

WILDLY IMPERFECT PRESENTS

KNOWING JESUS: THE FOUNDATIONS



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ABOUT THIS STUDY



WE ALL NEED A SOLID FOUNDATION

I wanted to write this study for y'all with the purpose and intent that you would really learn to know, love, and be loved by our savior. Sometimes when we've grown up in church our whole lives, we miss something fundamental along the way, but everyone just assumes we understand. I want to go back to the basics of who Jesus is and what he has done and continues to do for us.

My prayer and hope is that this study grows our community and that we truly learn how to be sisters in Christ as we grow deeper in our knowledge of and relationship with our savior. My prayer for each and every one of you is that God would use this study and our time to teach you about His amazing grace. He is for you and loves you, as do I.

WEEK 1: COMMUNITY

LUKE 1:26-45 (NLT)

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. 39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- How have you been encouraged by friends in the past when you were going through hard times?
- How have you encouraged friends who were struggling?
- Why is it important to have support?
- What support do you wish you had?
- How can we be that support for each other?



WEEK 1, DAY 1

THE TRINITY

John 14:15-20 (NLT)

"If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."

The Trinity is one of the greatest mysteries in our Christian faith. We all know there is a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but we will spend our whole lives learning and trying to understand how God can be three-in-one. It's not something we will ever fully understand. What we know from the Trinity, however, is that God starts with community. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are fully connected. God values community. He models it for us in the Trinity itself. According to Jesus's words in these verses, we can see a couple of things about the Trinity.

1. Jesus asks his Father and his Father is the one who sends.
2. The Holy Spirit will NEVER leave us and He lives in us.
3. Jesus may have left Earth, but he will return.

Each part of God in the Trinity serves a different function in our lives. God the Father sends and does and acts in our lives. Jesus came to die for our sins and rose again so that we may have eternal life. He is coming again to restore his kingdom on earth one day. The Holy Spirit is with us currently and lives in us to guide us and to be our helper. We have a powerful God who through the community of his three-in-one nature meets ALL of our needs. God is sufficient for you and wants you to see the value of community. We need Him and we need each other.

REFLECT

How do you view the Trinity? How does this affect your daily life?

APPLY

How can you invest in our church community? Reach out to someone in the group and tell them how you want to grow our community.

WEEK 1, DAY 2

THE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:12-18 (NLT)

"The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, 'I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,' that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, 'I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,' would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it."

Whenever you get a cold, don't you just long to be able to breathe normally? You always take for granted your body parts until one of them is not operating the way it should. The Christian body is also something we often take for granted. We do this in two ways, first by not fulfilling our role. This passage says that God has put each part of the body (each of us) where He wants it. Each and every person has a specific purpose in the body. As women, we can often feel that we are not needed. Someone else will do it or we are not the ones preaching so we aren't valuable. That is a LIE from an enemy who is SCARED of what you can do for the kingdom of God. We ALL have a purpose in the body of Christ and when we don't fulfill our purpose, the body does not operate the way it should. Secondly, we don't think we're part of the body at all. If you have been saved and made new, you are a part of the body of Christ. Even if you don't feel like you are or feel like you are qualified. Each and every Christian is essential to God's plan and His work. He gave you specific gifts and talents and they are designed to work together with the gifts of your brothers and sisters in the body. We are each necessary in the body and the body needs ALL of us to function the way that it should.

REFLECT

When you think about the body of Christ, do you feel like you have a role? Why or why not?

APPLY

What gifts do you see in yourself that can be used in the body of believers? How can you use those this week? If you don't feel like you have any gifts, reach out to a friend and ask them! Sometimes it's hard to see our good qualities.

WEEK 1, DAY 3

THE CHURCH

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NLT)

"So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit."

Think of a time when you did not feel like you did not belong. How did it feel? Did it make you sad? Mad? Did you feel alone? Unfortunately, almost everyone has felt this way before. Maybe it's in the school cafeteria, on the bus, or maybe in your own family. Perhaps it's even been at church. Scripture is clear, even if people have not been in your life- you BELONG to Christ. He has made you a part of His family. You belong in the Church. You are welcome here. You are valued here. You are a member of this family. This passage says that "we are carefully joined together in him." This means that it is not just by chance or by accident. God is bringing us together and uniting us in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God brought you into his family on purpose and he is bringing us together on purpose. Nothing can change his plan for us or the fact that you belong here. Sometimes God's people don't act like God, remember that we are all sinners. It does not mean that you don't belong. It means that we ALL need Jesus. The church is supposed to be the "dwelling where God lives;" we are His home. We- all of us. Let's live in the unity that we have because we are all His.

REFLECT

Think of a time when you felt rejected by others. What did you think about them and yourself at that moment? Think about a time when you felt accepted by others. What did you think about them and yourself at that moment?

APPLY

How can we make others feel included in the Church? What action steps can you take this week to do this?

WEEK 1, DAY 4

SISTERS IN CHRIST

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."

Women are especially good at supporting each other. We're also especially good at tearing one another down. We see this all the time in the world around us. Just think about Mean Girls. The whole movie is about women being cruel to one another. We should look different from the world- in our friend groups and outside of them. It is one thing to support our friends, it's another to support ALL women in Christ. The only way we can live out these verses from Hebrews is if we put forth effort. The verse says, "let us think of ways." That is not a casual action. That is something you sit down and think about ahead of time. These are not simple things done at the last minute. It requires a strategy and a plan, and it takes time and actually trying. We have to show up and be in community consistently. We have to not neglect one another. This looks like checking in regularly and listening when we ask "how are you" and going out of our way to encourage each other. And this applies to ALL of our sisters in Christ, not just the ones we're already friends with, but the quiet girls in the back of class too. We need to be there for people, even if they haven't been there for us. The only way to create change is to be the change. Even if that doesn't feel fair or easy, it is what Jesus would do and an incredible way he can move through us.

REFLECT

How have you been encouraged by your sisters in Christ? How have you encouraged your sisters in Christ?

APPLY

Reach out to a girl in the youth group you have not in the past and encourage her.

WEEK 1, DAY 5

VULNERABILITY

James 5:16 (NLT)

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."

Confession is liberating. Have you ever felt that sense of relief after you admit how you feel or apologize for something you did? Confession is necessary for our souls. We of course need to confess to God, but can I tell you that change normally starts when we voice it out loud to each other? I dealt with the sin of masturbation for years and I confessed hundreds of times to God, but everything changed when I was at a camp and heard a girl confess it out loud to everyone. I was shocked. I was shaken to my very core. That was the first time I realized that other believers could struggle the way I did. I confessed my sin the next day and that was the first time I had felt freedom in YEARS. It didn't mean that I never struggled with that sin again but it was the beginning of my healing. For the first time, I had hope that I could change. Confession and prayer will change many things- let's do that for each other.

REFLECT

What is a sin that you've been holding onto and have not been confessing?

APPLY

Choose a safe person and confess to them.

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY & AUTHENTICITY

JOHN 4: 1-30 (NLT)

Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). 3 So he left Judea and returned to Galilee. 4 He had to go through Samaria on the way. 5 Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. 7 Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." 8 He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. 9 The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" 10 Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." 11 "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? 12 And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?" 13 Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. 14 But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." 15 "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water." 16 "Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.

17 "I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband— 18 for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!" 19 "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. 20 So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?" 21 Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. 23 But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. 24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." 25 The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." 26 Then Jesus told her, "I am the Messiah!" 27 Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her?" 28 The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, 29 "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?" 30 So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING VULNERABLE

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to you that God knows ALL that you have done? Is that scary or reassuring? Why?
- Have you ever been vulnerable with a friend? What was the result?
- What do you need in a friendship in order to feel safe to be vulnerable?
- How can we create a space for vulnerability and authenticity in our group?



WEEK 2, DAY 1

GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS

Psalm 139:1-2 (NLT)

"O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away."

When I was younger I doubted that God really knew EVERYTHING I did. Like I knew He was all-knowing and that He had the ability to know everything, but I doubted that He really cared enough to pay attention to me. That was both a comforting and disheartening thought. Comforting because there were some things that I didn't want God to pay attention to, and disheartening because I struggled to believe that my creator really cared about me. Let me be the first to tell you, God loves you so much. He knows EVERYTHING about you and STILL loves you. He has examined your heart. He knows every thought you've ever had and will ever have. He knows ALL that and STILL sent his Son to die for you. God knows everything but His love for will never decrease. You can trust in His knowledge of you AND His love for you.

REFLECT

How does it make you feel that God knows everything? Is that comforting? Scary? Why?

APPLY

Regardless of the last time you prayed or talked to God, write Him a letter telling Him how you feel about Him. Be honest and say everything. He knows it all anyway.

WEEK 2, DAY 2

WE ARE ALL SINNERS

Romans 3:23 (NLT)

"For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."

We are all sinners. This is something you know if you have grown up in church, but is it something we really understand? What is sin? According to 1 John 3:4, sin is breaking God's Law or going against God. Anything we do that is contrary to what God wants for His people is sin. The book of Romans is clear- we have ALL sinned. We are all in need of salvation because we have all gone against God. We have all lied or cheated or been unkind. We have all desired something that was not ours. We have all said something about someone else (gossip). Because we are all sinners, no one's sin is worse than another. We are ALL in need of Jesus to make us right with God. I have often fallen into the trap of comparison. At some points in my life, I have felt that my sin was not "as bad" as someone else's so I did not need God as much or to confess as much as somebody else. At other points in my life, I have felt that my sin was much worse than anyone else's and that there was no way that God could forgive me. Both of these are lies from an enemy who wants you to feel like you don't need God OR that He can't help you. The only answer to ALL sin is to run to our Father who can cleanse us and heal us through His Son's death and resurrection. Trust me when I say that admitting that

1. You're a sinner
2. You need God
3. God wants you

will change your life. We have to remember that this is true of ALL people. EVERYONE has sinned. We have to point others and ourselves to this truth.

REFLECT

Are you more likely to believe that your sin isn't that bad or that God can't/won't forgive your sins?

APPLY

Write a prayer to God and ask forgiveness for your sins, whatever they are-regardless of if you think they are not that bad OR too bad.

WEEK 2, DAY 3

WHAT IS SHAME?

Genesis 3:6-7 (NLT)

"The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. *At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly **felt shame** at their nakedness.* So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves."

Did you know that we were never meant to feel shame? Shame did not exist in the Garden before Eve and Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We were never made to feel shame. We were never meant to bear that load. So what is shame? As one of my favorite Christian authors, Christine Caine says, "Shame is the fear of being unworthy, and it adversely affects our relationship with God, others, and ourselves." You may have felt guilt before; shame is different. Guilt says "I did something bad," but shame says, "I am bad." Shame lies to us and tells us that no one, not even God can truly love us and accept us. Shame in the garden drove Adam and Eve to hide from God, and it does the same thing in our lives today. We hide away our dirty secrets from God and others. We feel isolated and way too broken for anyone to care, accept us, and especially not fix us. Shame whispers, "it's too late now" and "you will never change" and "if anyone knew, they would reject you." Shame is one of the enemy's biggest tools because it isolates us from community and it isolates us from God. Know that shame, regardless of its source, is a lie. Sometimes we feel shame over something that happened to us, brokenness, and sin that was committed against us. Sometimes we feel shame because of something that we did. I promise that in either instance, God is way bigger than your shame. He wants you to bring it to Him. He wants to heal you and help you and replace the lies of shame with the truth of Grace.

REFLECT

Are you holding onto any shame? Do you believe that you are bad/unforgivable/uniquely broken and that no one can fix it?

APPLY

Write a prayer asking God to speak truth into any lies that shame is breeding in your heart and mind. Ask him to help you examine your heart and reveal any brokenness, hurt, or sin that is causing any feelings of shame.

WEEK 2, DAY 4

EXPOSURE

Ephesians 5:13-14 (NLT)

"But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, 'Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light'."

In looking at shame yesterday, you may have wondered, but how do I overcome these feelings of shame? The only treatment for shame is exposure. The only way to overcome those lies of unworthiness is to hold them up to the light. Scripture says that Jesus is the light of God. He will expose what is untrue in your life. He will expose the lies of shame. Confessing and naming it to God is 100% the first step in the battle against shame. However, I also encourage you to tell a safe person. Sometimes we can confess to God but we keep it "between us," and it remains hidden even if we tell Him. As scary as it is, telling another believer is one of the best things you can do in fighting your struggles, especially with shame. Speaking your shame out loud allows the lie that you will be rejected or that it's too much for someone else to be proven false. We know that God will always love and accept us (at least we know that it is in our heads, whether we truly believe it or not is another matter), but it is harder to believe a human will. Speaking your shame to another believer allows them to love you as God does in a way that is easy to see and feel. The light makes everything visible and helps us to see we are not alone. God loves us and has put people in our lives to show us His unconditional love.

REFLECT

Have you had someone tell you something and it made you feel better because you felt the same way? Have you ever heard a speaker/preacher talk about something and it made you feel less alone because you had felt those same things?

APPLY

As scary as it is, share something that you are actively struggling with a safe person. Text them, call them, talk to them in person, but write the name of that person and commit to talking to them today.

WEEK 2, DAY 5

BEING SAFE PEOPLE

Proverbs 16:28 (NLT)

("A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.")

Have you ever shared something with a friend and they blabbed about it to others? How did it make you feel? When we share something personal and sensitive, even if it doesn't feel like a big deal to someone else, and they tell someone else, it completely destroys the view and trust we have in that person. It feels like a betrayal and we cannot trust them ever again. Have you ever been told something and then shared it with someone else? Did the person who told you become upset with you? What was the impact on your relationship with that person?

We all need safe people. Safe people are those friends in our life who we could call for anything and tell anything, and they would keep it safe and give us good Godly advice. A true friend will keep your struggles and heartaches safe. They won't gossip about you. We need those safe people who we can confess to and talk about God with. Not only will safe people keep what we tell them to themselves, but they will also, more importantly, point us to God in response to our pain and struggles. The best safe person you can have is trustworthy and pursuing the Lord.

In order to find safe people, it is important to first be a safe person for others as well. I used to struggle with feeling like I had no friends who were really safe, but I had to take a step back and ask if I was a safe friend. In some instances I was not. God calls us to be kind, supportive, and safe for our fellow sisters in Christ. That's what we should all try to do, with no exceptions.

REFLECT

Do you have a safe person in your life? Are you a safe person for anyone?

APPLY

Brainstorm at least one way we can be safe people for everyone in this group. Brainstorm at least one way you can be a safe person for the people in your life.
