



HOUR OF POWER

Reverend Dr. Major A Stewart

**BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR
LASTING HAPPINESS!**





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March 12, 2024

**Building the Foundation for Lasting Happiness
(Matthew 5:17–20)**

Nothing that is built without a firm foundation will last. A house built on a weak foundation will crack and crumble. A “journey into blessed living” requires the firm foundation of the Word of God. We cannot live out the Beatitudes unless we stand on the foundation of God’s Word.

To emphasize the importance of the Bible in His confrontations and in answering questions, Jesus repeatedly begins His response with three words. The first time is immediately after His baptism when He hasn’t eaten in forty days. The Evil One tempts Jesus to use His power selfishly by turning stones into bread. What are the first three words in Jesus’ answer (Matthew 4:4)?



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Jesus uses that statement more than twenty times in the gospels. In so doing, He is teaching us that everything is to be judged by what is already written in the Bible. To build the foundation for lasting happiness in our lives, there are three requirements ...

Believe the Bible (5:17—18)

Jesus always makes it very clear that His followers must believe the Bible. One day Jesus' mother and brothers come to see Him. When someone tells Jesus they are waiting to see Him, what does He say in Luke 8:21?

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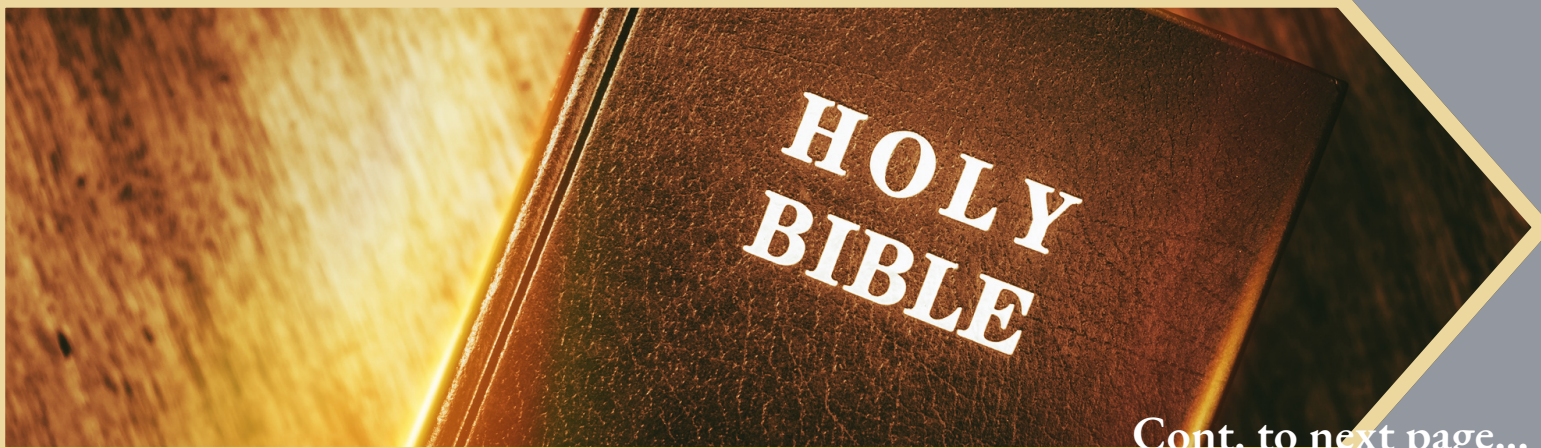


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At that time Jesus' brothers were not believers because they thought Jesus was out of his mind (Mk 3:21 & Jn 7:5). To make sure we understand He didn't come to replace or annul the Law, Jesus says, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17). The Law and Prophets refer to the entire Old Testament. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill, or complete, it. Jesus also came to correct the religious leaders' perversion of His Word. For example, God's Law had been perverted to mean that eating unclean food was the ultimate way a person was defiled. The religious leaders were teaching that God's command about eating unclean food meant that defilement comes from outside a person. However, Jesus corrects this perversion. What does He say in Matthew 15:11?



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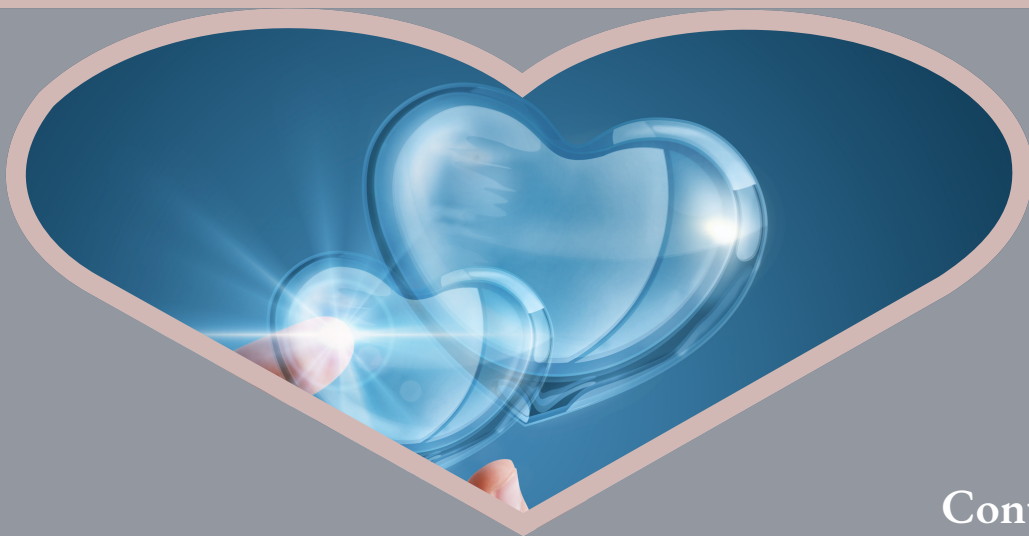
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Becoming pure in heart (Mt 5:8) does not come by abstaining from certain foods. Purity of heart comes by letting God work inside us, not from avoiding certain foods on the outside. This was clearly taught in the Old Testament. For example, what does David pray in Psalm 51:10a?

To emphasize the importance of believing the Bible, Jesus says: "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Mt 5:18). The word truly, or "verily," indicates what Jesus is about to say is of vital importance. The word translated iota, or "jot," (iōta, i-oh'-tah) in the Hebrew alphabet was much like our apostrophe or comma near the top of a letter. It could be like the dot above the letter "i" in our alphabet.



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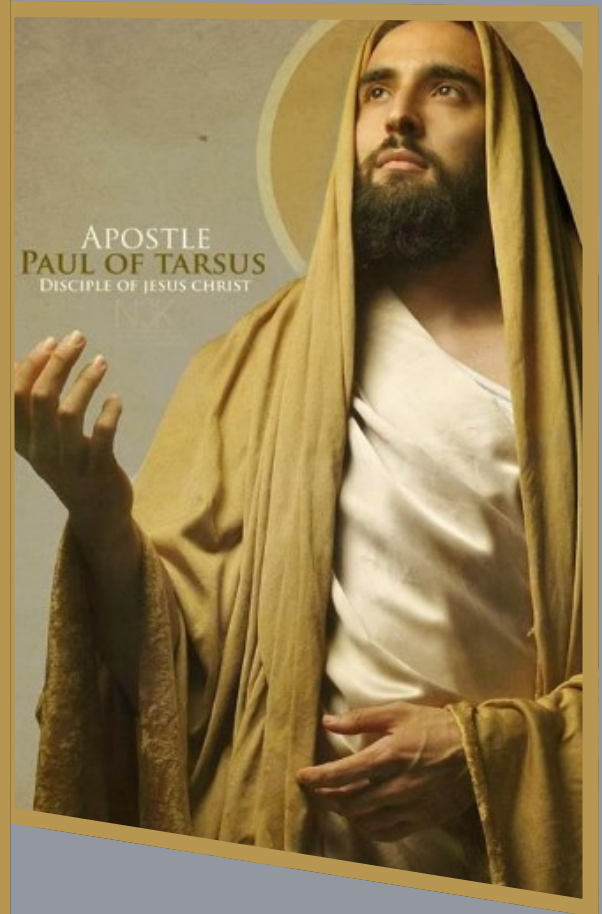
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The dot, or “tittle,” would be a small line that distinguishes Hebrew letters. In our alphabet it would be what distinguishes a capital “P” and “R.” This is of critical importance because words are made up of letters, and changing even one letter can change the meaning of a word.

When we read or hear God’s Word, it is vitally important we believe every word. What the early Christians believed about the New Testament, which is the writing and teaching of the apostles, is clear. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, how does Paul describe how the Christians at Thessalonica received his teaching? Because of what Jesus says about the Bible, it is impossible to take Jesus seriously and not take every word of the Bible seriously.

Building the foundation for lasting happiness requires we believe the Bible and ...



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Cleave to the Bible (5:19)

Cleaving to the Bible means we obey and revere every part of it, even the parts that go against the grain of our culture. Cleaving to the Bible means we do not reject it, or any part of it, as out-of-date. Our culture is suffering from “truth decay” to the point even many Christians and entire denominations are rejecting parts of God’s Word. Some even reject most of it.

For example, I read a quote from a pastor in Oklahoma City (right in the “buckle” of the “Bible belt”) that said, “The only command in the Bible Christians have to obey is ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ ” He was saying that what the Bible says about family, sexual behavior, and other things is not binding. In the face of such “truth decay,” what does Jesus say in Matthew 5:19a about anyone who “relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same”?



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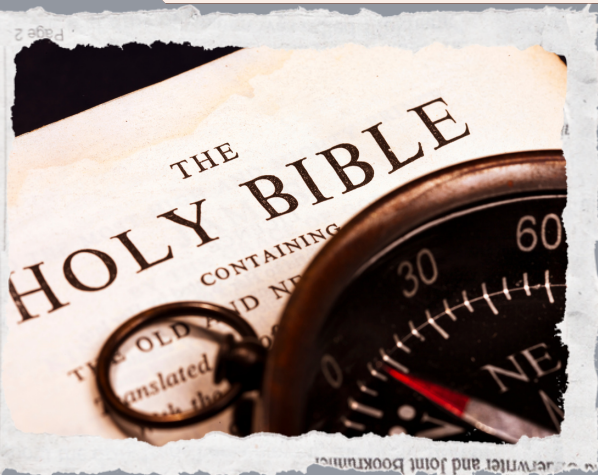
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The verb translated relaxes, or “break,” (luō, lu’-oh) means “to loosen” or “unbind,” as in loosening sandals or shoes so they can be removed. In an attempt to fit in and appear intelligent and educated, many so-called Christians and churches are trying “to loosen” what the Bible teaches about sex and marriage. However, Jesus says, “to loosen” the least of these commandments will result in being called least in the kingdom of heaven. This refers to loss of heavenly rewards or positions, not loss of salvation, because they are called least in the kingdom. Therefore, what warning do we have in 2 John 8?

In contrast to those who loosen God’s Word, Jesus says: “But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:19b). The word translated great (megas, meg’-as) is the word from which we get “mega,” as in “megabyte” and “megahertz.” “Mega” means one million. The Greek word means great, but in a “mega” way.



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What will cause us to be called great in heaven is not our gifts, our talents, the size of our ministry, the number of Christian books written, or the amount of money given to a church. To be called great in the kingdom of heaven, we must practice and teach the Word of God. You may not be able to teach a Bible study class, but you can teach the right attitude toward God's Word by always standing firm on its truth. How does Jude 3b describe this lifestyle?

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The word contend means to “struggle for something.” It is what Paul was referring to when he wrote I have fought the good fight (2 Tim. 4:7a). The word translated once for all, or “once,” (hapax, hap-ax) refers to something perpetually complete and valid. This means it is never out of date.

To contend for the faith means we defend the faith contained in the Bible against all attempts to dilute or pervert it. We are to keep it pure and teach it to others with no additions or deletions. Building the foundation for lasting happiness requires we believe the Bible, cleave to the Bible, and ...

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Allow the Bible to Achieve its Purpose (5:20)

Jesus reveals the purpose of God's Word when He says our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt 5:20). If it doesn't, what does Jesus say will be the result (Mt 5:20b)?

The purpose of God's Word, every part of it, is to lead us to righteousness, which the scribes, teachers of the law, and Pharisees lacked. The Pharisees were religious conservatives who obeyed every law in the Bible and added hundreds more. The scribes were scholars of the law. However, they didn't have the righteousness the Bible was intended to produce in our lives. How does Jesus, quoting Isaiah, describe the religious leaders of His day in Mark 7:6c?

Righteousness is the result of letting God's Word achieve its purpose in our lives. It's not a matter of rules, regulations, or religion, which are all outward things. Righteousness is all about the heart. The Bible tells us Jesus came to fulfill the purpose of the Law in our lives. How does Romans 3:22a describe the righteousness God wants us to have?



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God gave us the Bible because all Scripture is useful for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). When we have the righteousness of God, we have the same character God has. God is pure, sinless, holy, patient, faithful, etc. However, how is God's character best summed up in the last three words of 1 John 4:8?

Jesus said all the Law and Prophets are summed up in two commandments. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mt 22:37—40). Loving God is easy; but loving our neighbor is a real problem. There's a lot of truth in the old saying: "To live above with saints we love will certainly be glory. To live below with saints we know, well that's another story."

We all have difficult people in our lives whom God has allowed there to teach us to grow in love. When it comes to God's Law, we must remember what truth found in Romans 13:8c?

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**When we fulfill the
purpose of the Law, the
Bible, we become loving,
righteous people like
God wants us to be.**



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TO CONTINUE ON A “JOURNEY INTO
BLESSED LIVING,” YOU MUST BUILD THE
FOUNDATION FOR LASTING HAPPINESS,
WHICH REQUIRES YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE,
CLEAVE TO THE BIBLE, AND ALLOW THE
BIBLE TO ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSE.



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