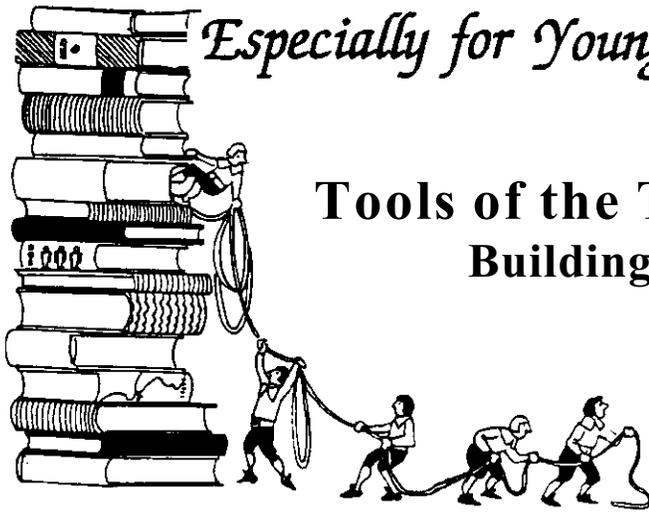


*Especially for Young People*

## Tools of the Trade Building



Matthew 7:24-25 reads: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Psalm 127:1 states, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

In this lesson, I will relate something pertaining to my occupation or profession in the way of tools. I am a builder by trade. First, I would like to give you a brief background. I started working with my father more than twenty-five years ago. At that time, we mainly built houses and various other dwellings. Building those projects required the use of many different construction tools.

I like to work with my hands, and I like to see something accomplished physically. I find great satisfaction in seeing something improved. When an old house is remodeled and made into something very nice, the difference can be seen right from the start. If you were to take a before and after picture, you would see the difference. If you were to purchase a vacant piece of ground and build a house on it, you would see that something has been accomplished.

As I think about taking an old

house and bringing it back to life, so to speak, it reminds me of a life in shambles. Just as the old house has broken windows, siding flapping, and doors hanging open, that is the same way many people appeared before they were saved. Their lives were in shambles, but the Lord took their wrecked lives and put them under construction. In the building process He added some things, removed some things, and changed some things. He makes us better, and we thank the Lord for that.

Salvation is what really brings the change and makes life better for everyone. It made my parents happy when I got saved. Christian young person, if your parents are saved, they are well pleased with you. That is the most important thing for you in this life. Sometime in your future, you may need a job, but the most important thing that you need to do is to keep your experience with Jesus Christ. You are building a spiritual house that you are going to live in forever.

Every one of us is in the building process. Before a person is saved, he has not built the way that God intended. These are the things I want you to consider. The foundation of a house is so important. You must insure that what you construct can withstand whatever may come in the future. I would not want to be in a tent if a tornado were to come through. I would want

everything to be secure. We must have our lives in order so that we can withstand the storms that come along. Our God has enabled us to do that, but we must follow His explicit instructions. Psalm 127:1 says, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Many people are building for the future, but unless the Lord is in the building of our lives, we may not withstand the storms that come. We must not leave the Lord out of the picture. He is very important! I once tried to build without the Lord, but I built on sinking sand, as the Scripture says. It was not very long until storms came along, and my foundation started to slip. Young person, you need to make sure that you do what pleases the Lord now, and it will be a help to you when you get older. You need to realize the value in that.

We each are building a structure, saint and sinner alike. The saint puts forth effort to see the Kingdom of God furthered. God puts that desire within you when you get saved. After you are saved, you will want to see others saved. When you find something better, you want to tell everybody about it; that is the way it works. If you are not sold on something, you cannot convince anyone else of it. Once you know that you have the best, it is not hard to sell salvation.

Young person, if you are saved, you and others are workers to-

gether with Christ. You want to see more souls get saved. One song asks, "Are you building up or are you tearing down the Church of God?" Every child of God is in the construction phase, not the destruction phase. We each are workers together with Christ.

In the business of building, I have been taught and have tried to establish this philosophy: "It may take more time, it may cost a little extra, but if you do it right the first time, it will pay in the long run." Doing it right the first time may require more effort and cost more money, but if you do it right the first time, the chances are, you will never have to do it again. It is the same way with the things of God. If you will do it right the first time, you will not have to keep backing up, retracing, and backtracking. I do not like to redo something. Once is enough.

If you will walk in Truth, God will establish your steps so that you can be exactly what you ought to be; then you will not have to retrace them. In other words, "Don't half do something; do it right or don't do it at all." Young person, you need to make your decisions with the future in mind. You must think about the end result of your actions. Consider how you would be affected by the moves and the decisions you make.

Many people think about the physical and the material things of this life, but they do not think about things in the spiritual realm. If they buy a car or a house, they want the best. If they buy clothes, they want the best. However, when it comes to spiritual things, they feel they can be a little lax.

The first thing a person should do before building is sit down and count the cost of what they want. It would be foolish to say, "I've got a hundred dollars, and I want to build a new house." That house would not get very far. Before building, you must sit down and go into the details and think it through: "What is this going to entail when I start? I don't want to lay the foundation block and then run out of money."

When I was a child, I went to school on a road where the foundation of a house was laid, but nothing was ever built on it. Thirty years later it still sits there, and I wonder, "What happened?" It is better never to have started than to start and not finish.

When we start living for God, we should count the cost with full intentions to finish, by the grace of God. Serious consideration needs to be given to see if people have the means to do what they plan. In building a house, it may mean a loan payment for thirty years. One thing that many people lack today is a commitment. They say, "Well, if I can't pay for it, I'll let the bank have it back," or "If I can't make the payments, so what?"

You cannot be that way with the Lord. You will not even get started if you have that kind of attitude. You cannot start living for God with the attitude, "If this happens, I may not be able to live it." You must count the cost and determine that you are going to live for God no matter what comes your way. You need to commit to upholding your end of the contract in building.

A vow should be taken before the Lord, promising that you will be true to Him no matter what. Some of the same things that a literal builder must consider enter into building a spiritual house as well. Luke 14:28-30 says: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Again, it is better never to have started than to start and not finish. Some people have started well for the Lord, but the terrible thing is, they gave up. Why did they start and not finish? What a distressing thought! They had a good start, but they never finished. Something happened. Perhaps they

did not count the cost or something got in their way. Some things need to be fixed and settled before getting started.

One tool that I use as a builder is a hammer. I am thankful for power nailers and the different kinds of tools used to shoot nails, but a hammer is still a tool that I use. Two other tools that I have are a measuring tape and a level. They are some of the first tools that I take out of the truck. I use these tools to determine if something is placed correctly.

Once I have measured something, then I use a level to make sure it is plumb. Somebody might look at something and say, "Well, that looks good." However, he may be standing on a hill looking at it. How something looks depends on where you are standing. When you use the level and see that both of the bubbles are right in the middle, you know that it is correct. So it is with the Word of God.

You may hear something and think, "Well, that sounds right," but when you measure it with the Word, you realize that thing is way out of balance. A true level is something that you can measure from, and when something is standing exactly plumb, you can take a measurement from it and know it is correct. You can gauge anything by it. That is how the Word of God is. You can take a true measurement from it and know exactly where things stand.

As a builder, I know that I can trust my tools. If the bubbles are in the middle of the level, it is right on the mark. I can take the square and set it up, and it should line right up with that. Young person, you have something more sure than any one of those tools, and that is the Bible. When something does not line up with God's Word, do not start building on it. If you do build on it, soon your dwelling will be completely out of kilter.

When I am building and get something plumbed and squared, then I fasten it, and that is where it

will stay. I establish that this is where I want it to be, and I do not want it moved. There are some things you have to establish spiritually. When you count the cost of living for God and get things in the proper spiritual perspective, you need to make sure that you keep it fixed and do not move away from it.

There may be times when you do not understand something spiritually. If that is the case, you should not say, "That's not right." It might be that your spiritual eyes are a little blurry. You need to ask God to make it clear to you. Use the level (the Word of God) to measure with. As God makes things clear to you, then you should be immovable. In the good times and in the bad times, you need to stand firmly on what you know is true.

It is important to start building, but it is just as important to finish. When building a house, the most critical part is its foundation, because everything rests upon that. The foundation supports the walls, the floor, and the roof structure. That is the reason it is so important to make sure the foundation is properly established. If not, the building can waver and the footers can freeze out. A footer is part of the foundation. It is the furthest part down, and it is what the block is laid on.

The footer should be poured on the original soil. It must be on something solid, because once the building is built, if it is not supported properly under the footers, the walls will crack. One time we had to look at a house that had one end leaning out, and it was cracked in many places. As we looked at the foundation under the footer, we discovered that the footer was poured on leaves, sticks, and all kinds of rubbish. The builder of that house did not dig deep enough, and when the first freeze came, moisture got underneath the foundation and froze and raised the foundation. The owners of that house lost a lot of money, because the builder did not dig deep enough for the foundation so the footer would hold the foundation in place.

The same is true spiritually. You cannot build on just any kind of rubbish and expect to have a good foundation. A bad attitude is not something that you can build on, because it will cause you trouble. If jealousy or hatred is in your heart, you cannot build on them. If you try to do so, you can be sure that your foundation will be insecure. It will not stay in place very long. Everyone's foundation will be tried by something, and the true condition of the foundation will be revealed. The foundation must be built on something solid, something that will not move.

Another important thing that I use is a blueprint. For building any house or structure, the builder has a print to follow. That print tells how deep the footers must be, what should be put underneath them, and what kind of rebar should be put in them. These are very detailed instructions that the builder must follow.

An architect is one who draws up the blueprints. He has studied to know what is needed in order for these things to be performed. If the builder does not follow what the architect has prescribed, the builder will be responsible. Should something go wrong and the inspector checks it out, the architect can say: "I showed this explicitly in the blueprint and described how much rebar to put in the footer, how to pour the walls, and where to put drainage pipe to get rid of the water. I made sure the builder knew to do all these things to secure the foundation." The builder is held responsible to the owner and to the architect. He must follow the blueprint. Young person, God has designed everything around us, and He has described in explicit detail how to follow His instructions. The Lord wants you to have a proper dwelling.

Another tool that I use is a saw. It is very useful when I need to cut something down to size. I have had to rip a 2x10 down to a 2x4 to make it fit into a wall. In certain applica-

tions, I might have to do a lot of cutting, and I might have to plane it. This does a finer detail work than the saw does. Sometimes there is a knot on the side of a board, and I use a chisel to smack it off.

Spiritually, there are a lot of things like that with you. Sometimes the Lord has to take a saw or a chisel and cut this or that off. Then He has to fine tune you a little bit with a plane until everything fits. Ephesians 2:21 says we are "fitly framed [joined] together." For that to happen, the Lord might need to cut something off or add something. When He sees that you are ready, then He will place you where you fit. However, sometimes it does not feel good when He does it. If something is too big and the builder tries to force it in, it can cause problems. It is much better to whittle it down a little, and then you can put it in. It is the same way with people. If they get too puffed up, it can cause a lot of trouble.

My Scripture text in verses 24-25 read: Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

Young person, I would like to see you be successful in endeavoring to live for the Lord. You will be if you go the way that He has designed for you. You have the opportunity to pray, to read the Bible, and to get instructions from God. We are in the midst of a shaking time. It is a trying time and a proving time. Our dwellings are going to be shaken. It must be built and founded upon Jesus Christ. There is only one sure foundation. He will hold you fast and keep you.

Brother Max Smith