

session 5 study guide

setting a strong foundation

message

Foundations, though often unseen, are vitally important to the structures they support. Consider the following facts:

- ◆ Roots make up more than half of a tree's size and provide support and nutrients to the remainder of the tree. Without roots, a tree would die.
- ◆ Ninety percent of an iceberg's mass is hidden underwater—hence the term “the tip of the iceberg” implies that only a small portion of the whole is seen.
- ◆ The foundation of a building holds the most weight of any element in the structure. Without a sturdy foundation, a building would not function or be safe for use.

The Christian life is not easy. Following God does not give us a get-out-of-problems-free card. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul says:

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

All Christians will endure some sort of persecution, struggles and trials at some point in their lives. Each of us must therefore prepare for these difficulties by developing a solid foundation to our faith.

As you read the following passage, keep these questions in mind: (1) How can you develop a strong foundation in Christ? (2) What are the consequences of not having a strong foundation?

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, and 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 (Matthew 7:24-27).

dig

1. How are we like the man who built his house on the rock?

2. Notice in this parable that the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against each house regardless of its foundation. What does this tell us about the Christian life?

3. What do the following elements symbolize in this story?

House: _____

Rock: _____

Sand: _____

Rain/Wind: _____

4. How would you describe the foundation of your faith in Jesus?

5. In your life, what are the rains and winds that test your foundation in Christ?

6. Although you should prepare for these tests to your faith, according to James, you should also rejoice in these hardships. Read James 1:2-4. Why should you rejoice during times of trials and suffering?

7. Read the following statement: “It is not possible to remain static in your relationship with Jesus. Either your actions and attitudes are moving you forward in your faith or backward.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? In which direction are *you* moving?

apply

Building a strong foundation for our faith is vital, but it isn't easy. Fortunately, we don't have to go it alone. God is there to help. As we look through Scripture, we can see a number of guidelines for how to develop a strong foundation in Jesus.

we need a cornerstone

A cornerstone is a stone set at the bottom of a structure as a starting place. Without a cornerstone, you can't have a strong foundation.

1. Read Ephesians 2:19-22. Who is the cornerstone?

2. According to the passage, what are all these “stones” building?

God provides instruction and guidance

Luckily, God doesn't leave us high and dry. Throughout the Bible, He provides guidance and advice on how we can develop a strong foundation. All we have to do is obey His instructions.

1. Read John 14:15,21. What do these verses tell us to do if we love God?

2. What is the result of our obedience?

we must set our foundation over time

A strong foundation doesn't happen overnight. In fact, setting a strong foundation is a life-long process.

1. Read Hebrews 10:23,36. What is the reward for being persistent and building a strong foundation?

2. According to Romans 5:3-5, although it is not always pleasant, what can strengthen our foundation? How?

build on the foundation daily

Our foundation on the Lord must be nurtured and reinforced through spiritual growth.

1. Read Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2-3. What is the result of spending time with God each day?

2. What are the benefits for us? For God?

3. Many people argue that they are too busy to set aside time to spend with Jesus each day. In light of this, calculate the amount of time that you spend on the following activities during an average day.

Sleeping: _____

Watching TV: _____

Eating: _____

Playing video games: _____

Working: _____

Talking on the phone: _____

Playing sports: _____

Browsing the Internet: _____

Doing homework: _____

4. When do you set aside time with Jesus during your day? Or, if you don't already, where could you make time in the day to spend in prayer and study?

As one author stated, "Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein."¹ Morning or night, 5 minutes or 50, God wants to spend time with you. In the same way an athlete spends time training for an event or a musician spends hours rehearsing for a performance, your faith requires time and commitment in order to develop and grow.

reflect

1. After reading this study, how would you describe the foundation of your Christian faith?

2. Discuss a time in your life when your faith was tested. What was the outcome?

3. Foundations need upkeep. What are you doing to strengthen your foundation in Jesus?

4. What are the things in your life that attempt to crack or crumble your foundation?

5. Who or what can you think of that will help you strengthen the foundation of your faith?

meditation



Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

JAMES 1:2-4

Note

1. H. Jackson Brown, *Life's Little Instruction Book* (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill, 1991).