

The focus of both parables in our lesson from the Sermon on the Mount is on the foundations.

One house built on rock and it stands! The other house built on sand and it falls. The crucial choice is the foundation upon which we build our house.

Storms are all too real: hurricanes, tornadoes, floods; and just as there are the storms that move through our lives each day, Jesus is talking about the choices we make each day about that foundation.

And when our lives are shaken to the foundation, what do we hear people say, “We have each other”.

They’re talking about the real foundations of a home.

The entire family must be rooted in, built upon a strong foundation! Home is where life makes up its mind about those foundations.

Quickly now, let me suggest to you what those foundations must be for your home - three familiar words:

The first foundation is FAITH! We must have a faith in God that will stand the tests of life and see us through... Faith that will give you and me the courage to stand fast when we feel like giving up, running away.

You get that at home. Home is where life makes up its mind about faith.

This matter takes on a whole new perspective when we consider that a lack of proper instruction in so many things can be "life threatening," both physically and spiritually.

What if you had never been told that certain animals could be very dangerous? What if you had never been told that fire was extremely important in life, but also could hurt you? Or not been taught to look both ways before crossing the street?

And most importantly, "What if you had never received any loving instruction about God and Jesus Christ."

Sadly, there are literally tens of thousands of children who will never hear the name of Jesus used, except as a swear word.

Faith cannot be a sometime thing. Faith is a decision every morning to walk with God, talk with God, in the small things, the big things, and everything.

Children learn about all of this in the home, they learn about life in the family.

Remember the words in Deuteronomy about family life, having a good life, it was all about teaching your children.

That’s why, on the first day of school, a first-grader handed his teacher a note from his mother.

The teacher smiled as she read the note: “The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents!”

But where else can children learn about family than in the family?

David Heller, in his delightful book, Growing Up Isn’t Hard to Do If You Start Out as a Kid, asked children the question: “Why do people have children, anyway?”

- Joe, age 10, says, “Without kids, mothers would have to clean their kitchens on their own.”
- Jason, age 5, “If you don’t have children, there’s not much for adults to do.”
- Or Tina, age 7, “Most folks want children because they hope the next generation will turn out smarter than they are and not have to work for a living.”

In my more serious readings about family life, I came across this from Peter Forsythe, who heads a foundation that deals with teenagers and crime.

He said that “society has more luck helping bad families become functional than it does helping rotten kids become good ones.”

What is he really saying? He is saying that the child who is allowed to grow up in an uncaring environment, a family that does not affirm or build up the child, the child that grows up that way is a lost child, and that a lost child is hard to find and bring back.

It's a truth the HR Director of the 4 Seasons Hotel understands. It is rated the Best Hotel in World, and she says it begins with staff, “When I interview, I look for attitude; I can train anybody to make a bed, but only Momma can teach good manners.”

Our society, our church should be deeply challenged by the task before us. As someone has said, “The only way to get this world back on track is to go back to the basics: how we raise our kids.”

The second foundation is HOPE!

Paul defines hope in his letter to the Romans: “...hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” (Romans 8:24-25)

That comes in the passage where Paul talks about how creation has been groaning in labor pains and we are waiting.

Jürgen Moltmann, who wrote a book titled “Theology of Hope” describes hope in similar terms of the present reality giving birth to the new creation, life looking forward through God’s redemptive promise and resurrection power.

But let’s bring it down to more pastoral and personal terms. Listen to my friend Dale Kuhn, who recently retired as the Executive Director of the Care and Counseling Center in St. Louis, MO.

In one of his last letters as the Director he wrote how they were dedicated to giving people hope, as he said, ‘hope is a simple word, but one with much meaning...the desire of positive outcome in one’s circumstances and/or life.’

Or look at it this way.

A few weeks ago, I was with the Men’s Fellowship at a UGA baseball game. A couple of young boys with us had each brought their baseball glove to the game.

They were hoping to catch a foul ball. They knew it could happen and they were ready for it when it did happen because they waited for it patiently.

That glove was hope, a present reality looking forward to catch that foul ball, as Dale Kuhn said, looking forward “to a positive outcome in life.”

That’s hope!

What gloves of hope are we giving our children?

Nick Stinnet, many years ago, did an in-depth survey of 3,000 families over a period of time, and out of that study he formulated six qualities that build a strong family life.

I think his study has stood the test of time; strong families share these six qualities:

- Committed to the family
- Spend time together
- Have good communications with each other
- Express appreciation to each other
- Have a spiritual commitment
- Able to solve problems in times of crises

Let me repeat those:

- Committed to the family...
- Spend time together...
- Good communications, talk and listen...
- Appreciation, affirm one another...
- A spiritual commitment...
- And able to solve problems in times of crises.

A living hope for our children is all about sharing stories of life’s journeys, small glimpses of grace, teaching an awareness of God’s presence in every moment, good and bad, that keeps us looking forward, moving forward.

Home is where life makes up its mind about hope.

Faith, hope - these are foundations and finally, the third word is LOVE!

It was the first day of summer vacation. The father was getting ready to leave for work.

He was trying to be extra quiet, because all four of his daughters, ages 6 to 14, had talked about sleeping late. Just as he was about to walk out the door, his six-year old came down the stairs.

“What are you doing up? It’s not even 7 o’clock. I thought you wanted to sleep late.” Sleepy-eyed, she held her arms open to him, “I wanted to kiss you before you left.”

What a way to start a day! To have someone go out of their way to show you how much they love you.

I like the way 8-year-old Ray says it, “A good parent is one who cares for the child like he is more important than they are.

Listen to Mattie Stepanek’s words in his poem, “The Way Home”:

*Sometimes the way home is love.
Sometimes the way home is together.
And sometimes the way home is
Not just love,
But loving each other.
And sometimes the way home is
Not just together,
But together with other people...
People you love a lot,
People you like a lot, and
People you are friends with.
But all the time, the way home is
Every good thing that God told us to do.*

We know what love can be like:

- when we have been forgiven generously and freely by someone we’ve hurt;
- when we have been bruised and battered by our own stupidity and the door to home was opened to us with no questions asked to bring us in and hold us tight;
- when we have been made strong by the realization that, in the midst of our miseries and fears, someone cares for us.

Like the little boy who woke up from a nightmare and his mom came in to comfort him, “You know that God is always with you.”

“But I need God with skin on!”

Home is where life makes up its mind about love.

We have choices to make about the foundations of our lives and our families, our church, our community, our country, our world.

Home is where life will make up its mind about those foundations of faith, hope, and love.’

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.