

"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 3:11



ROCK SOLID

Laying the Foundation for Spiritual Growth

Marvin R. Knight

Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built."

LUKE 6:47-48

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While all reasonable attempts have been taken to trace the literary and biblical sources used by the author, due to the nature of some of the original materials (old audio/radio or live preaching events), some have been impossible to locate. Any information regarding the origin of any unreferenced statements or quotations is welcomed and will be included in the next revision of the study.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.

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Introduction

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The purpose of this study is to help new believers, as well as seasoned saints, grab hold of some crucial truths to aid them in the Christian life. No believer ever grows past the basics; we just build on top of them. These lessons will help you to build on the foundation of Jesus that will stand the test of time and trials.

The Apostle Peter admonished believers in his day to “...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...” (2 Peter 3:18a). Those same words still ring true with us today in the 21st century. We are to be life-long disciples of Jesus. These studies are aimed at building your theology so that you might handle accurately the Word of truth. Dr. D Martyn Lloyd-Jones was right when he said, “What we believe about God has more consequences upon church life and Christian living than anything else.” Christianity is not a spectator sport; it is a life of participation and growth. Our prayer is that these truths will spur you to love and good deeds (*Hebrews 10:24*).

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How this book works

Understanding the key elements of discipleship

The lexical definition of **disciples** is “*learner*.” But in the first century, the cultural understanding of a disciple was “*follower*.” You cannot be a Christian without being a disciple. Faith as modeled and taught by Jesus requires more than just agreeing to religious truth. It means a commitment to follow Jesus daily. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” (*The Cost of Discipleship*, New York: Macmillan, 1937, 64).

The Christian faith and following Jesus are irrevocably linked. You can’t have one without the other. Here are five personal characteristics of disciples:

1. A disciple *abides* in Christ through the Word and prayer. (*John 15:7*)
2. A disciple *bears* much fruit. (*v.8*)
3. A disciple *responds* to God’s love with *obedience*. (*vv.9-10*)
4. A disciple *possesses* joy. (*v.11*)
5. A disciple *loves* as Christ loved. (*vv.12-13*)

Each lesson is built around the three components of faith.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH—Discovering what the Bible teaches

Why is understanding the truth so important? Jesus said, “*If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*” (*John 8:31b-32*).

2. EMBRACING THE TRUTH—Application and Accountability

Why is embracing the truth so important? Jesus said, “*If any man is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself*” (*John 7:17*).

3. OBEYING THE TRUTH—Mission

Why is obeying the truth so important? Jesus said, “*He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him*” (*John 14:21*).

Each lesson will begin with a prayer from **THE VALLEY OF VISION**. D.A. Carson once said, “The prayers in The Valley of Vision are steeped in Scripture, yet never succumb to mere formula. They are theologically fresh and vibrant, yet they are rooted in confessionalism. They range over a huge sweep of Christian experience and devotion, but they are never merely esoteric or cute. They brim with deep emotion and transparent passion, but they carefully avoid mere sentimentalism.”

At the end of each lesson we will commit to memorizing a **MEMORY VERSE** because David said, “Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You” (*Psalms 119:11*). Also, you will find **EXTRA RESOURCES FOR THE VAULT**—solid books, articles, and websites for future study and resources.

Accountability

“Keep watch over yourselves!” This was Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians elders (*Acts 20:28*), which can be interpreted in only one way—*mutual accountability*. However, implementing and maintaining an accountability system is probably one of the greatest challenges all Christians face. It runs counter to the way most of us think! It involves being vulnerable—which is normally threatening. We don’t naturally invite others into our lives.

When all is said and done, an accountability system only works when we are people of *integrity*. Any method of accountability can fail. However, this does not mean that we should ignore Paul’s exhortation to the elders in Ephesus: “*Keep watch over yourselves!*” (*Acts 20:28*).

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

In the accountability section of each lesson, you will be asked to share how you are doing in one of five areas of your personal life.

1. How are you doing in the area of LIFE and MINISTRY?
2. How are you doing in the area of MARRIAGE and FAMILY?
3. How are you doing in the area of INTEGRITY and CHARACTER?
4. How are you doing in the area of HEALTH and WELLNESS?
5. How are you doing in the area of DISCIPLESHIP and GROWTH?

Application

"Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it."
LUKE 11:28

"But prove yourselves to be doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."
JAMES 1:22

WHAT IS APPLICATION?

The word apply comes from two Latin words: **ap** (*ad*) which means "to" and **plico** meaning "to knit." They came to mean to "knit" or "join" something together to something else in such a way as to change or affect that to which something is joined. Application is meant to transform our lives. Hearing the truth or participating in a bible study without application *will* lead the hearers to self-deception. Hearing solid, sound teaching is good, but it's only a part of the process. The writer to the Hebrews says, "...we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift from it" (Hebrews 2:1). If we neglect application, we deceive ourselves and drift away from the truth like a ship at sea.

James 1:23-25 give us a picture that is worth a thousand words. Listening to the truth and not applying it is like a man or woman who looks at themselves in the mirror before they leave the house in the morning. They see areas that need attention and make the minor external adjustments before rushing into the day. This seems to be normal behavior for most of us. However, when compared to how we deal with God's Word, there is a stark difference.

A mirror is meant to show man's *external appearance*. The Word of God confronts our *internal condition*. If we treat God's word like a mirror—seeing our reflection, quickly making external adjustments to our appearance, and going our way—the truth is unable to penetrate our hearts and change our inner condition. But God's word demands that we do more than listen and walk away. Verse 25 says we must "*look intently into the perfect law.*" Instead of a quick glancing look, we are to *study* it, *meditate* on it, and *obediently* put it into practice. When we do, we will experience freedom, joy, and blessing (v.25). Biblical application is *knitting the truth of God's Word to our lives in such a way that we are progressively transformed into the likeness of Christ.* It is obeying God's Word in the mundane and routine lanes of life. This is impossible by human effort alone; application requires dependence on the Spirit of God.

Ken Ramey writes in his book, *Expository Listening*, "Sometimes the application of a particular text of Scripture is crystal clear. Other times it takes a lot of time and effort before you see how a passage applies to your life. Asking yourself a series of questions as you meditate on a particular passage of Scripture will help you determine how it applies practically to your life. Based on 2 Timothy 3:16, which states that Scripture is useful for four things—"for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness"—start by asking yourself the following four questions every time you read the Bible: (*Expository Listening*, Kress Biblical Resources, p.38)

1. What did I learn (teaching)?
2. Where do I fall short (reproof)?
3. What do I need to do about it (correction)?
4. How can I make this a consistent part of my life (training)?

True Conversion



"When the wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession."

WILLIAM SECKER



PRAY FIRST: LORD, HIGH AND HOLY, MEEK AND LOWLY, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory.

Understanding the Truth

How would you discern the difference between a true Christian and a religious person who is not truly saved? Describe the difference in your own terms. If you were asked to explain, in a simple statement, how you know that you are saved, how would you answer? The late Christian philosopher and scholar Francis Schaffer once observed:

"The meaning of the word Christian has been reduced to practically nothing because the word Christian has been made to mean so little, it has come to mean everything and nothing. The term Christian in contemporary usage can mean anyone who is not Jewish, anyone who lives in a 'Christian nation' as opposed, for example, to a Buddhist or Islamic one, or anyone who claims any kind of allegiance to Jesus Christ."

- Agree or disagree? Why?

Common Misconceptions

Here are some common reasons that people give for believing that they are truly saved:

- I prayed the sinner's prayer when I was...
- I walked forward in a church service...
- I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior...
- I felt Christ touch me at...

Although these may be real experiences in the lives of many people, biblically they are not indicators that one is truly born-again or saved. Here are false indicators that one is a Christian:

A. Praying to God

1. According to Luke 18:10-14, what did the Pharisee do regularly that gave the impression he was saved?
2. Yet who did Jesus say was justified (declared guiltless in God's sight) and why?

B. Professing to believe in Christ

1. According to James 2:19, what do demons do that is true of many people?
2. Demons believe fundamentally everything that the Bible says about Christ (*Luke 4:34*). This belief even has an emotional effect on them (they shudder), but do you think you will see any demons in heaven?

C. Seeing God work through you

1. Read Matthew 7:21-23. What three things will some people confuse for a personal relationship with Christ?
2. Is it possible to have the right profession and the right performance, but lack the right relationship? This is a frightening truth!

D. Being a follower of Christ

1. According to John 6:1-2, what was one of the reasons the crowds followed Christ?
2. After the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus unveiled to the crowds another reason they were following Him. What was it? (*Read John 6:22-26.*)
3. What did Jesus say to Philip, who followed Him most of His ministry? (*Read John 14:7-9.*)

The Essential Mark of a True Christian

2 Corinthians 5:17—“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”



The key attribute of a person who has been truly saved is that he has been **transformed!** Christians are new people. They have a new way of living, thinking, walking, and talking. The principle of sin has been broken and the practice of sin has been interrupted (*1 John 3:7ff*). The truly converted person is one who has new ambitions and a new desire to please and honor the God who has rescued him from sin and Satan. Although this transformation is seen progressively in a person’s experience, the new inward life, from which our basic drives come, is immediately transformed. Martin Luther once said, “Christianity is not attached to the outside of a man or put on as a garment, it is not the adoption of a new method and manner of life or action...it is not a self-chosen sanctity, but it is a new birth through God’s Word and Spirit and the creating of a man who is entirely new from the bottom of his heart.” (Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says*)

There are four clear signs or evidences that you have been saved or born again:

Sign #1—Colossians 1:12-13

The true believer is one who has been delivered (rescued) from _____ to _____.

In the Bible, darkness is a metaphor for evil (*John 3:19-21*) and error. Light is a metaphor for holiness (*1 John 1:5*) and truth (*Psalms 119:105*).

1. According to Ephesians 5:8-9, how does Paul describe the Ephesian believers before they were saved?
2. How does the Apostle Paul describe the true believer’s previous condition in Ephesians 4:17-18?
3. How are true believers described in Ephesians 5:8?
4. According to Colossians 1:13, what happens when a person is truly saved? (*See also 1 Peter 2:9*.)
5. What did Jesus say is characteristic of true disciples? (*Read John 8:31-32.*)
 - a. A simple definition for truth (Gk. *aletheia*) is the way things really are. (*Cf. 2 Timothy 1:10; John 1:17; 8:12; 17:17*)

A true believer is one who has been rescued from error in his thinking about sin (*John 16:8*) and Christ (*1 John 2:22*). A true believer embraces the truth from God’s Word about the things that are essential to salvation, like the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture (*2 Timothy 3:16*), the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15*), and even the Trinity. The Spirit of Truth who lives in the believer guides him into all truth (*John 8:40, 43-47; 18:37; 1 John 2:26-27*).



Application

Being a doer of the Word

Has this sign of being delivered from error to truth been seen in your life? If so, share *how*. If not, now you know what to look for as God works in your life. Close in prayer thanking God for delivering you from error to truth, or asking God to open your spiritual eyes to see the way things really are.



Accountability

Placing yourself in transparent and accountable relationships

How are you doing in the area of **LIFE** and **MINISTRY**?

- Assess your overall energy in life and ministry:

(Unstable) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Stable)

- Assess your **feelings of effectiveness** in your ministry:

(Unstable) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Stable)

Obeying the Truth—Your Mission this Week

Engaging the lost through word and deed with the intention of imparting the Gospel



Ask two people if they are a Christian and listen their response. Think about their response and how it relates to what you learned this past week. Don't feel pressure to decide whether or not they are a truly a Christian, but be ready to answer the question for yourself.



MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK: 2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."



EXTRA RESOURCES FOR THE VAULT

Webster, William. *The Christian, Following Christ as Lord*. Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust. 1991. Print.
Washer, Paul. *The Gospel Call and True Conversion*. Grand Rapids. Reformation Heritage Books. 2013. Print.

A. Praying to God

1. he prayed
2. the tax collector; because he humbled himself

B. Professing to believe in Christ

1. believe
2. no

C. Seeing God work through you

1. People will confuse prophecy, which is speaking of Christ before people; casting out demons, which is helping others spiritually; and miracles, which is seeing or experiencing the supernatural.
2. yes

D. Being a follower of Christ

1. they saw the signs that He was performing
2. they ate the loaves and were filled
3. have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me?

Sign #1—darkness to light

1. they were in darkness
2. ignorant and alienated from God
3. children of Light
4. called out of darkness and no longer bound by sin
5. continuing in (obeying) His Word