

Foundations for the Church

Pastor's Workbook



SCBAPTIST

Table of Contents

Introduction to Foundations for the Church	3
Prayer	4
Evangelism/Outreach	9
Discipleship	14

Introduction to *Foundations for the Church*



Foundations for the Church is designed in such a way to allow pastors with busy schedules to consider several key topics that are essential for healthy congregations. With short monthly time commitments and short semester tenures, pastors can continue their leadership and ministry development in small increments in a cohort setting.

- Four Sessions per module
- Flexible pastor study to prepare for cohort
- 90-minute cohort (in-person or online)
- Options for additional fellowship times

Pastor Study (60-90 minutes) -> **Cohort Session** (90 minutes)

Foundations for the Church - Module One Sessions

Session	Topic
1	<i>Orientation</i>
2	<i>Prayer</i>
3	<i>Evangelism/Outreach</i>
4	<i>Discipleship</i>

Prayer

God has always communicated with His creation. From one of the first recorded conversations with Adam in the garden in Genesis 3 to the conversations He is having with people today, God has conversations with His creation. In this lesson, we will look at a few scriptures that help us understand how great men of God learned to pray and how they practiced praying. The goal is for you to dig deep into your experience of prayer with God and be able to verbalize and practice what God says to him about the church he is leading. The ability to hear from God clearly and train others to hear is the foundation upon which the process of strengthening local congregations. Here's a thought to guide your study: "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous pastor will provide steadfast support for a faithful congregation."

Foundation Building Outcomes:

- The pastor will take a serious look at his prayer life and establish a biblical pattern of prayer which can be a model for his congregation.
- The pastor will develop a prayer strategy for himself and the congregation.

Wisdom Resource: Gospel Coalition's *Every Day Pastor* podcast, "The Praying Pastor" with Matt Smethurst and Ligon Duncan, March 31, 2025. (37 minutes) [Podcast Link](#)

Additional Related Resources for Further Study:

1. Morning Sacrifice: Devotions for Revitalization by SCBaptist ([Link](#))
2. *Three Steps to Powerful Prayer in Your Church* ([Article Link](#))
3. "Our Need of Prayer," by Tom Elliff ([Podcast Link](#))
4. Praying the Bible by Donald Whitney (Book)
5. Developing a Powerful Praying Church by Richard Blackaby and Rick Fisher (Book)

Truth

There is overwhelming Biblical evidence of prayer's importance to God. With all but five books in the Bible mentioning or recording prayers, and over 1100 verses on prayer in the Bible, we can conclude that prayer should be of ultimate importance to us.

In all of history, no one's prayers have been read, prayed, or studied more than those of our Lord Jesus. His practice of prayer is to be modeled in every way. Though we can learn much from the prayers of Jesus in the scriptures, the most famous and maybe the most meaningful for our purpose is the Lord's Prayer, and sometimes called the Model Prayer or the Disciples' Prayer.

- Read and think about the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17:1-26
- Questions for Reflection:
 - As you read Jesus' prayer, what captured your attention most?

 - What is the focus of Jesus' prayer in verses 1-5?

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- If you were to follow Jesus' pattern of prayer in verses 6-19 for the congregation you serve, what might be some of your requests before God?

 - As you review Jesus' prayer in John 17, how is God challenging you to strengthen your prayer life?

Wisdom

Listen/Read the podcast "The Praying Pastor" with Matt Smethurst and Ligon Duncan, Episode 21 of Gospel Coalition's *Every Day Pastor*, March 31, 2025. ([Direct link](#) to audio or transcript, 37 minutes). *Also available on Spotify or iTunes.*

- Questions for Reflection:
 - Who is teaching you or has taught you to pray? What did they do to help you learn how to pray?

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- Would you describe your prayer life as fervent and effective? Why or why not?

 - Which of the ideas and principles for strengthening your prayer life mentioned in the podcast would you like to explore further?

Context

Let's help you apply what you have learned in two areas:

- Questions for Reflection: *Your Life*
 - What is one way you could strengthen your prayer life over the next 30 days?

 - What specifically would you need to do?

- What specifically would you need to do?

Evangelism/Outreach

How's your evangelistic zeal, pastor? How faithful are your members to share the gospel whenever they work or live? Several recent surveys have reported a lack of evangelism among church members. With ample opportunities for training and resources and a growing number of unchurched neighbors, one could easily suppose evangelism would be an ongoing practice of our church members, but it's not.¹

As ministry leaders and followers of Christ, the command to do the work of an evangelist and fulfill our ministry begins with us (2 Tim. 4:5). So for a few moments, let's turn our attention to our faithfulness to share the good news of Jesus as we seek to equip God's people to do the same.

Foundation Building Outcomes:

- Renewed and increased pastoral faithfulness to the evangelistic task in his immediate context and community.
- In a practical sense, this exercise will also help pastors think of quality, everyday methods to make evangelistic zeal more natural for them and their flocks.

Wisdom Resource:

"The Last and Final Call," by Pastor Voddie Baucham. ([Sermon Link](#), 50 minutes). Also available on Spotify or YouTube.

Additional Related Resources for Further Study:

1. *Three Circles - Drawing the Gospel* by Adam Venture ([Video Link](#), [Resource Link](#))
2. "How to Create a Culture of Evangelism and Outreach in Your Church" with Scott Ball and A.J. Mathieu ([Podcast/Article Link](#))
3. Creating a Culture of Evangelism Online Course by NAMB ([Link](#))
4. Who's Your One? An Evangelism Initiative for the Church ([Link](#))

¹ Christians Say They're Seeking but not Having Evangelistic Conversations. Lifeway Research. 2022. <https://research.lifeway.com/2022/05/24/christians-say-theyre-seeking-but-not-having-evangelistic-conversations/>

Truth

Consider how God's Word prioritizes evangelism and mission. From the gospel we watch as Jesus travels and teaches about the Kingdom of God. Then he commissions the disciples to make disciples reproducing what they observed in his life and ministry. Then the Holy Spirit comes in Acts 2, and the early church is started and sent to surrounding communities to share the good news of Jesus and the apostle's teachings. Then God provides a record of the first missionary journeys as the gospel is proclaimed in other regions by faithful men who have been changed by God. And the story of God's Kingdom advancement has continued through many generations until it intersected our lives today in preparation for the fulfillment of Revelation 7:9-12. We, who have been changed by this gospel and been entrusted with this gospel, must devote our lives to sharing this gospel.

- Read Acts 17 and reflect on God's priority of evangelism and mission as you consider both the personal implications and the opportunities to strengthen the outreach ministry of the congregation you serve.
- Questions for Reflection:
 - *What catches your attention as you observe Paul's efforts to evangelize in Acts 17?*
 - *How would you describe Paul's efforts to explain the gospel to others?*

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- *What might have been some of Paul's motivations for his actions in Acts 17?*

 - *How is God leading you to respond in obedience to his Word?*

 - *How is God prompting you to pray as you reflect on this passage and your current circumstances?*

Wisdom

Listen to the sermon "The Last and Final Call," by Voddie Baucham. ([Sermon Link](#), 50 minutes). Also available on Spotify or YouTube.

- Questions for Reflection:
 - In what ways does this example of an evangelistic sermon encourage you to be faithful to declare the gospel?

that there is good news because God has provided an answer in the person and work of Jesus Christ.” ~Voddie Baucham²

Context

Let's help you apply what you have learned in two areas:

- Questions for Reflection: *Your Life*
 - In what ways are you currently “fulfilling your work as an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5)?

 - How would God have you strengthen your evangelistic fervor?

- Questions for Reflection: *The Outreach Ministry of the Church*
 - What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the church's current outreach ministry?

 - What would it take to strengthen the evangelistic fervor and mission of the congregation you serve?

² Voddie Baucham, *Sharing the Gospel is Easier than You Think*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKIYSo0KbPY>

“Evangelism is not an optional accessory to our life. It is the heartbeat of all that we are called to be and do. It is the commission of the church that gives meaning to all else that is undertaken in the name of Christ.”

— Robert E. Coleman

Discipleship

Understanding the heart of our Savior in terms of walking with others along the lifelong journey of making disciples is a key to strengthening the mission and ministries in the local church and in your community context. As people who have been changed and being changed by God's grace, we are called to make disciples wherever God has placed us so that others may be reconciled to God. The question for us as discipling leaders in God's Church is two-fold: 1) How has God positioned us best to make disciples? 2) How can we equip other church members to make disciples and create a culture of discipleship in our context?

Foundation Building Outcomes:

- Pastoral leaders will consider and strengthen their role as discipler.
- Pastoral leaders will develop and implement a plan for strengthening the discipleship ministries of the local church.

Wisdom Resource:

How to Create a Discipleship Plan for an Established Church by Ken Braddy, Lifeway (Article)

Additional Related Resources for Further Study:

1. *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual: How to Build Churches That Make Disciples* by Jim Putman, Bill Krause, Avery Willis, and Brandon Guindon (Book)
2. *Replicate: How to Create a Culture of Disciple-Making Right Where You Are* by Robby Gallaty and Chris Swain (Book)
3. *Grow a Disciple-Making Culture in Your Church* by Godwin Sathianathan (Article, [The Gospel Coalition](#))
4. *Beyond the Pulpit: Embracing Personal Disciple-Making* by Jim Putman ([Video](#))

- Read Luke 9:23-26; Matthew 28:18-20
- Questions for Reflection:
 - Based on these verses, what specific phrases would you use to describe the lifestyle of a Christ-follower?
 - For those who answered the call to follow Christ, what changes would they have to make to become a disciple? (Be specific.)
 - If you were to create a definition for disciple based on these 2 passages, what might it be?

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- Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7; 2 Peter 1:3-11
 - Questions for Reflection:
 - What are 3 applications regarding discipleship you can make from these passages?

 - Review your definition for disciple from above then draft an answer using insight from the passages you've reviewed to the question, "What is Biblical discipleship?"

Wisdom Resource:

While there is an abundance of resources related to Christian discipleship, we sought to find a resource that helps pastors ask key questions to strengthen the current disciple making efforts of their unique context. Every church has a plan for discipleship (intentional or unintentional), but not every church is effectively making disciples.

Read the attached article, *How to Create a Discipleship Plan for an Established Church* by Ken Braddy and utilize the below questions for reflection.

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- Questions for Reflection:
 - After reading Ken Braddy's article, which of the four points best reflects your current need? Why?

 - What is one way you could apply what you read?

 - If you could ask the author or other practitioners one question related to the article, what would be your question?

Context

Let's help you apply what you have learned in two areas:

- Questions for Reflection: *Your Life*
 - What next step is God leading you to take to become more effective in your personal efforts to make disciples?

 - Take a moment and record a realistic goal for disciple making.

 - What's your plan of action to reach your goal?

- Questions for Reflection: *The Discipleship Ministry of the Church*
 - What next step is God leading you to explore further with other leaders in the church so that some of the members become more effective in making disciples?

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- Take a moment and record a realistic goal for equipping others to become disciple makers.

- What's your plan of action to reach your goal?

"There are people who need you to answer the call of disciple making. Because something about who you are and how you relate to God speaks to who they are and how God relates to them."³

³ Jessie Cruickshank, *Ordinary Discipleship: How God Wires Us for the Adventure of Transformation*.

How to Create a Discipleship Plan for an Established Church

by Ken Braddy, Lifeway

An established church carries something precious: history. Over the years, people have prayed in those rooms, cried in those pews, laughed in those hallways, and learned to trust God through ordinary Sundays and unexpected storms. That kind of legacy is a gift.

And yet, the longer a church has been around, the easier it is for discipleship to become assumed rather than designed. We can have plenty of good ministries and still struggle to answer a basic question: Are we intentionally helping people become more like Jesus, and do we have a clear way to do that together?

A discipleship plan doesn't replace the church's story. It helps the story continue with clarity. It brings alignment to what you're already doing, identifies what's missing, and gives leaders and members a shared language for growth.

1) DISCOVER: Begin with a clear, biblical picture of discipleship.

Many churches “do discipleship” the same way families “do dinner.” It happens, but if you can't describe what you're aiming for, you'll get inconsistent results. Before you map steps or choose resources, define what you mean by discipleship. We believe Scripture is the best place to start.

Start simple. Look deeply into both testaments, because the word “walk” is found in both and we see the concept of walking with God in both. Discover what Scripture says about who disciples are, what they do, and how they're formed.

Jesus's call in the Great Commission isn't merely to make converts, but to make disciples – people who learn from Him, obey Him, and help others do the same. Discipleship includes belief, yes, but it also includes transformation: heart, habits, relationships, and mission.

A helpful exercise is to answer this sentence as a team: “In our church, a disciple is someone who is increasingly....”

Try to keep it grounded and observable. For example: increasingly abiding in Christ, living in community, serving with humility, and joining God's mission. Your wording will vary, but clarity is the key.

Then ask: What does a maturing disciple look like here? Not in theory but in your context with your people, in your neighborhood, with your church's strengths and limitations.

During this phase of the DisciplesPath process, you'll discover eight signposts of discipleship based on Lifeway Research's *State of Discipleship* study.⁴ These eight signposts are markers, indicators that a person is growing as a disciple.

The pastor and his team can take their observations from Scripture, combine that with the eight signposts of discipleship, and define what they believe a disciple is, does, and how he or she is formed.

When you can describe the destination, you can now examine your current pathway.

2) DISCERN: Take an honest look at your current reality.

Established churches usually have a lot going on – Sunday services, classes, small groups, choirs, mission efforts, student ministry, women's studies, men's breakfasts and more. That activity often represents genuine faithfulness. At the same time, activity can hide gaps.

So do an inventory. List every regular discipleship-related touchpoint in your church. Then ask a few diagnostic questions:

- Where do you consistently see spiritual growth?
- Where do people tend to plateau?
- What ministries are fruitful but disconnected from everything else?
- Who's being formed well, and who's quietly slipping through the cracks?

Don't do this in a spirit of critique. Do it in a spirit of stewardship. You are simply trying to see clearly.

Also, listen widely. Sit with small group leaders. Talk with newer believers, not just long-time members. Ask your staff what they see. Invite honest feedback from mature saints who love the church enough to tell the truth kindly.

If you only assess your church through attendance numbers, you'll miss what's happening in people's hearts. Stories matter here. Pay attention to patterns and testimonies. Discern how your church is doing in obedience to the mandate from Jesus to go and make disciples.

3) DESIGN: Name the key components of your church's future discipleship plan.

People want to grow, but they don't know what "next" looks like. A discipleship plan should make the next step visible to those in your church.

⁴ Bible Engagement, Obeying God and Denying Self, Serving God and Others, Sharing Christ, Exercising Faith, Seeking God, Building Relationships, Unashamed.

Source: <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/what-are-the-eight-attributes-of-discipleship>

During this third stage, refer back to the evaluation you conducted in the second stage. Ask:

- How does each ministry help people take a step forward?
- Do these ministries connect naturally to others, or do they function like an island?
- How much will we expect of our people, and what level of engagement should we expect from busy people and their families?
- Are there any gaps in our ministry offerings? If yes, what are they, and should they become an addition to our church discipleship plan?
- Which ministries need to be sunset, which ones should continue, and what new ones should be started?

You'll likely discover you already have strong pieces. The question is whether they form a coherent whole.

List all the ministries your church now plans to offer. You don't need a complicated chart. You just need a shared framework that helps leaders and members answer two questions:

1. Where am I right now?
2. What's a faithful next step?

For example, if I'm a worship attender only, I should know my next step is to commit to a group and begin attending. If I attend worship and a group, my next step might be to take a more intensive short-term study.

Once I've done that, my next step may be to find a place to serve. And once I've done these things, perhaps I should take the step of becoming a missionary to others in my town, state, country, or world.

The point is, people should have an idea what their next step is. The moment people can say, "I think I'm here," they can also hear, "Here's a next step that makes sense."

4) DEPLOY: Implement your church's discipleship pathway.

A discipleship plan only works for a church if people can see and remember it.

Once you've built a clear pathway, communicate it simply and repeatedly. Introduce it in sermons, membership conversations, group leader training, and newcomer materials. Put it on your website. Use consistent language from the stage.

And don't underestimate repetition. In a healthy church, you will say the same clear things over and over, because new people keep arriving and even long-time members need reminders.

Clarity isn't boring. It's pastoral.

Start where you are, and take the next faithful step

If you're waiting to craft the perfect discipleship plan, you'll never start. Most churches build this over time through prayer, conversation, wise adjustment and steady leadership.

Start with a clear definition. Tell the truth about your current reality. Create a simple pathway. Align what you already have. Invest in leaders. Measure wisely. Communicate consistently.

And remember: the aim isn't a polished plan on paper. The aim is a church family where people know how to grow, leaders know how to guide, and the love of Jesus quietly, steadily changes lives.

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For more information regarding DisciplePath visit <https://www.lifeway.com/en/disciplespath>

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