



Building a Firm Foundation



A 7 Week Discipleship Adventure

by Pastor Mark Hiehle

A Solid Foundation!

Whenever we want to build something that will last the test of time, the first place to start is always the foundation. Any house or building needs to have a strong foundation. In fact, the higher you want to build something, the deeper the foundation needs to be. Your spiritual life is no different. If you want your spiritual life to be able to stand the storms of life and soar high, your foundation must be firm and deep.

Throughout the Bible, our lives are compared to a spiritual house. The Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 4-8 (also written as 1 Peter 2:4-8), that we are like living stones being built into a spiritual house, in which Jesus is the precious cornerstone. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19, that we are God's temple in which God's Spirit lives, once we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Paul says that as we build our lives, we will be tested on how we build, but the only foundation we must build upon is Jesus.

Jesus told a story about this very truth at the end of his sermon recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7. At the end of his sermon he said, *"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house upon the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."* Matthew 7:24-27

You are about to begin a journey with God that will challenge, stretch and change you forever. As you work through this workbook, you will grow closer to your Heavenly Father. Plus, your life in Christ will be strong, firm and able to stand the storms of life!



It has been said that all growth means change. We never stay the same. If we stop changing, we stop growing. Therefore, we are continually under construction. When we give ourselves to God, He begins to mold us and make us more into the image of Jesus every day. As we understand more of who God really is, we also see more clearly who we are, and how we need God to change us.

God wants you to be mature in your faith. That happens when you understand the foundational truths of scripture and you are putting them into practice as you walk by faith every day. This workbook is a tool to help you make sure that you have a firm foundation upon which to build your spiritual life.

During the next 7 weeks, you are asked to **read a lesson each day for 5 days** during each week. At the end of each lesson, there will also be questions to answer or assignments to complete. Then, get together with your spiritual partner to **talk about the 5 lessons, and what you learned.** Go through this same process each week until this workbook is completed.

At the end of 7 weeks, you will have gone over many topics and truths from scripture that will give you a solid foundation. You will also understand what it means to be a Christian – a follower of Jesus. Your growth will not then end, but as you keep reading, studying and applying God's Word, your faith will continue to grow.

These next 7 weeks are just the start of an amazing adventure with God!

Your Name _____

Your Partner's Name _____

Their Phone Number _____ **e-mail** _____

When and where you will get together _____

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Week One – Day One

What Does God Think Of Me?



God knows everything about you. King David wrote in Psalm 139:1-4, *“O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.”* That is both amazing and intimidating. He knows everything we have ever done, said or even thought. He knows our failures, our successes, our fears, our dreams, our past and our future. He knows the good, the bad and the ugly in our lives. Yet, he loves us completely and unconditionally. Because he created us and loves us, he wants to have a relationship with us. In fact, God created us so that we could have a relationship with him.

Just think, the creator of the universe, who spoke the stars into existence, and everything in the world, also created you, and wants a relationship with you. He crafted you and knit you together so that you could know him, and experience his love and blessing in your life.

But there is a problem. The problem is that God is Holy, pure and righteous, and we are not. We all have done things that were wrong that the Bible calls sin. We all have lied, taken something that has not belonged to us, cheated or disobeyed. The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* That means we all are guilty. The result is that our sin separates us from God, but not from his love for us. He loves us still, but we are separated from him. It is as if we are on one side of a ravine and God is on the other.



The Good News is that because God loves us so much, even though we don't deserve his love, he showed us the extent of his love. Romans 5:8 says, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Jesus put it this way in talking about God's love, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* John 3:16

In what Jesus just said, the most amazing word was the word "so" because it reveals just how much God loves us. He loves us "SO" much, that he gave his only son. To make it personal, and to help grasp the full weight of what Jesus said, put your own name in the following blanks.

"For God so loved _____ that he gave his one and only Son, that if _____ believes in him, _____ will not perish but have eternal life." (You might want to repeat that a few times.)

God loves you! He loves you not because of anything you have done, or not done. He loves you because he created you and he believes in you. God never says, "I'll love you "if" you are good enough." He had Jesus die for you while you were still a sinner. God's love is Amazing and Unconditional!

Action Steps:

- What does unconditional love mean to you?
- If you had a child, how much love would it take to sacrifice them so someone else could live?
- Take a few moments and thank God for loving you and showing you how much he loves you.

Week One – Day Two

The Problem of Sin

SIN

God created us to love and be loved. In the beginning, man and woman walked and talked with God, and they were together in peace. They enjoyed God's presence and their relationship was pure. They were alive spiritually, physically and in their relationship with God. Then they permitted sin to enter their lives and everything changed. They rebelled against God's will for them and they did what they wanted instead. They still had the need for love and acceptance, but sin separated them from God and their hearts were self-centered. Sin created a void in their hearts because spiritually they died, and that sin nature was passed on from generation to generation.

A man by the name of Pascal, long ago put it this way, "Every person has a God-shaped hole in their life that only He can fill." Unfortunately, people try to fill that void with things or other relationships instead of God. Some try to fill the void with drugs, alcohol, sex, money, position or possessions. Because nothing else can take the place of God, substitutes always leave us feeling incomplete or empty. Nothing can satisfy us apart from a real, personal relationship with our Heavenly Father.



Many people have tried to reach God by doing good deeds or being religious. They have given time or money to causes or churches hoping that their sacrifices would make them acceptable to God. But all our effort comes up short.

Because of sin, we are spiritually dead. The Apostle Paul reminded believers in Ephesians 2:1-4, *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins[...All of us at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts...]”* The sinful nature says that life is all about me and what I want. Even the word can be spelled “sIn” to emphasize our nature apart from God in our lives. Without a relationship with God and a new spirit within us, we are forever lost in our sin. We cannot be right with God or each other.

Also, the Apostle Paul told us in Romans 6:23 that, *“The wages of sin is death...”* That means there is a cost to sin. The payment for our rebellion against God and our wrong choices is death, spiritually now and for eternity if not paid for.

The problem is that every other religion in the world says that you can save yourself. If you do enough good deeds, pray enough prayers or follow the prescribed teachings, you can reach God or find forgiveness. It is like saying to someone trapped in a burning building, “Save Yourself.” You cannot.

Since we cannot save ourselves, we need a savior. That is why Jesus came, to save us from our sins. The rest of Romans 6:23 says, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty that sin demanded be paid – the wages. He took your sin upon himself when he hung on the cross to pay your debt that sin caused. Jesus paid for your sin with his life so that you could be forgiven, set free and alive once more. Jesus made it possible to no longer be separated from God.



Action Step:

- Think about the sins you have committed, the fact you could not pay for them, and the price Jesus paid to forgive ALL your sins. Then take some time to tell God how you feel about your sins and how you feel about Jesus' sacrifice.

Week Two – Day One

A Member of the Family



When you believed that Jesus is God’s Son, who came to pay the penalty for your sin, and you asked Jesus to forgive you of your sin, he forgave you. Jesus became your Savior. When you asked Jesus to come into your life and take control of your life, and fill you with his Holy Spirit, you invited Jesus to be your Lord. When you did that, you became a child of God! John 1:12 says it this way, *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, not of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”*

Congratulations!! You are now part of God’s family! As part of the family, you now have the ability of calling God your heavenly Father. Romans 8:15-16 tells us, *“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”*

The term “Spirit of sonship” literally means the spirit of “adoption.” You have been adopted into God’s family.

Being adopted is a very special honor. It means that you were chosen. God chose you to be his. It also means that you have a new family and a new identity. You have been given your Father’s name, and the authority to use his name. You belong to a family in which you will never be forgotten, forsaken or abandoned.

You also have all the rights and privileges as a son or daughter. You are an heir and you have direct access to your Father as a child of his. The term above “Abba,” literally means “Daddy.” Just as a child affectionately calls and knows their Father by using the term “Daddy,” that is what God wants you to call him. Also, because your new Father is the King of Kings, you are now royalty too. You are a prince or princess of the King! (Read that all again and let it sink in)

The Apostle Paul repeated this truth in Galatians 4:4-7, *“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”*

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what you are!” 1 John 3:1

Because you are God’s child, you are now “a somebody.” You are loved, and a person of great worth and potential. God believes in you and wants only the very best for you. He loves you – you are his child!

To borrow a phrase, “With a great position also comes great responsibility.” As a member of the family, you also represent the family in whose name you carry. People will associate your actions, attitudes and words with your family. As a member of the family, you will want people to bring blessing and honor to your father in how you treat others, and in how you live. You will want to follow your Father’s example in how He responds to those who do not know him, and how he loves unconditionally. In other words, your desire should be to have people know that you are part of the family because you resemble your Father. What an awesome privilege and responsibility.

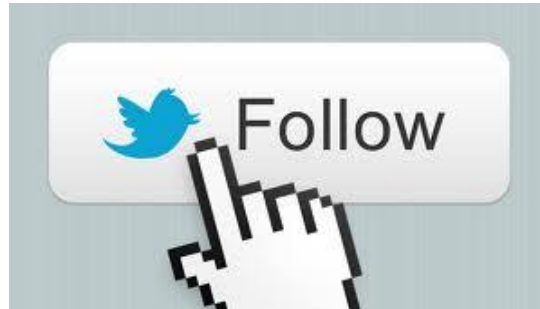
Action Steps:

- What does it mean to you that you have been forgiven and adopted into God’s family? Write out your thoughts.

- Take some time thanking God that He is yours and you are his – forever!

Week Two – Day Two

A Follower – Part 1



Social Media is the new means of communication today. It started with My Space, then Facebook, next came Twitter. You can instant message, tweet and follow just about anyone who is connected. By the simple click of a button you can “follow” loved ones, friends or even famous people you have never met.

When you “follow” someone on social media, you have a number of different choices you can make. You can follow their every post and read about their every thought. You can choose to follow only their most recent posts or you can ignore their posts all together. You can chose which posts you will read, and ignore those you are not interested in. You can even choose to un-friend them or cease to follow them at all. When it comes to following Jesus however, everything is different. You cannot “follow” the same way.

Since Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and since everything was created by and for him, and since he is the author and perfecter of our faith, we cannot pick and choose what we will obey. We cannot ignore what he says.

People today, like in Jesus’ day were interested in him. Some were **curious** about him. They wanted to hear what he had to say and see what he could do. They wanted a show. Some were **consumers**. They wanted to follow Jesus just for what they could get from him, like a free meal or a healing. Some were **concealed** believers, like some Pharisees (Religious leaders). They didn’t want to have others reject them, so they kept their belief secret. Then there were the **committed**. They left everything for Jesus and were not ashamed to be called his followers.

In the four Gospels, Jesus said 20 times, “follow me.” When he said that, he did not mean, just listen to me or be interested in being where I am, but be committed to me. Literally, Jesus’ call was to leave everything behind and obey him. That is what the early disciples did. They left their past for the promise of a brand new future.

In the book of Mark 8:34-38, Jesus lays out what the expectation and requirement is for being a follower. *“Then he (Jesus) called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

In those short statements, Jesus puts everything on the table. Jesus said that if anyone wants to be a follower of his, it is no longer about them anymore. The cross was a symbol and means of death. As we deny ourselves, we replace what we want for what Jesus wants. Then, Jesus lets us know that if we put ourselves first, we will lose what real life is all about. But, if we give up our control to Jesus, we will gain real life. Then Jesus asks the ultimate question. What in this life really compares to having a personal relationship with God himself? **Absolutely nothing!** Nothing in this world is worth giving up Jesus for. Money can be lost, fame will disappear, possessions can be stolen or destroyed, and pleasure never lasts, but God’s love never ends.

So, when we give up our favorite sin, selfish ambition or control to Jesus, we gain what only being a committed follower of Jesus can provide – true peace, God’s presence, real purpose, power to live victoriously and the promise of eternity. Being a sold out follower is worth it!

Actions Steps:

- In the Mark 8:34-38 passage above, underline the words that stand out to you the most. Talk about those words with your partner
- Read Luke 9:57-62. What is the main point that Jesus wanted them to understand?
- Take some time and talk to the Lord about your commitment to him.

Week Seven – Day Five



Obeying God

Whenever someone is going to leave on a trip, or for an extended period of time, and they want to pass on final reminders, usually the last things they say are the most important. As though, “If you forget everything else, remember this..”

Just before Jesus left his followers and disappeared into the clouds, Jesus gave his final instructions. Of all the written “known will of God”, this was the last command Jesus gave. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Your job as a follower of Jesus is to make other disciples. A disciple is simply a follower of Jesus. As you have gone through this workbook with your spiritual partner, you have begun the process of discipleship. As Jesus stated in the passage above, the process of discipleship is learning what God said and doing it. In other words, it is listening to God and doing what He says.

Each week you have read God’s Word, and been encouraged to obey what God instructed. You have discussed God’s Word with your partner and daily spent time talking with God. As you have been putting God’s Word into practice, you have been building a firm foundation for your spiritual life, and set a habit for continued growth. As you continue studying the Bible, talking to God about what you read, and walking by faith, you will grow more mature in your faith and stronger in your walk with the Lord.

One of the best ways to grow, is to pass on what you have learned to someone else. Helping someone else grow always makes you grow even more. This is just what God wants you to do now. Pass on what you have learned in order to help someone else become a disciple – learning and obeying.

Now that you have completed this discipleship workbook, the Action Step is to take someone else through their own workbook.

Begin now talking to God about who He wants you to partner with as you go through this workbook again. Share what your partner shared with you as you got together once a week. Talk with them and pray with them, just as your partner did when you met together weekly.

So, after you meet with your spiritual partner next, obtain a new workbook, and ask the Lord who you should approach about going through this discipleship tool for 7 weeks. Once you believe the Lord has directed you, ask them if you could have the honor of going through this workbook with them, so that they too can build upon a strong spiritual foundation. Tell them that they will have a lesson a day for five days, and then you will meet with them to talk about what they read and did. Just as your partner did, ask them questions about what they read and how they put the truth from scripture into their life. Encourage them and pray with them at the end of each time you meet together. You might want to even call them during the week to encourage them, and to answer any questions they may have.

When you are asked a question you do not readily have an answer for, tell them that you don't know, but you will find out. Then, either search the scriptures together or contact the Pastor for the answer. Once you have the answer, share that answer, and now you both have grown.

Congratulations again on completing this discipleship workbook. You have taken exciting steps in your spiritual journey with the Lord, and amazing truths and experiences are yet to take place. Stay committed to reading God's Word every day. Spend time talking to the Lord and listening to what he wants to say to you. When you hear from the Lord, obey everything he tells you. You have also built a relationship with your partner, so continue to talk together, and share what the Lord is doing in your lives. There is great blessing in building each other up in the Lord.

So, be faithful in study, faithful in prayer, faithful in church attendance, and seek to help lead a fellow follower in their spiritual life. In so doing, you will be fulfilling the commission of Matthew 28 which is to make disciples.

Remember, as a true follower - Listen to God, and do what He says!