

BUILDING ON THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

Matthew 7:24-29

If I asked you to describe your house, you would likely provide information about location, lot size or acreage; number of stories and rooms, windows and doors; square footage, design, color, age, landscaping, and various other details. However, amid that long list of household items, would you ever think to mention the foundation? “Oh, the most important part of my house is its rock-solid foundation.” Probably not.

Actually, we seldom think about the foundation of a house, unless the foundation develops problems; problems like settling or sinking, cracking or crumbling. And then the importance of a strong foundation becomes painfully and expensively evident. Decades ago, the foundation of my grandparents’ home in Florida began to modestly sink on one side. While the sinking was not noticeable from the outside, inside cracks appeared in ceilings and flooring throughout the house.

Though often hidden and so forgotten, the foundation really is the most important part of a house, because every other component in the house depends on the foundation: floors, walls, ceiling, roof, and ultimately the furnishings and occupants. A foundation not only holds a house up; it holds a house firmly in place. It also impacts the alignment of a house. If the foundation is not level and square, the house will not be level and square. In many instances, interior parts will not fit together properly and seamlessly. Doors may not closet. Windows may not shut.

Do you know why the *Leaning Tower of Pisa* leans? Because the tower was built on an unstable foundation. The higher the tower rose, the more it leaned; so that even today, eight-hundred and forty-five years after the Tower of Pisa was constructed, it still leans at an angle of four degrees or, said differently, by 12’10”.

Which part of a house is built first? The foundation. Which part of a house bears all the weight? The foundation. And which part of a house provides the underlying strength, stability, and support? The foundation. Obviously, then, everything depends on having the right foundation. And if this is true of your house, it is certainly true of your household and your life.

Jesus taught the importance of building on the right foundation in His *Sermon on the Mount*. After presenting a series of striking contrasts—for example, deeds done in love and deeds done for applause; meaningful prayer and repetitious babble; true prophets and false prophets; good fruit and bad fruit; the wide gate to destruction and the narrow gate to life—Jesus concluded His sermon by contrasting two builders, two buildings, and two foundations.

This is what He said: “**‘Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.’** When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law,” Matthew 7:24-29.

What lessons may we learn from these two builders, two houses, and two foundations? How can we lay a solid foundation for our own lives, and also help lay a solid foundation for the lives of those we love. A foundation that will stand the test of time and eternity. A foundation that will weather the worst storms. A foundation that will withstand the heaviest burdens? Consider the following.

First, everyone is a builder. Everyone. Realized or not, planned or not, everyone builds his life or ‘house’—and everything in that house; family, marriage, happiness, contentment, behavior, choices, priorities, language, view of God and view of salvation—on some foundation. But what type of foundation? And how strong is that foundation? And will that foundation ever fail, even once? These are vitally important questions. For if the foundation fails, the house, the household, the marriage, and the life will fall.

Some people build their ‘house’ or life on wealth, thinking that endless money will bring endless happiness and contentment. But of course it won’t. Someone noted: ‘Money can buy a house, but not a home; a companion, but not a friend; a bed, but not a good night’s sleep. Is money useful? Yes, it can be. But it can also be a snare; as Paul explained in 1 Timothy 6:10, **“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”** Who pierced them? Not Chase Manhattan. Not TD Ameritrade. Not the nearest ATM. When they became driven by money, they pierced themselves.

Other people build their ‘house’ or life on worldly possessions; viewing ‘having’ as an equitable trade for endless hours at the office and precious time not spent with spouse and children. Family-time that can never be recovered. And all this to possess STUFF that will either break or wear out or get lost or be left for the next-of-kin to sort through and dispose of. And so the Lord also said in His *Sermon on the*

Mount: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions,” Luke 12:15.

Remember that rich man in another parable who said, **“I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there store all my grain and all my goods. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.’”** Until one day God said: **“You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”** Luke 12:18-20.

And there are many other foundations that people build for themselves: humanism, hedonism, rationalism, skepticism, atheism. Even one who denies the existence of God is still building on a foundation. His foundation is the NO-GOD foundation. Will such a man and such a foundation survive the Day of Judgment?

Everyone is a builder. But there is more in this reality to consider. For we not only choose foundations or supports or belief-systems for our own lives; we also help build the foundation of other lives—our children, our friends, and at times, complete strangers. And this is a sobering thought. This is also why Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, **“But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”**

Consider the responsibilities parents have in helping build the right foundation for their children. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6: **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”** And long before Paul, Solomon wrote about this type of foundation-building in Proverbs 22:6,, saying, **“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”**

Building each other up in the faith is the special calling of the Christian Community. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11-13, referring to Christ: **“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”**

Building each other up through Scripture, by word and by example. This is our calling. And this is what makes tearing each other down—as spouses, as parents, as fellow Christians—so hurtful and so wrong. And thus Paul continued: **“Do not let unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building**

others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen,” Ephesians 4:29.

I shudder to think of all the worthless, flimsy, and dangerous foundations many children are receiving; foundations not from Scripture or godly parenting, but from the godless world. Foundations from Bible-bashing universities; from violent video games and prime-time TV sitcoms that promote transgender lifestyles and gay marriages. Foundations from satanic influences on the internet and occult indoctrination in certain forms of music. Foundations from so-called ‘scientific dogmas’ like evolution, where Man is viewed as an accident of Random Chance instead of a special creation of Almighty God. Human accidents, therefore, with no meaning and no purpose in the cosmos other than to gratify and glorify Self—slightly evolved animals, who should be free to live like animals. And then we wonder why some young people are so angry, so empty, and so foundationless that, apart from those who are victims of mental illness, they perpetrate mass shootings.

When we offer advice, we are foundation-building. When we share Jesus Christ, we are foundation-building. When we live as godly examples, we are foundation-building. When we display patience amid adversities, we are foundation-building. Conversely, when we surrender to despair; when we refuse to forgive others; when we tear each other down instead of build each other up; or when we exhibit an I-Don’t-Care-Attitude toward the word of God, we are also foundation building. Needless to say, we are building the wrong kind of foundation.

Second, in matters of faith, hope, and life, there are only two types of building material for a rock-solid foundation; namely, the word of God and everything else. Twice within the *Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders*, Jesus described the right material for building the right foundation; specifically, His holy word. More literally translated, ‘Whoever hears these words of Mine,’ Matthew 7:24; and again in Matthew 7:26, ‘Everyone who hears these words of Mine.’ His word. The word from Him. The word about Him. And therefore the entire word of God.

Note carefully. Jesus did not say to build your life on human philosophy. He did not say to build your life on fame and fortune. He did not say to build your life on pleasures or addictions. All of these are worldly building materials. And not one of them will last. Instead, Jesus said, “If you want a stable life; if you want a life filled with peace, joy, hope, the certainty of salvation and the limitless riches of God’s grace; then build your life on the word of God—the word whose great theme and great promise from cover to cover is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Savior.

And for those who may be thinking, “I wish I had this type of rock-solid foundation in life. I wish I had the faith of an Abraham and the conviction of Moses and the courage of David and the determination of Paul. I wish I had the type of foundation in life that would let me overcome this temptation or endure this heartache or persevere in this troubled marriage.”

To whom was the Lord Jesus speaking in Matthew 7:24-29? Only to the people gathered on the Mount of Beatitudes? No. He was speaking to “whoever” and “everyone” who does what? **“Hears these words of Mine.”** That means you too. What gave Abraham, Moses, David, and Paul such a great faith? The word of God. **“You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in Your word,”** wrote David in Psalm 119:114. **“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ,”** wrote Paul in Romans 10:17.

Do we understand then why Jesus told Martha: **“Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed,”** Luke 10:41-42? One thing is essential. One thing is more important than all other things and needs and obligations and errands in life. And that one thing needful is the word of God.

In 2008, the *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* surveyed 35,000 Americans on a variety of religious topics. Based on their findings, Pew concluded that most Americans have a nondogmatic approach to faith; that is, Scripture is not the foundation for their hopes, beliefs, and salvation. 70% said that many religions lead to eternal life. 60% said God is not a personal God, personally involved in human lives. And 30% viewed God as nothing more than an impersonal force in the universe.

But in Scriptural terms there is only one right foundation for faith and only one way to be saved. It’s not personal righteousness. It’s not good deeds, as taught by many religions—Catholicism, Mormonism, Islam, and others. **“Watch out for false prophets,”** said Jesus. **“They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves,”** Matthew 7:15.

Nor is the right foundation for faith the simple act of going to church or having one’s name in the Church Membership Directory. As Jesus said, **“Everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice,”** Matthew 7:24,26; that is, hears the words, believes the words, and as a result, does the words. Rather, the right foundation for faith and the only foundation for salvation is Jesus Christ. To repeat Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 3:11, **“No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”** Why this one foundation and no other? Because God Himself is the one who laid it.

Third and finally, when our lives are built on the foundation of Scripture, we can withstand any storm in life. Notice something. In the *Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders*, both houses faced the same violent storms. However, only one house stood firmly, while the other house completely collapsed. What made the difference? Was it the builder? No. Was it the neighborhood, neighbors, design, color, square footage, or number of rooms and stories, windows and doors? No.

The difference between one house standing and the other house falling was having the right foundation. And the right foundation, the foundation that holds us up and holds us firmly in place and makes our lives fit together in unity and peace, is the word of God. **“Everyone who hears these words of Mine,”** said Jesus.

Storms will come into our lives. In His parable Jesus made no mention of a thirty-percent chance of rain or the possibility of afternoon thunderstorms. He spoke with absolute certainty: **“The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house,”** Matthew 7:25,27. And the use of the plural in these verses—rain, streams, winds—indicates the severity and frequency of the storms. Yet, when you and your household are built squarely on the word of God, you have the assurance of Jesus Himself: **“The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock,”** Matthew 7:25.

Build your life on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His word. You won't be disappointed. This foundation comes with a rock-solid guarantee. As stated in 1 Peter 2:6, **“For in scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.’”**

“On Christ, the solid rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.”