

Church Leaders Build On A Foundation

"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." – (1 Corinthians 3:10-11)

Paul the apostle writes that he laid a foundation for the church in Corinth. We learn from this that men like Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Peter, and several others are tasked with "building" the church. Inferred by this is that church building is a task given to those in leadership over churches or ministries.

The scriptures outline such roles in Ephesians 4:11-13 *"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."* Here in this passage, those with these special roles in the church are identified as having the purpose of equipping people for "works of service" so that the body of Christ may be "built up."

The main point here is to underscore that leaders are "church builders" and they are responsible for "laying the foundation" in the church. Paul also points out that each (leader) has their role, some plant, some water, and each will be rewarded according to their own labor. *"The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor."* (1 Corinthians 3:8) All leaders share a common purpose – and that purpose is to lay the foundation of the church and to build it up for works of service.

The Nature Of Jesus Christ, The Only Foundation

Let's discuss the foundation of the church. The only foundation God's church can build on is Jesus Christ. This foundation was *"already laid"* – meaning, God set this foundation and it is Christ himself. The ideals, the character, the commands, and the "culture" of the community of Jesus Christ (his Kingdom, his Church) must be based on *Jesus Christ* as its only

foundation. Why would Paul, through the Holy Spirit as he wrote this very scripture, need to say *"But each one should build with care?"* This is because as men, we are not perfect, we sin, we struggle to have pure motives, and as such, struggle to build on *"the foundation already laid"* – Jesus Christ.

There are many things that could be said about the nature of Jesus Christ. In addition, much could be said about how Jesus' nature should affect our character, our motives, our thinking, and the "culture" that should be evident in our ministries. Our "culture" must be guided and dictated by the command, example, and character of our King, Jesus. Jesus is the Word, and through God's Word we understand these things about him and can "hold to" them (John 8:31-32). We are called *"out of darkness"* to be his *"holy nation"* and *"royal priests"* and to *"be holy"* as he is *"holy."* We are to identify as people living in *"his wonderful light."*

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9) *"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" – (1 Peter 1:15-16)*

In terms of why I stand where I stand in light of recent events (the starting of a new faction out of Los Angeles), I'm going to touch on aspects of the *"foundation already laid"* or *"Jesus Christ"* that are relevant to me. There are so many aspects of Jesus' commands and character – however, it is clear that the following are definitive and clearly central to Jesus' very nature. After looking at the scriptures we will see that Jesus Christ himself says these attributes are his very nature and identity.

The Foundation: Jesus Is The Truth

First, let's start with *"truth."* Jesus says *"the truth"* is who he is. *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)* Furthermore, *"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth"* is how Jesus is described by the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter 2:22. The English definition of "deceit" is *"concealment or distortion of the truth for the purpose of misleading; duplicity; fraud; cheating."* Jesus never misleads people. Jesus never distorted himself – he is the truth. Christ was never duplicit – it is deceitful and faithless (Proverbs 11:3). The English definition

of “duplicity” is *“deceitfulness in speech or conduct, as by speaking or acting in two different ways to different people concerning the same matter.”*

It’s a good thing Jesus was never duplicit, as such conduct is both faithless and leads to destruction. *“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.”* (Proverbs 11:3) Jesus’ integrity was so impeccable that he could stand up in a crowd and say *“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?”* (John 8:46) Truth is Christ’s very nature, it is literally *who* he is. Furthermore, someone who lies speaks Satan’s language (John 8:44), which is a language of hate and harm. *“A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.”* (Proverbs 26:28) Duplicity includes grooming people with flattery as they head to their own ruin. Deception is a hate-full and hurtful practice and is *nothing like Jesus*.

Follow Jesus Christ First

“I have spoken openly to the world,” Jesus replied. “I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret.” (John 18:20)

Some may say that Jesus’ “hiding” himself was Jesus being “strategically deceitful.” (John 8:59, 12:36) As if the LORD could ever be *any kind* of deceitful. *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”* (1 Peter 2:22) Some cite examples in the Old Testament of heroes acting deceitfully as they were in fear for their very lives. David fled to the Philistine king Achish in the city of Gath. Once there, David acted deceitfully and pretended to be insane. (1 Samuel 21:13) Important to note, Saul was planning to murder David. (see 1 Samuel 20:33).

Earlier in 1 Samuel 16, Samuel is instructed by God to go to Bethlehem to anoint David as King of Israel. Additionally, Samuel is told to take a heifer (female cow) to offer as a sacrifice, he can say he’s there to make a sacrifice – despite his whole intent being to anoint Jesse’s son David as king over Israel. Another important note, Saul would have certainly killed Samuel if he knew that Samuel was going to anoint David king! As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to follow Christ first, who is neither Samuel nor David. Jesus always spoke the truth, and it ultimately cost him his life. We must follow Jesus, *“the truth.”*

In the case of Christ, to label him as any kind of deceitful is simply inconsistent with his own self-proclaimed nature of being "*the truth*." In John 7, Jesus' brothers accost him because they do not believe in him. They tell him, "*No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.*" (John 7:4 NIV) Jesus acted in secret *not from them nor from other disciples*, but from those who sought to kill him.

Jesus was waiting for an opportune time to continue to preach his controversial message during the second half of the festival. It is the same message he preached before the festival and then continued preaching during the second half of it. There was no revelation, no new intention or plans, and nothing said "*in secret*" that was now suddenly revealed in some surprise meeting with his disciples. He simply did as he was doing before, and merely "paused" to avoid being murdered *prematurely* by the authorities. We must follow Christ first and "*[speak] openly to the world*" our convictions and intentions.

Acting In Secret Vs. Saying/Speaking In Secret (John 18:20)

Acting in secret – avoiding contact with non-disciples / worldly people who want to murder you – is not the same as deliberately and personally deceiving fellow disciples about your intentions, plans, and convictions. Consider disciples whose lives would be in danger if they were to openly proclaim their faith in Muslim nations or in mainland China! These disciples, like Jesus (and Joseph of Arimathea), must "*act in secret*" or else their lives could very well be forfeit! Yet these same disciples who "*act in secret*" from their hostile governments and/or societies are a source of encouragement for all of us! Lastly, none of us are hurt, surprised, nor "deceived strategically" by them!

Importantly, Jesus did not say one thing *before* John 7 and then in duplicity *change*, saying something different in his teaching or message *after* John 7. In John 7:6-8, Jesus spoke plainly about his decision to his brothers who did not believe (or agree with him) about his intent. Jesus also was avoiding being killed by the Jewish leaders. "*After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him.*" (John 7:1)

Furthermore, they wanted to kill him because prior to John 7 he had told them *“openly”* that he was the Son of God! He had to go to the festival *“in secret”* (John 7:10) as it was simply *not yet* his time to die. However, Jesus’ publically acted when it was the appropriate time, teaching at *“halfway through the festival.”* (John 7:14) Again, Jesus’ message did not “change” at this time, and his teaching/intentions and what he believed were well-known before this event. He acted in secret, but said *“nothing in secret.”* (John 18:20)

The Foundation: Cannot Be Hypocritical

Interestingly, Jesus teaches at this halfway point in the festival *“Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.”* (John 7:18) How hypocritical would it be if Jesus was being “strategically deceitful” for him to say that he is (1) speaking on God’s behalf, (2) a *“man of truth”*, and (3) *“there is nothing false about him.”* What do we see here in John 7? Jesus *acted in secret* because, “strategically” speaking, it was not his time to die, however he never hid his intentions or message, they were plain from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry!

Jesus is *“the truth”* (John 14:6), and *“a man of truth”*, and there is *“nothing false about him.”* (John 7:18) He *spoke* the same truth throughout his ministry. Noone was “clueless” or “uninformed” about where Jesus stood with the most controversial aspects of his identity and his teaching. Jesus did not deceive his physical brothers nor did he lie to his disciples. Jesus simply avoided those who were planning to murder him because of the controversial things he’d already been teaching that incited their rage. (John 5:17-18)

The Wrong Foundation: Building On Duplicity & Deceit

Like a vast majority of disciples, I was never told about the plans to split the church and form a “new movement” – which is a faction. For the past two years I’ve been at staff meetings and the following region leader’s meetings. My wife and I have served as shepherds and bible talk leaders. I’ve also served as the AV lead, in church administration, and provided oversight for the CyberMinistry. However, we had *no idea* of this intent nor its development and were astonished how ruthlessly it was executed on Friday, October 18th.

I learned that over the past year, the RCW faction leaders were asked plainly by brothers and sisters in their lives what their intentions were and if they planned on starting a new church. Sadly, the movement shepherds and various leaders were blatantly lied to on numerous occasions about this by those whose *intent* was initiating this faction. These intentions and teachings were hidden for *months*. Conversely, Jesus told everyone from the beginning of his ministry his intentions and spoke “*openly to the world*”.

Jesus’ life was certainly at risk and he would have been killed if he acted in public at the beginning of the festival in John 7. However, no one in the Soldout Movement leadership has threatened the lives of any of the leaders who chose to initiate or align themselves with this divisive group. The worst consequence practically would be the loss of their “job.”

Losing your job is challenging, sure, but it is hardly a death threat. Also, when Jesus was asked about why he did not go by his brothers, the Lord did not lie to them nor fail to explain himself honestly to them. Jesus did not hide his intentions or teachings from disciples nor did he lie to his brothers about what he was doing. Jesus was not duplicit – for it is *impossible* for him to be so and it is *not his nature*, therefore Jesus cannot be a hypocrite.

The Foundation: Do Not Put The Lord Your God To The Test

To use scriptures like this where Jesus “*hid himself*” and “*acted in secret*” to justify months of manipulation, convincing others to lie to those they lead and call “friends”, and strong-arming people into a last-minute non-disclosure, non-discussed visceral decision to join a faction reminds me of something:

“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ” ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Matthew 4:6-7)

Satan uses the scripture to mislead Jesus. It is a simple exegesis from Psalm 91:11-12, and the context of Psalm 91 is some of the most beautiful scripture – describing how we find

“shelter” from the “Most High” and how he will rescue us from snares, pestilence, and darkness. Satan has used many scriptures like this to control, captivate, deceive, and manipulate. Without such manipulations and us humans falling prey to them, there would be no divisions. He would not be able to masquerade as an angel of light and present his servants as servants of righteousness without convincing half-truths and aligning himself in some perceptible (yet only partial) way with the scriptures. (2 Corinthians 11:13-14) Half-truths are the backbone of putting God to the test and the genesis of twisting scriptures to justify ourselves.

The Foundation: Grace, Truth, Hope, & Gentleness

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Another core part of “The Foundation” (which is Jesus) is that he is *“full of grace and truth.”* The mindset of *“grace and truth”* is the one to fight for in prayer and practice during this time of navigating the division out of LA. When I am hurt by others’ bitterness, it makes me tempted to fester my own bitter root. Such things rob me of God’s *“grace and truth”* nature should I give into them! I must make every effort to “not go there!” *“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” (Hebrews 12:14-15)*

“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

We are commanded by the Word of God to be gentle and hopeful with those who oppose us that are trapped by the devil. Disciples are expected not to quarrel with their opponents. Followers of Jesus are called to be kind and not resentful. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6) and

opposite him are lies of any kind.

God is *love* (1 John 4:16) and at the opposite of God is Satan, the Devil, who is full of *hate*. God is patient with all of us, and his mercy is astonishing. He demands we be merciful and forgive one another (Matthew 18:32-35). Mercy is in God's nature, Jesus Christ embodies God's mercy and is the epitome of its expression. Mercy is how we triumph, and it is what God's church must reflect – as it is the very nature of Jesus Christ, who is the only foundation of God's church. (James 2:12-13)

The Foundation: Jesus Is The Light

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:1-5)

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Therefore the foundation of the church that we must build God's movement on *is* light, because Jesus is God and God is light. There is no room for darkness in the Foundation that has already been laid! *"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."* (1 John 1:5)

By its definitive nature and design, light exposes and banishes darkness. This is why it is impossible for God to lie. *"God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged."* (Hebrews 6:8) Because Jesus is the Light, we can give *"joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified [us] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves..."* (Colossians 1:12-13) We are in the Kingdom of Light when we build on The Foundation: Jesus Christ.

The Foundation: The Truth, The Light, & No Darkness At All

The call of the hour is for each of us in the SoldOut Movement to build on the *"foundation...already laid, which is Jesus Christ."* We are called to build carefully and with *"costly stones"* knowing full well that our 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."* (1 Corinthians 3:11;13) Jesus is *"The Truth."* (John 14:6) Jesus is *"a man of truth"* with *"nothing false about him."* (John 7:18) Jesus is *"God"* (John 1:1-2;14) and *"the Light"* (John 1:4-5) and in him, *"there is no darkness at all."* (1 John 1:5)

If we are to build God's church and be God's people, then our foundation must be Jesus Christ. Truth and light are not the genesis, the foundation, of this new faction. God's movement cannot be built on lying to people, being duplicit, and manipulation. Such things *are not who Jesus Christ is.* Let us consider carefully how we build and the foundation we build upon. The fire will test the quality of all of our work!

"If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:6-7)

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22)

I thank our God for his mercy and strive to be on His side,
In Faith, with Hope, and utmost Love,
JMC