

TUTORIAL

1.5

# What's so great about Foundational Teaching?

To give an overview of Foundational Teaching and how it is used as a part of the equipping process for church planters in the *AccessTruth Curriculum*.

## Introduction

You'll be hearing a lot about Foundational Teaching in this course. As a matter of fact, you could say it's the **core** of the *AccessTruth Curriculum*.

You might have heard of "Chronological Teaching"...That is usually used to refer to a set of materials – *Firm Foundations*. That material will be a resource for us in the Church Planting foundations part of the program. But when we say "Foundational Teaching", we are thinking even wider than one particular set of materials. We are really talking about a whole way of viewing God's Word.

## A Biblical Foundation for Equipping

The description of the first of the four foundational areas of the *AccessTruth Curriculum* is:

*Biblical foundations – understanding, living and teaching God's Word as a cohesive whole.*

Our desire is for you to develop a view of God's Word as one entire, seamless description of what God has revealed, about Himself, about the Spirit world, about Creation, about man and about His intentions. God's revelation comes to us in different discourse styles or genres - some is Narrative, some is Poetry, Rhetoric, Polemic etc. But in the bigger sense, it is important to think of it as one Narrative – One Story: a seamless description of all that has been, is and will be, with God as the Master Storyteller.

Stories are part of who we are; part of our idiom; '*It's a long story, Don't tell stories, That's the story of my life, The same old story, So the story goes, To make a long story short...*'. Every culture and language tells stories; creation myths, legends, epics (sometimes in dance, chants etc.), books, novels...favorite tales, and just every day anecdotes. Just about everyone loves

to hear stories and most of us like to tell stories, and each person has their own story.

But, there is ONE STORY that gives meaning and relevance to all those individual stories.

There is ONE STORY through which we need to interpret every story we hear, every story that is told...This idea that there is a Single overarching Story that makes sense of everything is something that has been attacked in the last 50 – 60 years:

Modernism – beginning in the Enlightenment (18<sup>th</sup> Century) gradually rejected God and the Church as the Story Teller and put Man (Humanism) and all that Man could discover and make (Science & Technology) in that role.

Post-modernism or post-structuralism (in the mid-twentieth century) challenged this – described these “meta-narratives” (Science, Freudian psychology, political structures, economic theories, history, religion) as ways of maintaining power. Language, the very words we use, were drained of their validity. Each person tells their own story. Each sub-group, each culture, etc.

Post-modernism says that words are only sounds, or symbols, without meaning. So the commonly held belief (although no one can function consistently like this) is that there is no universal meaning, no truth, no Story....that makes sense of language, or gives it meaning.

Words/Language have become separated from Meaning.

Post-modernism itself has been criticized as self-refuting, because it is a whole way of viewing things (a meta-narrative). Post-modernists reply that this critique is a modernist, one....the arguments go round and round.

## **The One who communicates**

The One who communicates and makes sense of everything was there all along with God – was, in fact, God himself. Everything owes its existence, its reality, to Him. It was through this One who communicates and makes sense of things, that God gave everything its existence and life; and through His life God showed us clearly all the things he wants us to know.

*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. John 1:1-4 (NLT)*

As we have heard in previous tutorials: There is a Story-teller - He created a race of listeners - He is committed to telling us his Story - His Story is complete and cohesive.

So everything in the *AccessTruth Curriculum* hangs on this reality. We want to help you understand this more fully – the way God’s Story hangs together...the way it makes sense of everything...and that it is the absolute authority. That He has Spoken, and continues to Speak, to tell His Story.

## **How is the curriculum structured to help you understand God’s Word as a cohesive whole?**

### **Module 1**

From Tutorial 1.7 onward Module 1 Tutorials tell God’s Narrative from Creation to Christ. There will also be Discussion points, some research and study, some practical assignments to go along with the Biblical Narrative as part of each Tutorial.

We’ll spend time talking about the foundational truths, how it relates to your own experience. How it contrasts with our culture, how you would try to share those things with someone you know here in Australia. We will discipline ourselves to stay with the Biblical Narrative...to see how Truth builds, one truth upon another. How it ties together. How the solutions to important questions, moral, ethical, spiritual issues have their foundations and roots in the Biblical narrative.

### **Module 2**

Looks back at the Biblical Narrative from Creation to Christ from the point of view of the identity change that has taken place for a believer - a new identity, access to God, coming together with other believers, looking back at the Biblical narrative from a totally new perspective.

Module 2 also covers Acts (our history, identity, mission, the Spirit’s work, the Task, the completion of God’s Revelation in the New Testament).

### **Module 3**

Covers the Biblical Narrative from Romans (how we are to live, how we deal with sin, the basis for our service), and Ephesians (God’s plan for His Church, what we have in Christ, His plan for marriages and families)

## **So what are the distinctives of “Foundational Teaching”?**

1. It presents God - not man - as the central character in His Story.
2. It *tells* and *teaches* God's Story from the beginning...and from "the ground up", layer by layer, truth upon truth.
3. It focuses on what God says are peoples' real needs, rather than on their *felt needs*.
4. It presents Biblical Truth within its historical, geographical, cultural and linguistic context.
5. It applies Truth at a "heart" and worldview level.

*Foundational Teaching* is our shorthand way of talking about a whole view of God's Word, of Truth, not just how we teach 'people overseas', but how we understand Truth works, how it fits together, how it is meant to be viewed, and how it builds foundationally, piece by piece, block by block, idea by idea. And it is about us needing to begin with God himself...that knowing anything, and understanding how things are, understanding ourselves, other people, the world around us, having purpose...these only happen when we've first of all understood God.

## **God tells his Story to the world, not only through words but also through the lives of His people.**

But Stories are not just understood, they are LIVED out. They shape how we feel we need to survive and therefore our view of who we understand we are, how we relate to others, what is important to us, and how we spend our time and energy. They are not just external Stories about we have to place ourselves within them and so they also determine our behaviour.

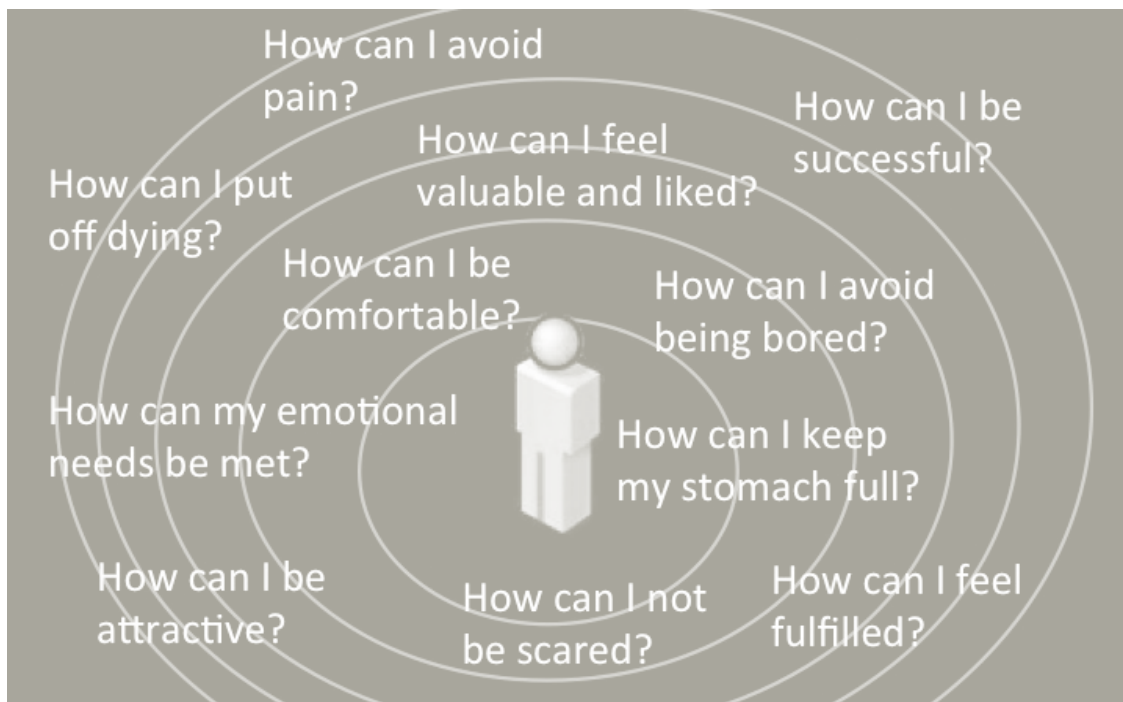
*We didn't just share the Gospel with you, but our lives. (1 Thessalonians 2:7)*

*...you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:3)*

Ultimately, our desire is for you to equip yourselves to contribute not just to people accepting the Truth in a theoretical way, not just to become adherents of a particular ideology, a religion, to become Christians....but to be living examples of the life of Christ for others. Once this Identity change takes place for people – they become different people to who they were before – then God wants to continue to tell them His Story, His True Version of Reality, so they;

- are able to enjoy their relationship with Him,
- appreciate Him and worship Him as He deserves
- understand their Identity, their History, their place in His Story

- become useful members of His family
- be light and salt in their communities
- contribute effectively within their local bodies as part of the Great Commission



That's what we want to help you equip yourselves to contribute to. To do that effectively, you need more than just to understand God's Word in a theoretical way. You need more than just to have insights into your own worldview and culture or an understanding of other worldviews. You need even more than knowing how to share Truth in those contexts...

If we're going to be the catalyst for other people to be willing to put aside their survival Stories, to go against the assumptions of their culture and community, to go through painful changes and adjustments, to actually change their values and beliefs at a fundamental level – then for us, this has to be more than an external set of facts or doctrines.

As you work to equip yourself with this understanding of God's Story, you will find that impacts the way you relate to your Friends and Family, the way you interact in the wider Community, and the part you play in your Church.

## Understanding the other stories

The *AccessTruth Curriculum* is all about helping a generation of church planters to equip themselves for the world's neediest contexts. The Biblical, Communication, Church Planting and Contextual Foundations areas of the

program are designed to work together to equip you to tell God's Story to people who need it most, who for whatever reason don't have opportunity to hear His Story in a way they can understand.

But as we discussed in previous tutorials, no society, no culture, no community or individual is without some kind of Story already. The universe has a feeling of order about it. It works. Things clearly have a purpose, some kind of meaning. There's a sense too that human life must be about something. At a deep level people want some kind of answers. To know why. In order to survive the big scary universe we find ourselves in, we put ourselves at its center and gradually work out how to make everything work for us. Moving out from our local space and time...from the purely physical, the most basic needs of food, sleep and comfort. We have an inbuilt need to make sense of things, to survive - so we build our picture, we learn to tell a Story, that answers our emotional needs, our need for security, our need for companionship, to feel "at home", to feel loved... And we're told a Story by the people we interact with. Our parents, siblings, friends...gradually being affected more and more by the wider society. When we watch TV, cartoons, have books read to us, when we see the way other people behave, the way society functions (lines on the road, frames around doors, windows, boundaries between gardens and lawns, certain kinds of music, particular food...we learn what's normal, what's clean, what's not, what's nice)

This is what a Culture is, a society's Worldview. What we call a "culture" is a way of roughly grouping together people who share a similar "Story"; a common description of the world and how to survive in it...also of what lies beyond it. By definition, Stories other than God's comprehensive description of reality are not coherent...they don't tie together, they have gaps, they are mixed together...So don't picture people or culture's having well-defined, tight storylines. So for you to be equipped to contribute to church planting efforts among the neediest people, here are the steps the *AccessTruth Curriculum* will take you through;

1. Understand God's Story in its entirety, "from the ground up".
2. Understand our own Worldview (the assumptions, what we take for granted, what has built into our values, beliefs).
3. Compare the two and adjust our views.
4. Begin to picture other worldviews...other Stories.
5. Begin to consider how to share God's Story in a way that will resonate and allow people to accept it as *their* Story, the true version of reality.
6. Be equipped to recognize and overcome some of the barriers and challenges involved in that task - language, culture, identity, relationships, communication, etc.

## Summary:

A *foundational* view of God's Story – is the core of the *AccessTruth Curriculum*. It is about us helping you equip yourselves to;

- understand God's Word as one comprehensive, authoritative "Story" – His true version of how things are.
- live out of that Story, i.e. To take the opportunity to see how much it shapes your lives, and to adjust what's necessary
- teach His Story...to know how to listen to and understand people, and then share His Story in such a way that it grips their hearts, changes their lives and becomes their Story



## DISCUSSION POINTS

*What's so great about Foundational Teaching?*

1. How would you describe the Story of our culture? Write out some points about the questions people ask and how you think many people answer those questions.