

Building on a Firm Foundation

Discussion Guide 10/29/17

Ice Breaker: What's your best holiday memory?

Open in Prayer

Sermon Summary: The final verses in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount us of the importance in building our lives on the firm foundation of his teachings.

Pastor Loren used the example of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, built over a period of 176 years beginning in 1173 to show the importance of a firm foundation. Have you ever began a big project (painting a room, cooking a meal, etc), and realized afterward you missed a step or need to start over? what happened?

The Big Idea: Hearing and obeying God's Word is how we build our lives on a solid foundation. We could say it like this: If you want your life to last, listen to Jesus and live what he says. It's the only way to stand against the storms of this life.

Read Matthew 7:24-29

- What are the commonalities between the two builders? What are the differences?
- From the outside, both homes appeared to be well-built and neither looked to be defective, but there is a huge difference between the two houses. Read and discuss the verses below. In what other ways does the Bible warn us to be cautious regarding appearances?
 - 1 Samuel 16: 7 - But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see as man sees*;[a]for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
 - Proverbs 31:30 - Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
 - Matthew 23:25-28 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

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Pastor Loren shared: *“The main difference between the two builders is that only one took the time and determination to dig down to the solid rock and anchor his house to that which would not move. The foundation of his house was secured to the rock, while the foundation of the other house settled on sand.”*

- What roles do time and determination play in the process of building our lives on Jesus? How might our relationship to time be positive or negative as we try to build our lives on Jesus?

Something that the original hearers of these parables and metaphors would have intuitively understood, because of their familiarity with agricultural processes, is their gradual, progressive nature. Many of us probably miss the meaning because the processes are so foreign to us. Christians are slow-grown, and fruit-bearing typically comes after an arduous time of maturation. “Be Patient with Your Slow Growth”¹

The recent storms throughout the US and Caribbean remind us that storms are no respecter of persons. Storms impact everyone.

- When we are in storms, we often feel like we are alone. How can we be reminded that we are not alone in our experiences? (1 Peter 4:12-13, James 1:2-4, Matthew 5:45)

We all experience storms. Charles Spurgeon once wrote: **“Whether your religion be true, or not, it will be tried.”**

What you build your life on will be revealed in the storm. Storms can serve as a wake-up call.

- What are some ways we react to a storm when our life is built on Christ?
 - Trusts God’s wisdom when life is confusing
 - Relies on God’s strength when they are weak
 - Looks beyond the present heartache to God’s purpose and eternal glory
 - Relies on grace in times of failure
 - Runs to God rather than away from Him

Proverbs 10:25 - **“When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.”**

¹ Jon Bloom. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/be-patient-with-your-slow-growth>

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Three steps to building a firm foundation:

- **We must hear the Word of God.**
“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. (verse 24)
- **We must recognize the authority of God’s Word.**
“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.” (Verse 29)
- **We must put God’s Word into practice.**
 - Read James 1:21-27 List acts of obedience (found in this passage) that help followers of Christ build a firm foundation.
 - What “storm” have you experienced in life that you can share with your group; how did you endure it, and what was the end result?
 - What are you doing today to prepare for “storms” that will come in your future?