



Church ON Purpose

Sermon Growth Guide

February 4, 2024

Don't Just Worship - Follow!



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1 Corinthians 3:10-23

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 3:18

“Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become ‘fools’ so that you may become wise.”

Big Idea: We need to build on the foundation that is Jesus Christ so we can stand strong when the storms of life come.

Foundations

Life presents us with many challenges that test the quality of our life-construction. Jesus Christ is the firm foundation we must build on and we must use quality materials and maintain with care to ensure we will stand strong when the storms of life come. In short, we must move from being worshipers to disciples and must take an intentional approach to building our lives.

Paul tells us that we're not just building roadside shacks, but that we are temples, for the Holy Spirit dwells within us! Stable, lasting cathedrals and temples take time and intentionality to build.

The tools that help us build Christ-centered lives are spiritual disciplines. Particularly corporate worship and personal time with Jesus. These disciplines are like weight training for athletes, strengthening individuals for life's challenges.

First Pres works to support each member in these efforts through Christian community which enables us to avoid self-deception and ensures accountability in the building process.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read 1 Corinthians 3:10-23.

What are some straw-like or stick-like building materials that people try to use to construct their lives?

Reflect on the idea that you are God's temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells in you. How does this realization impact the way you live your life?

Applying God's Word

What is the foundation of your life? How has your foundation influenced the way you navigate challenges and crises?

Evaluate your engagement with spiritual disciplines. How consistent are you in corporate worship and personal time with Jesus? What disciplines have been especially important for you throughout the years?

Describe a time when you've experienced a community like this one help you become aware of self-deception in your own life.

Witnessing God's Word

How involved are you in Christian community? Are you actively participating in Sunday Communities, Life Groups, or Growing Together Wednesdays? How can you enhance your involvement?

Reflect on the prevailing philosophies in our culture (Expressive Individualism, Power & Justice, Materialistic Naturalism, Hedonism). Where do you see these philosophies at work in your life? How might you begin to address them with friends/family?

I've had a story on my mind the last couple of weeks: "The Three Little Pigs."

Three pigs. One builds a house of straw, one of stick, one of brick. Big Bad Wolf comes to town and knocks on the house made of straw saying, "Little pig little pig, let me in!" The pig says, "Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin!" Wolf says, "Then I'll HUFF, and I'll PUFF, and I'll BLOW YOUR HOUSE DOWN!!!" The house falls and the wolf gobbles up the pig...

Big Bad Wolf goes to the house made of sticks saying, "Little pig little pig, let me in!" The pig says, "Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin!"

Wolf says, "Then I'll HUFF, and I'll PUFF, and I'll BLOW YOUR HOUSE DOWN!!!" The house falls and the wolf gobbles up the pig...

Big Bad Wolf finally goes to the house made of bricks and says... "Little pig little pig, let me in!" The pig says, "Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin!" Wolf says, "Then I'll HUFF, and I'll PUFF, and I'll BLOW YOUR HOUSE DOWN!!!" But... But... The house doesn't fall!! The pig is safe...

Here's the deal: Our lives are like houses (Jesus used this image in a parable about rock/sand). Inevitably in life, things will come along....Severe illness, relational breakdowns, death of a loved one, loss of a job....THESE kinds of things test the quality of our construction. If our lives aren't built on a firm foundation, built with quality materials, constructed and maintained with skill and care, we will collapse. We'll fall apart. We'll be "Blown down."

Paul warned us about this in our passage earlier: "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames."

Yikes! How can we avoid this? What must we do?

We've been talking about our discipleship pathway here over the last few weeks. Community, Participant, Worshiper. The next step in our spiritual journey, then, is to move from a place of being a worshiper to a disciple! The charge today is, "Don't Just Worship - Follow!"

See, once the foundation has been laid. Once we've had our hearts turned towards Christ, once, as Pastor Tim said last week, we move from a kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, we start building on that foundation! And again, we know that at some point, the structure will be tested. We'll face a crisis of health, finances, relationships, or maybe a crisis of faith and in those moments, the question "What materials are you building with?" becomes very relevant!

In our passage today, Paul says, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" We need to know that we're not building shanties. We are building a temple! The Holy Spirit dwells in us! WE are a house of God!

Before we had kids, my wife and I were able to travel to France and to Italy. While there, we visited some unbelievable cathedrals! We toured the Vatican and St. Peter's basilica. It was awe-inspiring! The construction of that cathedral took around 110 years to complete. We visited Notre Dame as well (before the fire in 2019)! That took 182 years to complete!

Question: Why did the lazy pigs build houses of straw and sticks? Because it was quick and easy! But it didn't last. But we know building anything significant and lasting takes time and intentionality.

We might also note that GROWING anything significant and lasting takes time and intentionality. Think about a giant oak tree. As a kid, one of my neighborhood friends had a ton of trees on their property. We spent a lot of time building treehouses in their backyard. But trees like that take a long time to mature. You can't build a treehouse in a young oak tree.

On the other end of the spectrum, my

wife, Ashley, and I built garden boxes during COVID and we have grown a ton of summer squash in the last few years! I grind them up to make zucchini bread or zucchini noodles. They seem to spring up overnight, they're kind of mushy and easy to break down. We tend to lose a bunch to squirrels and rabbits each summer, but it's no big deal because they're not that significant.

Do you see where I'm going with this? Do you want to be an oak tree (stable, lasting, formidable, significant)? Or do you want to be a spiritual squash?

We know building a life that stands strong, growing as a disciple, takes time and energy. It requires a firm foundation, good materials, thoughtful cultivation, intentionality, and effort all while looking to the Holy Spirit to re-form us.

So, how do we do this? How do we build well? How do we nurture and support growth in our lives? The answer is, "Though spiritual disciplines."

Spiritual disciplines aren't an end in themselves; they are the habits and practices that lead to increased intimacy with the Lord, that equip us to stay in the center of Christ's will, that strengthen our faith.

Spiritual disciplines are for the spiritual life what weight-training is for an athlete. The athlete's goal isn't to get better at weight-lifting, but weight-lifting helps the athlete be a better tennis/soccer/football player! Spiritually-speaking, this equates to tilling up the soil of our hearts, removing rocks, so we're ready for the Holy Spirit to work on us.

In our lives, there are two essential disciplines. These are the practices which strengthen us and equip us for the road ahead.

The first is gathering for corporate worship. Worship the single-most formative hour of our week. It's what we've been called to together as followers of Jesus. Worship is the eternal task we will engage in together!

We are formed spiritually as we commit ourselves to consistent worship and are formed by the liturgy and encounter with the Word.

We've talked about the centrality of this

several times in the last month. We get it. We can "Check" that box!

The second is personal time with Jesus. Personal time with Jesus involves Scripture reading and prayer. This is more than just a quick devo, more than knocking out a page of *Our Daily Bread*, more than listening to a podcast sermon on your morning commute. This is time spent actually reading the Scriptures, the Bible, for yourself. It involves making notes, praying through the text, times of silence so the Lord has space to speak to you.

There are so many different ways to engage in this! I've had seasons where I've sat in a single book of the Bible for many weeks, praying through 3-5 verses at a time. I've had seasons where I've committed to reading an entire book of Scripture each day of the week. Right now, my wife and I started a "Bible in a Year" reading plan together so we can read separately and then ask each other questions or discuss interesting passages throughout the week. Whatever form this takes, you've got to get in the Word, pray, and spend time with Jesus! Remember, we just heard what it's like to be a Christian in Egypt! They have to be built on the Word! No flimsy straw-built disciples. No flimsy stick-built churches.

Here at First Pres, we have a myriad of resources to help us become more and more shaped into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:29). Around here, we regularly say that Worship is our "first hour." Then, we have other "second hour" offerings with different purposes and flavors.

Sunday Communities — Most of these meet during the 10 o'clock hour. They're generally 20-75 people. We have communities for kids/youth/adults. Most recently, I've been involved with BaseCamp which is primarily people in their 20's, they meet on the 4th floor at 10 a.m. I'm just beginning to help lead The Incline which is especially for young couples or parents of infants-elementary kids. These are GREAT places to plug into immediately (today!) and start to find your people!

Life Groups — Tighter circles of 6-12 people focused on getting to know one another on a deeper level, applying Scripture to one another's lives, praying

meaningfully for one another, following Jesus together.

GTW (Growing Together Wednesdays) — This is a slightly more academic space available on Wednesday evenings. Kids/youth/adult classes. Dive deep into a section of Scripture or a topic.

Each of these spaces exist to support your spiritual growth! But, once again, these communities and classes aren't ends in themselves. They're like fertilizer to help stimulate your regular, personal time in scripture and prayer! In fact, there's a danger in focusing too heavily on these "tools." Pastor Tim will talk more about this next week, but if we're not careful, we can find ourselves stuck in a loop where we sit in a class, soak in the content, and eventually "sour." Instead of sit, soak, sour we want to be moved to serve. More on that next week!

Before we end, I want to make sure we don't miss a final element of our passage today. Paul continues, writing, "Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become 'fools' so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness'; and again, 'The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.' So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God."

The instruction from Paul is, "DO NOT deceive yourselves!" We have already spoken in this series about the philosophies of the day (Expressive Individualism, Power & Justice, Materialistic Naturalism, Hedonism) that dominate our culture. Go back and listen to the first two sermons in this series for more on that. Those are certainly a factor, but we're also uniquely equipped to engage in plenty of self-deception in our lives! Sometimes, we think we are more mature in Christ than we actually are. We can find ourselves thinking that attending worship twice a month and memorizing John 3:16 makes us a mature disciple, but that's not enough. We think we're building with bricks, but as it turns out, we're just working with square clumps of straw!

And, if we try to do this life alone, we won't discover this unfortunate truth until the wolf, the roaring lion, the forces of this fallen world come and blow on our front door.

The antidote to this self-deception is Christian community. We need deep relationships with people who have permission to speak into our lives with a balance of truth and love. People who will help hold up a mirror or hold a magnifying glass so that we are awakened to our vulnerabilities.

I've seen this in my own life. In high school, I had a core group of three guys and a mentor that deeply shaped me in those formative years. In college, I rallied a group to meet over chips/salsa each week to hold each other accountable to commitments we'd made around spiritual disciplines and Christian living. I've been encouraged and grown in the application of Scripture in the Sunday Community experience here at First Pres. I've been challenged on some perspectives, assumptions, and habits by individuals in my wife and my Life Group.

That's what the communities, classes, and programs of the church are trying to do. When we gather with mature followers of Jesus, Truth and Love can be spoken into our lives, and we can stop fighting against the Holy Spirit who wants to fortify our lives. Other disciples help us assess our building materials and help sound the alarm when they notice us attempting to build on anything but Jesus Christ.

How are you building your house? What materials are you building with? Who is helping you build?

Friends, we cannot do this life alone! Step into a Sunday Community, raise your hand to help host a Life Group, consider diving deeper on Wednesday evenings. When the wolf comes to town, when the roaring lion looks for someone to devour, when the storms of life blow against your door, you'll be glad you did.