

A Firm Foundation

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Gospel Lesson: Mark 10:13-16..... Becky Hodges, Director of Christian Formation

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

If you have ever spent lots of time with small children, you know that kids believe in the best of things, don't they? They have a humble and trusting attitude. They give their love wholly and unconditionally. They are pure in spirit. (Until they hit the terrible twos!)

Jesus said ***Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.*** We are all born with a child-like faith. We are humble, we trust, we have unconditional love, and unwavering belief.

But as we grow up, if we don't watch out, the world creeps in— belief turns to cynicism, humility turns to pride, we become distrustful of others, and our love becomes conditional on what we can get out of the relationships we have. We are not so pure anymore. If we don't keep a firm foundation.

When I was a kid, my parents took me to church every Sunday and Wednesday. I had a firm foundation. But a catastrophic event happened when I was 14 years old – we moved from the town where I grew up to a new town far away (really it was only 2 hours away, but it seemed like half a world away). A world away from my friends that I grew up with and a world away from my small town and my small church. My parents became very active in a new church in our new town, but I didn't. So, my “firm foundation” began to crumble.

Things happen when your foundation crumbles:

1. When our foundation crumbles, we no longer have the ability to **stand in the storm**. Just like the foolish builder who built his house on sand, as problems, fears, doubts, tragedies or crises come, we cannot withstand the worry, anxiety, fear and pain so we begin to crumble.
2. When our foundation crumbles, we can **lose sight of hope**. It is hard to climb out of something if you can't see past the rubble. We begin to lose hope because we cannot see the way out. We are often looking down at the rubble when we should be looking up for the way out.
3. When our foundation crumbles we find ourselves in a **MESS!**

I don't know how many of you have ever felt that way. I sure did, but in college, I met a group of people that helped support me in rebuilding my foundation. There is good news! We have the blueprint to build, re-build, and maintain a firm foundation no matter how broken or crumbled we are.

God gave me the tools to re-build and maintain a firm foundation by using His Word and His Church.

Tool # 1: God's Word

Hebrews 4:12 says God's Word is more powerful than a two-edged sword.

Do any of you ever read things and then wonder about it so you do some research? I looked up two-edged sword and this is the definition I found:

A sword whose blade is sharpened on both sides and is able to penetrate and cut at every contact point and with every movement.

We can use scripture like a ninja! Cut down doubt! Cut down fear!

Psalms 119:11, says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you".

I can focus on God's Word and write Scripture on my heart for when I need it.

Leanna Crawford's song *Still Waters* says this beautifully:

Anxiety hates Psalm 23,

So just say it to yourself 'til you believe it.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He leads me by still waters 'til my fear is gone.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I know you are with me

My Father, my friend.

Your goodness and mercy will follow me all of my days

because by your still waters I'm safe.

We can say God's Word over and over 'til our soul is reminded

God's Word also has many role models. Role models are not just for kids.

I still look up to God's champions, alive and dead, as my role models. My dad was one of the greatest champions of faith I ever met. I know he is in Heaven cheering me on. He wasn't the

only one I looked up to – I have many champions! Hopefully, you have some champions of faith in your life. Maybe you are a champion of faith or a role model for somebody else.

The Bible is full of champions.

One of our summer units in Power Hour focused on God’s Superheroes. God’s Champions included Moses, Noah, Joseph, Joshua, Queen Esther, Daniel, Elijah, Samson, David, John the Baptist, Paul, Peter, and Stephen to name a few.

These superheroes were not perfect people, but they were examples of ordinary people doing extraordinary things for God.

Moses was taken way out of his comfort zone when God asked him to speak to King Pharaoh. He tells God that he cannot because he has a speech disability. The Bible said he was “slow of speech and slow of tongue”. Maybe he stuttered? However, he obeyed God and became one of the greatest champions of all time – leading the Israelites out of Egypt and ending their slavery.

David was just a small boy with a huge heart. He loved music and dancing. He was not a fighter. Goliath was nine feet nine inches tall. That is three feet taller than LeBron James! Goliath wore 200 pounds of armor. Yet David killed him with one small stone.

Paul was once a man that arrested Christians until God spoke to him one day on a dusty road and he believed and became one of the greatest New Testament missionaries of all time.

Noah was saved from the flood, Daniel was saved from the lions, Elijah was saved and taken care of by Ravens in the desert.

These champions are role models because they were just ordinary people that God used. God gives their stories to us to serve as examples of humility, trust, unconditional love, and unwavering belief. I mean, Noah had unwavering belief to build a boat that was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high – that is about 100 feet longer than a football field! Queen Esther had to trust in God when she risked her life to ask her husband, the King, to spare the Jews. John the Baptist humbly baptized many new believers saying “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. John later baptized Jesus.

God’s Word has many examples of ordinary people doing extraordinary things using God’s power and strength. We can learn a lot from their stories.

Tool # 2: God’s Church

In addition to His Word, God has given us the church. When people say church, we automatically think of a building such as the beautiful Home Moravian Church. However, the Biblical meaning of church is a translation from the Greek word, *ekklesia*, (*ekk-le-se-a*) which means “called out ones” or “assembly” – it is a body of believers. The church isn’t a beautiful building with pipe organs and stained-glass windows. It is the place where we grow together, share our burdens, and strengthen our spiritual practice. It is people. Do you remember when we

were kids and we did the hand trick...Here's the church, here's the steeple, open the door and here's the people? It's true! The people are the church.

God has given us other people to be helpers and supporters in our journey of faith.

- These people are in Sunday School Class.
- They are in Men of the Church or Circle meetings.
- These people are at Wednesday Night Fellowship.
- They are in your next Committee Meeting.
- They are the Ushers and greeters
- They are the nursery workers and teachers
- They are the pastors and singers
- They sit beside you in worship

God has given us each other because He knows we cannot do it alone. We are meant to have each other. I didn't automatically jump right into Bible study or reading scripture when my foundation was in ruins. I had people who met me where I was and encouraged me, sat alongside me, and walked with me. They invited me, included me, and held me accountable for showing up for God. Church is a community of believers, and its people are God's ultimate power tool!

Did you know that this year on September 15, churches across the country will celebrate National Back to Church Sunday, a day reminding us of the important role that community plays in growing faith. Maybe you know of someone you haven't seen in church in a while. Maybe you can encourage, include, and invite them back to church!

I don't know where you are today. I know where I am because people didn't give up on me and God doesn't give up on us. He gives us the tools we need for a firm foundation.

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*