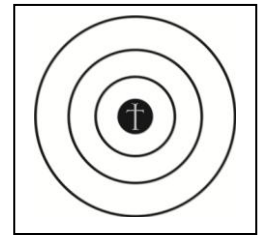


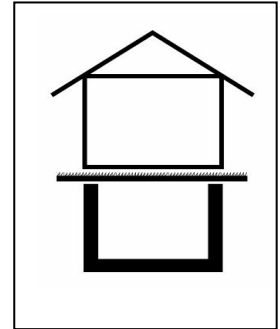
Session 2: How Are My Foundations? Revised 4.26.10

Introduction

In our last session, "Survival", we saw that some things are crucial for life even if we cannot easily see them. Being unaware of them or disagreeing with them does not change their reality. If we know them and practice them we live. If we don't, we die.



This week we explore "**Foundations**"; What are the underground, invisible realities that shape my family, finances, friends, fun, and my eternal future? Even if I cannot easily see them, how can these foundations make a life or death impact in every area of my life? What did Jesus mean when He described the man who "built his house on the ground without a foundation?"



Why go through this process of exploring "Survival" and our "Foundations"?

Our tendency is to measure ourselves, and others, by what we see on the surface. Sometimes things look really good on the outside. Often we have no clue about unseen dangers. Other times we see that inside, cracks are beginning to form. Or maybe even things on the surface are crumbling badly. We do not know why, or how to fix them. It seems so easy to assume, to simply gloss over these deeper issues, or give up too soon.

Hang in there. **Your courage to explore your foundations will be rewarded, even if it is challenging.** Seeing areas that need repair will motivate you to do whatever it takes to strengthen them. Answers are right around the corner. Soon your foundations will be strong enough to withstand any storm.

In this session, we'll explore how unseen realities can have a major impact on our lives, for life, or death. **You'll be motivated to do whatever it takes to strengthen them.**

PREVIEW OF SESSION: CHART THE COURSE

Here is what to expect in this session:

1. **Connecting with others: Link up with a person and idea (pairs).**
2. **Reviewing past concepts: Where are we? (group)**
3. **Exploring the topic: How Are My Foundations? (group and pairs)**
4. **Teamwork/Prayer Partner: How can this topic affect your life this week? (group and pairs)**
5. **Assignment for next week: Be ready to report on this.**

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS: LINK UP WITH A PERSON AND IDEA

Before we begin, briefly discuss the following in pairs:

- Share one positive or negative experience from the past week (in any category).
- What was helpful from the last session?
- Any progress in understanding or applying it?

REVIEWING PAST CONCEPTS: WHERE ARE WE?

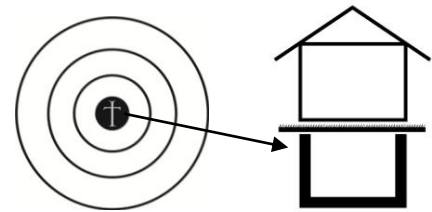
Session 1: What Does It Take To Survive? Am I Ready?

Some things are crucial for life even if we cannot easily see them. Being unaware of them or disagreeing with them does not change their reality. If we know them and practice them we live. If we don't, we die. Survival in any difficult task requires a set of essentials—core things you must focus on (like a bull's eye). Mountain climbers have skills they learn before tackling the big climb. Doctors look for vital signs to assess someone's health. It is foolish to start these things without testing to make sure you are ready. And it is dangerous to focus on secondary issues (high cholesterol) when core issues are wrong (no pulse). *Life is the same—including the spiritual world.* We all need certain spiritual essentials to make it in life. There are certain core questions we must focus on instead of other secondary things. We need to test ourselves or be tested by others in order to know for sure we are ready. And if we care about someone else, we will ask them to be sure about their “bullseye” too.



This next session builds on the concept of “essentials” and explores **“foundations.”** The essentials and the foundations are the same: *the things we need in order to survive and live the abundant life (John 10:10).*

As “essentials” they show us that we need them to survive.



As “foundations” they show us that they provide the solid structure on which we can build a truly abundant life. Testing them motivates us to do whatever it takes to strengthen them.

EXPLORING THE TOPIC: HOW ARE MY FOUNDATIONS?

Exploring the Topic: Overview

In order to explore this concept we will look at six things:

1. Are there examples in my experience or in the natural world of important things I cannot see? What are the *most important* things I cannot see?
2. Are some things invisible but still vitally important, regardless of people's opinions, and could this be true of the spiritual world as well?
3. Where do I have cracks in my foundations, what influences shaped them, and how do they affect every area of my life?
4. What does the Bible really teach about foundations?
5. Has anyone loved me enough to help me clarify my most important convictions?
6. What steps can I take that will make a real difference in my life this week?

Examples From Our World: What Can We Learn Here?

1. Personal Experience: In your experience, where have you seen something that was invisible but important, even vital for survival? (Discuss in pairs. Your experience may help someone else understand the concept better.)
2. The Natural World: Where in the natural world do you see something invisible but vital? (Discuss this as a group. Your leader will help the group identify a few key examples.) (-bad steel in the Titanic, oil leak in car, carbon monoxide, termites in home, unrecognized decay in tooth, discouragement, greed, deceit, bitterness in relationships,) **Recognizing these needs is painful, but leads to protection, solutions, life at its fullest.**
(+lung capacity of trained athlete, body armor/Kevlar vest, strong home, safe transportation, ethical business, hope, love, forgiveness, trustworthiness, good relationships)

Session Highlights



1. *Key Question*: How are my foundations?
2. *Key Scripture*: Luke 6:46-49
3. *Key Illustration*: Foundations
4. *Key Faith Prayer*: “Lord, I choose today to inspect my foundations. Help me see where there may be cracks.”
5. *Key Faith Step*: Identify one weak core conviction and explore how to strengthen it.

Transition to the Spiritual World

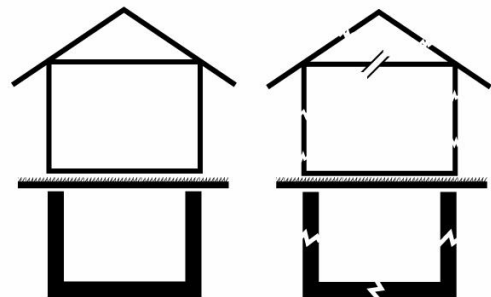
Could it be that invisible but vital things in the natural world actually point us to hidden spiritual things that make a huge impact on our lives? Can we *really* trust our emotions, circumstances, and cultural trends? Or are there spiritual, invisible realities more worthy of trust? *It is OK to have questions.* The important thing is to make sure you base your opinion, your life, and your actions on solid, reliable information—not on emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends. Check and double-check your beliefs and the reasons for them.

Here is the Critical Question: In what kind of shape are *your* foundations (the beliefs and assumptions you’re building your life on)? Could it be that all issues in your life, including your eternal destiny, are linked to these foundations, whether you realize them or not? Are you willing to inspect them?

Input From God’s Word: What Does the Bible Actually Say?

Jesus compared life to building a house, and the way we live our lives to the foundation. We often focus on the surface, and come to the wrong conclusions. *Jesus didn’t.*

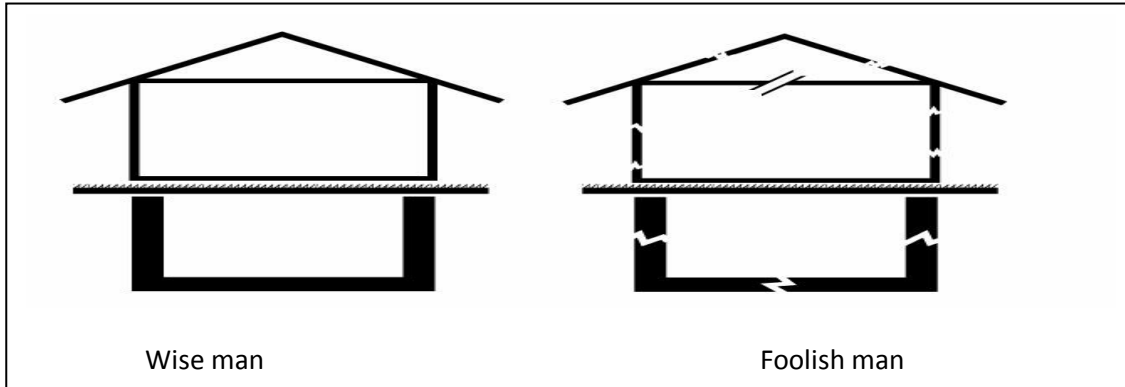
Jesus went below the surface and focused on the underground foundations of a person’s life—the *unseen things*. He made it clear that visible cracks above the surface come from hidden gaps in our foundations (see graphic on the right). It’s worth it to go to bedrock.



Visible strength above ground is based on unseen strength below the surface.

4 EXAMPLES FROM THE BIBLE: hidden dangers, treasures, foundations, hidden hope

Read Luke 6:46-49 and explore Jesus' words about **hidden danger; two builders:**



1. What did the two men have in common?
2. What did each do differently than the other one?
3. What different results did they experience when the storm came?
4. Until the storm came, were the differences between them obvious or hidden?
5. How would the foolish man have benefited if someone would have asked him about his foundations before the storm hit.

Read Matthew 13:44-46 and explore Jesus' teaching about **hidden treasure, two unusual men:**

1. What did they see that others missed?
2. How did their choices show how they valued what they discovered?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and explore **Paul's perspectives on foundations**

1. How did Paul describe himself in v.10
2. What did he say in v.11 was the only lasting foundation?
3. According to v12-15, what happens to anything built on other foundations?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, explore Paul's words about **hope**, no matter how tough storms are.

1. What did Paul say in v.16 about losing heart?

2. Where did he keep his focus?

Jesus taught His followers to look at our foundations through the FAITH PRINCIPLE:

Circumstances, Emotions, Cultural Trends;

Vulnerable to "storms", questions and adversity
Assuming, looking only at the *surface*
Conforming to trends and opinions around me
Troubles, complicating every area

God and His word

Strong, anchored, despite questions, adversity
Testing, asking, going to the *source*
Convictions based on unchanging reality
Treasures, bringing deep joy to every area

He taught them that if they would examine their foundations, and let HIM rebuild them one block at a time, they would experience life at its fullest.

It's as if He is here right now, personally asking you face to face, "Are you willing to have Me inspect your foundations with you?"

Use the exercise on p. 6, "How Clear Am I about the Core Convictions of Christianity"

As you review them ask yourself:

How clearly do I understand them?

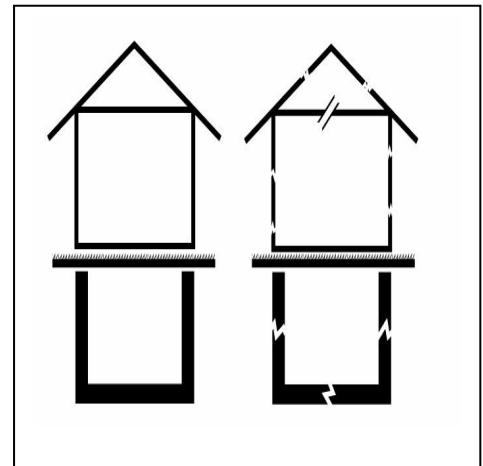
How clearly can I explain them?

How would I back up my answers,
if someone were to "challenge" me?

How clearly are they evident in how I choose to live?

How strong will they be in storms and adversity?

If I am not clear, what about the people I care about?



CAN YOU SEE THE LINK BETWEEN THESE UNDERGROUND, ROCK BOTTOM REALITIES, AND EVERY AREA OF LIFE "ABOVE GROUND"?

If your confidence is based on circumstance, emotions and cultural trends, then you are in danger. Everything above ground can be swept away when storms come. Look for the benefits of strengthening your foundations...

How Clear Am I About the Core Convictions of Christianity?

In the last session, we introduced the *Core Convictions* of Christianity: Six **Footings** and Seven **Foundation Walls**. Just like a house, the footings lay a surface for the walls, so the first set of convictions enable the second set. Complete the exercise below to test or inspect your foundations.

– Recall these key passages on testing: Matt. 16:13-15, 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Peter 1:12-15. –

For each main statement, rate from 0-10 your level of **certainty** (left) and **ability to explain it** (right)
(Jot down a few key phrases indicating how you would explain or defend each one)

<u>Certain</u>	<u>Footings (Survival)</u>	<u>Can Explain</u>
_____	<i>God</i> : I am confident God is real and reliable.	_____
_____	<i>Bible</i> : I am confident the Bible is reliable.	_____
_____	<i>Jesus</i> : I am confident Jesus is God and the Savior of the world.	_____
_____	<i>Rescued</i> : I am confident I have been rescued and have a relationship with God.	_____
_____	<i>Growth</i> : I know and am practicing several faith steps that will produce growth in my life.	_____
_____	<i>Fruits</i> : I know these foundations will transform all areas of my life.	_____

What did I learn about my certainty?

What did I learn about my clarity to explain?

<u>Certain</u>	<u>Foundation Walls (Destined Series)</u>	<u>Can Explain</u>
_____	<i>Assurance</i> : I am confident God has adopted me and will stay with me forever.	_____
_____	<i>Forgiveness</i> : I am confident God has forgiven me, freed from sin.	_____
_____	<i>Word</i> : The Bible is the ultimate authority in my life, and others can tell.	_____
_____	<i>Power</i> : I am confident God gives me power to live the way I should.	_____
_____	<i>New Identity</i> : I am truly able to live out of my new identity in Christ.	_____
_____	<i>Community</i> : I have connections with real people who are also walking with Jesus.	_____
_____	<i>Sharing</i> : I confidently share the good news of Jesus Christ with others.	_____

What did I learn about my certainty?

What did I learn about my clarity to explain?

INSIGHTS FROM THIS EXERCISE:

What did you learn about your certainty, clarity, ability to explain, ability to live...?

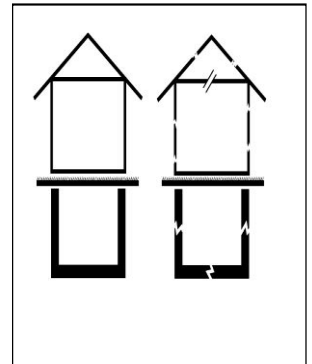
What did you discover about the BASIS for your beliefs? (Check ones that apply)

- They were mostly based on statements like, "I just 'feel' this is true..."
 - I have always been raised to believe this...
 - Certain people I admire (experts, heroes, authors, professors, pastors, priests, parents, media...) believe this, so I agree with them"...
 - I believe these statements but they make very little difference in my life
 - I had this experience which seems to prove my belief...
- They are clearly and solidly based on rock solid realities that give me hope and strength...

CAN YOU SEE THE LINK BETWEEN THESE UNDERGROUND, ROCK BOTTOM REALITIES, AND EVERY AREA OF LIFE "ABOVE GROUND"?

If my confidence is based on circumstance, emotions and cultural trends, even powerful personal experiences, then I am in danger. Everything above ground can be swept away when storms come.

For example, if I think that God might break His promises and desert me, then I am likely to break my promises and desert others...
If I am not experiencing acceptance or forgiveness from an eternal source, then I will not be able to fully accept or forgive others...
If my faith is based on personal positive experiences, what happens if I have powerful negative experiences?



Even deeper, if I am not sure that God really exists or that the Bible is really true, then everything in my life will be based on shifting sands of opinions.

No matter how persuasively I am taught and challenged to "try harder to be a better person" "above ground," (my morals, money, marriage, etc.) I cannot fully succeed until I am solid "below ground." It may take time, but building my foundations will lead to great strength.

Where am I in my spiritual journey? Indicate how much you agree with this statement:

"I am motivated to explore and pursue clarity and certainty about my foundations."

-10 disagree strongly -5 0 +5 +10 agree strongly

Explain your answer:

A Word of Encouragement; It's worth it to have our foundations examined, answers coming soon

Being aware of our gaps and uncertainties should not discourage us. It should encourage us to explore. God welcomes our scrutiny, and spiritual things need to be tested. The worst thing we could do is just fix up the surface, to blindly reject or accept these teachings. God encourages us to explore them carefully. If they prove true, build our lives upon them, discover the treasures which withstand the worst storms.

Look at upcoming sessions. **Many of your questions will be answered soon.** Keep exploring!

TEAMWORK/PRAYER PARTNER: HOW CAN THIS TOPIC AFFECT YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK?

Discuss the following with your partner. Start now, and check in with each other through the week.

1. *General*: What is most helpful from this session? What is difficult? How clear am I?
2. *Specific*: Where do I need the most help? How does this affect specific areas of my life?
3. *Faith steps*: Why is it worth it to clarify and strengthen my foundations? What practical steps do I need to take in order to live according to reality? Whom else can I share this with?

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK: BE READY TO REPORT ON THIS.

Before next week's meeting, do the following to help you further understand and apply this session.

1. *Keep Your Eyes Open*: Look for other things in your life or the natural world around you that are invisible but very important for survival.
2. *Reinforce Your Learning*: Review Luke 6:46-49, the concept of "foundations," Mat. 13:44-46, about finding treasure, and the Reality Principle. You know you understand them if you can explain it to a 10 year old. Can you?
3. *Apply the Reality Principle*: What are your emotions, circumstances, and cultural trends saying about the importance of spiritual beliefs and principles? How do those things stand up to Jesus' claims about foundations?
4. *Share with Someone Else*: Look for an opportunity to share these concepts with another person or ask them for their perspective.

Forecasting Session 3: *Is God Really There?*

The rest of this Survival tool will explore each of the "footings" so that you can **strengthen your clarity** and **confidence** in these **core convictions** of Christianity. The first conviction is about **God: *Is He really there? How has He revealed Himself? Can He be trusted? How do I know?***

In Session 3, we will explore **five different ways God has revealed himself** to be very real and very reliable. From the beginning, God has made it clear that He wants to be known, and He wants to be trusted. Prepare for this session by thinking about your view of God. Write down brief answers to the following questions:

1. Does God exist? Can He be trusted? How do you know?
2. How did you form these beliefs?
3. Can you explain these beliefs and do your actions reflect them?