

Are You Stable?
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Introduction: We have been given a great task in the building of souls for eternity.

A. God has warned us to build very carefully. **(1 Cor 3:10-12)**

1. We live in an age where discernment is being described as “Legalism.” Is this actually a defense of hay and stubble as a building block?
2. What we teach must be of substance and have a goal of bring others closer to the Lord.

B. God has not asked us to use our originality to come up with ways to accomplish this task. In fact, God condemns those who use this approach.

(2 Cor 2:17; 2 Cor 4:1-2, 5)

1. He wants us to preach the word! **(2 Tim 4:1-4)**
2. This is not the fluff of the modern day “contemporary worship” movement.
3. God’s word will bring a principled, consistent approach to life.
4. It is through consistent preaching, rebuke and support that this kind of building will take place. **(Titus 1:9, 13)**
5. Good building is not easy and it is not cheap!

I. The Dangers of Instability

A. What does it mean to be “unstable?”

1. ἀσθήρικτος - having a tendency to change one's views and attitudes *unstable, unsteady, not settled* (2 Pt 2.14); substantively, of someone not settled in his thinking *unstable person* (2 Pt 3.16) - Friberg Lexicon
2. We all have been here at one point in our lives. We must not live in instability!

B. Instability brings despair and uncertainty.

1. Being like a wave that is tossed about is no fun. **(Eph 4:14-15)**
2. If you stay in this state too long you will likely quit.

C. You will be easy prey to be moved by manipulation of men.

1. Relationships become more important than God’s word.
2. Emotion’s are often used to bring a change. **(1 Thess 2:5-6)**
3. Threats and peer-pressure are effective. **(Jn 9:22)**
4. Empty sayings become appealing.

D. You will be tempted to wrest the scripture to commend your lifestyle. **(2 Pt 3:16-17)**

1. The arguments of the unstable will have no consistency.
2. They will appeal to the flesh and attempt to “win” at any cost.
(Ex 1 Cor 11, debate arguments)

E. You will be tempted to “burn out” and give up. **(Lk 8:13)**

II. The Elements of God’s Foundation

A. It is found in the Lordship of Christ. **(Col 2:6-7)**

1. God’s foundation is found in justice and righteousness which demand discernment. **(Psa 89:14; 97:2; Heb 5:12-14)**
2. By the very definition of God and His nature we must see the need to yield every thought to Him.

3. While we cannot answer every question or situation, we can clearly know what is sure. **(Rom 8:14-16; 1 Thess 5:21)**
- B. It is found in the forgiveness and grace of God
 1. God has a way that gives assurance. **(1 Jn 4:1, 6)**
 2. This is not the way of “easy-believism” but one of a studied understanding in the promises of God.
 3. Look at the paths of those who talk of God’s grace but now deny God’s way of salvation to have “unity” with unbelievers. **(Acts 2:38)**
 4. Would you rather have the temporary “joy” of man-centered, performance based worship with its empty promises or standing in the precious promises of God alone? **(2 Pt 1:2-4)**
- C. It is found in protecting the conscience. **(Acts 24:15)**
 1. If you are not sure, do not practice it! **(Rom 14:23)**
 2. There is a great certainty is demanding Book, Chapter and Verse for all of our teachings and practices. **(Col 3:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17)**
 3. Some men promote the destruction of the conscience. (Ex. Inst. Music and singing)
- D. It is found in the peace of God that comes from a walk in His promises. **(Phil 4:7)**
 1. Please do not stay in the land of uncertainty.
 2. There is a great strength in praying to God with confidence in His promises. **(James 1:6-8; 1 Jn 5:13)**

III. Steps to Building a Stable Soul

- A. Come to know the cross of Christ. **(Gal 2:20; 6:14)**
 1. When I come to see the cross then I can know that God wants me as His child.
 2. It also tells me that the path of suffering has a desired end. **(Heb 12:1-4)**
 3. It will cause me to reject the cheap sayings of men that in fact lead away from the cross. **(Gal 6:12)**
- B. Let your reading be scripture-centered and not centered in the writings of men.
 1. I was disturbed several years ago when a group of preachers was asked concerning what books they were reading.
 2. More and more I see “trendy” subjects being preached by many that have no basis in the scripture. How can this happen?
 3. It is very discouraging to see the regular messages being presented in local assemblies. What is being preached and what is not being preached?
 4. Years ago I asked Bill Hall about what a man preached from a pulpit concerning the number 666 found in the Book of Revelation. His reply was “I would rather preach exclamation mark rather than question marks.”
 5. Some churches are allowing destabilizing preaching to come unchallenged.
- C. Surround yourself with Christians that are building on the rock of God’s word.
 1. You may have to find new friends. **(Ps 1:1-3)**
 2. You may need to find a local church that is building properly.
 3. You may, for a while, have to stand alone.

Conclusion: What kind of foundation do you have? **(Eph 2:20)**

Moderation in Doctrinal Stability
by Bill Hall

People who are useful in the Lord's service are balanced in their thinking. They maintain moderation of the mind. They know what they believe and why they believe it, and are not given to radical fluctuations of thought.

A Study in Contrasts

Two men are teachers of God's word. Both are conscientious men who love truth. The first man, however, is easily swayed by whatever he reads and hears. He frequently changes positions on doctrinal issues. Wanting to be independent in his thinking, he is quick to reject traditional "Church of Christ" thinking. He adopts into his thinking anything that, on the surface, sounds reasonable to him. He loves to come across some new, exciting "gem" that will set his teaching apart from the old, stale teaching that people have heard for years. Above all, he wants his teaching to be thought provoking and challenging, different and exciting, new and fresh in its approach.

The second man wants his teaching to be challenging and thought provoking, too, but he recognizes that one does not have to reject that which is tried and proven in order to be challenging and independent. He is not surprised to find that his convictions are similar to those of others who have labored to separate error from truth, traditionalism from the pure word of God, sectarianism from the unity found in Christ. After all, he shares the same goals and studies the same book. He sees no virtue in being different from them. He has come to solid conclusions based on his study of the Scriptures and is not easily swayed from those conclusions. He finds truth challenging because it is truth.

The first man tends to be "tossed" to and fro, and "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (**Ephesians 4:14**). His hearers never know what to expect from him next. One thing they can be sure of: whatever "kick" he is on at the time will come out in his lessons, for every new concept seems to become an obsession.

The second man has his heart "established with grace" (**Hebrews 13:9**); he is "grounded and settled" (**Colossians 1:23**). He questions positions he has held, and is forced by his own personal honesty and integrity to change positions occasionally, but he acts very slowly and cautiously in doing so. He keeps many questions that arise in his mind to himself, for he recognizes that they are not vital to his own salvation or to the salvation of others.

The first man unnecessarily disturbs others with his teaching, leaving them with more questions than answers. Some of his conclusions are dangerous. And though he later recognizes their danger and discards them, he has already, in his haste, planted seeds of error in the hearts of his hearers. His influence is hurt because brethren are afraid of him justifiably afraid. His usefulness in the kingdom is greatly affected.

Questions To Be Considered

We would suggest to our first man that before he creates trouble among God's people and hurts his own influence, he might ask the following questions.

1. Am I sure of the conclusions I have reached? Is it possible that I have overlooked some pertinent scripture or argument that would negate my conclusions?
2. Am I sure that my conclusions have not been tainted by prejudice, disillusionment, bitterness, jealousy, emotional considerations, or some other factor that can adversely affect one's thinking?
3. Even if I am sure of my conclusions, is the point I am stressing vital, of sufficient importance to justify problems?
4. Have I allowed these conclusions to become an obsession? Do I find myself talking about them frequently in Bible classes? In sermons? In private discussions? Do I find my reading of the Scriptures somewhat "colored" by these new concepts?
5. Is it possible that in my teaching I am glorying in new and deep and fresh approaches rather than in the simple message of the gospel and the Christ who is the center of that message?

We are not encouraging compromise; nor are we suggesting that one must gain brotherhood approval for his conclusions before teaching them. We are saying, however, that caution dictates that one go slowly in adopting new concepts and be even more cautious in teaching them. "Let your moderation be known to all."