

MOMENTUM

Study Guide #2: Man's Foundation for Life

And the Walls Come Tumbling Down

So you're building a home. You've purchased the land, drawn up your blueprints, purchased all your supplies, and are now ready to construct your palace. What's the first step? What must you do before you can begin framing?

Take a moment and think about the house you live in. If I asked you to describe your house or apartment, you probably would tell me such things as its location, color, design, square footage, possibly the size of the lot it sits on, maybe even the number of bedrooms and bathrooms. But you probably wouldn't tell me about the foundation. Yet, it is the foundation of your house that makes all the difference.

When building a home, it's rather important to start with a foundation. That only makes sense - right? After all, if you don't have a foundation, or if you build upon a weak one, it may stand for a brief period of time, but as soon as a strong wind comes along - WHAM! The walls come tumbling down.

QUESTION #1: What is the purpose of a foundation?

QUESTION #2: What exactly does a foundation determine?

I am told that the reason the tower in Pisa (which was built in the 1170's) is "leaning" is because its foundation went only 3 meters deep, and it was built on marshland. As a result, because it didn't have a proper foundation, it was not capable of remaining stable. Every year it leans another 1/20th of an inch.

The only thing the Leaning Tower of Pisa is good for is tourists. It's just for show - for people to come by, look at, point to, and take pictures of. Consider this: a life that is not built on a proper foundation is nothing more than a sightseeing attraction. It's for show.

QUESTION #3: What kind of life are you building?

On Christ the Solid Rock I Build

Just as we need a solid foundation in order to build a solid structure, so we need to build a godly life on a spiritually solid foundation. The bottom line is simple - if you expect to stay standing in the midst of the storms that life will throw at you, if you expect to remain undamaged by the chaos that constantly bombards you on every front, you need to be planted firmly on a foundation that will not fail ... one that runs deep into solid rock.

QUESTION #4: Read Proverbs 24:3. What kind of "house" is Solomon talking about here?

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QUESTION #5: What is required to build this house?

QUESTION #6: Where do I find this essential item?

QUESTION #7: Read Proverbs 23:23. The implication here is that I don't have wisdom naturally; it is something I must go get. Note that there is a cost involved. What is the price to be paid in order to have wisdom in building a godly life?

QUESTION #8: Read Proverbs 2:1-6. Write down all the action words - what is required to "get wisdom"?

QUESTION #9: Now look at your response to question #8. What do those words indicate to you?

QUESTION #10: What do "wisdom" and "understanding" have to do with building a godly and pure life?

QUESTION #11: Do the materials used in the construction process matter? Why (or why not)?

QUESTION #12: Read Proverbs 16:16. Why is getting wisdom and understanding better?

QUESTION #13: Read James 1:5; Proverbs 2:6 and Job 28:12-28. Where do we get wisdom and understanding?

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As I was studying the verses and developing the questions above, I had a realization hit me. If I really understood and appreciated the value of wisdom and understanding in the building of a godly and pure life, would I invest in them? We are, by nature, lazy and selfish creatures. To invest in those building materials takes time and effort, and all too often we're about the easy way. This is why we end up using shoddy materials that compromise the solidity of our life.

Are You a Wise Man?

Before you read any further, I'd like to challenge you to read Matthew 7:24-27. OK, now that you've read it, would you please read it again? Yes, I'm serious. I'll wait for you.

Jesus is concluding one of the greatest sermons ever preached (the Sermon on the Mount), and He does so with a powerful truth about two men. He compares and contrasts two builders. One He simply calls a wise man, the other foolish.

In this parable, He emphasizes how critical it is to have a strong, solid foundation to build upon. As a carpenter, part of the firm of Joseph and Sons, He had built the furniture that people put into their homes and more than likely helped to build some of the homes as well. As a result, we can be fairly certain that Jesus knew the difference between a solid house and a weak one; making it natural for Him to use the analogy of building a home for building a life.

QUESTION #14: Read 1 Corinthians 3:11. According to this verse, how many different foundations are there?

QUESTION #15: What is the foundation we are to be building our life upon?

QUESTION #16: So if a person is not building their life upon the foundation of Christ and the Word of God, what are they building upon?

QUESTION #17: Read the following verses, then answer the question - 2 Samuel 22:47; Psalm 18:1-2; 40:2; 62:2, 7; 94:22; Isaiah 26:4; 1 Corinthians 10:4 and Hebrews 13:8. Why is it so important that we build on the foundation of Christ and the Word?

QUESTION #18: In reading all of the verses in question 17, did you notice the terms "fortress; refuge; stronghold; not greatly shaken?" What do those terms mean to you?

QUESTION #19: Read Luke 6:46-49. What are the three characteristics Jesus used to describe those who call him "Lord" (v. 47)?

QUESTION #20: Take a moment to think about this question before you answer. Based on those characteristics, is Jesus your Lord or just your savior?

Even if you're very familiar with this passage, and even though you've already read it twice in this study, please go back and read Matthew 7:24-27 again. Let's take a few moments to notice the comparisons between these two men.

- They both wanted to build a house - in other words, they shared a dream. They both had the same goal - build a house (build a good life worth living, a life that is significant and will leave a lasting legacy). What a vision!
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No matter where you are in life, you are in the process of building too. Whether you're just beginning or have been at it for years, every moment of every day - through every thought, every word, and every action - you are building your life. I'm sure it's safe to say that you want to live a life that you could be proud of and that God would look upon with favor.

QUESTION #21: Name some of the things you want your family and closest friends to remember you for when you're gone.

Now let's consider the second comparison between the builders of Matthew 7.

- They were building their homes in the same neighborhood. As far as we can tell, they lived in very close proximity to each other.
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You see, they were both affected by the exact same storm. Jesus describes the storm precisely in the same manner for both builders. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against their house.

Again, no matter where you are in your building project, you too are going to face storms in life. Every one of us is affected by the same storms. We get rained on. The damaging effects of flooding erode away and the winds slam into each of us. The fact is, life isn't always sunshine.

It struck me the other day that the rain in Christ's story can represent the tiny little missiles that annoyingly bombard you at the most inopportune times, interrupting your plans, messing up your day. The flood waters can represent the bigger things that just kind of sit there. They don't go away. They bury you and leave you wallowing in a bunch of crap. And the wind is a picture of those things that suddenly pop up, seemingly out of nowhere. You didn't see it coming and it slams into you, relentlessly pushing.

MOTIVATING ORDINARY MEN TOWARD THE ULTIMATE MISSION

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Look at Matthew 7:25. Jesus doesn't say "IF the rain falls" or "IF the floods come" or "IF the winds blow." He states it as a fact. "*And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew*" (ESV). It doesn't matter who you are, or where you are spiritually - the storms will come ... you can count on it. In fact, many times you will get hit by rain *and* flooding *and* winds all at the same time.

QUESTION #22: What are some of the "storms" you have faced?

QUESTION #23: Why would they be considered "storms"?

QUESTION #24: What does Satan want to accomplish through the storm? Why?

QUESTION #25: What does God want to accomplish through the storm? Why?

Finally, let's consider the third comparison between the builders of Matthew 7.

- Both men went to the same Church, they sat in the same Sunday School class and listened to the same teacher teach the exact same lesson

Jesus said they both "heard" his words. Both men chose to be open to God's Truth. Please understand that Jesus wasn't saying the wise man had a love for hearing the truth, while the foolish man had utter contempt for it. No, both men heard God's Word. Both men sought it out. Both men knew the value of what God had to say.

Let me quickly explain here that to "hear" (in this text) means to listen to, to consider what has been said, and to understand the meaning of it. Don't let the impact of that slip by you. Both of these men listened to what the Lord had said. Both of them gave careful consideration to what He was saying, and they both understood how it applied to them.

QUESTION #26: Read James 1:21-25. How is the Word of like a mirror?

QUESTION #27: What is the purpose of a mirror?

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QUESTION #28: When you look in the mirror and see your hair all messed up, or a smudge of grease on your face, what do you do?

QUESTION #29: Why don't we do the same thing when we look into the mirror of God's Word and see an issue in our life?

Consider this: when you walk into the bathroom at night and try to look into the mirror to see your reflection, you cannot tell what it is you're looking at because it's too dark. In order to see properly you must turn on a light. Well, not only is the Bible a mirror, but we see in Psalm 119:105 and 130 that God's Word is also a light. How cool is that!

QUESTION #30: Read James 1:21-25 again. James says that when we merely listen to the Word of God (read it but don't apply it to our lives), we are being deceived. How so?

Now back to Christ's story of the two builders in Matthew 7. The comparisons have now come to an end. Here is where the two men take two totally different paths. Here is where the contrast makes one a wise man and the other foolish.

- Although they both were building their life, although they both faced the same storm, and although they both heard God's word, the fundamental difference between the two was the foundation they chose to build their home upon

Jesus said the wise man built his house upon the rock. The foolish man built his house upon the sand.

QUESTION #31: Read Luke 6:48. Not only did the wise man build *upon* the rock, he did what to the rock he was building upon?

QUESTION #32: What is so significant about that?

Just think about this for a moment. Let this truth sink in - deep in. The wise man dug deep into the rock. He didn't simply set his house on that rock, he dug into it. Now lets pause long enough to really think about that. Consider closely what Jesus is saying here. Remember, this wise man wasn't able to rent a 385 CAT Excavator, he didnt have access to a pneumatic jackhammer with alloy steel forgings and a four-bolt

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backhead design, he couldn't even find a simple stick of dynamite. He had only a chisel, a hammer and sheer brute force and determination.

While his neighbor was erecting a beautiful four bedroom, three bathroom 2-story home with gable roof and cedar shake shingles, he was on his hands and knees chipping away at the solid rock underneath him.

While his neighbor was entertaining guests at night on his gorgeous 20 x 16 cedar deck, he was up in the wee hours of the morning hammering away, struggling through exhaustion, sweat, blood and tears.

QUESTION #33: Finish this statement - "I'd rather be _____ " (e.g., flying, fishing, playing football, working on my car, etc.).

QUESTION #34: Why?

It takes work to build into the rock. It takes time and energy. It costs more. Let's face it guys; it's easier (and faster) to build on much more flexible ground. It's always easier to take shortcuts in building. You save money when you use inferior materials. And, for a while, no one may notice the shoddy work. But somewhere along the line, you will pay.

It takes less time and energy to maintain a superficial faith. And, to be honest, who will be able to tell the difference? If you know how to talk the talk and pretend to walk the walk, who will know? It's definitely easier to just show up for church for an hour a week, let the worship leader and the pastor fill you with warm fuzzies and then go on your way. It's undemanding to open your daily devotional booklet, read the half dozen verses that are there, read the writers' comments, close it up and go on with the rest of your day.

QUESTION #35: What are some other ways in which we tend to take spiritual shortcuts in life?

QUESTION #36: To be a wise man, we need to dig deep. Name some ways in which you can (and must) truly dig into the foundation.

QUESTION #37: No one builds without first counting the cost (Luke 14:28). What are some of the costs to digging into our spiritual foundation?

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In 1992, Hurricane Andrew destroyed thousands of homes in South Florida. Interestingly enough, in an area where the damage was the worst, one house remained standing - firmly anchored to its foundation. When the homeowner was asked why he thought his house wasn't blown away, he pointed out that he built the house according to the Florida state building code. So, when the code called for 2"x 6" roof trusses, he used 2x6's. The code assured him that if he built his house according to those standards, it could withstand a hurricane. He pointed to his house, and with a smile said, "and it did!"

Sure sounds to me like the guys who wrote the building code for the state of Florida knew what they were talking about! Because he chose to follow the strict building codes written specifically for homes built in an area know for hurricanes, his house stood firm in the midst of a horrible storm that wiped out his neighbors.

God knows what He's talking about my friend. He knows what storms are coming your way. He knows when they are going to hit, for how long and how hard. He also knows exactly what materials you need, what tools you should use, and what specifications you should be building to.

Are You a Moron?

Now before you take great offense at that question, please read on. If you are reading your Bible, you are hearing God's Word. If you are going to church each week (assuming it's a church that teaches from the Bible), you are hearing God's Word. The question for you is: are you doing it? If you construct your life according to Christ's building codes, if you dig deep into solid rock, you will not be disappointed (read 1 Peter 2:6-7).

Jesus called the first man a wise man. The second man was a moron. Oh, that's not my definition, that's Christ's! The Greek word for "foolish" is *moros* from which we get our English word *moron*. By not building his life on a solid foundation, that man was a moron.

QUESTION #38: According to Matthew 7:24-27, are you a wise man or a moron? (NOTE: we're not asking what you think you are, nor what you are trying to be. Rather, the real question is: right here, right now, based on what Christ says, which are you at this very moment?)

I must be honest, prior to writing this study; I would have said I was a wise man. I now realize that there are areas of my life where I've been a complete moron! I know I need to apply the Word of God to those areas, but up till now I was just too lazy to do anything about it. According to Christ, I've been being a moron - a very foolish man. If I were to keep it up, when the storms hit (and I know they will) it will be too late. My world would have come crashing down around me because I was building my life with shoddy material.

The wise man, in Scripture, is the one who takes divine truth and immediately applies it to his life. The fool is not necessarily the person who is lacking information or understanding. He is the person who does little or nothing with the information received and the understanding he has been given. Just read the book of Proverbs. It's full of the fool who hears but chooses not to respond.

The biggest contrast between these two men is the result after the storm. One house stood, the other house fell. Not only did it fall - "it fell greatly." It experienced a near total collapse. Prior to the storm, if you were to drive down their street and look at the foolish man's house, you would not have been able to tell a difference. Only the storm will reveal the nature of your foundation.

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As long as the sun is shining, our tendency is to not think about what we're building upon. The storms of life have a way of letting you know what kind of foundation you're resting upon. However, when the weather is fair and the sun is shining - that is when you need to be building. You just can't pour a good foundation in the rain.

To be a wise man (instead of a moron), you must take what God says and daily live it out. This is not something we can do on occasion, not even most of the time - it must become a normal part of our everyday living.

QUESTION #39: In Matthew 7:24 we see that to "hear" and "put into practice" is written (in the Greek language) in what's called the present tense/active voice/imperative mood. What does this mean as it relates to your responsibility as a child of God in the following areas: Home, Work, Play?

- **Present Tense:** the action is happening at all times - right now, right now, right now, etc. This means that I ...
- **Active Voice:** the action is being done by you - no one else can do it for you. If you don't do it, it won't get done. This means that I ...
- **Imperative Mood:** the action is in the form of a command. If you don't do it, you are disobedient. This means that I ...

QUESTION #40: What is the difference between spending time and investing time?

QUESTION #41: Do you tend to "spend time" or "invest time" in God's Word?

QUESTION #42: Consider this: when God reveals an area of your life that needs addressing, and you choose not to attend to it immediately, that area will likely get worse. What area(s) in your life does God want you to address that you've been putting off?

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QUESTION #43: Look at your answer to question 42. If you have honestly written some things down, what are you going to do about it? (NOTE: "deal with it" is not an acceptable answer. Give specific steps along with when you plan on implementing them.)

When we say we believe the Word of God to be true, but our actions (or lack thereof) prove otherwise, we are that foolish man (moron) building his house (right here, right now) on the shifting sand. We have been deceived into believing that our home will stand in the midst of the storm that is coming.

This week, determine that you will be a wise man!