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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my wife LaVerne, to my family, and to the DCFI family worldwide, with whom we have had the privilege of serving the Lord for nearly 30 years. This book is also dedicated to every person who reads this book seeking to lay a strong spiritual foundation in his or her life. And most importantly of all, this book is dedicated to the One who has promised us that He will build His life in us...our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I am eternally grateful.

*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11 NKJV).*

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## Chapter 1

# HOW TO BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION

### PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

Years ago, I worked on a construction crew. I learned quickly that the first step to building a house is to *put in a solid foundation*. Likewise, our Christian lives must be built on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. He is the foundation for the Christian faith: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). If we build on anything else, our spiritual foundation is faulty and will collapse when tests and storms come our way—and we can be sure they will come. If our foundation is strong, we will be able to stand, no matter how hard the winds blow.

This book, and the next in this series, will help you continue to build, once you lay the foundation of a personal encounter with Christ, who claims, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Many people have a false understanding of what it means to be *Christian*. Some people think that if you live in a "Christian nation," such as the United States, you are a Christian. Others think they are Christians because their parents are Christians. Being a follower of Jesus is not based on our ethnic or family background. It is based on

a relationship. Knowing *about* God does not mean that you know Him personally. You may know about the Queen of England, but you probably do not know her personally. You cannot know God without having a relationship with Him. Christianity is all about having a relationship with the living God.

Liz was attracted to Christianity when a neighbor moved in next door. She recalls, "Judy talked about God in intimate terms, and I could tell she really knew Him. She acted like God lived in the house with her." Liz longed for that same relationship with God, so she, too, yielded her life to Christ.

The basic foundations for a Christian's life must be built on Jesus Christ who wants to know us personally. In this book, we will come to know that God is revealed to us through Jesus Christ:

*Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent (John 17:3).*

### GOD WANTS TO KNOW US PERSONALLY

Our universe and everything in it has order and design. Its complexity and beauty suggest an intelligent creator. God intended for the beauty of the universe to point to Him (see Ps. 19:1). In Romans 1:20, the apostle Paul tells us that God has made Himself known to us through nature and an inner, instinctive recognition of God:

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20).*

In nature, we find evidence that He exists, but He really must be accepted by faith:

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).*

If a person does not want to believe in God, he can find a million reasons not to believe. Yet, when you think about it, it really takes more faith not to believe in God than it does to believe in Him. Take a look at a beautiful sunset or watch the power of waves crashing onto the seashore—it's hard not to believe in God, a master designer, who created all of it.

Many people think of God as a distant, impersonal being, presiding over His creation disinterestedly and intervening only when humans beg Him to act on their behalf. Such a view is entirely incorrect.

The Bible reveals a God who seeks humankind because He wants to fellowship with them. God, the Creator of the universe and Ruler over it, who existed before the beginning of time, created humans in His image. God said, "*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...*" (Gen. 1:26 NKJV). He wants mankind to reflect His image. The Creator of the universe wants to have a personal friendship and relationship with you! He wants you to know Him, and He wants to be your closest friend.

*This is how God showed His love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9).*

### JESUS—THE ONLY WAY TO GOD

We were created to share in a close, loving relationship with God and one another. Relationship is central to God. He created us to live in unbroken fellowship with Him. But the first human beings,

Adam and Eve, created without sin and in perfect fellowship with God, rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden. When Satan tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit from the only tree in the Garden that God commanded them to avoid, their sin of disobedience alienated them from God (see Gen. 3:6,14-19).

Did God leave mankind to perish in their sin? No! He loved them and continued to reach out to them. In the Bible, we do not see man seeking after God; we see God reaching after man.

*You did not choose me, but I chose you...* (John 15:16).

But what possibility does man have to know the eternal God? God is infinite, all powerful, and all wise (see Isa. 40:12-18; 55:8-9). How can we ever relate to such an awesome God? It is possible through Jesus Christ. God took the initiative to reveal Himself in Jesus Christ. He reached out to us through Christ. We can know the Father through knowing Jesus. Jesus Himself said,

*If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well... anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father...* (John 14:7,9).

When we see Jesus, we see Father God. We must accept and believe in Jesus Christ in order to know God.

Some people say that there are many ways to God, but the Bible is clear—no one can come to God and go to Heaven except through Jesus Christ (see John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The Bible tells us that not everyone will be saved (see Matt. 25:41-42) and that it really *does* matter what we believe, regardless of how sincere we are (see Acts 17:22-31).

We must believe, by faith, that Jesus is "*the way and the truth and the life*," because we can only come to God through Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

### REALIZE WE'RE LOST IN SIN

In order to be made right in God's eyes, we need to first realize that we are lost:

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23).

We have all sinned. The word *sin* literally means to miss the mark [of God's perfect will].<sup>1</sup> It would be highly unlikely for a person practicing target shooting to hit the bull's eye every time. Every now and then, he or she will miss. Sin misses the mark of God's perfect will—as revealed in His Word, the Bible—and separates us from God. All of us have disobeyed God. Jesus came to solve the sin problem of mankind. He first convicts us, or makes us aware, of our sin:

*He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin...* (John 16:8).

Someone once asked D.L. Moody, an evangelist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, how God could reject him if he had only one or two little sins. Moody responded by saying that, if a man is trying to pull himself up on a roof by holding onto a chain, it only takes one weak link to cause him to fall to the ground. The other links may be in perfect condition. It only takes one sin to cause us to spend eternity separated from God.<sup>2</sup> Moody was right. Even one sin separates us from God. God loves us, but He hates sin.

Sin is like cancer. If one of my family members had skin cancer on his arm, every time I would see it, I would hate it. That is how