

D&C Lesson # 7
The First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel
D&C 8; 10; 18-20
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(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. How important is a Firm Foundation?

A. When cracks were found in the eight foot deep sandstone foundation of the Salt Lake Temple, though it had taken years to place it, Brigham Young refused to ignore the consequences. A firm foundation was essential. The sandstone was torn out. A firm foundation of granite was laid. The temple was meant to last through the Millennium. (Richard N. Holzapfel, "Every Window Every Spire speaks of the Things of God," *Ensign*, March 1993, 9).

B. The Lord had promised "If you shall build up my church upon the rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you" (D&C 18:5). **And He repeatedly emphasized this truth.**

II. And, step by step, **He was laying a firm foundation for His Church.** Ultimately that foundation would be Twelve Apostles, with Jesus Christ as cornerstone.

A. While not immediately calling Twelve, he taught that they would be its Foundation.

B. "the Twelve shall be my disciples and ... shall take upon them my name" (D&C 18:27-31).

III. He also taught that each member should build as firm foundation for their membership:

A. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (JS-H 1:11-14; D&C 8:1, 10; D&C 10:47; D&C 17:3).

B. Repentance (D&C 11:9; D&C 15:6; D&C 16:6; D&C 18:9-15).

C. Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins (D&C 13:1; 18:7, 22).

D. The Gift of the Holy Ghost (D&C 8:2; D&C 11:12-14, 21; D&C 14:8; D&C 18:32).

E. Enduring to the end (D&C 6:13; D&C 18:22).

III. The Lord continued to add line upon line to the understanding of these principles.

A. Faith in Jesus Christ must be the first foundation stone for every member. "And as all have not faith, Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom" (D&C 88:118).

B. Through Joseph He taught **the core of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints must be the testimony of Jesus Christ and His atonement. All other things are merely appendages to it.**

1. He revealed important aspects about Himself and His atonement in D&C 19.

a. "I, having accomplished and finished the will of him whose I am..." (v. 2)

b. "Retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works..." (v. 3)

c. "Judging every man according to his works and the deeds which he hath done..." (v. 3)

C. As each saint heard and received His direct voice with the Spirit, put into practice these principles and ordinances, their testimonies were firmed.

IV. Repentance is the second foundation stone for each member (D&C 58:42-3).

A. To repent is everyone's need, and crying repentance is our responsibility. Without this part of the foundation, the result will be just sand.

B. **There is no more powerful voice calling men to repentance than that which the Lord Himself gave in Doctrine and Covenants 19.**

"Therefore I command you to repent --- repent lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore --- how sore you know not, how

exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent: But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit --- and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink....

"I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken" (D&C 19:15-20).

C. If any think such strong statements unloving, note **they actually express God's greatest love.** For God "suffered these things for all if they would repent." If not, He has only one recourse.

V. Baptism by Immersion for the Remission of Sins is the third foundation stone for members.

A. Surprisingly, the need for baptism is a stumbling block for many. Yet why?

B. Baptism is for man's Joy! So why should any argue against it?

The ironic truth is that many who claim to believe the Bible believe it least. Many deny that Jesus requires baptism, though He set the example by being baptized Himself, and taught, **"Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"** (John 3:5). Thus He made it clear that baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost [by laying on of hands through the priesthood; 2 Timothy 1:6] are the very first steps of being "Born again" (John 3:3).

C. However, God is a kind, wise and just God. **It is not by arbitrariness, but out of kindness and wisdom that He commands us to be baptized.**

D. Paul told us The Lord's reasons. We are to be "buried with him [Christ] by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness in life" (Romans 6:4). What a wondrous concept!

E. In other words, when we are baptized in the proper manner, by full immersion, we undergo, symbolically, a "death" to the old persons we were, and we are reborn when we come up out of the water into a new person: cleansed and renewed. When we are also baptized "by the spirit" --- that is by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, through true priesthood authority, the spirit enters and purifies our souls and our bodies, and we truly do walk in newness of spiritual life.

1. **This is the true essence of being "Born again,"** a slogan adopted by many, yet who strangely deny baptism --- **the major process by which the Savior said "being born again" occurs.**

VI. Being baptized by authority and at the age of accountability (eight or beyond) is also a part of a member's firm foundation (D&C 18:41-2).

A. History confirms **that infant baptism was not practiced in the early church. That practice was adopted much later and for one reason:** the development of the doctrine of original sin. Because the later Church adopted the concept that all men are born in sin due to Adam's sin, they started baptizing infants. And because of that change, [for it was not seen as wise to baptize babies by immersion], the method of baptism was changed from immersion to sprinkling.

B. This is the result and consequences of building upon shifting sands.

C. Sidney Rigdon **was an example of building on the rock of truth.** Before he knew Joseph Smith, Sidney was a minister in Pennsylvania. He was a diligent student of the Bible and his sermons were excellent. He was becoming quite renowned.

Then he was told to preach infant baptism. Because he had studied the Bible extensively, he knew that the Bible did not support the doctrine of infant baptism. He could not in good conscience preach that doctrine. But those who had authority over him insisted.

So he chose to give up his career as a minister --- his public honor and a good living.

The sacrifice was huge. He was trained for nothing else. His only recourse was to become a humble tanner. He went from being a respected preacher to the hard, dirty work of scraping hair off animal skins. His family was now forced to live in poverty. His life, once considered honorable and rewarding, was changed to lowly humiliation.

But he accepted this rather than build his faith upon sand. He knew the doctrine of infant baptism was not a doctrine of Jesus Christ. He accepted his loss of wealth and even infamy because his testimony was built upon a firm foundation.

He worked as a tanner for two years before moving his family to Ohio. There he began to preach again, for he was not required there to preach infant baptism.

As a result, when he received a Book of Mormon, Sidney was a ready recipient. Not only was he ready for the gospel, but he became a great blessing to the Church. He had taught many groups of good people who were now prepared, like himself, to join the true Church of God. (*Times and Seasons* 4, May 15, 1843, quoted by Karl Ricks Anderson in *The Savior in Kirtland*). All this happened because he knew the real truth about the Bible's teachings concerning baptism, and refused to forsake that foundational truth for sand, regardless of the consequences.

VII. Laying on of Hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost is the fourth stone in a Firm Foundation.

A. A significant number of wall paintings found in the catacombs of Rome which early Christians used for worship and burials were portrayals of Jesus laying His hands upon the heads of others. Christ showed His apostles how to perform ordinances, bestowing in that same manner the priesthood authority to do so. One of those ordinances was the blessing of the gift of the Holy Ghost. And this too is a part of the firm foundation.

B. Joseph Smith once said **that baptism by water only is just half a baptism**. It must be completed by the Baptism of Fire. Without this Stone, there is still only sand.

C. The loss of the Laying on of Hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost was an enormous loss to Christianity, and a basic cause of the apostasy. For without this ordinance, the Holy Ghost is not bestowed. And the Church is not guided by its influence, neither the leaders nor its members.

Without this gift, those who guided the church, therefore, turned to philosophers --- the creeds of men, and thus fell upon sandy soil.

How grateful we should be that the Lord restored this fourth foundation stone in our day.

VIII. Enduring to the End is the final stone of the Firm Foundation for members.

A. This too is extremely important. Sadly we will see that many who begin in faith and service and leadership in the early days of the Church, eventually fall away.

B. Since then, others have lost faith, failed to grasp the atoning power of Jesus Christ, refused to repent, were baptized but failed to receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost in their lives and be guided by it. There are those who could not endure the many challenging trials of their lives.

And some have refused to listen and accept the words of the Twelve, the Firm Foundation for the Entire Church, and instead returned to sandy foundations. But while many have fallen by the wayside, their demise has not stopped the Church. It continues to move forward and always will.

C. In a recent stake conference in Sharon Park Stake, Orem, Utah, Elder David Bednar clarified that we should understand the principle of enduring to the end as **“Enduring to the End with Jesus Christ.”**

That is, we must not just endure, but do so by following and obeying Jesus Christ; keeping Him as our constant companion, mentor, and guide. Thus coming to truly Know Him.

And then if we do so, we will have His strength to help us Endure to the End.