

- We began a new teaching series last week called “Foundations.”
- In it, we are going to examine what we believe.
- The reason we are calling this series “Foundations” is because of this truth that we examined last week.
- **HOW I RESPOND TO LIFE IS DETERMINED BY WHAT I BELIEVE.**
- Your choices, actions / reactions, what you do when faced with opportunities or when going through crisis, how you deal with people, are all done based on what you believe.
- In some cases, we decide what we want to do first because, let’s be honest, it’s just what we want to do. Then we decide what we need to believe in order to feel good about our decision.

- We are going to walk through the beliefs of what it means to follow Jesus. What does it really mean to be a Christian?
- Do you believe in God? (That’s a strange question to ask a bunch of people in church on Easter Sunday)
- As I mentioned last week, there are many, many people that believe in God.
- A 2016 Gallup poll found that 9 of 10 Americans profess a belief in God. They believe that God exists.
- The statistics don’t change much around the world. Most of the 7.5 billion people on our planet have some level of belief in God.
- It is true whether they consider themselves religious or not.
- You can be in a group of people with very disparate opinions and find easy common ground about the existence of God.

- Perhaps the better question is not “Do you believe in God?” but “What do you believe about God?”
- The answer to this question is hugely pertinent whether you are religious or not, whether you profess to be a Christ-follower or not.
- How you answer that question will impact how you deal with others and with the challenges you face in life and how you practice your faith.

- We are using the Apostles Creed to work through the foundations of our faith. It is simply a statement developed about 300 AD to summarize into a single manifesto or creed the essential truths that Christ-followers believe.
- We sang a modified version of it this morning. It begins as follows:
- “We believe in God the Father
- Almighty Maker of the heavens and the earth”
- So, what do we believe about God? Do you picture Morgan Freeman?
- This is a huge topic, but let me suggest three things that we believe to be true that should shape our response to him.

I. God is the Creator.

- “Maker of the heavens and the earth”
- How do you see the world around you?
- Was it simply a random occurrence? Are we a result of infinite time plus infinite chance?
- Was it put into motion by a God some millions of years ago and then let spin into its current state?
- There was a high school science teacher who greeted her students each day with the greeting, “Hello cosmic accidents.”

- It that what we are?

This is what God the LORD says – the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it. (Isaiah 42:5)

- God made it all. There was nothing, then there was something. He is the uncaused cause. The one who began it all.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

- He is the creator. That alone says something about God. He is infinitely creative (all you have to do is watch a Planet Earth episode to see the stunning variety on our planet)
- He is strong and powerful enough to create. Only he could bring something from nothing.
- It is deeper than this.

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness” . . . so God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

- Pause for a second and grasp this. He designed men and women to be made in his image. He breathed life into us.
- You are an image bearer of God. You are marked with his stamp. You are not an accident. He decided to create you. You are intentional.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. (Psalm 139:13)

- This has implications for how you see yourself.
- What do you see when you look in the mirror?

Lie	Truth
God doesn’t care	God creatively made me.
God is remote and distant, absent even.	God is actively involved in this world.
I am nothing.	I have value.
I am worthless.	I bear God’s image.
I am an accident, a mistake.	I am the product of design.
I am a loser.	I have purpose.

- God is not capricious. This world, me, are not the result of chance. God specifically designed you for a purpose.
- How would we live differently if we knew that God had designed us for something? That he is present? That no matter what others say, we are amazing, designed people, exactly how God chose to make us?
- The second thing is tied to the first.

II. God is the Almighty One.

- What does that word mean to you?
- The word used frequently in OT Scripture translated to Almighty is Shaddai, which means the most powerful or Jehovah which means the existing one, the Lord of hosts. He has always been. He is eternal. It conveys the picture of a powerful general in charge of an undefeatable army. He holds all power.
- Some facts about our world:
- Spinning at 1,000 mph, moving at 67,000 mph
- From -128F to 136F
- From 35,000 ft. below sea level to 29,000 ft. above it
- Lightning strike can heat the air to over 50,000F and there are 6,000 strikes per minute
- Mount St Helen’s released energy equivalent to 1600 atomic bombs like Hiroshima
- The energy in one hurricane if converted to electricity would power the US for 3 years
- Sequoia trees 52,500 cubic feet

- 1.7MM species of insects, animals and plants
- Blue whale weighs up to 200 tons – tongue weighs as much as an elephant, its heart as much as a car. Lives on krill which are about 2” long.
- Some facts about our universe:
- Solar System is almost 4 million miles – if you drove at highway speed all the way to Pluto, it would take you 6,000 years.
- Our Solar System is part of the Milky Way galaxy – a spiral arm galaxy that contains 200 billion stars and is 100 million light years across.
- Light year is distance light travels in a year and since light travels 186,000 mps (fastest plane goes around 2,000 mph), (means light can go around the earth 7 times in one second) one light year is a mind boggling distance (5.87 trillion miles)
- Our observable universe (from where we are) contains 10 billion trillion stars.
- God made all this and he holds it all in the palm of his hand.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. (Isaiah 40:28)

- If God is something less. If he is one of a number of gods. If he cannot influence all things. If he does not understand everything. If he is not Almighty . . . then there is less reason to ever want to follow him completely.

Lie	Truth
God is incapable. God doesn't get me or my situation. I have to take control of my life. I worry about what might happen. I can't rely on God when it really matters.	God can do anything God understand me better than I do. I can relax and give up control. I can live with peace. I can rely on God.

- God is the creator. God is Almighty. This is incomplete. He might have made it all, he might even be all powerful, but without this last truth, God is simply a being to be feared or appeased. When I mess up I need to appease him. I serve him for what I get out of it. Mostly I just hope that he leaves me to live my life and when things get bad, I might ask for help.

III. God is our Father

- God is not an impersonal force. He is all about relationship.
- This is nowhere seen more than in the story of Abraham.
- Many of you are familiar with Abraham.
- Over 4000 years ago, God picked a man, named Abram, and personally appeared to him and told him to pack up and move across the country when he was 75 years old. He promised him that his children would grow into a great nation.
- Problem was, he had no children. And he was 75!
- After God made that promise, Abraham waited 11 years. Now he was 86 and still no kid. He and his wife Sarah took matters into their own hands and they had a child (Ishmael) through one of her servants. But God promised him again that no, this child would come from him and his wife.
- 13 more years passed. Abraham was now 99 and Sarah was 90.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty ; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." (Genesis 17:1-2)

- God came and promised again to give him kids and make them into a nation in the future.
- Finally, the following year, at 100 years old, they had a son they named Isaac.

- It is hard to understand the depths of joy and love Abraham had for Isaac. Talk to any couple trying to have children year after year and all the heartbreak and talks and futility. Then they finally have that baby. They finally get to put together the nursery. To have their own child.
- In that culture it was even more important. And now at 100 years old, Abraham has a son.
- He was the light of his life. He was everything to him.
- Then the unthinkable happens:

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." (Genesis 22:1-2)

- What is going on? I'm not sure we can image his confusion.
- Take your only son. The one you love with all your heart and soul. The one who is dear to you and go to a mountain place to kill him and sacrifice him to me.
- The next day, Abraham loads his donkey and takes his son and 2 servants and sets out.
- They travel for three days. Three days between his death sentence and whatever lies at the end of it.
- I'm sure Abraham didn't sleep for three days. How could he? This was his miracle child. It was the one he waited for his entire life. Even after God promised he had to wait 25 years. All his hopes and dreams were died up in this young man.
- It was agony as he plays over and over in his mind what is going to happen and whether he should simply turn around and ignore God's instruction altogether.
- But they marched on. On the third day, they reach their destination.

As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." (Genesis 22:6-8)

- He loaded up the wood for the sacrifice and Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice.
- Isaac went willingly – I am sure he could have gotten away from a father was now probably 110 years old or older.
- Abraham had no idea what God was going to do, if anything.
- They got to the top of the mountain, he built an altar, he placed the wood on it, and he bound Isaac, his only son and placed him on top of the wood.
- He raised his knife to kill his son. In that moment, when he did not withhold his only son but in a supreme act of love was going to sacrifice him, in that moment, all the things he had believed about God being his provider and protector were suddenly made more real than they ever had before.
- Because God intervened. He stopped Abraham. He called to him and commended him for not withholding his son. As Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught in a thicket which he took and sacrificed in place of his son.

So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." (Genesis 22:14)

- It all because so personal. Why would God do this? It seems so cruel. Why put Abraham through something so horrible?
- [PAUSE]
- Then 2200 years later, God took his only son, the one he loved more than anything, the light of his life.
- He put him on a donkey and led him into the city.
- He carried the wood for his own sacrifice.
- He went willingly.

- He was bound by being nailed to a cross with two thieves.
- But this time there was no last minute reprieve. There was no lamb to take Jesus place. Because he was the lamb to take our place.
- God went through anguish, pain and sorrow as he allowed Jesus to die.
- God, the creator, the Almighty One, did not withhold his only son and in a supreme act of love allowed him to be sacrificed because he is a personal God.
- He is a loving Father who cares deeply for YOU.

- What is the truth about God?

Lie	Truth
God is absent. God doesn't care about me. God is ignoring me. I am unloved. I am an outcast. I don't matter.	God is there always. God loves and cares for you deeply. God is listening to you and is involved. I am loved. I belong to his family. I matter to him.

- Because Jesus did not stay dead.
- His sacrifice changed everything because while Abraham figuratively thought he had gotten Isaac back from the dead, Jesus did rise from the dead.
- He is alive. He is the Lord. He is powerful. He reigns.
- The one who created the world and who designed you.
- The one who was and is powerful enough to do anything.
- He chose to have relationship with you, if you are willing.
- To forgive your sins and to bring you freedom.
- To be the Father you long for.