

greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced.” All over the world the Bible is the most sought-after and purchased book. It is by far the world’s longest-standing bestseller.

Jesus, when He walked on the earth, urged His disciples to build their lives on the solid foundation of His teachings. He concluded His inaugural address, the “Sermon on the Mount,” with this parable:

“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 wind 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 (New American Standard Version).

The parable of the foolish and wise builders reminds Americans of a children’s tale about little pigs and the wolf that came to devour them. Like the pigs, we will all at times face a wolf – in the form of adversities and trials – who threatens to “huff and puff and blow your house down.” How will we stand?

We all know the conclusion of that classic children’s story: only the wise pig built his house with the right material – that which would protect him when adversity came. The other two pigs lost everything. Are you basing your life, convictions, faith and worldview on the Word of God? Everything else is shifting sand!

Unfortunately, for the majority, the destruction of the unwise pigs and the unwise builders marks their lives. Too many never build on anything that is proven and unshakable. As a result, many are blown off course, even left in ruins by the storms of life. Fortunately, for the wise and humble, there is a hope. That hope is something that has been proven trustworthy and unshakable over thousands of years of history – the Bible, the Word of the Living God, the reliable fount of wisdom for all time!

So he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down
and swallowed the first pig.

-Three Little Pigs

Introduction

Guam, August 8, 1993. Pastor and ministry partner Rice Brooks and I checked into room 911 of the Pacific Islands Club, a number that seemed eerily prophetic a few days later. We had joined other pastors on the island of Guam to help my good friend, Taylor Stewart, launch a new church.

As we chatted in my 9th floor hotel room, everything started shaking violently. The sliding doors overlooking the Philippine Sea shot out, the T.V. in the console flew out of its casing and crashed on the floor and the entire building swayed back and forth with the earth's tremors. We were in the middle of something all of our educations, seminary classes, and parental advice could have never prepared us for, an earthquake that registered 8.1 on the Richter scale.

Everything shook for a terrifying sixty seconds. When the tremors ceased, we looked around in relief and amazement. We saw concrete pillars smashed, debris everywhere and tourists running around frantically. All we could do was praise God and boldly preach to others the grace of God that saved us.

When we finally ventured out of the hotel room, we learned that no one in our hotel was killed (indeed, miraculously, no one on the island was killed in this historic quake!). We also learned that our hotel had remained intact while other buildings on the island had crumbled. Beyond the grace and help of God, this building stood strong because of the care with which it was built. It was exceptional in quality, prepared to handle the worst typhoons the island could ever face. Under the leadership of key builders, architects and engineers, this building was built to last.

Laying a foundation is the first step in any construction project. Enduring success can't rest on shortcuts or compromises in this critical element. The strength of the foundation determines the stability and longevity of the building.

This rings just as true in our spiritual life. A solid foundation for the Christian life helps ensure a strong walk with the Lord. Theological teachings are the bedrock of a pure heart, dynamic faith and an enduring walk with God. As the author of Hebrews says in chapter 6 verses 1-3, we can't press on unless God permits. He will never permit construction unless our foundation has been approved.

My summer construction job while in college added a few skills and basics about building to my resume. It's been many years since I put on the carpenter belt, used a trowel and swung a hammer, but I'll never forget several key aspects to building a good foundation.

It's hard work.

Laying a good foundation is meticulous and demanding labor. Likewise, building foundations in the Christian walk takes more than a mystical experience or a fun-filled church retreat but rather hard work. It takes rolling up one's sleeves, getting out the trowel, and doing the hard labor. Building foundations of faith means getting in the Word and seeking God on a consistent basis. There are few goose bumps involved in the process, and no soaring soundtrack in the background, but the work is rewarded with a victorious life in Christ.

It's messy.

Constructing a foundation is just plain messy. There's wet cement and mud everywhere, drying on the ground and on clothes, arms, face and hair. Likewise, building a foundation for a new life in Christ gets messy as we replace old thinking patterns with the truths of God's Word. Lining up with God's truth requires working through issues, ending bad patterns, and choosing a lifestyle and behaviors that match up with the standards of the Lord who died and rose for us. In the midst of the mess, our old nature gets replaced by maturity in Christ, and we are blessed with a strong foundation upon which to build a God-glorifying life.

It's invisible.

No one, when coming to visit your house, admires it by exclaiming, "Man, that is sure a beautiful foundation!" The work of building foundations is done primarily "in secret" as we spend time with God and His Word. However, God openly rewards what is done in secret (Matthew 6:4, 6). This secret work of building on God's Word takes us off the path of self-destruction and helps us to lean more and more on Christ, locked securely in fellowship with His people.

Finally, it's essential.

I wrote Pocket Theology to help believers build strong foundations for a victorious life in Christ. As a pastor for more than twenty-five years, I've seen how poor foundations and thinking patterns wreak destruction and havoc in people's lives. It is my hope that, as we build ever stronger foundations for the faith we confess, that we will "grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

We need to dig deep in our heart to construct a theological foundation based on the trustworthy and true Word of God. For centuries wise men have turned to the Word of God to seek God and find Him. Immanuel Kant wrote, "The Bible is the