressure, our true character is revealed by how we respond. When we take the time to develop Christ-centered habits of love and faithfulness to God and others, we will respond to the difficult situations in a way that honors God and shows love and grace to others.)

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Read Ruth 4:13-17

Ruth never knew that she would become the great grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus. In our own lives, how does remembering God's bigger story help us endure present pressure?

(Open for discussion. We must remember Romans 8:28, which says: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose." Nothing takes God by surprise. He knows what we are going through, and He knows what lies ahead. When we choose to live faithfully for Him, even when we don't understand our circumstances or know what lies ahead, we can know that everything we do for Him has eternal value!)

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PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- If someone looked at your daily habits right now, what kind of foundation would they see you building for the future?

- If you were to face a sudden difficult crisis tomorrow - financial, relational, or cultural - where is your foundation strongest right now, and where do you need to reinforce it? Where are you most tempted to become complacent or distracted, and what boundaries help keep you grounded?

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- When financial, emotional, or relational pressure hits, what is your default reaction - panic, distraction, or persistent prayer?

- What constructive work, ministry, or household responsibility needs your focused attention in this season?

- What is one practical habit you can put in place this week to make sure your spiritual foundation is steady before the next storm comes?

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WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

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THE BIG PICTURE

During medieval times, knights were mounted soldiers who often served as elite fighters for a lord or other leader. The first knights were from the reign of Charlemagne, and their efforts brought success to his conquests. During the Crusades, knights began to represent the chivalry of the Christian warrior, as a position of honor. They were heavily armed, well trained, and fought for more powerful noblemen - like the king. Knights were expected to maintain high moral and religious values, living by a code of honor that focused on bravery, loyalty, protecting the weak, and fighting for the good of all. Each knight carried a distinct coat of arms on his shield, to identify him both on and off the battlefield. They were heavily armed, carrying a sword used only for battle, a shield to block strikes and projectiles, and armor with a helmet. Due to the Knight's Code of Conduct, lords trusted their knights completely. One version of the Knight's Code of Chivalry states: "To fear God and maintain His Church, to serve the liege lord in valour and faith, to protect the weak and defenceless, to give succour to widows and orphans, to refrain from the wanton

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giving of offence, to live by honour and for glory, to despise pecuniary reward, to fight for the welfare of all, to obey those placed in authority, to guard the honour of fellow knights, to eschew unfairness, meanness and deceit, to keep faith, at all times to speak the truth, to persevere to the end in any enterprise begun, to respect the honour of women, never to refuse a challenge from an equal, never to turn the back upon a foe" (Alchin). Knights no longer exist in the military sense, but knighthood is still bestowed today on those who have achieved major accomplishments in public service, arts, science, or sports.

As followers of Christ, we all serve the King of Kings, Jesus Christ! While He does not bestow knighthood on those who lead the people, He does call up pastors and spiritual leaders to guide, protect, and teach His people. They have a responsibility to guide and direct the local churches and help believers grow in Christ. In this week's study, we will see the importance of mature leaders, grounded in consistency and godly standards, who help believers grow to become all that God has created them to be.

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Passages we'll review:
1 Timothy 5:17-25; Proverbs 4:20-27

OPENING
(Choose 1 or 2)

What is the hardest job you have ever had, and what made it feel worthwhile or underappreciated?

Have you ever jumped to a quick conclusion about someone's character - good or bad - only to find out later you were wrong?

Who is a teacher, mentor, or spiritual leader who has significantly impacted your faith? What made their leadership memorable?

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DISCUSS

Read 1 Timothy 5:17-25

What does it mean for a pastor or spiritual leader to "rule well", and why does Paul connect maturity to hard work in preaching and teaching, rather than just possessing natural charisma? What character traits distinguish a spiritually mature leader from someone who is merely capable or charismatic?

(Open for discussion. They are to do their job well. The term "work" emphasizes energy, labor, and working to the point of weariness. But this doesn't mean that they are to be overworked! The church ought to respect the lives of those who lead them. As the church takes care of its leaders, both financially and in other ways, they will receive the blessings that come from God as He blesses the church's obedience. Spiritually mature leaders are those who lead the church in the direction God guides. They ensure that ministries are run in an organized, responsible way, caring for those who are under them. They also help them grow spiritually so that they are not just spiritual babies, but are growing in Christ and able to do His work. High energy, influence, and charisma on their own are not enough to accomplish these things.)

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What qualities make a leader easy to trust? What habits can quickly erode that trust?

(Open for discussion. Good, trustworthy leaders must lead with objectivity and impartiality. They ought to act in a way that does not compromise the nature of the Lord. They exercise judgement fairly, without favoritism. Trust can be eroded by rash decisions, arrogance, or partiality.)

Why is it so hard to remain impartial when dealing with people we know, like or respect? Why is it tempting to show favoritism, and how can a community of believers guard against it?

(Open for discussion. The actions of a leader are very influential and affect those he cares for. As a result, it is important not to act out of favoritism. Everyone should be held accountable, even when it is uncomfortable. In order to lead effectively, it is important to live unblemished through the strength that comes from Christ alone through sound doctrine and holy living.)

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How do you typically react when you hear gossip or criticism about a leader? How can you apply the principle of requiring solid evidence before accepting a claim?

(Open for discussion. Gossip can be destructive and harmful. It is important to make sure that any accusation is true before responding to it. Rumor and suspicion are not enough to discipline someone. Any accusation should be backed up by other witnesses or factual evidence.)

Why is a public accountability for spiritual leaders uniquely important for the health of the church? What happens to a church when sin in leadership is swept under the rug? Why is it important to address sin or failure openly, rather than sweeping it under the rug, and what makes it so difficult to do?

(Open for discussion. It is important to be accountable for our actions. Those who are guilty ought to stand before the body, in order to repent and be restored, even when it is difficult.)

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How do you protect your own integrity when dealing with someone else's failure?

(Open for discussion. As Paul reminded Timothy, we are to keep ourselves pure. We are each responsible for our own heart and soul. While others can help us grow in our spiritual journey, only we can choose the disciplines we will live by. We must make the decision to take steps toward our spiritual growth, and not allow ourselves to be led astray by others.)

We are reminded that both hidden sins and quite good deeds will eventually come to light. How does that truth encourage you to stay faithful, especially when no one is watching? What does spiritual endurance look like when ministry feels thankless or exhausting?

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(Open for discussion. Eventually, the truth behind what each person does will be revealed, whether good or bad. Time reveals what lies in the heart of each believer. The sinful inner life will eventually be revealed as it seeps out through attitude, careless speech, and unloving actions. The same is true for good deeds. While good efforts may not be noticed at the time, for those who do good works in a quiet way, working behind the scenes, their work cannot stay hidden and will eventually be revealed. True godliness cannot be kept secret!)

Who are the leaders, pastors, or teachers in your church who teach, guide, or serve quietly behind the scenes? How can you express gratitude to them this week? Beyond financial support, what are some practical ways you can help lighten the load for your church leaders and their families?

(Open for discussion)

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DIGGING DEEPER

Read Proverbs 4:20-27

Solomon refers to the heart as the springs, or source, of life. Why do you think he warns us to guard our hearts above all else rather than focusing first on our outward behavior? What kinds of things can pollute the springs of our hearts?

(Open for discussion. We will always find time to do what we enjoy, and those things will often reveal the state of our hearts. As a result, we are reminded to guard our hearts, not chasing after everything the heart desires, being careful to concentrate on the things that will keep us on the right path.)

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What does it mean to "let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you"? What kinds of things typically take our eyes off course? What helps you keep your gaze fixed on what truly matters?

(Open for discussion. We are to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and the path He has laid for us. We cannot be distracted and led astray by sin's distractions. We must remember that our outlook determines the outcome!)

We are reminded to carefully consider or ponder the path for our feet and turn away from evil. Why is it important that we actively level or clear the path we will take, and not just react to temptations or distractions as we encounter them?

(Open for discussion. We are to choose our path carefully, not walking in the way of the wicked. This ensures that we will follow the path that has a solid foundation built on Christ. When we walk in God's wisdom, He will guide us.)

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"The church is the chosen channel through which God's saving grace flows to the world… The church is the visible form of Christ in the world. Its purpose is to reveal His glory and thus draw men savingly to Himself. The church is also to model godly virtue in an ungodly world by living according to God's commands." [John MacArthur]

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PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- Do you tend to view church leaders with gratitude and respect, or with criticism and entitlement? What is one practical way you can show honor, encouragement, or gratitude to a pastor or spiritual leader this week?

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- How does your current approach to giving reflect a commitment to supporting those who serve your church full time? How are you guarding both your spiritual integrity and your physical well-being so that you can serve effectively over the long haul?

- In what area(s) of your relationships or church life are you tempted to show partiality? How can you make decisions based on fairness rather than personal preference?

- When someone brings constructive criticism or correction to you, do you respond with defensiveness or humility? Is there any area in your life where you want to ensure your private character matches your public reputation?

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