

The final step in laying a foundation for your pursuit of God is to simply start reading the Bible. The New Testament is the second half of the Bible, and it focuses specifically on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Though the entire Bible is important, it's helpful to start with the New Testament. After you've read it a couple of times, you'll be ready to start the Old Testament – which finds fulfillment in what you read here.

You're encouraged to complete this step with a friend or in a group. Try to stay on schedule as you each read on your own, and touch base every couple of weeks using the discussion questions here as a guide. You won't understand everything in the NT your first time through, so we've included a focus for each week to help you connect the readings to the axioms from 201. For additional commentary and useful sermon links, visit rednotes.org/301.

WEEK 1

- John 1-2
- John 3-4
- John 5-6
- John 7-8
- John 9-10

THE DEITY OF JESUS | Axioms 1 and 3

One of the major teachings in the NT is that Jesus is God. In the first week of our reading we are confronted with this truth. From the opening words of John to Jesus' tense words with a hostile crowd, we learn that Jesus is unlike anyone who has come before or since. He is God.

WEEK 2

- John 11-12
- John 13-15
- John 16-17
- John 18-19
- John 20-21

THE CROSS | Axiom 3

The cross is central to the Christian message. It represents suffering and death. But ultimately it represents the forgiveness and new life we have in Jesus. Read "101" again and thank God for the power of the cross.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do we learn about Jesus the Word in John 1:1-18?
2. Read John 8:24. According to Jesus, what do we have to do to be saved? How did the crowd respond to Jesus' words?
3. Discuss the moment you first put your faith in Jesus.

WEEK 3

- Acts 1-2
- Acts 3-4
- Acts 5-6
- Acts 7-8
- Acts 9-10

THE CHURCH | Axioms 4 and 10

The book of Acts describes the beginning of the Christian church. When Jesus left, he gave his followers a mission: to help people pursue God. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the message of Jesus spread quickly, and the early church exploded in growth.

WEEK 4

- Acts 11-12
- Acts 13-15
- Galatians 1-2
- Galatians 3-4
- Galatians 5-6

JEWS AND GENTILES | Axiom 3

The church started off as a Jewish movement but quickly included Gentiles (non-Jews). The church leaders grappled with an important question: Did Gentiles have to accept the Jewish religion to become Christians? Traditionally, Gentile converts to Judaism were required to be circumcised. Was this still necessary now that Jesus had come? These chapters explain the shocking answer that changed the church forever.

Questions for Discussion

1. List all the ways we see the Holy Spirit at work in the early church.
2. Why do you think the early church grew so quickly?
3. The apostle Paul wrote Galatians to combat the dangerous teaching of the “Judaizers” - men who taught that Gentiles had to follow all of the Jewish rules to become Christians. How did Paul respond to that teaching?

Notes

WEEK 5

- 1 Thessalonians 1-3
- 1 Thessalonians 4-5
- 2 Thessalonians 1-3
- 1 Corinthians 1
- 1 Corinthians 2-3

LIVING TO PLEASE GOD | Axioms 1 and 2

The Christian life isn't always going to be easy. In fact, it's often very difficult. In the midst of life's struggles, temptations, and persecutions, following Jesus can seem impossible. Paul wrote these letters to the Thessalonian church to teach them how to live lives pleasing to God in the midst of life's struggles.

WEEK 6

- 1 Corinthians 4-6
- 1 Corinthians 7-8
- 1 Corinthians 9-10
- 1 Corinthians 11-12
- 1 Corinthians 13-14

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH | Axioms 6-8

The Corinthians thought church was all about them. Instead of being a place where people pursued God, the church was marked by selfishness, sexual immorality and a denial of the power of the cross. Paul combats their false ideas by restoring the true purpose of the church. The church wasn't there to serve them. Instead, God had made them part of the church to serve others and glorify Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

1. According to 1 and 2 Thessalonians, how does our future hope in heaven enable us to live to please God on earth?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12 again. How has God equipped you to be part of the team in your church?
3. How have you traditionally viewed church? Is it a place to get your needs met? Is it a place to serve God and others? Is it both?

Notes

WEEK 7

- 1 Corinthians 15-16
- 2 Corinthians 1-2
- 2 Corinthians 3-4
- 2 Corinthians 5-6
- 2 Corinthians 7-8

THE NEW COVENANT | Axioms 4 and 10
God works with his people through covenants. During the time of Moses, God had made a covenant with Israel – promising blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Israel was never able to obey God, but God had already planned something better. Through Jesus, a new covenant was introduced where God’s Spirit lives in us, enabling us to live as God desires and bring others to faith in Christ.

WEEK 8

- 2 Corinthians 9-10
- 2 Corinthians 11-12
- 2 Cor 13, James 1
- James 2-3
- James 4-5

EVERYDAY CHRISTIANITY | Axioms 2 and 9
James was a practical kind of guy. He was concerned with seeing what our faith looked like in everyday life. As a result, James left us this handy book on how to live wisely as a Christian. Notice how God wants us to live in regard to our money, our speech, our relationships and a whole array of other areas in life.

Questions for Discussion

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:20-21. What does it mean to be Christ’s ambassadors?
2. Read James 2:14-17. What kind of “faith” does James describe in these verses? How does James envision our faith working itself out in our lives?
3. Choose one of the areas in the Christian life that James mentions (speech, money, etc). What are some steps you can take to grow in this area?

Notes

WEEK 9

- Matthew 1-2
- Matthew 3-4
- Matthew 5-6
- Matthew 7-8
- Matthew 9-10

DISCIPLESHIP | Axioms 2, 5, 9

The first part of Matthew contains the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7), the most famous teaching of Jesus in the NT. It shows how following Jesus changes every part of our lives: our actions, our relationships, our attitudes and our thoughts. Nothing is left unchanged when we follow Jesus.

WEEK 10

- Matthew 11-12
- Matthew 13-14
- Matthew 15-16
- Matthew 17-18
- Matthew 19-20

THE IDENTITY OF JESUS | Axiom 3

Who is Jesus? A good teacher, a prophet, something else? Matthew confronts us with a startling picture of Jesus. Jesus teaches with an authority that no human could possess. He has power over demons, creation, and disease. Through the careful telling of Jesus' story, the author gives us Jesus' true identity. He is God.

Questions for Discussion

1. What aspect of the Sermon on the Mount is most challenging to you? Why?
2. Why do you think Jesus wants us to come to him like a child (Matt. 18:2-4)?
3. Read Matthew 18:10-14. What is the point of this parable? What does it teach us about God?

Notes

WEEK 11

- Matthew 21-22
- Matthew 23-24
- Matthew 25-26
- Matthew 27-28
- Acts 16-18

ACCEPTING JESUS | Axiom 3

Jesus had some harsh things to say at the end of Matthew for those who reject him. He taught that those who believe in him would find eternal life, but warned that those who reject him will receive eternal separation from God. The last chapters of Matthew remind us why it is so important to have both the right information about Jesus and the right attitude toward him. Our eternity depends on it (see 101).

WEEK 12

- Acts 19-20
- Acts 21-22
- Acts 23-24
- Acts 25-26
- Acts 27-28

MAKING DISCIPLES | Axioms 4 and 10

The last half of Acts records the spread of the church all over the Roman empire. In fact, the church extends all the way to Rome, the world's capital at the time. The end of Acts reminds us that we are called to carry out God's mission in the world: to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion

1. Read Matthew 24:36-44. How does Jesus describe his return? How can we be prepared for it?
2. How does God use Paul's imprisonment to further the growth of the church? Have you seen God use trials like this in your life?
3. Why do you think God allows Christians to suffer and face persecution?

Notes

WEEK 13

- Romans 1-2
- Romans 3-4
- Romans 5-6
- Romans 7-8
- Romans 9-10

JUSTIFICATION | Axioms 3 and 4

If Paul has a masterpiece, it is the book of Romans. Romans covers the broad sweep of the Christian life: salvation, sanctification, and glorification. But at the heart of the book of Romans is justification: the moment that we put our faith in Jesus, God declares us righteous because the work of Jesus is credited to us. In that moment, we are forgiven of our sins and made right before God. It's our defining moment (101).

WEEK 14

- Romans 11-12
- Romans 13-14
- Romans 15-16
- Philippians 1-2
- Philippians 3-4

JOY | Axioms 3 and 5

Notice something about the book of Philippians. Paul wrote it from prison. In fact, he wasn't far from death. But consider the main theme of Philippians: joy. No matter what the circumstance, Paul teaches us to be filled with joy. Because we have an eternal hope in heaven, we can have everlasting joy.

Questions for Discussion

1. According to Romans, where do we see people justified by faith in the Old Testament (Rom 4)? What does this teach us about salvation?
2. Read Romans 12:2. What does Paul mean by "the renewing of your mind"? What needs to occur in the life of a Christian for this to happen?
3. Describe a circumstance in your life that has caused you stress. How can you apply Paul's instruction to rejoice (Phil 4) in your trial?

Notes

WEEK 15

- Ephesians 1-2
- Ephesians 3-4
- Ephesians 5-6
- Colossians 1-2
- Colossians 3-4

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE WORLD | Axioms 3 and 6
In Ephesians and Colossians, we learn about God's plan for the world. This plan began before creation and will find its fulfillment when Jesus returns. In the meantime, Paul gives us a vision of God's desire for our churches, our families and even our occupations – all transformed by the work of Christ.

WEEK 16

- Philemon, 1 Timothy 1
- 1 Timothy 2-4
- 1 Timothy 5-6
- 2 Timothy 1-2
- 2 Timothy 3-4

SOUND DOCTRINE | Axioms 1, 3, 6
Paul writes the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus to two young men whom he knew very well. Although they were young, Paul had entrusted to them the work of leading churches. Unfortunately, both churches were plagued by false teachers who taught false doctrine. In these letters, we learn just how important theology really is and how dependent we are on the Bible for that theology.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does God's ideal for the family (Eph 5) compare to the type of family you grew up in?
2. Take note of Paul's prayers in Ephesians and Colossians. What does he pray for? How can these insights help shape your prayer life?
3. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what function does the Bible play in the life of a Christian?

Notes

WEEK 17

- Titus 1-2
- Titus 3, Mark 1
- Mark 2-3
- Mark 4-5
- Mark 6-7

JESUS THE SERVANT | Axiom 7

The gospel of Mark focuses on the role of Jesus as a servant. In his fast-paced style, Mark highlights for us how Jesus came to serve and save people. As God, he could have come with the full regalia of royalty. But that was not Jesus' mission. He came to serve and save people. How much more should we serve as we point others to Jesus?

WEEK 18

- Mark 8-9
- Mark 10-11
- Mark 12-13
- Mark 14
- Mark 15-16

THE CROSS | Axioms 3 and 7

Notice how Mark's Gospel always has the crucifixion in view. Why did Mark make the crucifixion so central to telling the story of Jesus? Because it is at the cross that Jesus took on our sins and paid the penalty we deserved. Salvation is only made possible through the cross.

Questions for Discussion

1. Read Mark 10:45. How do we see this lived out by Jesus in the gospels?
2. Why do you think Jesus kept his identity hidden from the crowd for much of his ministry?
3. How can you grow as a servant to others?

Notes

WEEK 19

- Hebrews 1-3
- Hebrews 4-6
- Hebrews 7-9
- Hebrews 10-11
- Hebrews 12-13

THE END OF RELIGION | Axiom 3

The author of Hebrews understood that the work of Christ was the end of religion. By this we mean that because of the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross, we don't find salvation through religious rituals and ceremonies. We don't even find it through being good. We only find it through Jesus.

WEEK 20

- 1 Peter 1-3
- 1 Peter 4-5, 2 Peter 1
- 2 Peter 2-3, Jude
- 1 John 1-3
- 1 John 4-5, 2 Jn, 3 Jn

TRUTH AND LOVE | Axioms 3, 4, 7

This week we read several little books that we find at the end of the New Testament. Together, these books teach us to uphold truth and love. On the one hand, we need to be defenders of the faith. Theology matters and what we believe about Jesus determines our eternal destiny. But truth is not all that is important. Love is the characteristic that is meant to mark the Christian. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13, without love we have nothing.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think it's so tempting for people to try to save themselves through religion? Has this been a temptation in your life?
2. Read Jude 1:3. What does it mean to contend for the faith?
3. Read 1 John 3:18. How can we love others "with actions and in truth"?

Notes

WEEK 21

- Revelation 1-2
- Revelation 3-5
- Revelation 6-7
- Revelation 8-9
- Revelation 10-11

AUTHENTIC WORSHIP | Axiom 5

Most people think of Revelation as a book about the end of the world. And it's certainly that. However, in the opening chapters of the book we see the greatest worship service in the history of the world break out as God is worshiped in his throne room.

WEEK 22

- Revelation 12-13
- Revelation 14-16
- Revelation 17-18
- Revelation 19-20
- Revelation 21-22

GOD'S LOVE WINS | Axiom 3

God gives us the end of the story before we experience it. That's what we read about in the second part of Revelation. But notice what happens in the story. The love and power of God triumphs over the forces of evil. Jesus vanquishes death, sin and Satan forever. God's justice crushes his enemies. As a result, Christians experience God's love, joy and peace for all eternity.

Questions for Discussion

1. Draw and label the circles of worship around God's throne in Revelation 4-5. What do you notice about the worship described in these chapters?
2. How is the description of heaven at the end of Revelation similar or different than what you thought heaven would be like?
3. What are several things that you most look forward to about heaven? Why?

Notes

WEEK 23

- Luke 1-2
- Luke 3-5
- Luke 6-7
- Luke 8-9
- Luke 10-12

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE | Axiom 4

Jesus led a life filled with the Spirit. Luke points this out more clearly than any other gospel. Jesus' whole life was lived out under the power of the Spirit. Notice in Luke what the Christian life can look like as it is propelled by the Holy Spirit.

WEEK 24

- Luke 13-15
- Luke 16-18
- Luke 19-20
- Luke 21-22
- Luke 23-24

THE RESURRECTION | Axioms 3, 8, 10

Jesus didn't stay dead. No, he came back from the dead to demonstrate that he really is the Son of God. As such he grants authority to his followers to carry out his mission to the ends of the world, empowered by his Spirit, glorifying the Father.

Questions for Discussion

1. List all the times in Luke the Spirit is mention in connection with Jesus' life. What kinds of things did the Spirit help Jesus to accomplish?
2. What does it mean that as Christians we have the same Spirit living in us that lived inside of Jesus?
3. Read Luke 24:45-49. What does this teach us about Jesus' mission? How can we help fulfill Jesus' mission?

Notes