

7 BUILDING ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS

REVISED CROSS-CULTURAL EDITION



TEACHING NEW BELIEVERS:

1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians and Revelation

Trevor McIlwain A

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Trevor McIlwain

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*Building On Firm Foundations: Volume 7: Teaching New Believers:
1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians and Revelation – Revised Edition*

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What is *Firm Foundations*?

Just what is *Firm Foundations*? It is foundational, chronological Bible teaching.

This method of teaching is patterned on God’s progressive revelation of Himself and His plan to rescue people from sin, Satan and death. Lessons start “*in the beginning*.” Moving through the Old and New Testaments, *Firm Foundations* highlights the themes that run through all of God’s Word. This builds, from lesson to lesson, an understanding of the Bible as a whole.

This practical approach has been used all over the world, and is proven for:

- Evangelism
- Grounding new believers
- Teaching maturing believers
- Planting churches

Firm Foundations arose from the experience of Trevor McIlwain in the 1960s. While working cross-culturally with a people group in the Philippines, Trevor saw the need to establish proper biblical foundations. He developed Bible lessons to meet that need. As Trevor states, “The Scriptures were progressively revealed by God within the context and framework of history. Therefore, the best way to teach divine truth in any culture is God’s way, within the chronological and historical framework of the Scriptures.”

Trevor shared this approach with other missionaries who were also teaching cross-culturally, initially distributing his basic outline, and later, detailed Bible lessons. They discovered, as he had, that this *Firm Foundations* approach was exceptionally effective.

When these missionaries returned home, their glowing testimonies inspired pastors and other Bible teachers to adopt this method. As a result, the *Firm Foundations* lessons were modified for churches and home Bible studies, and this approach has proven equally effective in English-speaking settings as in cross-cultural settings.

Since that time, adaptations of the *Firm Foundations* materials have been developed for many languages, cultural contexts and age groups.

You are now a part of the *Firm Foundations* legacy!

About This Curriculum

Building on Firm Foundations – Teaching New Believers: 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Revelation is a set of Bible lessons by Trevor McIlwain. This book is Volume 7 in the *Building on Firm Foundations* series, and covers the next step in the foundational, chronological teaching program.

At this stage in the development of the church, new believers need to learn about God's plan for the future. As you teach this curriculum, they will be strengthened in hope, as they learn the absolute certainty of God's future plans for His Church, Israel, the rest of humanity, Satan, spiritual powers and the universe.

These lessons were written to guide missionaries step-by-step as they prepare Bible lessons in tribal languages. They were designed for teaching in a cross-cultural setting, although they can be adapted and used in any teaching situation.

Firm Foundations Materials Available

***Firm Foundations* by Trevor McIlwain [Revised Edition]** (Teacher Guides and Study Guides available)

- Books 1-5: *Creation to Christ*
- Book 6: *Secure in Christ*
- Book 7: *Growing in Christ – Acts*
- Book 8: *Growing in Christ – Romans*
- Book 9: *Growing in Christ – Ephesians*

***Building on Firm Foundations* [Revised Cross-cultural Edition]** by Trevor McIlwain

- Volume 1: *Guidelines for Evangelism and Teaching Believers*
- Volume 2: *Evangelism: Genesis to the Ascension*
- Volume 3: *Teaching New Believers: Genesis to the Ascension*
- Volume 4: *Teaching New Believers: Acts*
- Volume 5: *Teaching New Believers: Romans and Ephesians*
- Volume 6: *Teaching New Believers: 1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy and Titus*
- Volume 7: *Teaching New Believers: 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Revelation*
- Volume 8: *Teaching New Believers: Galatians and Colossians*
- Volume 9: *Teaching New Believers: 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon and 2 Timothy*
- Volume 10: *Teaching New Believers: Hebrews and James*
- Volume 11: *Teaching New Believers: 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Jude*
- Volume 12: *Teaching Maturing Believers: Genesis through the Epistles*

Note that the latter BOFF volumes are in the process of revision or development. Check the NTM website for availability.

Information about the above publications, along with information about translated materials, and other resources, can be found at:

Canada: ntmbooks.ca or email bookstore@canada.ntm.org or 519.369.2622

United Kingdom: ntmuk.oxatis.com or email books@ntm.org.uk or 44 (0) 1472.387700

USA: www.ntmbookstore.com or email books@ntm.org or 800.321.5375

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Part 1



Preparations and Guidelines for
the Next Step in Phase 4

1

The Next Step in Phase 4 of the Chronological Teaching Program

Great world events in which God intervenes in human history are the foundations for all the teachings of salvation. The first is an established fact. Through Christ at Calvary, God made full provision for the salvation of sinners. The next wonderful event is yet to take place – the return of Christ for His Church. When He comes, Jesus will deliver us forever from the presence of sin, death and Satan.

The first event – God’s mercy provided for sinners through Christ – has been central to all the teaching we have given so far in the chronological teaching program.

In Phase 1, Genesis to the ascension, the students learned that, by His first coming, Christ completed the work necessary for the salvation of all who will simply put their trust in Him. Those who understood and believed now look back to His first coming and what He did on their behalf as the basis for their complete acceptance by God.

In Phase 2 we briefly reviewed the Old Testament and the life of Christ to reemphasize to the new believers that Christ has fulfilled all that God required so that they would never be condemned.

Phase 3, the Acts of the Apostles, told the exciting story of the building of the Early Church as the message of the Gospel spread from Jerusalem throughout Judea and to Samaria, and, finally, by the Apostle Paul to the lands of the Gentiles surrounding the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas.

Phase 4, to this point, has focused on Christ’s deliverance of God’s children from the penalty and power of sin. But wonderful as it is for believers to learn that they have been freed from the control of Satan, even that isn’t the end of the marvelous message of the Bible!

Before He left this world, Christ promised that He would come again to take God’s children to the Father’s house (John 14:1-3).

This is the second great milestone for which we, who *“have the firstfruits of the Spirit,”* wait. Until Christ returns, *“we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body”* (Romans 8:23).

The Scriptures not only point believers back to the Cross to rest in the past accomplishments of Christ on their behalf, they also point forward to the time when He will return to deliver His people forever from the presence of sin (Hebrews 9:28).

The return of Christ will be the primary focus of the next step in our chronological teaching program.

As you teach 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Revelation, the believers will learn that Christ’s second coming is one of the strongest incentives for living holy lives for God’s glory and their greatest comfort when they are faced with the sad reality of death (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1-11).

Basic content, not every verse

We will treat these books in the same way as we have the Phase 4 Epistles already taught – not covering every chapter or verse. Remember, in Phase 4 we are focusing on what is most important for the new believers and the infant church. And at this point, the believers need to understand the over-all plan of God for the future.

Continually building on previously-laid foundations

In keeping with the principles of the chronological approach, as we teach 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Revelation, we will point back to the foundations we have already laid. This means that we will use biblical illustrations and Scripture passages from the portions we have already taught. In this way, we will be continually adding to our foundations and basic framework, and we will be interpreting each new book in the light of previous lessons.

Phase 4				
Old Testament	Gospels	Acts	Epistles Already Taught	Epistle Being Taught
←				Pointing backward to the Old Testament
	←			Pointing backward to the Gospels
		←		Pointing backward to Acts
			←	Pointing backward to Epistles already taught

Practical instructions about using these lessons

Those who have taught from the previous books in this series will understand both my approach to writing the content of the lessons and the layout of the lessons. If you are not familiar with the approach and layout, or if you are not familiar with the truths that were taught in previous phases, I encourage you to read the earlier volumes in this series.

Volume	Title	Phase
1	Guidelines for Evangelism and Teaching Believers	
2	Evangelism: Genesis to the Ascension	1
3	Teaching New Believers: Genesis to the Ascension	2
4	Teaching New Believers: Acts	3
5	Teaching New Believers: Romans and Ephesians	4
6	Teaching New Believers: 1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy, Titus	4

Step-by-step guide

These lessons were written to guide missionaries step-by-step as they prepare Bible lessons in tribal languages, first for themselves and then for tribal believers as they teach others. I wrote the lessons as though I were actually addressing a group of tribal people in Palawan, an island of the Philippines.

Note that the chronological Bible lessons show both **what** to teach and **how** to teach. At the same time, these lessons can be adapted and used in any teaching situation.

Dialogue form

I have deliberately written in dialogue form. Throughout the lessons, you will see that I constantly encourage the people to think about something or to respond to a question. You should adapt this dialogue style to your teaching situation. Don't preach, but rather teach. Your style should not be stiff and stilted but lucid, free and spontaneous.

Review at the start of each lesson

At the beginning of each lesson, you will see a reminder to review, using the questions from the previous lesson. These review questions are a vital part of each lesson. They ensure continuity in the people's understanding of the truths, and will give you the opportunity to assess what your students understood from the previous lesson.

Questions during the lesson

I have included a few questions throughout the lesson text. These questions are a teaching tool, intended to promote participation and to reinforce truths the believers have already been taught.

Be sure to allow the believers sufficient time to think about and answer the questions. If they answer incorrectly or insufficiently, ask another question, or make a statement that will guide them to the correct answer. (Note that the correct answer follows each question. The answer is indented and italicized.) Always use the questions as a teaching tool, never as a quiz to test the people's memory or understanding.

Read Scripture

Give good readers opportunity to participate by reading the verses from which you will be teaching. Encourage the others to follow the reading in their Bibles.

At the beginning of each lesson, I have included an instruction to read the passage that you will be teaching in its entirety. This initial reading gives the opportunity to view the passage as a whole before examining each part in detail.

As you teach the lesson, you will be reading the same verses, but in an expository manner, reading only one or two verses at a time.

Scripture base for answers to questions

I have included Scripture verses to be read as part of the answers to the questions which appear at the end of each lesson.

It is important in the development of the new believers' knowledge of the truth to not only be able to answer questions but to also be able to show others where to locate the answers in Scripture. Give the believers the opportunity to read these verses as they answer the questions.