

LESSON 5 Building in Community

Two men are digging a ditch. A third man walks by and asks:

“What are you doing with the shovel, sir?”

“Oh, I’m laboring over this ditch.”

“And you, sir?”

“Well, I’m building a beautiful school.”

Do you see the difference in each man’s outlook? One man looked at his job as hard work. He could not see beyond the job he had to do at the moment. The other man was looking ahead. He saw the school that was going to stand on that spot.

Are you like the first man, or the second one? Do you see a beautiful building or just mud? In this lesson we will consider the foundation on which we must build and how to build on that foundation.

The Plan

- A. Building on Proper Foundation
- B. Building Together
- C. Building Bridges

The Goals

1. Indicate the appropriate foundation upon which to build.
2. Explain the importance of building with other believers.
3. Describe the difference between building “bridges” and building “walls.”

A. BUILDING ON PROPER FOUNDATION

Goal 1. Indicate the appropriate foundation upon which to build.

Beneath every great building there must be a solid foundation. If there is no foundation, the building will collapse. It is the same way in the Christian life. Your spirit of community must be based on the solid rock, Jesus Christ. He is your foundation. Paul writes, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

A biblical foundation is necessary for spiritual growth. In Matthew 7:24–27, Jesus told the story of two builders. One built his house upon a rock; the other built his house on sand, without a proper foundation. When the floods and storm raged, the house on the sand fell. But the house built on the rock stood strong.

In this story, Jesus said the wise man who built on a rock is like a person who obeys the words of Christ. The rock that he or she builds upon is obedience to the teachings of Christ. The man who built on sand is like a person who does not obey the words of Christ.

It is one thing to say we believe in Christ and quite another to walk in obedience to His words. Jesus warned, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). You need a solid foundation to support you when the storms come. Such storms come in different ways: the death of a loved one, sickness, loss of possessions, or temptation. When we have built upon the foundation of obedience to God, we have a clear conscience and can have confidence that He will help us in the storm. First John 3:21–22 reads, “If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.”

Only our faith and foundation in the Lord and His Word will keep us during difficult times. Is He your foundation? Are you obedient to His Word?

Application

- 1** Fill in the blanks.
 - a)** If there is not a solid
the building will fall down.
 - b)** Those who build upon the rock
the teachings of Christ.
 - c)** A house built upon the sand will
during a storm.
 - d)** The foundation upon which we should build our lives is
.
- 2** Think over your life since you accepted Christ as your Savior. Can you say you have been walking in obedience to Christ?
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If your answer to the last question is yes, you are laying a solid foundation. If not, ask God to help you to obey Him.



B. BUILDING TOGETHER

Goal 2. Explain the importance of building with other believers.

After the foundation is laid, we can start the actual building. We are not only building as individuals, but we are also a part of the universal church of Jesus Christ—all believers together being built into a complete structure, with Jesus Christ as its foundation. Peter writes, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). In Ephesians 2:20–22, Paul says,

[You] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

We are all stones in the same building. The Scriptures give much instruction about our relationships with each other. Here are words of advice given by the apostle Paul to some of the churches:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:2–3)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Galatians 6:10)

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:14)

These verses make it clear that the community of believers has a great responsibility towards each other. Among believers, more than any place else, the spirit of community should always be seen—fellowship, communion, partnership, love, concern, giving, and receiving. The early church practiced this kind of community spirit (Acts 2:43–47).

When we build in community with others, we must be adaptable. I did not say changeable! An adaptable person is one who can fit into whatever ways are most suitable to meet the needs of others with a common goal. For example, a friend that you are witnessing to asks you to go to the zoo with him on Sunday evening. You have a habit of going to church on Sunday evening. So you suggest to your friend that you will go to the zoo with him earlier on Sunday, and then you would like to take him to church with you. In this way, you have pleased your friend by sharing in a wholesome time of fellowship, and you have an opportunity to win him to the Lord.

If we want to win our community for Christ, we must have a plan. But our plan should always be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If He wants to change it, allow Him to do so.

The city of Seoul, Korea, has a population of more than ten million people. There is a church in Seoul whose members minister to many thousands of people each week. But their building will not hold that many people, so they have learned to adapt to meet the needs of the people.

In Seoul it is common for people in the different sections of town to gather for public meetings in small “town halls.” Each section has its own leaders who meet with the people of that section. The pastor of the church has followed the same practice in ministering to the people. They could not all come to the church, so he took the church to them, thus adapted to meet their needs.

If three people live in the same part of the city, one of them opens his or her home for a weeknight meeting. They invite their friends and neighbors. As people find the Lord, the group grows. When there are 12 people, the group divides. Now there are hundreds of such small groups throughout the city, reaching 45,000 people every week.

Too often we forget that the church is not a building—it is people. It is important to worship together, but we need to be willing to adapt when necessary to reach people everywhere with the gospel.

Application

3 Name six attitudes that we should have towards other people.

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.....
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4 Circle any of these attitudes that you need to develop in your own life.

5 Being adaptable means changing your method of doing something

- a)** without changing your basic purpose.
- b)** by changing your basic purpose.

6 If you want to win people to the Lord you should

- a)** wait until they go to church with you.
- b)** make opportunities to witness to them wherever you are.

7 An adaptable spirit is one that is

- a) selfish.
- b) unselfish.



C. BUILDING BRIDGES

Goal 3. Describe the difference between building “bridges” and building “walls.”

Bricks and stones have been used as building materials for many years. The same bricks or stones that can be used to build churches, schools, and hospitals can also be used for building prisons. The same pieces used for building bridges can also be used for building walls. The difference is in the plan of the builder.

Bridges make it possible for people to move in two directions to cross over barriers. They are a means of having community, of bringing people together. Remember in our first lesson that one of the basic meanings of *koinonia* indicates a two-way relationship—a giving and receiving relationship. We build bridges by showing friendship, helping people, and being available when they need us. Or we build walls by holding back our friendship and closing ourselves off from others.

Christians should try to have friends on all levels of society. We build walls when we consider ourselves better than others. We also build walls when we refuse to reach out to those whom we consider to be on a higher level than ours. Whether you are a farmer, a laborer, a clerk, or a government official, you can have friends on different levels than your own. Then you should try to win them to the Lord. I have never won anyone to the Lord without first making him my friend.

Walls divide and separate people. Probably you have read about the Great Wall of China, which was built many hundreds of years ago and still stands. It was built to keep some people out and to keep others inside the wall. In a metaphoric sense, it is safer to build walls than bridges. When we build bridges we

take a chance on being hurt or rejected. But Jesus has reassured us: ““In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”” (John 16:33). Jesus did not pray that God would take us out of the world, but that He would keep us close to himself and safe in the world (John 17:15).

Sometimes walls must be broken down before we can reach others. There are social, ethnic, cultural, and religious walls that must be broken down in our quest to build community. Jesus himself broke down such walls when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7–9).

We must continually choose between building walls or bridges in our Christian community and in our larger community in the world. Are you showing a true spirit of love to your community? Are you winning the lost to Christ by first winning them to yourself? Your community will know the true meaning of community spirit when you minister love.

Application

8 Beside each statement, write *W* if the action would build a wall, and *B* if it would build a bridge.

- ... **a** Take care of someone who is sick
- ... **b** Take someone to church
- ... **c** Refuse when people different from you ask you to join them in a community project
- ... **d** Clean the house of a sick person
- ... **e** Visit people in a hospital or a prison
- ... **f** Avoid people who are not on your level
- ... **g** Invite someone to your home for fellowship
- ... **h** Talk about people who have hurt your feelings



Now that you have completed the first five lessons, you are ready to answer unit one of your student report. Review Lessons 1–5, then follow the instructions in your student report. After you have completed the unit one evaluation, send your answer sheets to your instructor, and continue with your study of the remaining lessons.

Check Your Answers

- 5 a)** without changing your basic purpose.
- 1 a)** foundation
b) obey
c) fall
d) Jesus Christ
- 6 b)** make opportunities to witness to them wherever you are.
- 2** Your answer
- 7 b)** unselfish.
- 3** Possible answers: gentleness, patience, humility, tolerance, kindness, forgiveness, compassion, love, a tender heart
- 8 a)** Bridge
b) Bridge
c) Wall
d) Bridge
e) Bridge
f) Wall
g) Bridge
h) Wall
- 4** Your answer. The Holy Spirit will help you to develop right attitudes.



Lessons

- 6 Learning from Jesus**
- 7 Shining in Your Community**
- 8 Belonging in the Church Community**
- 9 Contributing to Your Community**
- 10 Continuing in Community**