

1st THINGS F1RST 2 – Foundation

1st THINGS F1RST title

Welcome to Redemption Church. My name is Chris Fluitt and this is the 2nd week of our 1st Things First series.

In this series we are focused on priority and defining what is worthy of first place in your life. As we begin this year we are already asking ourselves... What should we put first this year? What change should you make first? What should you try to fix or rebuild first?

We are looking through the book of Ezra to help us frame our year.

Last week we talked about the setting of Ezra. Israel had come back from 70 years of exile. They returned to a capital city that had been destroyed by an enemy and left to decay for generations. The city was a mess... the walls were torn down, houses had collapsed on themselves, the roads were taken over by nature, the once great temple had been destroyed... Israel stood in the middle of this mess and had a **WHERE TO START** moment.

Of all the things they could do first... the children of Israel decided to build an altar first. **They built an Altar F1RST**

We encouraged you last week and I want to encourage you again today to build an altar first!

The ALTAR is a place to acknowledge a meeting with God or a cry that such a meeting is necessary.

As we look at our lives, we see some areas that are in just as much turmoil and disrepair as the city of Jerusalem was in Ezra.

Before you do anything.. before you make a big decision.. before you start a task.. before you react to change.. YOU SHOULD BUILD AN ALTAR FIRST.

You can build an altar anywhere and at any time. It's easy to build an altar. Somethings take years to fix, repair, and rebuild, but a relationship with God can be built very quickly. Altars can be built quickly. There is no reason for you to leave this place today without building an altar.

Last Sunday we built an altar after service as we gathered to talk to God and worship. On Wednesday we met together in homes and built an altar as we prayed. Yesterday we built an altar at the Villagio Alzheimer Care Center in Plano as we sang and talked about Jesus. You should build an altar every day and every where.

Israel made use of the altar you had built. The children of Israel made consistent use of the altar they built in Ezra 3.

Ezra 3:3 Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.(NIV)

Ezra 3:4 Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day.(NIV)

Ezra 3:5 After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD.(NIV)

Ezra 3:6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD's temple had not yet been laid.(NIV)

They kept coming back to an altar. **Keep coming back to the altar.** The altar should not be a onetime experience. Israel kept coming back to the Altar.

Spoiler alert... before today is over we are going invite everyone to make use of the altar today. The Altar is not a place reserved for the biggest sinner in the room... it is reserved for those who long to have an meeting with the Lord of Glory!

So we need an altar.. but that is not all that we need. Israel had an altar but they still stood in a mess of a city. It is God's will to restore the city.. just like it is God's will to restore every area of your life.

So what should happen next... We built an altar first... what is the first thing we should do next...

Ezra 3:6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD's temple had not yet been laid.(NIV)

They had an altar, but they lacked a Temple. They needed a temple if the city were to be restored. They needed a temple for the ark of the covenant and the dwelling place of God – the Holy of Holies. They desired and wanted a place of worship in their life... But not only did they have the building – they didn't have a foundation laid.

Build a Foundation First

Before you can build the building... you need a foundation.

The most important part of any house or structure is the foundation. The foundation supports the building. The foundation stabilizes the structure. The foundation stands in integrity against the sifting sands and settling soils.

They wanted to see a building. They wanted it to be beautiful and honor God. But they could not forget about the foundation.

There are a lot of lives that have built amazing careers... have reached heights of success and fame... athletes that have achieved near perfect physical condition... people that have gathered material wealth... seen dreams realized and received awards and accolades... stars on the Hollywood walk of fame... only to ultimately fail... because they lacked a foundation.

You must build a Foundation First! This is what Jesus tells us in his parable...

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.(NIV)

Matthew 7:25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.(NIV)

Matthew 7:26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.(NIV)

Matthew 7:27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."(NIV)

If you grew up in Sunday School you know a song with hand gestures and everything for this parable...

The parable has 2 men who set out to build the same thing. They set out to build a house. The only thing that separates the wise from the foolish is the foundation. The wise man built on a foundation that withstood the storms but the foolish man did not build on a solid rock.

Whatever it is that you want to build this year... can I tell you to build a foundation first.

The foundation will decide the buildings fate.

If the foundation is not true... then the building won't be true either.

We know relationships that were built on untrue foundations. We know people who had an untrue moral foundation. We know people who dreamed big but the foundation of their work ethic was not enough to support their dream.

This is the problem with most new year's resolution... we build dreams without ever considering a foundation.

The foundation will decide the fate.

The foundation will decide the size.

It would be a disaster to build a skyscraper on a foundation the size of your home. The bigger the building the bigger and stronger a foundation is required.

A taller structure requires a deeper foundation.

A wide structure will require a wide foundation.

You want to build great things? You need a great foundation?

This works in every area of life.

- Want to do great things in the work place? Better build a foundation first. Work hard, be on time, study up, show leadership and dedication.
- Want to do great things in your marriage? Better build a foundation first. Work hard. Grow as a person. Correct mistakes.
- Want to do great things in God? Better build a foundation first. Work hard. Better get in the word of God. Study to show yourself approved. Serve and give.

Jesus equated a foundation to what? Hearing His word and putting it into action!

We are building foundation right now... We are hearing His word... will you finish the foundation by putting His word into action?

Prayer is foundational! Are you building that foundation?

Worship is foundational! Is that happening in your life? Is the foundation of worship large enough to support what you want to build?

The word of God is foundational. Do you read your Bible? Most Christians do not...

Repentance is foundational.

Baptism is foundational.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is foundational.

Whatever you want to build... you need to build a foundation first!

Altars are easy to build... but **Foundations take work**

The altar is easy to build. Doesn't take much time, effort, or materials... but foundations are different.

EVERYTHING you build rests on the foundation you will lay. It must stand up to the pressure. Foundations take work!

Ezra 3:7 Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.(NIV)

An altar won't cost you... you just pile up some dirt... the sacrifice is the one who pays the price of the altar... Jesus has paid the price of the altar! He paid the price to give us direct access to God... But a foundation costs...

“Then they gave money...”

They gave what? (money)

Who gave the money? (The people who wanted to build)

There are things you want to build that will cost... they will cost money... they will cost your heart (Jesus told us that our heart and our money –our treasure- occupy the same space) ..they will cost you your time and energy.

Redemption Church would not be here... 903 W Parker Road Plano Tx meeting inside the Ivy School... without people who give.

While we are talking about **first things first** we need to take 1 minute talk to you about your money.

We are told to... **Proverbs 3:9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;(NIV)**

The tithe, which is the FIRST 10% of your increase, is also referred to as FIRSTFRUITS. Tithe is not an amount of money... It is a percentage... but it is also not just a percentage... it is the FIRST percentage of your increase.

Are you giving to God in such a way that shows He is the FIRST priority of your life? If you are then can I tell you that you are building a foundation that will support a lot of blessing.

The Israelites gave money to purchase the materials that would be used to build the foundation.

Foundations take time

Ezra 3:8 In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work, appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD.(NIV)

2nd month of the 2nd year... they set out to build... why so long?

Because foundations take time. You have to clear the space... you have to gather the materials... you have to build... Foundations take time

I AM SORRY BUT I HAVE NO QUICK EASY ANSWERS FOR YOU TODAY!

This step of building a foundation won't fit nicely in a check list of things to do in a day. It will take time, money, effort, energy, heart... but it is worth it.

Then in Ezra 3:10 it tells us about the foundation being laid.

When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel.(NIV)

Ezra 3:11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.(NIV)

Ezra 3:12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.(NIV)

Ezra 3:13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.(NIV)

Foundations are praise worthy

There are usually celebrations over finished building projects. There are ribbon cutting ceremonies and everyone comes out to see the completed work.

...but in Ezra 3 a great commotion is made.. not over the finished temple, but over the laying of the foundation.

There is rejoicing. There is music. There is weeping and crying.
EVERYONE WHO LAID THE FOUNDATION WAS MOVED AND FULL OF PRAISE.

Do we take the foundation for granted? Is it ok to rejoice over the foundation? Is it ok to be moved to tears when foundation is being laid?

Am I in a church that rejoices over the Cross of Christ and the blood of Jesus?

Am I in a church that loves to see new souls baptized into Christ?

Am I in a church that loves to give towards the Kingdom to see the Gospel of Christ spread throughout the world?

Am I in a church that is not tired of the preaching of the word of God?

Am I in a church that is not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Redemption Church! When was the last time you rejoiced over the foundation!?

Heaven rejoices over the foundation! In Luke 15:7 Jesus tells us that Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents. Heaven throws a party EVERYTIME it happens. WHY? Because Heaven rejoices over the foundation called repentance.

Could it be that while you are laying the foundation... Heaven is rejoicing! Could it be while you are working hard... sweating under the

burden of work... that Heaven is rejoicing. I know that you are sacrificing when you give of your time and your finances... BUT DO NOT STOP! You are laying a foundation and heaven rejoices over you!

Everyone rejoices over the finished product... but I dare you to rejoice right now by faith over the foundation!

You will have no future greater than your foundation

MUSICIAN

I have told you that the foundation defines what you are building. You don't build larger than your foundation...

So if you want to build a great life... what should your foundation look like?

If you are looking for a blessed home and loving marriage with kids who don't hate you and actually respect you... what kind of foundation will you build?

If you want to be used by God... if you want to help other people... if you want to leave your mark on this earth... then what are you doing about a foundation?

Do you want a life far beyond ordinary? Than you need a foundation far beyond ordinary! You will need a foundation that is up to the strength and stability of the object you are building... So what will your foundation be?

Ephesians 2 tells us about such a life that is built to be extraordinary.

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,(NIV)

Ephesians 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.(NIV)

If you want that kind of life then I want to pray with you today!