

<sup>11</sup>We have much to say about this, and it is difficult to explain, because you have become too lazy to listen. <sup>12</sup>In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the beginning principles of God's word all over again. You have become people who need milk, not solid food. <sup>13</sup>For everyone who lives on milk is not acquainted with the word of righteousness, because he is still an infant. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for mature people, who have their senses trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil.

<sup>6:1</sup>Therefore, leaving the beginning discussion of Christ, let us press on toward matters that require greater maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith in God, <sup>2</sup>of the teaching about baptisms, of the laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup>And we will do this, if God permits.

I love watching television shows like Barnwood Builders and Fixer Upper. It is amazing to me how they can put these homes together in such artistic ways. I would love to have the knack for that kind of thing, but I really don't think I would be very good at it.

It's one thing to be able to build a house or rebuild an engine, but it's another thing to build a soul or a church. The writer to the Hebrews talks about that very thing, building up the soul. He talks about laying foundations and what it takes to be built up. Paul referred to himself as an "**expert builder**," and then other people built on the foundation he laid. You are part of that building that God wants to build upon. Let's look at what God's Word has to say about that today.

### Keep on Building on Your Foundation

#### 1. By being an active listener

When it comes to building, you make a distinction between amateurs and experts. You can see the distinction in woodwork and finish and all kinds of things where it is easy to see the difference when you look at the finished product. It's what distinguishes beautiful houses and solid homes from shacks that are ready to fall apart. There are basic concepts to building, and then there are more intricate tricks of the trade that take much more skill in accomplishing.

The book of Hebrews is not just a novice book. It is an in-depth exposition that draws upon Old Testament imagery as a basis from which to show people who Jesus is. Just prior to these verses he used a seemingly obscure king named Melchizedek to show how Jesus was foreshadowed through his ministry. He was writing to Jews, who should have had a solid background in their Old Testament history. That was why the disciples were told to start with the Jews in their mission work - because they had that knowledge which could be built upon when speaking of Jesus. If you're going to read the Bible, you need to know that this book is not an easy read like John might be. It's pretty in-depth.

The writer - we don't know exactly who he was - became rather irritated with the people he was writing to. The NIV says, "**We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths**

**of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!"** When you read that translation, it might sound like the people were just not very smart. That's what we usually think of when we hear that term "slow." But that's not what he really meant. He literally said, "**You have become lazy in the hearings.**" They were lazy hearers. There's a difference between being lazy and being just not very smart. I can be very patient with someone who doesn't understand, if they're just not that smart. But if they are just lazy, that's another story. The Hebrews weren't dumb. They were lazy.

What does that mean? How can I be a lazy listener? Years ago there was a young man who wanted to marry a member of my congregation in Kansas. He was a nice guy. He was smart, and he wanted to go through Bible Information Class. But every time he came into class, he just couldn't wait to get out. He didn't ask any questions. When I tried to engage him in details of a text, he would just try to get through the answer as quickly as possible. He wasn't really engaging his brain his own self in the process. He was being lazy in a sense.

You can be a lazy listener too. If you don't do your own Bible study - where you have a question and you seek the answers in the Bible - you might be being lazy. If you don't really listen to the readings or make an effort to listen during the sermon - aren't you being lazy? Do you ever bother to come to a Sunday morning Bible study? Do you ever think to listen to the Bible while you are on the road? Have you ever considered listening to an online class when the WELS has one to offer or listening to a Lutheran podcast that discusses some modern day issues in light of God's Word? Or are you barely doing enough to get by in your faith? Have you quit going to Bible Study ever since you were confirmed? Those might be signs that your listening has become lazy.

The writer to the Hebrews compares it to being a baby and needing milk instead of gradually progressing to meat and potatoes - solid food. Do you want to be a baby in your faith or do you want to mature?

## 2. By being firm in your foundations

In order to mature, you need to start by having the **elementary teachings** down. The EHV translates it as the "**beginning discussion.**" It comes from a Greek word "**stoxeia.**" Paul used it in referring to the basic principles of this world - that the Galatians and Colossians lived in prior to coming to faith. (Galatians 4:3 / Colossians 2:8.) He was referring to the basic philosophies of life that people can get from studying humanity. You might also think of basic herbs and spices that can be used to heal people or make them more health. Basic principles, the stoxeia of life - could refer to basic philosophies of what it takes to have a healthy society, a healthy body, and a good and steady income: what is needed for success. "A penny saved is a penny earned," things like that. These basic principles of life can be found in herbal medicines, yoga, finance and philosophy classes. They might have some basic concepts behind how to eat healthy and sleep well, but they don't do any good for the soul. They don't offer salvation from eternal damnation.

The **beginning discussion** of the Bible does. That's what the writer to the Hebrews was talking about: the basic principles of sin and grace, law and gospel, damnation and redemption, along with the resurrection of the dead. These are all found in the Bible, in the stories of Creation and the Fall, along with the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. You know who He is, how He came to humanity, what He did on the cross, why He died, and how He rose. You learn that His death paid for the sins of the world. You know that He ascended into heaven and that He is coming to judge the living and the dead. These are the elementary truths and teachings of

Christ that we recite in the creeds on a weekly basis. We purposely cover them in our Sunday School curriculum every year, along with our Catechism classes and Bible Information Classes. Half of the church year is dedicated to the life and death and resurrection of Christ.

Paul said in chapter three of 1 Corinthians, **“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.** A solid foundation is needed - one that lays our salvation firmly and only on Christ. We need this foundation more than basic principles for living a debt free life or a healthy life. This is the only foundation that saves you from eternal damnation and gives you life in heaven.

Think about what you want your children to be founded in. What is your life grounded in? It seems that many Christian parents today are more concerned about their children playing on a sports team, getting married, and getting a good job than they are about whether they know their Savior well. They would rather their kids had friends and were seemingly normal in this world, rather than that they were faithful to Jesus. What good will a new job or a spouse and child do if they all end up in hell with no repentance and no faith? Wouldn't you rather see them in heaven? The foundation is all important.

### 3. By digging deeper into the Word

It seems so strange, then, to hear what vs. 1 of chapter 6 has to say. The NIV translates it, **“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ.”** Why would we want to leave the fundamental teachings about Christ? Think of what Peter said in 1 Peter 2:2-3. **Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.** Peter told his readers to keep on craving the milk of Christ. But when the writer says to “leave” he doesn't say to leave behind. He talks about leaving it in the sense of building up ON it - not building AWAY from it. So we build ON Christ and grow IN Christ. I like the way the EHV translates it. **Let us press on toward matters that require greater maturity.** God doesn't want us to remain stagnant. He wants us to PRESS ON.

Here's the neat thing - that God wants us to grow up and He has provided us with the meat to do so. Some parents prevent their children from growing up by babying them all the time. They bail them out of financial problems. They don't make them get a job. They do their laundry and buy them cars, enabling them to act like children for the rest of their lives. God doesn't want us to stay spiritual infants. He wants us to grow in faith.

How do we do that? Through **CONSTANT USE**. When I was camping there were some young men who were trying to saw some logs up. The older gentleman saw that they were trying to muscle the saw down and not letting the saw do the work. He knew how to use a saw, because he had used one plenty of times. An artist gets better as he keeps on using the paintbrush along with the oil paint. He moves on from the pencil and learns how to use paint. So it is with the Word of God. You constantly use it. You dive into it. Then when you know it well you are able to apply it into your life. You memorize it. You TRAIN YOURSELF to know the true nature of the word. You can tell when someone is taking a verse out of context or misleading you even when they are quoting the Bible because you know it so well.

That's exactly why the writer to the Hebrews wants you to grow in your faith. So that you can distinguish "καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ." I like the way that sounds in the Greek. They rhyme, and there is only one letter difference between the two words, but they mean the exact opposite. KaLou is good while kaKou is bad - kind of like the word "kaka." When you know the Bible well, when you are experienced in it, you can distinguish good from kaka. Sometimes evil sounds almost like the good - but you find out they are miles apart. The devil can make evil sound good - like the right thing to do. But when you constantly use the Word: when you get to KNOW it: you can tell the difference even in the subtle difference. It becomes obvious.

When you look at today's version of Christianity, you can see many people being misled in two directions.

1. An unhealthy focus on temporal and earthly rewards - a theology where faith is equated with riches and power and success, where passages are taken out of context to make you think that riches and wealth are what being here is all about.
2. A misdirection on what sin and grace really are and how God brings salvation. Instead of preaching repentance and faith in Christ and His crucifixion, people are being told that acceptance and tolerance is grace and forgiveness simply means don't judge.

A thorough knowledge in the world experiences how God truly acts with humanity and how He deals with sin. He doesn't tolerate it. He condemns it and He damns it on Jesus. God doesn't save us by accepting us as we are. He saves us by clothing us in Jesus through baptism and giving us righteousness and holiness through faith in Him alone. Having faith doesn't mean believing in yourself or what you decide feels good. It means repenting of your sin and believing in Christ, and trusting in what HE says is right. But if you don't know your word well, you will fall for the lies and deceit.

The Hebrews were falling for the lies. Their foundation of faith was crumbling. So the writer pointed them back to their Old Testament to see Christ clearly throughout. It wasn't too late for the Hebrews. It isn't too late for you. **And we will do this, if God permits.** We will keep on going back to the foundations, and we will build on the foundations. We will have more Bible study. Right now we are going through a rather in depth look at the book of Ephesians. There is a new women's Bible study starting soon. The men will be going through 1 Peter on Saturday mornings. There are online Bible studies through the WELS. Are you willing to dig in and keep on growing? Or are you going to let the foundations of your faith crumble? Do you want to be a baby in your faith, or do you want to start eating some meat?

I have always admired people who are able to fix cars and build things. I have always told myself that "I wish I could do that." It would save me money if I could do it myself. The truth is, I am probably either just too lazy or too impatient to learn. If I really wanted to learn how to do it, I should just dig in and get after it. Now, that doesn't mean that there are some jobs that I would need help with and advice with: some are just better at it than others. But that doesn't mean I couldn't try to learn more than what I do.

Doesn't the same ring true when it comes to growing in your knowledge of God's Word and in your faith? Could you dig in more? Could you grow more? Know more? Then go back to the sources. Go back to the Word. Dig in and experience it. Ask your pastor some tough questions. Build your faith in Christ. Be strong in the Lord. Don't be content with being an infant. Press on in Christ. Keep on Building on Your Foundation. Amen.