

Chapter

2

Building A Foundation

Last summer I undertook a building project. I added a room to my house. It was time consuming and took a lot of blood, sweat, and tears. But the worst part of the entire project was the beginning. I was ready. I wanted to get to work and start to see results.

I broke ground in early March and then witnessed the last snowstorm of the year two weeks later. I did a lot of digging and it seemed like I had moved a lot of dirt. I laid out the perimeter of the room. It amounted to a trench forty feet in perimeter, more than a foot deep and two feet wide. That's about 80 cubic feet of dirt - enough dirt to pack four normal sized refrigerators full. It wasn't nearly enough. The frost line in my area is 32 inches below ground. Anything more shallow and the ground under my foundation could freeze and cause the entire foundation to shift.

I was going crazy. I'd dig and dig and check how much progress I'd made and find I had moved only another two inches. I wasn't sure if my project was ever going to get started because I didn't know if I could ever shovel enough dirt out of the way. Finally, I got a friend who works construction to bring in a backhoe and finish the trench. What would have taken me weeks, he accomplished in 15 minutes.

After this, I had to pour concrete for a footer and then lay cinder block. This was time consuming and the weather was not cooperative. That year was one of the wettest on record for our area. You can't lay cinder blocks and then let it rain on them. So there were a number of days that I couldn't work.

Finally, in May my foundation was finished and I was ready to start the actual frame construction. The floor was finished in a couple of hours. The walls took a day. The roof was two days' work with the help of a professional. After laboring on my foundation for two months, I saw my room take shape in about a week.

The foundation is an often overlooked aspect in evangelism. Just like no one ever says, “that’s a pretty nice foundation you laid for your house,” no one is going to pay much attention to our foundation for evangelism. However, this does not make it any less critical.

As I said, if the foundation for my room wasn’t deep enough, the ground below could have shifted it. If my foundation shifted, I could get cracks in my drywall. Or worse, a corner of my room could sink entirely. Everything that I had worked so hard for would be messed up because I didn’t take the time to lay a proper foundation.

We run across the same situation in evangelism. Just like I was eager to get my room underway and I wanted to see results, we want to get out into the world and start making a difference.

I have a problem with patience. I often rationalize in my mind that what I want done should get done as quickly as possible because only God knows if I’m going to be here tomorrow. This means I get quickly frustrated when I see things get in the way of what I think God wants to get done.

What I often forget is that God’s timetable is not mine. If God wants to speed something along, he is quite capable of doing so, regardless of my effort or lack thereof. Oftentimes I am so eager to start a project that I fail to take the proper steps to prepare for it. Only when the project stalls or fails altogether do I begin to realize what I should have done to begin with.

So we need a solid foundation for evangelism. If we dash out into the world, ready to change lives, without any kind of foundation, we are going to see results that we do not desire. If you’ve been fired up for evangelism before, only to see things turn out poorly, your foundation may be the reason why.

There are three simple facts that I have deemed to be foundational to evangelism. But before we even get to these, there is something else we must do. We need to prepare ourselves.