

## SMALL GROUP LESSON

# Examining Your Life Foundation

The logo for 'hyphen' is located in the top right corner. It consists of the word 'hyphen' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters are colored: 'h' is blue, 'y' is green, 'p' is red, 'h' is blue, 'e' is green, and 'n' is red. The logo is set against a dark grey rounded rectangular background.

### Lesson 1 in the Life Foundations series

#### Lesson Aim

This lesson will teach you why it is important to build your life on Christ the Rock.

#### Preparation Necessary

The opening story has a set of pictures to illustrate it on Flickr. Surf <http://www.flickr.com/photos/20257708@N04/tags/flood/> to print them off or show on your laptop.

#### Supplies Needed

Whiteboard with markers

#### Scripture Text

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7:24-27)

#### Additional Scriptures

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (James 1:22-25)

#### Looking Deeper

1. The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel is an atheist's investigation into whether or not Christ actually existed. He comes out converting, but in the meantime he reveals some amazing facts about Christ the man and Savior.
2. The New Testament Commentary series by William Hendriksen is an insightful resource for the general student of Scripture. Each book in the New Testament is given a close verse-by-verse reading in accessible language.

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## INTRODUCTION

The billboard at the entrance of interstate 370 outside St. Peters, MO had a simple message: There are two types of levees, those that have failed and those that will fail. This updated quip by Mark Twain stood for many years and was ignored by the hundreds of vehicles that passed it daily.

Then, in June, 2008, a Mississippi River flood came crashing south. While Iowa and northern Missouri took the brunt of the flooding, a levee within two miles of that prophetic sign sprang a leak and soon miles of acreage around I-370 were under about 10 feet of water. While few homes were destroyed, the acreage of water created a surreal view for the usual travelers. After all, yesterday everything was the same as usual, yet today presented a new reality.

Today's parable is similar to that situation.

## THE IDEAS

Read Matthew 7:24-27 together.

If you grew up going to Sunday school, you've heard this parable most of your life. As a young adult, its so short and simple you can breeze right over its serious implications for contemporary life.

There are several points worth exploring:

Just like these two men, we are building every day—We aren't building a house, but a life. Its important to assess our daily building blocks to see what were creating with our daily choices.

Its interesting that Bill & Melinda Gates meet every month to assess their current effectiveness down to time with their kids and then replan the next month so that no moment is wasted.

Jesus only gives us two types of builders here—the wise and the foolish. As in so many of His parables, there are only two choices, be it God and Mammon, wise and foolish virgins, sheep and goats, good and bad fruit.

If it was up to me, Id offer a parable with a wise builder, a smart builder, an average builder, a well-meaning-but-bad-builder, and a foolish builder. That way, even if I didn't qualify as wise, I could still be better off than the foolish builder. That's not how it works here. I'm either one or the other. That's it.

While were often told we live in a world that is all shades of gray, in spiritual matters, time and time again, Jesus gives us two options are we wise or foolish? Are we living for the eternal or the temporal? Are we drawing closer to Him or the world around us?

Only offering two choices is not very tolerant, but its all Christ gives us.

The Wise Builder assumed the good times would not last and prepared for an unknown future—He put in the extra work to make sure his house was ready for the unexpected storms.

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## Interaction

(Use the white board to write down the group answers under the title Wise Builders.) Ask your group:

1. In a spiritual sense, what are the characteristics of wise builders?
2. In earthly and heavenly matters, are there any tell-tale signs of a wise builder?

The Foolish builder was fine with a house without a true foundation—He looked around and was happy with his circumstances; a house he could live in during good weather somehow believing the circumstance would never change.

## Interaction

(Use the white board to write down the group answers under the title Foolish Builders.) Ask your group:

1. Are there any tell-tale signs of a foolish builder?
2. Does anyone ever think they're a foolish builder? Why/Why not?
3. What makes being a foolish builder so seductive in today's society?

Christ is the Rock—Its interesting that Jesus is considered a prophet by two other major religions—Islam and Hindus—even though he isn't recognized as the Son of God by either. Everyone, it seems, noticed something unique about Him. Indeed, in public schools, other religions are taught about, yet somehow Christianity is too incendiary to be shared.

Isn't it possible that Jesus was who He claimed to be the Son of God, the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6); the Savior who died for our sins so that we might be saved?

Read James 1:22-25 together.

Once you recognize your true foundation, you don't just listen but implement His commands. We cant just be hearers, but doers of the word. The foolish man is a hearer of the Word, but not a doer. He chooses not to surrender his will to Christ, but maintains his pride, his choice, and his individuality to continue building on the sand. The doer surrenders his own dreams for Gods.

## Interaction

(Use the white board to write down the group answers under the title Building on Christ.) Ask your group:

1. What separates Christian doers from Christian hearers?
2. What are some characteristics of a Christian doer? (NOTE: How similar are these characteristics with the wise builder?)
3. How do you ensure being a wise Christian builder of your own life and ministry?

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## CONCLUSION

In the last couple of decades, the United States has been wracked by at least two financial bubbles that burst, wreaking havoc on the unprepared. While conventional wisdom proclaimed there were great amounts of money to be made, too much of it seemed like a Ponzi scheme of shuffling money. Instead of a solid foundation of rock solid investments, most were actually schemes built on sand:

In the late 1990s, everyone with the slightest idea for an internet business found financing because tech stocks were only skyrocketing in value. Until they didn't. The bubble burst in 2001, with millions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs lost.

In 2008, the home mortgage market imploded after home prices rose to unbelievable heights in the previous years. Everyone was making money on their homes. People were speculating on Florida condos that weren't even built, and thousands took out home loans that they could only pay the interest on. Major home-lending corporations had to write off billions of dollars in bad debt, tens of thousands of jobs were lost, foreclosures spiked, and supposed financial geniuses were proven otherwise.

The reality was they built their future on sand and then seemed flummoxed by the results of foolish planning. Whether its a levee, a financial situation or spiritual choices, the results of a foolish builder is always obvious. The legacy of a wise builder is just as obvious.

## LED-BY-THE SPIRIT QUESTIONS

1. How have you built your life on Christ?
2. If you haven't, does this scare you?
3. Why do some Christians seem more like atheists on the issue of life-building?
4. How are you going to strengthen your life on Christ the rock this week?
5. When we meet again next week, how will you be able to measure your progress?
6. Is there someone you can partner with to help you measure that progress?

## PRAYER

Lord, too often we rely upon ourselves, somehow believing were capable of handling everything, somehow believing we can do it all. Forgive us this pride. Forgive us our insistence on seeking other things to build upon. Now we ask that you guide us forward. Help us to put our trust in you and you alone. To realize that a life built on anything else is a life incomplete. We love you Father. Please accept our efforts to build on you for your glory. Amen. ★