



First Baptist Durango

FOUNDATIONS

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CHAPTER 1

The Gospel Message

Creation

God created the world and everything in it. Everything existed in a state of harmony. Human beings were made in the image of God, meant for relationship with Him and to reflect His character.

Fall

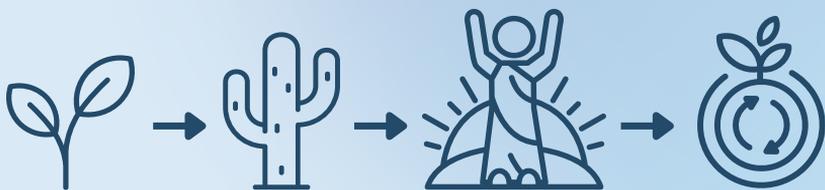
Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's command and introduced sin into the world. This act of rebellion led to brokenness, suffering, and separation from God.

Redemption

God, in His great love and mercy, provided a way for humanity to be reconciled to Him through Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, and rose from the dead, conquering sin and death.

Restoration

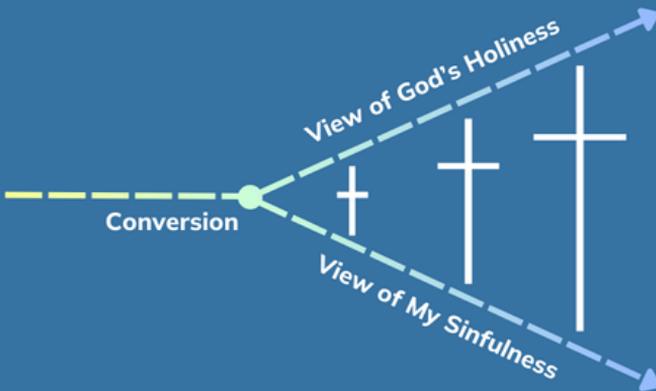
Through faith in Jesus, individuals can experience forgiveness of sins and a renewed relationship with God. This transformation leads to a life of purpose, hope, and eternal life in God's presence. Ultimately, God will fully restore all of creation, eliminating sin and bringing about a new heaven and a new earth.



CHAPTER 2

The Cross Chart

The Cross Chart represents the growth of the Gospel in our lives. First, at the center of the chart is the cross. God, in His infinite grace, provided a solution through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The cross is where God's justice and mercy meet, offering forgiveness and reconciliation to all who believe. Second, on the top ascending line, we see God's holiness. God is holy and pure - this is his standard. As we grow as Christians this reality becomes bigger, more obvious, and more glorious in our eyes. On the bottom descending line we see humanity's sinfulness and our awareness. Sin (our rebellion against God and his ways) has separated us from God and because of this, we fall short of the glory of God. As we grow as Christians this reality becomes more clear to us.



As Christians, the more we grow, the more we recognize both the holiness of God and the sin that remains in us. We have two options:

- Repentance and thankfulness - We confess who we are and realize the greatness of the grace of God through the cross. Through this, our affection for Jesus grows and we are sanctified through the Spirit of God. This makes the work of Jesus on the cross bigger. The grace found there is all the comfort we need.
- Pretend or Perform - When we perform we try to prove that we are worthy of saving - which is legalism. We pretend that we are better than we are. We make excuses or say things like “I am not that bad” or “At least I’m not as bad as ____.” We try to cover our guilt and shame on our own, which minimizes the cross.

To read more check out *The Gospel Centered Life* by Bob Thune and Will Walker

CHAPTER 3

Gospel Fluency

Gospel fluency is the ability to speak and live the truths of the gospel into the everyday stuff of life.

Often we think of the gospel as a one time trust or commitment to Jesus but this is a minimization of the gospel. The good news of Jesus is not just for new belief but all of life.

The story of redemption is the story of the gospel. The story of redemption tells us that God created a good world without sin. Sin entered the world through Adam, breaking everything that we see creating division, death and destruction. By God's grace Jesus came: He lived a life we could not live. Died the death we deserved to die. Rose again defeating Satan, sin and death. Now he sits enthroned soon to return and make all things new.

Though this is true, we still struggle. We struggle with unbelief, where we do not fully trust and apply the gospel in difficult circumstances. We ask questions like: Is that true? Is he faithful? Is God good?

Gospel fluency shapes key areas of faith, grounding our lives in the truth of the gospel. In Christ, we are children of God, saved by grace and clothed in His righteousness—no longer defined by performance. We are called to renounce false sources of identity,

purpose, and satisfaction, placing our hope in Christ instead of worldly things. Through repentance and faith, we turn from sin and trust God's promises rather than striving to perform. Community plays a vital role as we build relationships marked by love and grace, reminding one another that Jesus is our ultimate hope.

Growing in gospel fluency involves:

- Studying Scripture to see how it speaks into everyday life
- Recognizing opportunities to apply the gospel in daily situations
- Responding to real circumstances with gospel truths
- Practicing gospel application within community
- Developing rhythms where gospel conversations flow naturally
- Praying for God's guidance to live faithfully

We often drift into legalism, trying to earn God's favor rather than living in grace-driven effort. We also forget that the Christian life is meant to be lived in community, not isolation. True growth happens when we walk with others, embracing the gift of fellowship in Christ.

To read more about check out *Gospel Fluency* by Jeff Vanderstelt

CHAPTER 4

Fruit to Root

The "fruit to root" principle emphasizes the idea that our actions, behaviors, and attitudes (the "fruit") are a reflection of what is going on in our hearts and innermost being (the "root").

It teaches that true transformation begins at the core of our being, in our relationship with God, and then manifests in our outward actions. Fruit to Root teaches that the external expressions of our lives (our actions, words, and behaviors) are directly connected to the condition of our hearts and our relationship with God. It encourages us to focus on the inner transformation through faith and obedience, which will naturally lead to godly fruit in our lives.

Take a moment to consider some of the undesirable actions or "bad fruit" in your life – actions that are clearly sinful. Instead of just focusing on stopping those actions, delve deeper into the root cause or the incorrect beliefs that are producing such behavior. Is it a misguided belief about yourself, God, or God's work? Repentance goes beyond just turning away from our wrong actions; it involves acknowledging and turning away from the underlying incorrect belief.

The next time you become aware of your sin, grab your journal or a piece of paper and practice the "fruit to root" method. Confess and repent of your misguided belief, and embrace the truth found in God's word.

Fruit to Root Exercise



Take a moment to consider and record the bad fruit you're currently experiencing.
Ex) I'm constantly worried.



Identify the false beliefs about yourself or God that are producing the bad fruit.
Ex) I don't believe that God is in control.



Repent. Reject and turn from the wrong beliefs. Embrace the truth.



Identify biblical truths about yourself and God. Commit to embracing them.
Ex) The Bible says God is in control and He is trustworthy.



What fruit do you expect this correct understanding to produce?
Ex) I have peace and trust in God's plan.

To read more about the fruit to root concept check out Gospel Fluency by Jeff Vanderstelt

CHAPTER 5

Spiritual Disciplines

Prayer

Prayer is a personal, reciprocal response to knowing God—a covenantal conversation with the Creator, not just a ritual. Everything human is fitting for prayer: thoughts, emotions, doubts, needs, gratitude, and suffering. Nothing is excluded.

The traditional forms of prayer—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication—are concrete practices as well as profound experiences.

- **Adoration:** Praising and worshiping the Lord for who He is. Focus upon acknowledging God's attributes, such as His holiness, majesty, love, and power- reverence and awe towards God.
- **Confession:** Admitting one's sins and shortcomings to/before the Lord. It is an honest and humble acknowledgment of wrongdoing and a plea for forgiveness to God who forgives us in and through Christ.
- **Thanksgiving:** Expressing gratitude to the Lord for His blessings, provisions, and acts of kindness. It is an acknowledgment of God's goodness and faithfulness in one's life. Thanksgiving prayers cultivate a spirit of appreciation and contentment.

- **Supplication:** Making requests or petitions of/to the Lord. Seeking God's help, guidance, and intervention in specific needs, concerns, or circumstances. Supplication involves asking God for His provision, protection, healing, and wisdom for oneself or others.

These four types of prayers are often referred to by the acronym "ACTS," representing Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication

Other helpful starting points to prayer:

- Reflect on Scripture, letting God's Word guide your prayers.
- Use the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as a model.
- Pray through the Psalms to express a range of emotions.
- Use prayer books like *Valley of Vision* to enrich your prayers.
- Join others in corporate prayer to seek God together.
- Pray in "concentric circles," starting with yourself and expanding to others.

Application: Plan and Develop a consistent pattern of daily prayer wherein you become a person of prayer. Integrate Scripture into your prayers, allowing God's Word to shape your petitions.

Scripture

The reading of the Word of God is essential. It is in the Word of God that we see the nature and character of God through his work. It is where the Savior, Jesus Christ, is revealed; where the Spirit shapes us; where truth is proclaimed; and where, through the Spirit, we receive all we need for life and godliness.

To know God is to know who he is and what he has done. To love God is to respond to him. In scripture he meets us and the Holy Spirit changes us.

A helpful way to study the scriptures is through the acronym: SOAP

- Scripture
- Observation
- Application
- Prayer

Grab a readable Bible (ESV, CSB, NIV, NLT—FBD uses ESV) or a Study Bible and read through using this framework. If something is unclear, use resources like Got Questions (website), Logos, Blue Letter Bible, or ask a church leader, pastor, or friend.

SOAP Bible Study

What is happening in the passage? What is the passage saying? What immediately stands out?

S

Scripture

Did this reveal anything new to me about God, His people, myself or the world?

O

Observation

How should this passage change the way I live and worship?

A

Application

Write out an honest prayer to God. He hears you and delights in you.

P

Prayer

Other Disciplines

In addition to the reading of the Word of God and prayer there are other disciplines that are useful in deepening our understanding of God and transforming our lives. Some of these include:

- **Corporate Worship:** Central to Christian life, corporate worship invites us into communion with God and one another through singing, prayer, Scripture reading, and preaching. Here, we're encouraged by the good news of Jesus and sent out to share it.
- **Sabbath:** Observing a day of rest and focus upon the Lord is an important discipline. It is a time for remembering that God is God and we are not.
- **Confession and Repentance:** Regular self-examination, confession, and repentance are daily parts of the Christian life, revealing our remaining sin and the gracious forgiveness found in Christ.
- **Fellowship:** Here is where the Word of God is enacted and the one another's of scripture are practiced. This includes participating in small groups, accountability partnerships, and church activities.
- **Service:** Serving the church involves using one's gifts and resources to meet the needs of others and to advance the mission of the church.

- **Evangelism and Missions:** Sharing the gospel is a vital practice for both obedience and joy. In it, we see a Redeemer who desires to save all people and renews His people as they behold His saving work. This includes personal evangelism, participation in outreach programs, and supporting missionaries.
- **Sacraments:** Faithful participation in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper is essential. These sacraments are viewed as means of grace that lift our eyes to the transforming work accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Which discipline would encourage you in your pursuit of God? Which discipline do you take for granted? Which discipline do you enjoy the most?

CHAPTER 6

Biblical Lament

- 1. Address God Directly:** Begin by addressing God directly. This acknowledges your faith and trust in Him even in the midst of pain.
- 2. Express Your Feelings Honestly:** Be open and honest about your feelings. Lament encourages you to express your sorrow, anger, confusion, or any other emotions you may be experiencing.
- 3. Describe Your Situation:** Articulate the specific circumstances that are causing you distress. Share the details of what you're facing; share your pain with God.
- 4. Ask for Help or Intervention:** Humbly ask God for His intervention, guidance, or assistance in your situation. This demonstrates your dependence on Him.
- 5. Remember God's Character and Promises:** Reflect on who God is and His promises.
- 6. Seek Assurance and Hope:** Request assurance of His presence and hope for the future. Trust that God is near and that He will bring comfort and restoration.
- 7. Express Commitment and Trust:** Despite the pain, express your commitment to trust in God's plan and purpose, even if you don't fully understand it.
- 8. Wait in Expectation:** Conclude your lament with a sense of expectancy, trusting that God is at work, even if the answers or relief don't come immediately.

Remember, biblical lament is a process that can take time. It's a way to bring your heart before God honestly, seeking His comfort, guidance, and ultimately, His peace. Many Psalms, like Psalm 13 and Psalm 22, serve as examples of biblical laments, demonstrating how individuals poured out their hearts to God in times of distress. To dive more deeply into this topic check out *Dark Clouds Deep Mercy* by Mark Vroegop.

CHAPTER 7

The Church

The universal (catholic) Church comprises all followers of Jesus Christ, representing the Body of Christ—a divine family worshipping and glorifying God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Acts 2:42–47; Ephesians 2:19–22). Various metaphors in Scripture describe the Church, emphasizing its unity and purpose. As believers in Jesus Christ, united by grace, we form the universal Church, Christ's true bride and primary instrument to continue His ministry on earth. The Church is defined by its Gospel message, sacred ordinances, discipline, mission, and love for God and others.

Local manifestations of the universal Church exist, with each "local church" representing the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth with distinctive characteristics which make them unique. Membership in these local churches involves a formal relationship, partnering in doctrine and life under the authority of elders for the mission of ministry. Members submit to both the authority of the local church and the mutual support within the community.

While some leaders equip the saints, every believer is called to be a Spirit-empowered Gospel minister. The church, God's dwelling place, witnesses to the world and anticipates a future where service to others outweighs self-focus.

First Baptist Church of Durango

The local church of First Baptist Durango glorifies and worships God through Connection, Transformation, and Multiplication. These values aim to build up believers into conformity to the image of Christ, achieved through the proclamation of the Gospel and devotion to God's Word, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

Vision of First Baptist:

Our vision is to see the people of Durango transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ to the glory of God.

Mission of First Baptist:

Love God. Love People. Make Disciples.

Mechanism for Vision and Mission:

Gospel Communities (GCs) are the primary mechanism to achieve this vision and mission. These communities are shaped and driven by the Gospel to make disciples and encourage one another in faith.

- Primary Guiding Texts for GCs:
 - Matthew 22:37–39: Loving God and loving our neighbor are paramount.
 - Hebrews 10:22–25: Encourages us to draw near to God, hold fast our hope, and stir up love and good works within the community.
 - Acts 1:8: Calls us to be witnesses to the ends of the earth through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Values of Gospel Communities:

Word and Prayer:

- Core Idea: Being formed by the Word and constant in prayer is crucial. This is the foundation from which our communities flow.
- Practical Application: Regular discussions on spiritual growth and frequent individual and group prayers.
- Supporting Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; John 5:14-15.

Care:

- Core Idea: God's grace compels us to love and care for one another deeply, reflecting a community set apart.
- Practical Application: Knowing each other's stories, sharing life's joys and struggles.
- Supporting Scriptures: John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10-16; Galatians 6:10.

Intentionality:

- Core Idea: Purposeful and deliberate actions are necessary to see transformed lives.
- Practical Application: Vigilantly planning and recognizing spiritual and physical needs around us.
- Supporting Scriptures: Hebrews 3:12-14; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

Mission:

- Core Idea: Making disciples is a form of worship, motivated by grace received, and a call to spread the Gospel.

- **Practical Application:**
 - Encouraging everyone to be disciple-makers and planning to reach specific groups together. Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

By embodying these values, Gospel Communities at First Baptist aim to transform lives through the Gospel, fostering a supportive and mission-driven community.

CHAPTER 8

Advent

Advent, from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” is a season in the Christian calendar focused on preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ. Originating in the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was initially a season of penance, prayer, and fasting leading up to the January feast of Epiphany. Epiphany celebrated events that manifested God’s presence in Jesus, such as the Magi’s visit (Matthew 2:1), Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). During this period, Christians prepared their hearts, often for the baptism of new believers, yet initially, there was little connection to Christmas itself.

By the 6th century, Advent began to shift its focus toward Christ’s coming. Christians saw Advent as a time to prepare not only for celebrating Jesus’ first coming in Bethlehem but also to anticipate his second coming as Judge and King. During Advent, believers reflect on their spiritual lives, reminiscent of Israel’s centuries-long wait for the Messiah. In this way, Advent becomes a time of dual focus: looking back at Christ’s arrival as a baby while also looking forward with hope to his future return to establish his kingdom fully.

The themes of Advent are often divided into four key aspects: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. These align with biblical promises and truths that provide a spiritual framework for the season.

- **Hope:** Advent begins with hope, drawing on the prophetic promises of the Messiah. Isaiah 7:14 prophesies a virgin who will give birth to Immanuel, meaning “God with us.” This promise gives hope that God is present and working, a hope rooted not in wishful thinking but in confident expectation and assurance of God’s promises (Hebrews 11:1). For believers, hope anchors them in God’s faithfulness and provides direction and endurance in challenging times.
- **Peace:** Biblical peace, or shalom, is more than the absence of conflict; it’s wholeness and harmony in God. Jesus, the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6), brings this peace through reconciliation with God. John 14:27 underscores that Jesus gives peace not as the world does but through restored relationship with God, bringing inner calm even in adversity. Advent calls Christians to embrace and spread this peace, woven deeply into the fabric of life.
- **Joy:** Advent’s third week celebrates joy, seen not as circumstantial happiness but as deep-seated contentment rooted in Jesus. Luke 2:10–11 describes the angel’s message of “good news of great joy,” highlighting that joy flows from God’s grace and salvation in Christ. Philippians 4:4 calls believers to rejoice in the Lord, who is constant despite life’s uncertainties.

- **Love:** Advent culminates in love, embodied in Jesus. John 3:16 affirms God's love, demonstrated by sending His Son to save humanity. This love is sacrificial, steadfast, and unconditional, calling believers to love one another. First John 4:10 reveals that God's love initiates redemption, transforming hearts and inspiring love that mirrors His character.

Advent, then, is a season of reflection, repentance, and expectation. As the hymn *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* expresses, it is the Church's cry for God to be with us as we wait and prepare for the fullness of His kingdom.

CHAPTER 9

Sermon Engagement

Listening to a sermon is an act of worship, humility, and active engagement with God's Word, rooted in the conviction that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative revelation of God. Therefore, approaching a sermon requires preparation, attentiveness, and a heart open to the Spirit's work, as well as a commitment to apply the truths revealed.

1. Prepare Prayerfully and Expectantly: The process begins even before the sermon. Believers are called to prepare their hearts through prayer, asking God to open their minds to understand His Word (Luke 24:45) and to receive it (James 1:21). This preparation also involves an expectant mindset, trusting that God's Word, when faithfully preached, will not return empty but will accomplish His purposes (Isaiah 55:11).

2. Listen Attentively and Discerningly: During the sermon, focus. Resist distractions and actively engage with the Word. This attentiveness is an act of reverence for the proclamation of the Word of God. (Psalm 119:15-16). However, as you listen apply discernment to evaluate the scriptural accuracy of the teaching. This is testing all things against Scripture (Acts 17:11) to ensure that what they hear aligns with God's truth and protects the congregation and oneself from error.

3. Approach with Humility and Teachability: Listening to a sermon requires a posture of humility, recognizing that God’s wisdom surpasses human understanding (Isaiah 55:8-9). James 1:19 encourages believers to be “quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.” So we come to each corporate gathering with a teachable spirit, open to correction, rebuke, and instruction. It is easy to become defensive or selective in our listening, but true growth comes from humbly receiving all aspects of God’s Word, even the challenging parts.

4. Reflect Deeply and Meditate on God’s Word: After the sermon, believers should take time to reflect and meditate on what they’ve heard (Psalm 1:2). This reflection may involve re-reading the passage, conferencing with others, or walking out the implication of the sermon. Ultimately we hope to internalize God’s Word and guard against being a mere hearer rather than a doer (James 1:22).

5. Apply Obediently in Faith: The ultimate goal of listening to a sermon is transformation. James reminds believers to be doers of the Word and not hearers only (James 1:22-25). Every sermon invites us to respond in faith, whether by repentance, renewed commitment, or specific action. Philippians 2:12-13 teaches that as we seek to work out our salvation, it is God who works in us to will and act according to His purpose. Approaching a sermon this way acknowledges God’s power to change us and bears witness to a heart willing to obey.

How do I discuss a sermon in a group setting?

Conferencing was a puritan practice to reflect on the most recently preached sermon. One of its primary goals was to increase all believers' understanding of and ability to apply Scripture in the context of listening to the preached word. While the format was fluid, conferencing was guided by two fundamental questions:

- Was the pastor *right* on Sunday?
 - Prove and explain from scripture one way or another.
- What did your heart do or how did you react when you heard that sermon?

The goal of these two questions was to both engage the heart and the head. The head in a desire to deeply know scripture. Christians were expected to have a deep and growing knowledge of Scripture, forcing congregants, families, and friends to search the Scriptures together. Even if you did believe the pastor was right, you had to use your own means to prove it. The heart in a desire to be moved by the Word of God. The Word of God should always affect our intellect and emotions in a desire to know Him and move our hearts to action.



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