

# *The Foundations of Truth*

## **A FOUNDATION FOR CONFIDENCE** *THE GOSPEL OF GRACE*

### ***PRE-GAME***

Scripture refers to the central message of Christianity as the Gospel, or literally the ‘good news.’ But what *is* the good news? What does it have to say about our life today? Far from just being a basic part of Christianity, the Gospel is the richest, deepest, most powerful concept that we could study. Understanding and applying the Gospel to your life is not a once-and-done act nor a past tense experience. Rather, just as the Gospel is the foundation for our relationship with God, so too is it the foundation for our on-going confidence in Christ and a God-honoring life of growth. Sadly, many people’s misunderstanding of the Gospel keeps them from knowing God and growing in him. In this study, you will learn how to rightly understand this ‘good news’ and how it applies to your life.

### ***THEME***

It is only through our confidence in the Gospel that we can rightly understand the nature of God, our own hearts, Christ’s promises and the need for repentance and faith. The good news of this message is the basis for our faith and our on-going growth in Christ.

### ***PRACTICE***

Experiencing the saving power of the Gospel leads us to confidently leave behind our idols and trust in Christ alone as the source of our significance and meaning in life.

### ***SYMBOL KEY***



Indicates discussion questions



Indicates Biblical passages to look up



Indicates application questions to be discussed

### **The Foundations of Truth Series**

A Foundation for  
Confidence

A Foundation for  
Trust

A Foundation for  
Growth

A Foundation for  
Community

A Foundation for  
Life



**I. THE GOSPEL: OUR FOUNDATION FOR CONFIDENCE**

✦ In your own words, how would you summarize the central message of Christianity?

📖 Read Luke 2:8-11

The Gospel is the good news that Christ has broken into human history to save mankind by living the life we should have lived and dying the death we should have died. It is the confidence that through faith in Christ as our Savior and Lord, we are granted eternal life in heaven.

➤ Where do you see yourself on the spiritual continuum below? What do you need in order to move along the continuum to the right?



**evangel** =  
Greek for 'good news'  
or 'Gospel'

"The Gospel teaches that we are more sinful and flawed than we ever imagined and yet are more loved and accepted than we can ever dream."  
- Tim Keller

**II. GOD: OUR JUST JUDGE AND GRACIOUS FATHER**

Tertullian, a 3rd century theologian, described the basic ways people misunderstand the Gospel in terms of "two thieves." One thief is moralism. Moralism robs the Gospel of its grace by stressing that we must do the right things in order to be saved. The other thief is relativism. Relativism robs the Gospel of its truth by leaving us the freedom to live and believe as we please. Instead of legalism or license, the real Gospel gives us a God far more holy than a moralist can bear and far more loving than a relativist can imagine.

✦ Which thief—moralism or relativism—most influences how you see God?

📖 Read Exodus 34:6,7

- What two attributes do you see co-existing in God? Is this surprising?

The mercy and grace of a loving Father

God is like a loving Father, delighting in being merciful and gracious to those he loves.

📖 Read Luke 1:50 and John 3:16

- Through God's *mercy* we do not get something we deserve—death
- Through God's *grace*, we get something we do not deserve—eternal life

"The Gospel is a message of some complexity, needing to be learned before it can be lived, understood before it can be applied."  
- J.I. Packer

The holiness and wrath of a just Judge

God is like a just Judge, holding us accountable for our actions, words and intentions.



Read Ezekiel 18:4 and Romans 1:18

- God is perfectly holy and just and calls us to be holy. In his justice, he can't ignore our sin.



How is your attitude toward sin affected if you fail to understand God as a loving Father? As a just Judge?

**“You shall be holy because I, the Lord your God am holy”**  
- Leviticus 19:2

**III. MAN: THE REALITY AND PROBLEM OF SIN**



How would you define sin? What qualifies as sin?

Wrong views about the Gospel can often be traced to wrong views about sin. Most people think of sin in one of two extremes: simply bad manners (“But that’s no big deal!”) or a terrible crime (“But we haven’t gone that far!”). Scripture refers to sin as active rebellion or passive indifference toward God. Instead of worshipping him, we rebel and worship God-substitutes by searching for significance in life apart from God.

The reality of sin



Read Romans 3:10-12, 23 and Romans 1:21-23

- Does it surprise you that Scripture says *all* have sinned?
- Is the problem just with our actions? What else does sin affect?

The problem of sin



Read Romans 6:23 and Romans 2:5-8

- What is the result of our sin?

Apart from Christ, we are also enslaved to sin (Romans 6:17). When we worship God-substitutes like sport, success or relationships, we find ourselves enslaved to guilt and anger when something gets in the way of our pursuit or fear and driven-ness when we sense that we can't live without them. As a result, we need a savior who will free us from the penalty of sin as well as its powerful presence in our lives.



Do you ever feel guilt, anger, fear or compulsive driven-ness? What God-substitutes may these feelings reveal?

**‘Sin’** (hamartia) in **Greek** comes from a word used in **archery** to measure the distance by which an arrow missed the bull’s-eye.

**Romans 1-3** is a great passage to turn to for understanding the problem of sin and Christ’s solution.

**IV. CHRIST: THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL**



Who do you think Jesus is? Why is he so essential to the Gospel?

The central person of the Gospel is Jesus Christ, our divine Savior and Lord. Because of who he is and what he has done through his birth, life, death, and resurrection, we have been given 3 promises - freedom from the penalty, power and presence of sin.

The promise of a new record...victory over the penalty of sin



Romans 3:21-28

- On what basis are we freed from God's wrath against our sin?
- On what basis are we given a right standing before God?

The promise of a new nature...victory over the power of sin



Romans 6:1-14

- In what sense do we go through a spiritual 'resurrection' as believers?
- What prevents us from living out a good, moral life on our own?

The promise of a new hope...victory over the presence of sin



Revelation 21:1-4

- Why does this picture of a new heaven and a new earth give you hope?



Which Gospel promise is most important to you? Why? How would your life look different if you lived in light of this promise?

See Foundation #2, A Foundation of Trust, for a closer look at the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**propitiation** = to satisfy God's wrath by a substitute

**justified** = to be made righteous, given a right standing before God

**The Gospel Promises:**

- A new **record**
- A new **heart**
- A new **hope**

**V. REPENTANCE & FAITH: OUR RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL**

The Gospel is not meant to merely inform us about Christ nor describe our spiritual condition. The Gospel is a summons to faith and repentance (Mark 1:15). It demands us to trust Christ alone in light of the truth and reality of God, our sin and the promises offered to us. There are two key aspects of trusting Christ: repentance and faith.

A call to repent



Read Acts 3:19 and Mark 6:12

- To repent literally means to 'turn away from'. It's not just feeling sorry. Repentance involves a real change of heart, mind and will whereby we confess to God our sinfulness and our reliance on our own good works.

A call to faith




Read Matthew 8:28-29 and Acts 16:3

- Faith is not mere intellectual agreement nor a general acknowledgement of God. Faith is a trust in Christ in which we submit our lives to him as Savior and Lord.


**"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel."**

- Jesus, Mark 1:15

 Do you feel that you have truly trusted Christ through repentance and faith in your life? If not, is this a commitment you would like to make? Below is a simple prayer through which you can express your heart to God.


*“Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner in need of your forgiveness. Thank you for living the perfect life I can not live and dying the death I deserved to die. I now turn from my self-trust and place my trust in you alone for my forgiveness and eternal life. I now receive you as my risen Savior and Lord. Thank you for the gift of your righteousness. Take control of my life and make me the person you want me to be.”*

## VI. POST GAME - THE SAVING POWER OF THE GOSPEL

 Do you think that repenting and believing is a once-and-done activity?

When we first trust Christ, God declares that we have a right standing with him because Christ has paid our penalty and has given us his righteousness (Romans 3:22). We can have confidence that our salvation is secure. Yet, Scripture reveals that repenting and believing is a process we continue to go through. This is a God-ordained process by which we are saved from sin’s power as well as sin’s penalty.

But we often think that once saved from sin’s penalty, we can live the Christian life on our own (Galatians 3:3). Our lives remain unchanged because we continue to look to objects, people and pursuits other than Christ as the foundation for our confidence. Anything that functions in this role besides Christ is a false-god or an idol. Heart idolatry is the core of our sin and we must turn from it to trust Christ alone.

 Consider the following questions. What do they reveal about potential God-substitutes in your life? What would it look like to leave these God-substitutes behind and trust in Christ alone?

- What is your greatest nightmare? Why?
- What, if you failed or lost at, would make you extremely depressed?
- What do you rely on for comfort when things go bad?
- What prayer, if unanswered, would make you seriously question God?

**“The real difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is not their attitude toward sin...it is their attitude toward their good deeds.”**  
- Tim Keller

**“Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”**  
- Galatians 3:3