

## Introduction

In our last session we saw that our courage to test our **foundations** will be rewarded, even if it is challenging. We discussed invisible but vital things in the natural world. These actually point us to hidden spiritual things that make a huge impact on our lives. *It's as if He is here right now, personally asking you face to face, "Are you willing to have Me inspect your foundations with you?"*

This week we explore the one footing that provides strength for all others.

### Have you ever wondered if God is really there?

Deep down, if you are really honest, have you asked yourself this question, *"Am I just creating God in my mind, or did God really create me?"*

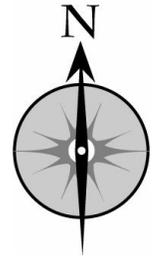
This is a question for everyone. It is natural to wonder about this, whether you have a religious background or not. Some eagerly tell others about God. Others reject the idea of God being real. But sooner or later we all will face the same question: "How did I arrive at my conclusions about God? Do I believe in God, or reject Him, because of my circumstance, emotions or culture... Or because of rock solid realities that can be trusted."

Some cultures tell us this question can only be answered by blind faith. Others say it all depends on personal preferences.

**But what if God has been sending signals, leaving fingerprints, revealing Himself in countless ways...ways that are true and reliable whether we believe them or not?**

In this session, **we will explore five ways that God has revealed Himself to be real and worthy of trust.**

You will see how confidence in His reality can change our lives.



The compass shows us where North is, even when people disagree. Could it be that God is even more real and reliable than Magnetic North, that we are designed to point at His realities?

## PREVIEW OF SESSION: CHART THE COURSE

Here is what to expect in this session:

1. **Connecting with others: Link up with a person and idea (pairs).**
2. **Reviewing past concepts: Where are we? (group)**
3. **Exploring the topic: Is God Really There? (group and pairs)**
4. **Teamwork/Prayer Partner: How can this topic affect your life this week? (group and pairs)**
5. **Assignment for next week: Be ready to report on this.**

### CONNECTING WITH OTHERS: LINK UP WITH A PERSON AND IDEA

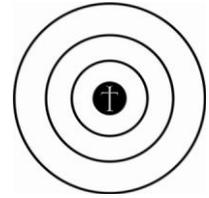
Before we begin, briefly discuss the following in pairs:

- Share one positive or negative experience from the past week (in any category).
- What was helpful from the last session?
- Any progress in understanding or applying it?

## REVIEWING PAST CONCEPTS: WHERE ARE WE?

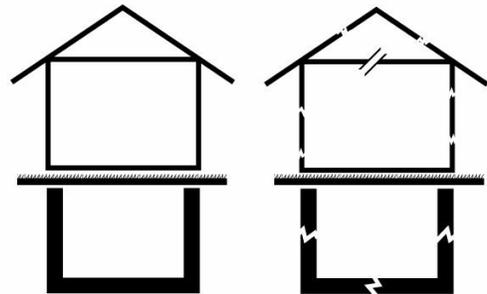
### Session 1: *What Does It Take To Survive? Am I Ready?*

Some things are crucial for life even if we cannot easily see them. Being unaware of them or disagreeing with them does not change their reality. If we know them and practice them we live. If we don't, we die. Survival in any difficult task requires a set of essentials—core things you must focus on (like a bull's eye). Mountain climbers have skills they learn before tackling the big climb. Doctors look for vital signs to assess someone's health. It is foolish to start these things without testing to make sure you are ready. And it is dangerous to focus on secondary issues (high cholesterol) when core issues are wrong (no pulse). *Life is the same—including the spiritual world.* We all need certain spiritual essentials to make it in life. There are certain core questions we must focus on instead of other secondary things. We need to test ourselves or be tested by others in order to know for sure we are ready. And if we care about someone else, we will ask them to be sure about their “bullseye” too.



### Session 2: **Foundations;** invisible but vital things that make a huge impact on our lives

Jesus compared life to building a house, and the way we live our lives to the foundation. We often focus on the surface, and come to the wrong conclusions. *Jesus didn't.* Jesus went below the surface and focused on the underground foundations of a person's life—the *unseen things*. He made it clear that visible cracks above the surface come from hidden gaps in our foundations (see graphic on the right). It's worth it to go to bedrock. All issues in your life, including your eternal destiny, are linked to these foundations, whether you realize them or not. **Visible strength above ground is based on unseen strength below the surface.** *Last time He asked us, “Are you willing to have Me inspect your foundations with you?”*



### Session 3:

**Today He is asking, “Are you willing to allow Me to show you the ways I reveal Myself through rock solid realities which are always reliable? “**

This will not be an academic exercise, philosophy class, or a theological argument. No preaching, pushing or selling allowed.

We will explore five ways God has revealed Himself.

Ways that are true, solid, reliable, whether you believe them or not, far beyond radar, sonar, x rays, compasses, lab tests, stock market reports,...

Ways that are clear, simple, but stunning when you really think about them.

### ***Exploring the Topic: Overview***

In order to explore this concept we will look at six things:

1. Are there examples in **my experience** or in the **natural world** of something invisible but very real and very reliable?
2. Are some things **real and reliable regardless of people's opinions**, and could this be true of God as well?
3. What do I think about God? **How did I form my opinions?** What information have I accepted without testing?
4. What does the Bible say? Has God revealed Himself in real and reliable ways?
5. How do these realities affect my life?
6. What steps can I take that will make a real difference in my life this week?

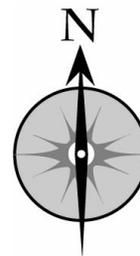
### **Examples From Our World: What Can We Learn Here?**

1. Personal Experience: In your experience, where have you seen something that was invisible but very real and reliable? (Discuss in pairs. Your experience may help someone else understand the concept better.) radar, sonar, x rays, compasses, lab tests, stock market reports,...
2. The Natural World: Where in the natural world do you see something invisible but very real and reliable? (Discuss this as a group. Your leader will help the group identify a few key examples.)

### **Transition to the Spiritual World: Are Invisible Things Really Real?**

Could it be that just as we can see invisible but real and reliable things in our experience and in the natural world, we can also know that *God* is real and reliable? Does it *really* depend on emotions, circumstances, and cultural trends, or is He actually there?

As we have said, *it is OK to have questions*. The important thing is to make sure you base your opinion, your life, and your actions on solid, reliable information—not on emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends. Check and double-check your beliefs and the reasons for them. *If there is no God or He cannot be trusted, it is foolish to follow Him. But if there truly is a God and He can be trusted, it is equally foolish (and dangerous) to ignore Him.*

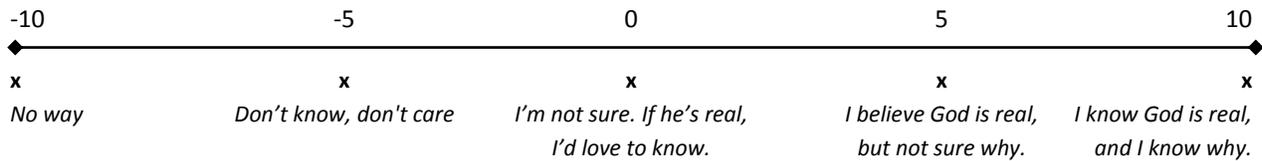


***True North Diagram:***  
*"True North" is invisible unless you have a compass. But it's always there... Same with God.*

## Inspecting My Foundations: What do I think about God?

The rest of this session will help you see the powerful ways God has revealed himself. But first, let's look at your present opinion. What do you think about this?

What do **you** think about God? Is he real?



Why did you put your "X" there? What would help you move toward +10?

How have you formed your opinion (e.g., family, teachers, culture/society)? Were they reliable sources of spiritual insight?

## Input From God's Word: What Does the Bible Actually Say?

**What is at stake here?** Frankly, *a lot*.

1. If I am not really sure that God exists, then I cannot be sure about the Bible, Jesus, salvation, forgiveness, morals, missions, ...anything.
2. If my certainty is based on circumstances, emotions and culture then I am in danger when trials or temptations come.
3. If these things are true and we deny them, we are in another kind of danger. We are actually declaring with our words or our lives that God is a liar. John, a close friend and eyewitness of Jesus for three years, wrote that *"Anyone who does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because He has not believed the testimony God has given about His Son"* (1 John 5:10).

**Therefore, if we deny God's existence, if we deny that Jesus is God, or if we live in a way that denies Him, we are calling God a liar.** You may not have thought of it like that before. You may not have meant to call God a liar. But that's why it's so important to address these questions.

**From the very beginning, God has made it clear that He is eager to reveal Himself.** And as He reveals Himself, He does so in a very personal, powerful, and passionate way. He declares to all people everywhere that He exists, that He is reliable and wants us to know Him in a personal way.

### Session Highlights



1. *Key Questions:* Is God Really There? Is He reliable?
2. *Key Scripture:* Romans 1:20
3. *Key Illustration:* Compass and True North
4. *Key Faith Prayer:* "Lord, I choose today to live according to reality and believe that you are a reliable God."
5. *Key Faith Step:* Look for ways God has been active and reliable in your life.

## ***Five Ways God Has Revealed Himself***

Many of these powerful insights are revealed through the Bible. But you may have nagging questions about the trustworthiness of the Bible. Session 4 will show some remarkable indications of the Bible's reliability. But these will be seen more clearly when we first explore the bigger picture:

**five ways God has revealed Himself to be reliable.** They are like five fingerprints. When you see them all together, they make it very clear that Someone's hands are all over the world around us.

Let's look briefly at each of them. In the right column, write down what you learn and any questions you have. In the left column, describe your current view or any questions or objections.

Remember, this is a safe place to ask your most important questions.

*Write your objections or questions in the space provided.*

### ***Five Ways God Has Revealed Himself***

1. **Creation:** God has clearly revealed Himself in the natural world around us. (evidence of design, the watchmaker...)

Romans 1:20 – *What does this verse say we can know just by looking at our world?*

2. **Reliable Word:** The Bible came from God Himself and is very reliable for getting to know Him and guiding our lives.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – *What do these verses say about Scripture?*

2 Peter 1:20-21 – *Where does this verse claim the prophecy's of Scripture came from?*

Other reference points that the Bible was accurately recorded, transmitted, translated:

Uniqueness,

Manuscripts,

Archaeology,

fulfilled Prophecy,

remarkable Statements about itself...

**Write your objections or questions in the space provided.**

3. **Fulfilled Prophecy:** The Bible documents numerous prophecies that were fulfilled. (The Old Testament was translated into the Greek in 250 BC, so they could not have changed the text to create a fantasy.) Here are some examples:

Isaiah 53: The messiah, killed for sake of others' sin...

Micah 5:1-2 (written in 740-710 BC) – *What is predicted here?*

Matthew 2:1(fulfilled 700 years later!) – *What are the odds?*

4. **Jesus' Claims and miracles:** see the Gospel of John; What "Colossal Claims" did Jesus make, and what were His credentials? John 3:16, those who believed on Him would have eternal life, John 6, bread of life, John 7, living water, John 10:30, He is God, 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life... John 14, 15 He will dwell in and through His followers... John 20:27-29, welcomed scrutiny, accepted worship

Lord, Liar, Lunatic...

5. **Jesus' Resurrection:** Jesus foretold His crucifixion, was executed by crucifixion, was dead for three days, came back to life, and was seen by hundreds of eyewitnesses.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 – *How many people saw Jesus alive after he was killed? What are the chances that someone would lie about this when the eyewitnesses were still alive?*

Acts 17:22-31 – *What evidence did Paul point to in order to substantiate the reliability of Jesus (and of God)?*

**The Reality Principle: Choosing to live according to reality regardless of emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends.**

Let's apply the Reality Principle and give you a place to clarify questions and raise objections. The Reality Principle says that some things are worthy of trust no matter what other people think. We can choose to live according to reality rather than relying on our emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends.

In the left hand column, list all the objections you or others have about the existence or reliability of God and the ways you have formed your view of this issue.

Then, in the right hand column, fill in the five ways God has revealed Himself.

<b>NOT REAL: <i>emotions, circumstances, cultural trends</i></b>	<b>REAL: <i>True, whether I believe it or not</i></b>
<i>Example: "God is just an idea in my mind."</i>	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

What do you think about these claims? Write your thoughts and further questions here:

**God's Reliability: The Foundation for Everything Else**

Recall the "foundation" illustration from Session 2: **Write your responses to the following:**

As you test your foundations can you see that God is the foundation for everything else?

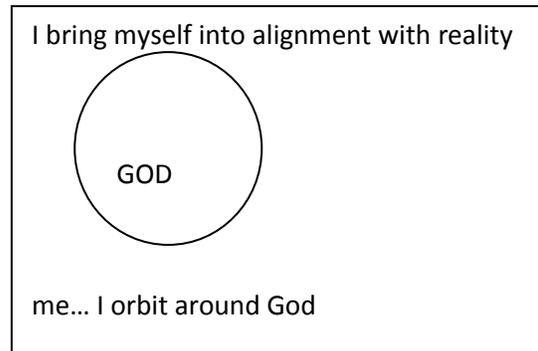
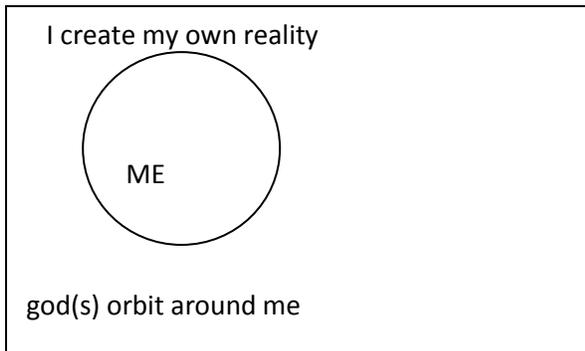
If there is no God, we all make up our own stories, the Bible is optional. If there is no God, Jesus is also a myth. If God is not reliable, then nothing else really matters. But if God is reliable, we can choose to align our lives with those realities. Then we can experience fullness in life beyond what we can imagine.

**A Word of Encouragement**

God welcomes your scrutiny, and the worst thing you could do is blindly reject or accept these principles. We encourage you to thoughtfully consider them, and if they prove true, wholeheartedly embrace them. Let them change your life because, if they are true, to disregard them is to deny reality. The following pictures may help:

## How can this change my life?

Remember how people used to believe the sun orbited around the earth? Seems silly to us now. But today we see many benefits because someone has revealed a greater reality to us. Could this be true about God also?



*Which circle best represents your life today?*

*What effects does each picture have on how a person lives?*

*How would your life change if you shifted your whole life toward the right circle?*

*(How would you view God's promises, commands, worthiness, and other characteristics differently?)*

### **TEAMWORK/PRAYER PARTNER: HOW CAN THIS TOPIC AFFECT YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK?**

Discuss the following with your partner. Start now, and check in with each other through the week.

1. *General:* What is most helpful from this session? What is difficult? How clear am I?

2. *Specific:* If possible, share your answers to some of the thought questions:

How does this affect specific areas of my life?

3. *Faith steps:* How much do I live as though this is true? What practical steps do I need to take in order to live according to reality? Who else can I share this with?

## ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK: BE READY TO REPORT ON THIS.

Before next week's meeting, do the following to help you further understand and apply this session.

1. *Keep Your Eyes Open*: Look for other things in your life or the natural world around you that are invisible but very real and very reliable. Write down any examples you see.
2. *Reinforce Your Learning*: Review the five ways God has revealed Himself to be reliable. You know you understand them if you can explain them to a 10 year old. Can you?
3. *Fill in the Reality Principle Chart*: What are your emotions, circumstances, and cultural trends saying about God (left column above)? How do those things stand up to the claims of God Himself (right column above)?
4. *Share With Someone Else*: If you are convinced of the reality and reliability of God, *share this with someone else*. If you are not, *ask someone else what they think*. It will help you to talk this out with others who are interested in the topic.

### Forecasting Session 4: *Can I Trust The Bible?*

Perhaps you see the impact of these principles, but you are wondering, *Can I trust the Bible? It's a pretty old document. How do we know it was actually from God? Was it reliably recorded, transmitted, and translated? Even if it is true, what does that mean for me?*

In Session 4, we will address questions about the Bible itself. In preparation, think about your view of the Bible. Write down brief answers to the following questions:

1. What do you believe about the Bible?
2. How did you form these beliefs?
3. Do your actions reflect these beliefs?

### Team Activity for the next session:

Bring or describe objects that show;  
the value of a **trustworthy source of information**,  
the value of being accurate about things not easily seen, true even if others disagree,  
**love and concern** by sharing important information in a reliable way;  
auto manual, recipe book, last will and testament, love letter from distant loved one,  
ballistics chart, reloading manual, printout of financial realities from advisor