

Extreme Family Makeover
Laying a Strong Foundation

Psalms 127:1

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.”

My opening statement is this: No good, God honoring marriage happens by accident. EVERY part of the process is important, and EVERY part of the process requires attention and labor.

Some of these principals I am going to talk about with you are easy to talk about but much harder to act upon. Some of you here will learn that you have some work to do. My prayer for you all today is that you will be more than listeners only and actually get busy doing the work to get your relationship back on the tracks.

The focus for today is on your foundation. Every foundation worth building on is built by following certain steps. I'd like to share them with you and apply them to your marriage today.

1. Clear the Land. (Show picture)

Before any work can be done on the foundation, there is work that needs to be done first to prepare the land by removing whatever is in the way of you building the foundation. Cutting trees, removing stumps, hauling off rocks and bringing in a box blade to level the ground.

My point is, you can't just dump some cement on the ground and expect a solid foundation to appear. You have to remove the junk first. Marriage is no different. In fact, there's no aspect of following Christ that is any different.

When two people come together in marriage, they come together with their past sins, some dysfunction, hurts and unrealistic view of what a marriage is supposed to be like.

Some of you came in with less junk than others, but in either case those issues, if unresolved will lead to a collapse in your marriage. If it is sin then repent of it. If it is wrong thinking, replace it. If it is unfair expectations, adjust them. Maybe there is guilt and shame that has never been dealt with. Don't you think it's time? Maybe you are repeating the sins of your parents, you've got to address that.

I say all of that like it's easy. Maybe for some it will be, but for most of us clearing away sins or hurts from the past is a long and difficult process. If you are in Christ you can be free from the sin and hurts and wounds of your past that are keeping you from growing the marriage you want to have. But first you have to clear the land.

2. The second step in building a solid foundation is: Setting the batter boards.
(Show picture.)

I really didn't think you needed the batter boards, but as I studied the process of pouring a foundation I found out that I was wrong. These boards are used to set the dimensions, square it up, and determine the elevation of the foundation. So the batter boards are a tool that determines the success of our foundation.

My question to you is what standard are you using to determine the health of your marriage? If you are looking around at other marriages or your parent's marriage or the world to get a gage on where you are in your marriage then you are using the wrong standard. Here's why, each marriage is different and unique, which means the standard is different. Culture changes, people change. But there is one standard that has stood the test of time: The Bible. The Bible alone can help you bring your marriage back into alignment.

The bible is like those batter boards, they may seem optional, but without them all we have is a messed up slab that is out of square and not capable of holding the weight of marriage. Somewhere we've replaced Biblical teaching with personal opinion and forgotten that God himself is going to use the Bible as His standard of judgment.

Every married individual in this room needs to remember to build his or her marriage square and level with Gods Word. Anything short of that will only lead to poor results.

3. The third step in building a solid foundation is: Building the forms.(Show picture)

The forms are 2x6's or bigger that are used to form the outer edges of your slab. Here are some questions you need to have already answered before you build the forms, are they built strong enough to hold up to the pressure that will come from the slab itself? And is it high enough to keep the water out?

I want you to think of the forms as convictions. As you study the bible and learn those standards, you will either view them as nice principles that are negotiable, or you will develop strong convictions based on those standards. Unless you build strong convictions, the pressure within and outside your marriage will prove to be too much.

Because we lack Biblical conviction about marriage relationships, marriage itself is collapsing in our society.

How is it that a Christian couple can be married for 20 years and then crash and burn? How is it that after years of marriage there still bickering and fighting over the same old thing? How is it that a home where two believers share a love for God and His Word that they are so strapped with debt that they can't obey the Word with a simple tithe? We need the Word of God to form our convictions and guide us in our marriages.

4. The fourth step in building a solid foundation is: reinforcing your foundation with rebar. (Show picture.)

Rebar reinforces the concert and makes the foundation stronger to withstand the test of time. In the case of a foundation, real strength lies in the reinforcement of

rebar that runs through the cement. In the case of your marriage, real strength lies in Godly character and values that will reinforce your life and marriage. Many marriages look good on the surface but underneath there is no substance.

So what about integrity? Are you faithful to your spouse? You may never cheat on him or her but are you faithful in your thought life? Do you entertain thoughts of leaving? Are you being honest with how you feel or what you are going through?

The rebar in this situation is the Holy Spirit. We invite him in to our lives and He gives us the strength to love when we don't want to, Forgive when don't want to.

The Holy Spirit gives us strength and wisdom to give us a strong foundation to withstand whatever life throws at us.

5. The fifth step in building a solid foundation is: Work the concrete as it comes.

If there is a blessing in marriage or life that is absent in concrete work, it is that God gives you the opportunity to correct areas of your life that have not been given proper attention. In concrete work, once the truck arrives and you start pouring, it's too late.

I believe our marriages are like the cement trucks that show up on job. Life starts showing up one load at a time, and all you can do is jump in with both feet and start working it out as it comes.

I thank God that he allows you to evaluate and correct your mistakes. He allows you to see where you've been and make course corrections. Maybe your convictions aren't Biblical. You're not stuck with them, you can repent and change, or maybe you have missed some junk that was on your property before you got married. You can do something about it. By the way, there are no magical pills to make all of this go away. The way it works is, the Holy Spirit brings it up and we, along with his help repent and walk it out.

You fill in the low spots and knock down the high spots and keep working it as it comes to you!!!

6. Lastly, Apply The Finishing Touches.

There are countless way to finish concrete, some people like a stained look while other like lines cut into it. My point is that in concrete work the final look on the surface of the foundation may differ, but the real strength and health of the foundation is not about looks, it is the culmination of everything that took place getting you to the finish.

We spent way too much time on trying to create an instant finish or to bring about some sort of pseudo look of success. There are no short cuts to a long and healthy marriage.

Some of you have some junk that needs to be cleared away today. Others have never seen the importance with aligning your beliefs and values with God's Word.

Maybe you need to take your spouse by the hand and come to the alter together. Ask God to reveal the flaws in your marriage so that you can repent and move forward. Remember, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."