

A Foundation Built on Christ

[Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 3:10-17](#)

My Heart, Christ's Home
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One of our daughters recently went looking for a new house. She wanted to be closer to work, especially during the winter months when snow and ice make her commute dangerous. She found one in a lovely new community. The layout of the house and the size of the yard were just what she was looking for. There was, however, a potential problem: there was a crack in the basement floor. The real estate agent assured her it was no problem, but to be on the safe side, she hired an independent engineer to look not only at the crack in the basement but at the entire house. Was it solid and sound, or would she have problems down the line? Fortunately, the engineer reported that the crack was not a fault in the foundation, and that the house was well built. She is now happily ensconced in her new home, secure in the knowledge that it will be there for many years to come.

The foundation of your life: is it strong, solid, and secure? Do you even know where it is, and what it's made of?

Some build their foundation on themselves: "I am the sole judge of what is good and right." René Descartes set the trend back in the 17th century. Descartes realized one day that everything he saw, sensed and thought might be no more than dreams and illusions. How then could he be sure that the world even existed, let alone God? He concluded that whatever else he could doubt, there was one thing it was impossible to doubt—the fact that he was doubting. This, in turn, led to his celebrated axiom, *cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am." He then built his entire life on the foundation of the thinking self, the rational ego.

And Cartesian thinking is alive and well in 21st century America. People still build on their own ego, still look to themselves as the sole foundation of truth. In "Habits of the Heart," his landmark study of American values, Robert Bellah wrote about Sheila Larson, a New England nurse. She described her faith as "Sheilaism." "My faith has carried me a long way," she told Bellah. "It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice." Bellah then added, "This suggests the logical possibility of over 220 million American religions, one for each of us." And is that the case? Do we each have our own religion? Have we made gods of ourselves? Is my true faith "Tom-ism," and is yours "Mary-ism," or "Fred-ism?"

But when you build your life solely on yourself, you must sooner or later come up against the question, "How can I be sure that I, among the billions of people who have ever lived, that I alone have a pipeline to the truth? The odds, it seems to me, are far worse than winning the lottery! It reminds me of the adage attributed to Abe Lincoln, "The lawyer who represents himself in court has a fool for a client." Correspondingly, those who look to themselves for eternal truth have a fool for a worshiper.

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3, nominates Jesus Christ as the only adequate foundation for our lives: "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Why Jesus Christ?

First, because no one has ever embodied God as Jesus did. And it's not just a matter of degree. It's not that some historical figures embodied God to a great degree, while Jesus embodied God to a greater degree. No. In Jesus, God has come personally into our world. Jesus is God with us. God speaking our language, God living our life, God sharing our pain, God dying our death. It's called "the incarnation," the en-fleshing of God, God becoming a human being in this man Jesus. When we listen to Jesus in the Gospels, we are listening to God. When we follow Jesus' instructions, we are following God. When we build our lives on Jesus' word and Jesus' will, we are building on a foundation that's guaranteed to last as long as God lasts, because no one has ever embodied God as Jesus did.

Secondly, no one has ever embodied love as Jesus did. Love flowed from this man as from no other, love for his Heavenly Father, love for humanity, love for you and for me. At a meeting of the Mission Committee in my former church, Jeanne Skarda read several definitions of love written by children ages five through nine. We laughed at several, but one wiped the smiles off our faces: "God could have said magic words to make the nails fall off the cross, but he didn't. That's love."

Did that child get it wrong? Shouldn't a loving God have removed the nails? But listen to Jesus' own testimony: "The Son of man came not to serve, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Jesus went to the cross by his own volition. It was out of love that he died for our sins. His was a vicarious death; he took the penalty we deserve upon himself in order to reconcile us to God. Think of Medal of Honor recipients who put their lives on the line for their buddies. Would you tell the widow of a Medal of Honor hero that he shouldn't have thrown himself on a live grenade to save the other members of his platoon? No, the deepest, most profound love is that which gives its life for others. "No one has greater love than this," Jesus said, "to lay down one's life for one's friends." So for God to have removed the nails from the cross would have been to deny the most profound love ever expressed, for in giving himself to the cross Jesus loved us totally, unconditionally and redemptively.

One of my seminary professors told of a man who was asked if he had found Jesus. He replied, "I didn't know he was lost; but I was, and he found me." That's my story, too. And he not only found me, he founded me on the rock of his love. I have no doubt that my life is built on a solid footing, not because of who I am or what I've done, but because of who he is and what he's done. It's my testimony too that "no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ."

Just how do you build your life on Jesus Christ? That will be the subject of my sermons between now and Holy Week. Over the next four weeks I will talk about grace and faith, prayer and love.

In the meantime, check out the life you're building. Walk down into your basement and check for cracks. If you discover that your

life is spiritually unsound, pay attention to Jesus: "Every one who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock."