



TOPIC:

Spirit

Christian
FOUNDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Christian FOUNDATIONS

Christian Foundations is a series of studies that helps people discover (and rediscover) the FOUNDATIONS of believing in, living life with and serving Jesus.

Each module is centred around the rhythm of daily self-study and reflection on Scripture and weekly discussion with a Christian mentor (or mentoring group).

The daily rhythm involves:

- A brief introduction to the Scripture reading
- The study of a Scripture passage
- Reflection and journaling on the passage
- A short devotion flowing from the passage
- A prayer to pray aloud
- An action to take in response to what you have learned

The modules can be completed in any number or order depending on your needs, but for someone completing all the modules a

suggested order is:

1. Identity
2. Spirit
3. Growth
4. Service
5. Mission
6. Perseverance
7. Baptism

INSTRUCTIONS

ORGANISE with a mentor or mentoring group when you will meet and which module you will do together each week.

STUDY daily one of the five Bible studies (Study 1-5), and write any reflections, questions and revelations. It will probably take you about 20 minutes to complete the reading and reflection. (If a daily study proves too difficult, you could decide to spread each module over two weeks.)

MEET weekly (or fortnightly) with your mentor (and other members if in a group). There is a guide for this discussion at the end of each module.

ADVICE

Decide in advance exactly where and when you will spend the time each day reading and reflecting on the Scripture passage and input. With a regular time and place, it is much more likely that you will get the studies done.

Make sure you don't "move on" from each module until you have spoken and debriefed with your mentor or mentoring group about this important foundation of Christian living. Be completely honest with your mentor. If you don't understand something, are having doubts, or forget to do the studies, just tell them. This isn't a test you can get wrong. It is an investment into the rest of your life with God.

Write down your questions and reflections and bring this to your weekly meeting. It would also help to have a look at the discussion questions before you meet with your mentor. Pray that God will use these studies to grow you and release you into a more grace-centred, God-focused and joy-filled life in Christ.

READING 1: THE COMING OF GOD'S SPIRIT

orientate

God is three persons in one (Father, Son [Jesus] and Holy Spirit). These three persons are distinct and yet one. If you find this difficult to picture, join the club. But of course, wrapping our little brains completely around God is always going to be an impossible challenge for humans. But that doesn't mean we can't understand more about God and his work. In this module, we will be focusing on the most shadowy member of the "Trinity" – the Holy Spirit. He is now living in you, so it will really help to understand what he is doing in you and with you and for you.

explore

Acts 2:1-12

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own languages!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What was the significance of the way in which God's Spirit came?

reflect

What an unusual event! The book of Acts is the story of the growth of the early church and it all hinges on the coming of God's Spirit into believers. You see right through the Old Testament, God's Spirit only came on very significant Israelite individuals like kings and prophets and occasionally very talented artists (Exodus 31:3). These important people in Israel had the presence of God in their lives through the Spirit, but ordinary people didn't. That all changed at this event (Pentecost) that occurred shortly after Jesus' resurrection and return to God. As Peter goes on to quote from an Old Testament prophet, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:17). So in this passage we see God breathing his Spirit onto and into all his people for the first time.

It was a very significant and very exciting event. From this point on, all followers of Jesus would receive God's Spirit.

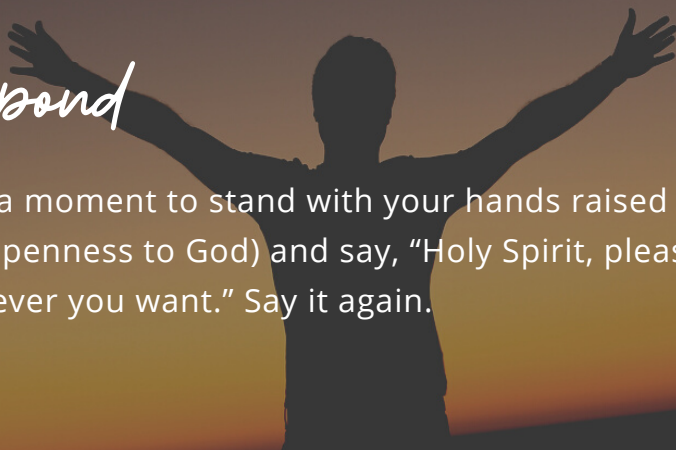
So now all believers have God's Spirit living in them. That includes you. God breathed on you when you believed and gave you his Spirit to fill you and help you. You are never alone. God is living in you. You may or may not have seen fire or heard a mighty wind or be able to speak in other languages, but this has happened to you. God's Spirit has been poured into your life to help you do all that God wants you to do and become all that God wants you to be. From now on it's the Holy Spirit and you together. It makes all the difference, as it did for these new believers in Acts 2.

pray

Thank you Lord for sending your Spirit into my life. I'm so glad that I live in these "last days" when your Spirit is poured out on every believer. I know that I have a long journey ahead of me to continue to grow as a Christian, but it's going to be so much better doing it in tandem with you. Please fill my life Holy Spirit. Take over anything you want.

respond

Take a moment to stand with your hands raised (as a symbol of your connection with and openness to God) and say, "Holy Spirit, please take all my life and work in me whatever you want." Say it again.



READING 2: GOD'S SPIRIT BRINGS TRUTH

orientate

I am not a 'handy' sort of person. I have very few skills when it comes to building or repairing things. Fortunately, I have some good mates who can help me out when I need to fix something around the house. It makes such a difference having capable and experienced "helpers." In today's Scripture, Jesus called the Spirit a "Helper." His disciples were really worried about how they'd go without Jesus around. Perhaps you are too? How on earth are you going to be and do all that God wants? Well they didn't need to be concerned and neither do you. Jesus explained why.

explore

John 16:5-15

5 But now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 6 Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. 7 But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: 9 about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;

11 and about judgement, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

12 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What are the roles of the Spirit mentioned in this Scripture?

reflect

There are a few ways that different Bible versions translate the word, "Helper." Some translate it, "Counsellor" and others "Advocate." The original word was used for someone who helped you out if you were in trouble with the law. Basically, it meant someone who would assist you when you were out of your depth. Jesus is telling his mates that while his leaving felt disappointing to them, it would actually open the way for the Spirit to help them out from within. These guys would no longer need the physical presence and words of Jesus to guide them. God would be speaking through his Spirit.

In this passage, Jesus particularly focuses on the Spirit's role in helping us with truth. He speaks to the hearts of not-yet Christians to convict of sin.

You may have already experienced this work of the Spirit in coming to faith in Jesus. But particularly, he guides Christians into truth. He helps us understand what God is saying. We don't have to work it all out ourselves.

This doesn't mean that every time you get an idea or feeling it's from the Holy Spirit. It could just be an overactive imagination or indigestion. But you will find that as you read Scripture, or listen to a sermon, or worship God, something suddenly grabs your mind or heart and you recognise that this is God speaking specially to you. This is your Helper doing his job.

pray

There is so much to understand and experience as a Christian. Sometimes I feel that I will never get it all right. But thank you Holy Spirit for being there to help me grow in my understanding and my life. Please convict me when I'm doing wrong and teach me how to live for Jesus. I'm listening.

respond

Have a quick look again at today's reading and devotion. Is there anything that the Spirit is really impressing on you now? Try to listen to the quiet whispers of the Spirit throughout today.

READING 3: GOD'S SPIRIT BRINGS LIFE

orientate

Many years ago (when I was at Uni), there were a lot of people having special experiences of the Spirit. God was really at work powerfully through his Spirit and it was an exciting time. The trouble was that some people began to say that unless you had these special experiences you didn't really have God's Spirit living in you. They argued that the Spirit comes into Christians as some kind of second experience that you have to ask for.

Well while fresh experiences of God's Spirit are wonderful; these people were wrong. The Scripture you are reading today rules out the idea that some Christians have God's Spirit and others don't. As Paul says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). Jesus and God's Spirit come together of course, whether you have a special experience or not.

explore

Romans 8:9-14

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your

mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What help does Paul say that God's Spirit provides?

reflect

Romans 8 is an incredible passage of Scripture. We've already looked at some readings from this great chapter. When you get a chance, read the whole thing. In this section, Paul (the author) is outlining the ways in which God's Spirit, who lives in all believers, brings them life. In this Scripture, I can see two ways in which he brings life to us.

First, God's Spirit is a down payment and guarantee that we will live forever (11). We already have God's presence in our lives and therefore death is only going to impact our mortal bodies. Our physical death will just be a pathway to an even better life that God's Spirit will provide for us. So God's Spirit in us provides us with eternal life, ensuring our future with God.

Second, God's Spirit helps us in our battle with sin (12-13). He brings life and freedom to us so that we don't have to give in to sin and its painful consequences. He leads us and protects us and gradually kills off our brokenness so that we begin to look more like Jesus. So with the help of God's Spirit, we experience more of God's life now. Third, God's Spirit keeps telling us that we are God's kids (14). That God is not someone to be feared or held at arm's length.

We have a dad who welcomes us with open arms and promises us all that he gives Jesus. The Spirit (who is God of course) whispers away in our hearts until we begin to appreciate this incredible family life we have through Christ.

pray

Thanks Holy Spirit for the life you are opening up to me – guaranteeing my future, helping me in my battle with sin, and assisting me in loving my heavenly Dad. May I listen more and more to your quiet whispers and appreciate my precious relationship with God and its implications.

respond

Pick one of the ways the Spirit brings life to you: Life forever (8:11), freedom from sin (8:13), or life as God's kid (8:14).

Write out the verse (on your phone or on a piece of paper), repeat it aloud at least five times, and take it with you today.

READING 4: GOD'S SPIRIT BRINGS FRUIT

orientate

Despite having God's Spirit living in me, there is still something of the old nature there as well. This old nature is very attracted by sin and doesn't want to listen to the Spirit at all. I often have this conflict between the old and the new going on within me. If you feel the same way, it's not because you are particularly bad or disobedient. It's the way we often experience Christian life in a broken world. But there is good news in today's Scripture.

explore

Galatians 5:16-26

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What is the good news in this Scripture?

reflect

You are in the process of change from doing your own thing to following Jesus. It's sometimes called "sanctification" or being made holy like Jesus. It takes a lifetime. As God's Spirit works in your life, change does happen. He brings beautiful fruit to your life - you become more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled. Give God's Spirit time and space in your life and this is what he always does. He makes you more like Jesus. That's his job. Be patient. It is happening through God's Spirit in you.

But in this passage, Paul doesn't let us completely off the hook. While the character changes are the Spirit's work, we need to cooperate and do our part. We are called to do two main things:

1. Crucify our old nature (5:24). We are to take our broken self and nail it to the cross. We are to turn our back on our selfishness and sin and reject it completely. The cross analogy suggests that this will be pitiless, painful and decisive. We must leave our old nature to die. This must be ruthless and uncompromising. We did this when we turned to Jesus, but every day the old nature rears its ugly face again, and we repent. Saying sorry to God and turning our back on our old nature, we leave it to die, crucified. We're not going to pull out those nails of our enemy and release it from its cross.

2. Walk by the Spirit (5:16, 18, 25). We actively choose to walk the Spirit's way. We listen to his voice and follow his desires. There are a number of different ways that Paul describes this: "walk in the Spirit," "be led by the Spirit," "live in the Spirit," and "keep in step with the Spirit." As a young person, I was involved in Boys' Brigade. We were taught to march in line, keeping in perfect step with each other. That's the idea here. We choose to walk in line with God's Spirit.

pray

Lord you are at work in my life and sometimes I can see that I really am becoming more like you. This is not my doing, but the beautiful work of your Spirit in me. Please help me to play my part in this transformation process by daily turning my back on my old desires and actively walking in line with your Spirit's leading. I commit myself to this.

respond

Choose some aspect of your broken, old nature that is plaguing you and choose to nail it back up to the cross again right now. Repent and ask God's forgiveness and turn your back on it so that you can walk in line with the precious and gracious Spirit of God.

READING 5: GOD'S SPIRIT BRINGS POWER

orientate

No-one would have held much hope for the impact of the Jesus gospel once he was gone. Jesus left a group of terrified tradies who had already shown their lack of understanding and stickability. You wouldn't really say that they were able or ready to take the world by storm. I'm not saying these guys didn't have faith, but they were by no means world-beaters. They weren't at all ready or wanting to take this new faith to an antagonistic empire. The future of Christianity looked bleak in the hands of these ordinary country folk. But God's Spirit changed all that.

explore

Acts 1:4-9

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

journal

1. What is God saying to me? Which verse is most significant?
2. What do I want to discuss/explore further?
3. What do I need to do?
4. What sort of power was Jesus talking about?

reflect

This event occurred between Jesus' resurrection from the tomb and his ascension to heaven. He was just tidying everything up before he left. Jesus wanted his mates to know that there was a radical, world-changing event about to occur. He called it being "baptised with the Holy Spirit." Baptised means "dunked" or "immersed." So his disciples were about to be swamped by the Spirit. (As we have already learned, the same thing happens to each of us when we believe in Jesus.) As Jesus pointed out, what was going to happen to the kingdom of Israel was not important to these Jewish boys. What mattered was that they were going to be immersed in God's Spirit.

And the result was going to be "power." The Spirit brings God's power into our lives. The incredible power that created the whole of the universe, that raised up and extinguished empires, that culminated with Jesus being raised from the dead.

This power is in believers. And you should see the difference it made for these guys.

They were courageous. They were strong. They were outspoken. They were faith-filled. And the world began to be turned upside down through the gospel of Jesus. Ordinary people saturated in the power of the Spirit are spiritually unstoppable. (But remember that it comes with a cost – almost all of them became martyrs for their faith.)

The same Spirit is living in you. You are no longer a slave to fear or weakness or sin or shame or condemnation. You are not trapped by your past or your personality. Like these early disciples of Jesus, you are baptised in the Spirit and you have his power to change, love unconditionally, share this wonderful good news, and impact your world.

pray

Lord most of the time I feel very ordinary and that's probably good because it keeps me dependent on you. But you are not ordinary and your Spirit living in me is not ordinary. Please pour out your courage and strength and faith into my life through the power of your Spirit in me. Lord may my faith and my life impact my world.

respond

I don't think the Holy Spirit's power is something that we have to grasp, but more to wait for and to look for. As you rest in God's Spirit today, look for evidences of his power through your life. Look for anything that happens that is God's doing more than yours.

Discussion QUESTIONS

Use these questions to discuss with a mentor or group what God has shown you in this study

Reading 1: The Coming of God's Spirit (Acts 2:1-12)

1. Any reflections or questions on Reading 1? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
2. What was the significance of the way in which God's Spirit came? How does the Spirit come now?

Reading 2: God's Spirit Brings Truth (John 16:5-15)

3. Any reflections or questions on Reading 2? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
4. What are the roles of the Spirit mentioned in this Scripture? How does he do this for you?

Reading 3: God's Spirit Brings Life (Romans 8:9-17)

5. Any reflections or questions on Reading 3? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
6. What help does God's Spirit provide? In which area do you need most help?

Reading 4: God's Spirit Brings Fruit (Galatians 5:16-26)

7. Any reflections or questions on Reading 4? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
8. Which fruit of the Spirit is most growing in your life at the moment?

Reading 5: God's Spirit Brings Power (Acts 1:4-9)

9. Any reflections or questions on Reading 5? What did you learn? Which verse was most significant?
10. What sort of power is God's Spirit giving to you? What power would you like?

11. Share what you now know about the role of God's Spirit in your life.

12. How are you going spiritually and personally? What other things would you like to talk about?

