

Hi ladies, my name is Danae Lloyd and I am a member of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL. I'll be your trainer for this session and I'll tell you more about myself along the way but the most important thing you need to know is that I'm your sister in Christ. I'm not smarter, braver, more gifted or more Godly than any of you. I never would've chosen myself to be on this training team, but the Lord saw fit to use it to grow me as His daughter. I'm only leading this session because I've been studying a rich, theologically-sound resource and would be remiss if I didn't share how I have been impacted by the Scriptural truths presented in it and how it applies to every aspect of our journey through life. My goal for this session is that God would redeem the time we are about to spend together, that He would grow in us a right love for Him and His people, and that He would guide you individually and corporately as you seek to begin, strengthen, reshape, or redirect the Women's Ministry within your local church. And to do that correctly, we need to start with a solid foundation for life and ministry. We're going all the way back to the basics of the faith, looking for cracks in the foundation of our own lives first, and asking the Lord to renew us so that we can become the women He designed and called us to be. Then, and only then, can we be in the proper frame of mind to establish effective Women's Ministries in His Church across the globe. I do want to clear up a few terms before we get started, though. So here they are...

The first thing we will discuss in our Grid series is what we're calling "Foundations." Four theological cornerstones that are inseparable and absolutely non-negotiable because they come straight from God Himself. We need to use all four of them as the strong, level base upon which to build solid frameworks for everything else. We want to be like the wise man who built his house on the Rock and not on the shifting sand. There will be times in our session when I ask one of you to read something out loud or say something aloud together in the interest of enhancing our learning, so I hope you're ready to dive into God's Word today.

God is Our Reference Point

Turn with me to the section titled Foundations, as we read that first one together aloud. Number one, together: *God is our reference point*. Genesis 1:1 states it clearly for us with the first four words we read in Scripture. "In the beginning God"... Think about that. God's first four words to us tell us so much about Him! His existence in eternity past qualifies him as the origin point for all of creation. And what else do we know about God through His Word? Listen to these verses and write down or underline some words that jump out at you. <Call out references for reading>

John 4:24 [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Job 11:7 [7] "Can you find out the deep things of God?

Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?

Psalms 90:2 [2] Before the mountains were brought forth,

or ever you had formed the earth and the world,

from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

James 1:17 [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Exodus 3:14 [14] God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Psalms 147:5 [5] Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.

Revelation 4:8 [8] And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"

Revelation 15:4 [4] Who will not fear, O Lord,
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Exodus 34:6-7 [6] The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, [7] keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

He is sovereign, perfect, unchangeable, wise, holy, and true. Everything He is, He always has been, and always will be. So we have a few words from Scripture to describe God. But what is a reference point? My first competitive sport was synchronized figure skating. I was 7 years old on a team of about 18 girls my age. Each part of our choreography had to be performed as one cohesive unit, then we would rearrange ourselves into the next formation together. We practiced each element more times than I could count, and everyone had to be in the right place doing the right thing at the right time. We only had about 2mins on the ice, and timing was key. So what kept us in unison? Our song was playing over the speakers. You see, we played the same song every time we practiced the choreography for it. It gave us tempo and lyric cues, but most importantly it gave us confidence. We would usually have to drive very far away, sometimes spend the night in a hotel, eat different foods, then find our locker room in a huge foreign arena. While we waited on the bench, we couldn't always find the faces of our families in the bleachers. The lines for the ice might be different colors or spacing than ours back home. Nothing was familiar or would help us succeed as a team. But when it was our turn, we took the ice and got

in our starting poses and waited for the music. And when we heard the first notes of that song we'd heard so many times before, we always knew what to do.

In its own simple way, it reminds me what it could be like if God remains the reference point for my own life, for any role that I step into, for the women's ministry at my own church, and for his church all over the world. No matter what chapter of life we're in, where we minister to others, or what's happening on our side of the world, we can have confidence in His call for us and continue to grow the way God intended as long as we keep Him at the forefront. Now let's say Foundation number 1 together again: *God is our reference point.*

What are some reasons why it is good for us to have this God, the God of the Bible, as our reference point? What other reference points have failed you? Why did they fail, and how does that compare to the attributes of God?

His Word is Our Authority

Let's read the second non-negotiable together aloud. Number two: *His Word is our Authority.* All of the verses we just read, that tell us about this glorious God, came straight from him. The fact that all of scripture is breathed out by our Reference Point is what makes it authoritative. When we say the Bible is God's word, it means that everything written from Genesis to Revelation was communicated to men by God himself and put on paper so that we can know who he is and what he wants. Both for us, and from us. Often times, when we talk about authority, I think we have a tendency to associate it with a position of power and rulership. Maybe you think of a police officer, CEO, or president. In our world, all positions of authority have limitations - police officers have jurisdictions, CEOs have org charts, and even presidents have term limits and national boundaries. And I'm sure we can all think of times when power has opened the door for corruption. But as God's children, we can be certain that the authority of God is never abused in his word. Let's read a few verses and see what God says about it. <Ask for volunteers one at a time>

2 Timothy 3:16 [16] All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and **profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,**

Hebrews 4:12 [12] For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow,

Ephesians 2:20 [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,**

2 Timothy 1:13 [13] Follow the pattern of the **sound words** that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Hmm, so what are some of the words God used to describe the Bible? all of the words that we just used to describe God as our reference point - holy, perfect, unchangeable - they apply just

as much to his word as they do to God himself. That's why scripture is so powerful as a weapon to dispel the lies of the enemy, to calm our fears and anxieties, and to encourage and bless one another. And if we trust that his word is truly good, then we can trust it as we search for answers to all of life's questions. No one and nothing else on earth can claim to do the same! If you spoke long enough with the wisest person in the world, eventually they would run out of answers for your questions... They might get tired of them, too. But God's word will never return void, come up empty, or lie to us, and it will always tell us how to live God's way. His way is always best for us and for those around us, even when it's hard to obey. So let's declare that second foundation together once more: *His Word is our Authority*.

What other authorities in your life seem to compete with Scripture? What are some ways the world tries to usurp the authority of God's word? What are some areas of your life that you have not submitted to the authority of Scripture?

His Glory is Our Purpose

Let's move on to the third foundation. Number 3, together: *His Glory is our Purpose*. Let's play a quick game: I'm going to say a word, and I want you to tell me the first thing you think of to use it for. We'll start with some easy ones:

- Spoon
- Phone
- Tennis shoes
- Paper

Okay, good! These things obviously have lots of clear purposes. These next ones, you don't have to answer out loud but I want you to think of possible purposes:

- Car crash
- Divorce
- Earthquake
- Loss of employment

Our answers were great at first, but the truth is we live in a broken world and sometimes things happen and we can't explain why. Thankfully, we have God's word to look to for answers, even when our questions stem from pain. And actually we're going to see that they all have a common purpose. Let's read a few verses together, and listen for what God says about it.

Count 4 ladies toward middle of room Could each of you read one of the passages below?

1 Corinthians 10:31 [31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Psalms 73:24-28 [24] You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.

[25] Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

[26] My flesh and my heart may fail,

but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

[27] For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.

[28] But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
that I may tell of all your works.

John 17:21-23 [21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Romans 11:36 [36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

God says in His word that the purpose for everything to exist or happen is to glorify Him. When God says 'everything', it's not hyperbole or for dramatic effect. He really means that every person, every event, every family, every success, every failure, every gain, every loss, every healing, every illness - every bit of everything is for His glory.

And there's one other part to the equation: God doesn't share that glory. No one else is worthy of it, and no one knows how to receive glory without sinful pride. It is all owed to Him, our great God and Father, the maker of heaven and earth. And when we speak, act, and interact in ways that seek to bring Him glory and Him alone, we will experience a closeness and intimate security with Him that we can't find anywhere else. And it declares a oneness with Christ to a lost and dying world. Let's declare foundation number 3 together once more: *His Glory is Our Purpose*.

According to the world, what is our purpose (as humans, women, students, employees, etc.)? When we pursue those goals, who gets the glory? What areas of your life need to be repurposed to give glory to God?

His Presence is His Promise

Some of you may know this, but out of all faith systems that have ever existed, Christianity is the only one where the deity, being God, desires to be with us and live with us. We see this clearly in the Garden of Eden, where God spent each evening walking with man, His highest creation. After the Fall, He promised to send a redeemer who would crush death itself so that we might live at peace with Him again. Throughout the Old Testament, He comforted and emboldened His people: "The LORD is with us; do not fear" (Num. 14:9), "He will not leave you or forsake you" (Deut. 31:6,8), "you shall know that the living God is among you" (Josh. 3:10), "Fear not, for I am with you" (Is. 41:10, 43:5), "I will put my Spirit within you" (Ez. 37:14), "I am with you" (Jer. 1:8,19, 15:20, 30:11, 42:11, 46:28; Hag. 1:13, 2:4). We read that people like Joseph, Job, and

David were successful in all they did because “the LORD was with them.” But God’s dwelling place was far greater than anything we could have ever imagined.

God gave instructions to the Israelites on how to build a tabernacle for His presence to fill the Holy of Holies while they wandered in the wilderness, but He would not remain in the back room of a mobile tent. Later he gave instructions for King Solomon to build Him a beautiful temple in Jerusalem, but that building of stone was not going to last forever and God had an even better dwelling place in mind. Fast forward to the New Testament, and we see how Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s presence coming to us. *Count 3 ladies toward the back of the room* Would each of you please read one of the passages below? Thank you. And while they are reading, listen or underline when you hear where God’s presence has moved.

Matthew 1:23 [23] “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).

John 1:14 [14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 Corinthians 4:6 [6] For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

His plan from the beginning was not derailed by the Fall because it was never dependent on our merit. The stage was set for God’s great plan of salvation to unfold the only way it ever could possibly happen - by His grace. He sent Jesus, the God-Man, to live among us and die the death we deserved, bearing all the weight of God’s wrath, so that we didn’t have to. And after He resurrected, the Holy Spirit came to live in the hearts of His chosen people day by day all over the world until Jesus comes back. Then a new heaven and a new earth will take the place of our broken ones, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. In His presence and among His perfect creation, just as it was back in the first Garden. Except this time, we will be in our resurrected bodies and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. What a wonderful and sure hope we have in our risen Savior! Let’s declare our fourth foundation one last time together: *His Presence is His Promise.*

Is the promise of God’s presence truly satisfying for you? In what areas of your life do you forget or ignore God’s presence? What do you tend to seek out for strength or comfort instead?