Chapter One

Laying A Foundation

2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

**Our responsibility as Christians is to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Our ultimate goal is to bring glory to His name.**

**This study will establish the groundwork or the foundation of the things necessary in each of our lives to accomplish this goal. As we go through this study, we will learn several basic concepts that will serve to enhance our lives to a spiritual maturity, which the Lord is hoping for. I have chosen five words, which will serve as a guide to this systematic study.**

* **Knowing**
* **Growing**
* **Understanding**
* **Giving**
* **Living**

**These words will represent the divisions in this study. We must begin with the foundation if we are to complete this study with positive results. We will look at some secular examples to establish the need for a systematic growth.**

**Let us look at a house builder. Anyone can see that a house must be built under a systematic system or method. Can you imagine putting the shutters on before you build the walls? How about laying the carpet down before you pour the concrete foundation. What you have by someone starting with the roof, painting, or windows first is chaos and a loss of time and finances. We know one must start with the plans. This one must have the permits to build on a piece of land, and it is very helpful to have the necessary skills to build the house. This is done by experience or by paying someone with experience.**

**The next step is the financial preparation and the collection of the materials. Next we would begin by preparing to lay the foundation. The surveying, the form building, setting of the plumbing and anything else that needs to be supported by the foundation. Next we actually get to the foundation. This took a long time, didn't it? Once the foundation is laid, the walls and ceiling and roof can go up in their proper order and we see the development of this structure into a beautiful house. Afterwards we can apply the details like paint or brick, the tiles, flooring, and the electrical wiring, and finally, the turning on of the utilities. Now we are ready to inhabit this structure.**

**We can also see the need for a systematic building with athletics and professional sports. We can understand why a young team has a hard time in the professional level. It takes time to develop into a physical and mental maturity necessary to win the games and reach the goals for champions. A young player might demonstrate some skills, but is not always ready to be placed in the actual game. In baseball they have several levels of competition, starting with the rookie league then to "single a", "double a", "triple a", and finally the major leagues. Some players move quickly through these ranks where some take longer to develop. Many times we see the results when someone is pushed too far too quickly; they fail and risk the end of their career.**

**Why is it that we expect Christians to be ready immediately after baptism? Many Christians like the builder and the sports team expect the final result right away and then become confused, frustrated, and run out of patience.**

**Christians want the championship rings and medals right away. They must, however, learn to develop and grow in stages that will ultimately get them the reward of their goal. In the Christian's thinking, that goal is heaven.**

**This study does not have all the answers, but tries to coordinate and organize a systematic program that will provide for the levels of growth. As the Christian acquires the skills to handle a level, they must be ready to take on the next level. We must always be ready to take on a higher level of responsibility as God gives it to us. This study does not give the formula in a simple sentence. This study is a guide. It can be used in teaching others publicly or privately. It can be dissected and discussed. It does not claim the perfection that the Word of God is constructed with.**

**The Foundation**

**This study will guide the student through the stages that are necessary to acquire the skills necessary for spiritual maturity.**

**The word "disciple" means learner. We might use the word student. We as Christians must use every tool available to us so that we can reach the ultimate goal. We must use study aids and apply the learning of others and the academic skills of learned men and women. We know we are to grow. We know we must encourage others. We know the Church must be edified by knowledge. We must work out our own salvation. Hopefully, this will guide someone to a better understanding, and help one grow to the final stage that you can teach others and share the Gospel of Christ with those around you. No one can reach the whole world with the word, and God really does not expect us to. But, God does ask us to spread the Gospel to our little corner of the world. Our world consists of our families, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. Faithful Christians living godly in the present age can expose all, which they come in contact with, to the Gospel.**

**Paul describes the growth of the early church to the Ephesians in the same fashion.**

Ephesians 2:20-22 (NKJV) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, {21} in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, {22} in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

**Notice the foundation. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. Peter calls Him the chief cornerstone.**

1 Peter 2:7 (NKJV) Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"

**After the foundation of Jesus Christ we see the apostles and prophets. Paul adds to this list in the following verse.**

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NKJV) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, {13} till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

**As we read we see that a foundation was laid for the growth and development of the Church. This passage also list in detail the expected results of the building up of these components. Lets look at these details more closely starting with verse 12.**

**" for the equipping of the saints"**

**This is giving the early saints the necessary tools, abilities, skills, and knowledge to help their training for the task at the present time and the preparation for the expectation of future needs. We must remember that the need of Christians in the first century varies a lot from our needs. This will be covered in a later chapter.**

**"for the work of service"**

**The rewards are not going to be given us because of who we are, but because of what we do in our lives. We must work out our salvation. This is a job. This is a profession. Christianity is to be a life-style. We must learn to serve others in what they need, not what they want.**

**"to the building up of the body of Christ"**

**The goal is to get all Christians into a state of spiritual maturity. The body of Christ is the Church. The Church is the body of saved individuals who have been added to the Church by God, because of their individual obedience. We are to work together to attain this building up. Once again, upon the proper foundation. Not just any foundation, but the foundation of Christ, the apostles, and others used by God to bring to light the Truth of God. We will see that the real foundation is "TRUTH". All aspects of our being must be upon this truth. Any addition or subtraction to God's truth is to bring plagues upon us as we see in this verse:**

Revelation 22:18-19 (NKJV) For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; {19} and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

**We must be careful to control our feelings and emotions and keep within the boundaries of truth revealed in the Word of God, which is the Bible. When Jesus was praying, He was telling us the importance of God's word.**

John 17:17 (NKJV) "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

**"until we all attain to the unity of the faith"**

**This is to be a joint effort on the part of all Christians. Paul describes the Church as a body.**

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NKJV) For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. {13} For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. {14} For in fact the body is not one member but many. {15} If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? {16} And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? {17} If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? {18} But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. {19} And if they were all one member, where would the body be? {20} But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. {21} And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." {22} No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. {23} And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, {24} but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, {25} that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. {26} And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. {27} Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

**There is but one head. As you know the head directs the rest of the body. Sometimes an illness or disease will have the body do things without direction from the head and it makes life hard and promotes a quick demise.**

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NKJV) And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, {23} which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

**Since Christ is the head, He makes the rules and laws. Jesus is our master. Jesus is our leader. Jesus is our guide. Jesus is our example. Jesus is our savior. Jesus is the door to God. Jesus is the way to God. No one can reach the level of God without Jesus. This is to be done in Jesus' way. No man can change it and be pleasing to God.**

**We can only achieve this unity by following the same leader and observing the same laws.**

Philippians 2:2 (NKJV) fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

1 Corinthians 1:10 (NKJV) Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

**Each member has a part and a function in this body. We must be active, alive, and willing to do whatever it takes to benefit the body to do what it is meant to do.**

**"and of the knowledge of the Son of God"**

**To know Jesus is to learn of Him. To learn everything we can about His existence, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His rise to glory. As we learn of Jesus we learn about His character, His thoughts, and His desires. We need to learn that we must be like Him in all ways possible. Jesus Christ is the single most important event and character in human history. He deserves our recognition and accolades. He also deserves our obedience.**

**"to a mature man, the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ."**

**Once again, we see the need to develop to the completed product. In the spiritual realm, we must start from the foundation, which is the truth, so that the ultimate goal is reached. The glory given to God who deserves it. Jesus has this glory now until the end of time and God has the ultimate glory forever. We want to be a part of that glory. God has promised this to those who will obey and live according to His word.**

**God has given us all the information we need to gain salvation.**

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

**God has told us how and why this will be accomplished.**

2 Peter 1:8 (NKJV) For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**We are to understand that God will receive the ultimate glory. We must do all in our power to give God and Jesus the glory and not look for the glory for ourselves. God promises us this glory will be ours, but not in this life, but the one to come.**

**Grace**

**The following verses deal with two basic words or thoughts; grace and knowledge. I would suggest that you read these verses in their context. As the verse is printed here, please read the verse in your bible. Look at the surrounding verses and read what the subject matter is. Look at the general scheme or theme, which the writers are giving to you. Concentrate on the word "grace" with these verses and see how it is used.**

John 1:17 (NKJV) For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

**When we look at the mission of Christ, we see that the salvation of mankind was His goal. Christ brought this salvation to mankind. In this sense, God “gave”, but Christ was the bearer of the gift.**

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NKJV) And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

**Every spiritual blessing comes from God. Since God gives us these blessings, we can translate this as His grace bestowed upon us.**

Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV) In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

**The great value of the grace of God is more valuable than any physical possessions. Jesus taught this principle on numerous occasions.**

Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

**God’s grace makes it possible for us to be saved. There is nothing that we could have done to merit our salvation. Only God could provide salvation for us. That is why it is considered a gift instead of a purchase.**

Titus 2:11 (NKJV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

**Grace brings salvation. When we consider all the other things that bring salvation, we are able to look at the entire scheme of redemption that God has for man. We learn that God has done His part, and we also learn that we have an important role in this salvation process.**

**There are several things we need to know about grace. Some have written books trying to detail all the ins and outs of grace and explain all that it is and all that it does. Sometimes, people place meanings on words improperly. So as to give it a different meaning than the original language intended. Where a word might mean one thing in a particular context, it might have a different meaning in a different context. In the Greek language, there are at least five different words (all similar, but slightly different) that have been translated to "grace"**

**One interesting way to understand this is to find other words that can be used in place of "grace". I would suggest that the word "gospel" is a synonym of "grace" in several places depending on its use. A synonym is a word that means the same thing as another word.**

**An excellent example of synonyms in use is found in the verses of Psalms 119.**

**All of these synonyms refer to the same thing.**

* **Testimonies**
* **Laws**
* **Ways**
* **Precepts**
* **Statutes**
* **Word**
* **Judgements**
* **Commandments**
* **Ordinances**

**Any of these words can be used in place of the other. They all refer to the law of God. Though in our language each word would have a slightly different connotation, it still has different ways of explaining different aspects of the "law".**

**Getting back to the idea that "gospel" is a synonym for "grace", try reading a few of the verses listed above and change the word from "grace" to "gospel". You should notice that the verses do not lose their meaning and thought. This will open your understanding of what "grace" is. You can know that "grace" and "gospel" are actually the same thing in many cases. As humans, we are constantly trying to look at things in different ways. We must be careful to not introduce ideas that go beyond the truth, so we must always make careful examination of any philosophy or thinking no matter what the source of that thinking. Grace also has some uses that are different from the concept of the gospel.**

**Knowledge**

**Now, as you look at the following verses concerning knowledge, once again, read them in their context. See what properties of the word are and what is the result of this word. Knowledge has different meanings in these verses. This is a very good study to reason together with. Concentrate on the word "knowledge" to see its application.**

Psalms 14:4 (NKJV) Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call on the LORD?

Psalms 119:66 (NKJV) Teach me good judgment and knowledge, For I believe Your commandments.

Proverbs 1:4 (NKJV) To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion;

Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:29 (NKJV) Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD,

Proverbs 2:6 (NKJV) For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;

Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV) "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 12:1 (NKJV) Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid.

Proverbs 15:14 (NKJV) The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

Proverbs 17:27 (NKJV) He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.

Proverbs 19:27 (NKJV) Cease listening to instruction, my son, And you will stray from the words of knowledge.

Isaiah 5:13 (NKJV) Therefore my people have gone into captivity, Because they have no knowledge; Their honorable men are famished, And their multitude dried up with thirst.

Hosea 4:6 (NKJV) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Hosea 6:6 (NKJV) For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Ephesians 1:17 (NKJV) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

Ephesians 3:4 (NKJV) by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

Ephesians 4:13 (NKJV) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Colossians 1:10 (NKJV) that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Timothy 2:4 (NKJV) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

2 Peter 1:8 (NKJV) For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.