

Bumper Vid

1st TH1ngs 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 FIRST**

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 Tuesday we met together at our 1st Tuesday Worship night and we built an altar as we met with God. We are getting ready to launch our Connect Groups for the year and together we will build altars in homes through the metroplex and online. You should build an altar every day and every

where. Today before we dismiss, we will build an altar.

Israel made use of the altar they 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)

Keep coming back to the altar

They kept coming back to an 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 a 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 where to be restored. They needed a temple for the ark of the covenant and the dwelling place of God – the Holy of Holies. The people desired and wanted a place of worship in their life, yet not only did they lack the Temple 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 shifting sands and settling soils.

They wanted to see a building. They wanted it to be a beauty and honor to God, but they could not forget about the foundation.

There are a lot of lives that have built amazing careers and have reached heights of success and fame. There are athletes that have achieved near perfect physical condition and accomplished record-

breaking performance. There are people that have gathered material wealth, seen dreams realized and received awards and accolades. We have seen stars on the Hollywood walk of fame who tread upon red carpets and enter luxury vehicles. ...yet so many of these businessmen, athletes, and starlets ultimately fail.

We could compile a list of people who soared to great heights, only to fall. They built great accomplishment only to see what they built collapse? Why did they fall? Why the collapse? 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)

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 but the foolish man did not build on a solid rock.

Whatever it is that you want to build this year, you must 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.

Relationships built on untrue foundations will falter. An untrue moral foundation will not be able to withstand the tests of life. You may dream big, but is the foundation of your work ethic enough to support your big 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 deeper, broader, 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 workplace? 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. Spend time. Work hard. Grow as a person. Correct mistakes.
- Want to do great things in God? Better build a foundation first. Work hard. You better get in the word of God. Study to show yourself approved. Serve and give. Pray!

Jesus equated a foundation to what? In His parable of the wise and foolish builder, Jesus told us “hearing His word and putting it into action” was the foundation!

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! His Word tells you to pray. Will you put what His Word says into action? 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? The majority of Christians have not yet touched their Bible this year. Perhaps we have Christians with no foundation?

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 time, effort, and cost.

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 much. You pile up some dirt and place a sacrifice on it. 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 you personally.

The scripture starts, "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. It will cost money. It will cost your heart (Jesus told us

that our heart and our money –our treasure- occupy the same space). It will cost you your time and energy.

Redemption Church would not be here without people who pay the cost. There are people who give money...

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

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

FIRST FRUITS. Tithe is not an amount of money. It is a percentage, but it is also not just a percentage. The tithe is the FIRST percentage of your increase. It is not just 10% of your budget, it is the FIRST 10%.

Are you giving to God in such a way that shows He is the FIRST priority of your life? If you are, then 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, that is the 26th month. It does not say that in the 26th month they finished the project. It says they set out to build. They are just starting!?! Why so

long? Because foundations take time.

You have to clear the space. There are things you need to remove in order to build. There are habits that need to be uprooted. There are unhealthy relationships that need to be dug up.

You have to gather the tools & the materials. you have get everything you need to build to the site of the build. There are some tools and skills you need to learn. There are some materials you need to purchase. All this takes time, because 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.

Ezra 3:10 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 won'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 but 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? Then 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)

You aren't just anybody. You are a member of God's family.

You are built on the foundation of God's Word from prophets and apostles.

Jesus Christ Himself is your chief cornerstone.

You are a living dwelling place for God's Spirit.

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