

2026 |

LARGE GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

UNSHAKABLE

**FAITH
FOCUS
FOUNDATION**



I will keep my eyes always on the Lord, with Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Psalm 16:8

connection
ministries

HELPFUL HINTS

Preparing Your Lesson

Please read through this guide as you prepare to teach your large group lessons. Training videos and note sheets are available online at <https://connection-ministries.org/summer-friendship-gathering-training/>

It will also be helpful to study these Bible passages. 

PowerPoint slides are linked with the lesson. When you see PP> it will tell you what PowerPoint slide corresponds to your lesson.

DAY 1 UNSHAKABLE Faith (Daniel 3:1-30)
DAY 2 UNSHAKABLE Focus (Acts 16:16-34)
DAY 3 UNSHAKABLE Foundation (Matthew 7:24-27)

Encourage Participation

Your Bible lesson should be interactive verses a lecture-style lesson. Ask questions. Let friends read the verse of the day. Invite them to participate in skits or object lessons.
*Discussion question ideas are provided throughout the lessons.

Wait for a Response

Sometimes friends with disabilities need extra time to process a question. If they do not answer right away, try rephrasing the question or ask another friend to help.

Connect the Bible Lesson

When we tie the Bible lesson to real-life situations, it helps our friends use what they learn in their daily lives. Skits and object lessons are great tools for making that connection clear.

OBJECT LESSONS & SKITS

- The Object Lessons for each day are written into the lesson.
- Each Object Lesson will have a supply list and instructions. There is also a video of the object lessons posted on the Connection Ministries website.
- Skit scripts will be given to the Leaders along with this guide. Skits work best at the end of each lesson.
- Practice, practice, practice so everyone is familiar with his/her lines.
- Invite our friends with disabilities to participate in both object lessons and skits.

PP 1> DAY 1 – UNSHAKABLE FAITH – DANIEL 3:1-30

Theme Bible Memory Verse:

PP 2> Psalm 16:8 “I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”

Leader: Practice this week’s theme memory verse with your group a couple of times at the beginning of each lesson.

Introduction:

This week we will learn that we can remain unshakable in the face of trials. First, we will study the **unshakable faith** of three young Hebrew men. They were thrown into the fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to the King’s idol. Their courage proved that God alone is the true King of Kings.

On the second day, we will join Paul and Silas as they praise God from a prison cell. They show us their **unshakable focus** even in dark and painful circumstances. Their worship became a witness that spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

On our final day we will listen to a parable Jesus tells of an **unshakable foundation**. When storms come and winds blow, the house built on the Rock stands firm. In the same way, we remain steady when we build lives on the foundation of God’s Word.

Day 1 – Key Points:

- God is the only One worthy of our worship.
- Faith is trusting God completely, even when we can’t see the outcome.
- God may not prevent all our trials, but He promises to be with us through them.
- Trials can bring praise and glory to God.

Leader: Today we are learning about unshakable faith. So, every time you hear the word “faith” shout out “Unshakable!”

PP 3> Let’s give it a try with our memory verse for today from **Hebrews 11:1 “Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see.”** Great job! Let’s say it together.

DAY 1 – UNSHAKABLE FAITH – DANIEL 3:1-30

Lesson:

PP4> Have you ever heard the phrase, “Shaking in your boots?” It means being really afraid. Think about your first big thunderstorm—were you scared? Or how about going to the dentist? Do fireworks or large crowds of people get you shaking in your boots?

Q. What makes you shake in your boots?

Leader: Invite a few friends to share what makes them afraid or “shake in their boots.”

Today’s lesson takes place in the Old Testament in the book of Daniel about 600 years before Jesus Christ was born. We know that Jesus is the King of Kings. But Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, thought he was the greatest king.

PP 5> He captured many young men from Judah including Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They had to learn a new language and a whole new way of living.

After the three long years of training the three young men began to serve the King. God blessed them and the King liked them. He found them to be incredibly wise. He even made them important officials in Babylon.

PP 6> King Nebuchadnezzar was a very proud man. He built a massive gold statue or idol—90 feet tall! Just imagine three school buses stacked on top of each other from end to end!

PP 7> He commanded people to come from every nation to see his gold statue. When the music played, they were to bow down and worship his idol. Anyone who refused would be thrown into a blazing fiery furnace.

PP 8> When the music started, everyone bowed and worshipped the idol—except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They knew the truth: God is the only One who is worthy of worship. They refused to bow to the golden idol. They didn’t want anything to be more important than God.

DAY 1 – UNSHAKABLE FAITH – DANIEL 3:1-30

What is an idol? It is not just a carved statue made of wood or gold. It's anything that takes God's place in our life—anything we love more than God.

PP 9> Idols can be things like money, sports, shopping, or food. They can even be people, like celebrities or close friends. If something becomes more important to you than God, it's an idol.

Q. What is an idol? What are some modern-day idols?

A. It is anything that takes God's place in our life—anything we put as more important than God.

A modern-day idol can be money, sports, shopping, or food. They can even be people, like celebrities or close friends. If we put these things above our worship of God, they become an idol.

PP 10> Nebuchadnezzar was angry that the three young men refused to bow down to his gold statue. He said to them, *"Is what I heard about you true? Don't you worship the gold statue?"*

"You will hear the music and when you do, fall down and worship the statue I made. But if you won't, you will be thrown at once into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to save you from my power?"

King Nebuchadnezzar gave them one last chance; bow down or burn. The Bible says that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not have to think twice about what they should do. They answered the king right away.

PP 11> *"The God we serve is able to save us from the fire. But even if He doesn't, we will never worship your gods or bow to your statue."*

Wow! Do you think the young men were afraid? I would be! But they still would not bow down. Even if it meant being thrown into the fire. They were willing to die for their faith in God.

DAY 1 – UNSHAKABLE FAITH – DANIEL 3:1-30

The young men loved God and trusted Him completely. They knew it was wrong to bow down to anyone except God. It was the first of the 10 Commandments. They had faith in God and chose to obey God rather than obey the King.

That's what unshakeable faith looks like—trusting God completely, even when you don't know the outcome. It's saying, "Lord, I believe You are good, no matter what happens."

Q. How could Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be so bold in what they said to the King of Babylon?

A. They loved God and had faith that they could trust Him completely no matter what happens. They chose to obey God rather than the King.

PP 12> The Bible gives us a definition of faith in today's memory verse: ***Hebrews 11:1***
"Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see."

The three young men were sure of God, even if they couldn't see Him with their eyes.

Q. What does the Bible say faith is?

A. Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see. It is trusting God completely, even when you don't know the outcome.

PP13> Life brings many challenges that can make us feel afraid—like moving to a new home, having surgery, loss of a loved one, or broken friendships. In those moments, we can feel like we are "shaking in our boots."

Instead of turning to things like food, TV, or shopping for comfort, we can run to God in faith, even when the path is not clear. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we can trust His promise to always be with us. Even when we face a fiery trial.

PP 14> Faith begins by trusting Jesus as our Savior—believing He died on a cross and rose again to give us eternal life. When we trust Him, the Holy Spirit lives in us, we can pray for His strength and guidance.

DAY 1 – UNSHAKABLE FAITH – DANIEL 3:1-30

PP 15> Even after we trust Jesus to be our Savior fear may still creep in. God gives us Christian community – friends at church and Friendship group – who will pray and encourage us. We can listen to His voice through Scripture and music. We can talk to Him in prayer. Remember, He is always with us.

PP 16> A Bible verse that helps me is *“Psalm 18:2 He is like a shield to me. He is the power that saves me. He is my place of safety.”*

Q. How can we run to God when we are afraid?

A. Trusting Jesus to be our Savior. We can pray and ask Him for strength and guidance. We can go to church/Friendship group where our friends can encourage and pray with us. We can read the Bible or listen to God’s Word.

PP 17> Our story continues. Remember the King was about to throw the three young men into the fire after they refused again to bow to his golden idol.

PP 18> *This made King Nebuchadnezzar even more angry. He quickly ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. He commanded his strongest soldiers to tie Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.*

PP 19> But then something incredible happened! The King saw four men untied and walking around in the fire, unharmed. *The fourth looked like “a son of the gods.”* Many believe this was Jesus with them.

Q. Who do you think the fourth man was in the fire with them?

A. The Bible doesn’t specifically say, but King Nebuchadnezzar said he looked like the son of a god. So, we can guess He was probably Jesus Christ, the son of God, before he came to earth.

Because the young men were obedient and refused to forsake their God, God did not let His servants go through the fire alone. **We** have the same promise in the Bible.

DAY 1 – UNSHAKABLE FAITH – DANIEL 3:1-30

The Leader may want to include the Bible verses below. (optional)

- *Isaiah 43:2 – You will walk through fire. But you will not be burned. The flames will not harm you.*
- *Matthew 28:20 – I am with you always, even to the very end.*

PP 20> God does not always prevent us from going through the fire, but He always promises He will be right there with us in it. The next time a trial has you “shaking in your boots” refuse to bow down to fear of what may happen and hold on to unshakable faith in Jesus Christ, our King of Kings.

PP 21> But wait! That is not the end of the story! *Then the King approached the opening of the blazing furnace. He shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, come out! You who serve the Most High God, come here!”*

PP 22> The Bible says that when the men came out of the fire, not a single hair on their heads was burned. They did not even smell like smoke. It was a miracle!

PP 23> *Then King Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in Him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”*

Their unshakable faith revealed to everyone, even King Nebuchadnezzar, that the Lord is the only One who is worthy of worship.

Q. Why did King Nebuchadnezzar give praise to the true God?

A. Because the King witnessed a miracle, he saw God deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire.

He saw their willingness to die rather than worship any other god. He saw their unshakable faith. Through this incredible rescue, God demonstrated that He alone is the true God, the King of Kings, worthy of all worship.

DAY 1 – UNSHAKABLE FAITH – DANIEL 3:1-30

Q. How can trials we go through give glory and praise to God?

A. Others will see our faith in God’s unfailing love and our love and devotion to Him. They will see that it is God who is walking with us through our trials. We can tell them that they too can be unshakable by putting their faith in Jesus Christ.

DAY 1 – OBJECT LESSON: FAITH IN THE ONE WHO SEES

<https://youtu.be/RmXpgqxr4VM>

Supplies:

1 Quart size plastic Ziplock bag with water

3-4 sharp pencils or kabob skewers

- **(Show the group the bag filled with water.)**
- “We are going to talk about having faith. The kind of faith Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had.”
- “We learned in our story today that they had faith or trusted that God would save them from the fire. But even if He didn’t, they still had faith that God would be with them in the fire. They trusted God completely and were not bow down to the Kings golden idol.”
- **(Ask for a volunteer to come up and hold the bag of water over their head.)** “I am going to hold this bag of water over your head and then I am going to poke a hole in this bag with the pencil. Do you trust me? Do you have faith that you will not get wet?”
- “It’s hard to trust someone when they are holding a bag of water over your head. The bag of water could represent the fire that the three young men had to go through. They had faith that even something as horrible as being thrown into a fiery furnace they still trusted God completely and knew He is always with them.”
- “It seems impossible, doesn’t it? It may work or it may not work and you’ll get really wet. Do you still trust me?”

DAY 1 – OBJECT LESSON: FAITH IN THE ONE WHO SEES

Continued

- **(Push the pencil through the bag of water. The pressure of the water should cause a seal around the pencil.)**
- **(Leader can poke more pencils or skewers in the bag.)** “Wow! It worked! How about if I poke another pencil through the bag will you still trust me? And another. It makes no sense, yet here we are with a bag full of water and many holes, yet you didn’t get wet.”
- **Sometimes in life we can feel like we are getting poked with holes. Friends move away, people get sick, our pets die. It hurts.**
- But we can trust God even when life hurts.
- **(Ask the volunteer if they were nervous.)** “Trusting God can be scary but we can ask God to strengthen our faith in Him.”
- “Sometimes we can’t see how things are going to work out, we just need to have faith in the One who does see, God. This is what faith is. Not being able to see but trusting in the One who does see. We may not be able to see God with our eyes, but we are sure He is always with us. Loving and protecting us through any fire we may go through.

PP 12> (Show the PowerPoint Bible verse.) “Do you remember our memory verse for today? Let’s say it together. *Hebrews 11:1 Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see.*”

Leader’s Notes:

PP 1> DAY 2 – UNSHAKABLE FOCUS: ACTS 16:16-34

Theme Memory Verse:

PP 2> Psalm 16:8 “I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”

**Leader: Practice with your group this week’s theme memory verse a couple of times.
*See if the friends can notice the picture is not in focus.**

Review and Introduction:

This week we are learning that we can be unshakable in the face of trials. Yesterday we studied the **unshakable faith** of three young Hebrew men. They were thrown into the fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to the King’s idol. Their courageous faith proved that God alone is the true King of Kings.

Today, we will join Paul and Silas as they praise God from a prison cell. They will show us their **unshakable focus** even in dark and painful circumstances. Their worship and praise became a witness to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Key Points:

- Praise changes everything when going through tough times.
- People notice how we go through difficult times.
- God is good, and He is always with us.
- Everyone needs Jesus, even those who mistreat us.

Leader: Since we are learning about unshakable focus, our word for today is “Focus”. Every time you hear the word focus shout out “Unshakable!” and make circles around your eyes with your hands or point to your eyes if you can.

Let’s practice. Today we are going to learn how Paul and Silas focused on praying and praising God – even while they were in prison!

Lesson:

PP 3> Do you like to sing? Do you like singing praises to God? I sure do! I love singing at church, in the car, while doing chores— **PP 4>** even in the shower! Where’s your favorite place to sing? What is your favorite song?

DAY 2 – UNSHAKABLE FOCUS: ACTS 16:16-34

Leader: You can make this personal by sharing your favorite places and songs you like to sing. Invite a few friends to give favorite songs and places they like to sing.

It's fun to sing and worship God when we feel good and everything is going our way. But what about those low moments—those sad and painful things we go through? Do we still think about praising God?

Daily Bible Verse: (Practice the daily Bible verse together)

PP 5> *Psalm 30:12* “So my heart will sing your praises. I can’t keep silent.”

PP 6> Our lesson today comes from Acts chapter 16:16-34. Paul and Silas were missionaries spreading the good news of Jesus in the city of Philippi. Philippi was a city that had a lot of false gods. There were not many Christians in that city. Paul and Silas were focused on telling others how they can know God through Jesus Christ.

PP 7> What does it mean to be focused? **Leader:** (Give the friends a chance to answer the question.) It means paying attention to one thing and not getting distracted by everything around you. Have you ever used a pair of binoculars?

Leader: Hold up a pair of binoculars. (Optional) When you first look into binoculars, objects may be a little fuzzy. But when you turn the knob, everything becomes clear and focused. You can see that one object you're looking for.

PP 8> One day, Paul and Silas were on their way to pray. An angry crowd grabbed them. The crowd didn't like that Paul healed a girl with an evil spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. And they didn't like Paul and Silas preaching against their false gods.

PP 9> They dragged them into the marketplace to face the Roman authorities. Paul and Silas were arrested and hurt very badly. They were found guilty of making trouble in the city.

DAY 2 – UNSHAKABLE FOCUS: ACTS 16:16-34

They were handed over to the jailer. The jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Paul and Silas were thrown into the deepest part of the prison. Their feet were chained so they couldn't get away.

Q. Why were Paul and Silas arrested, mistreated and thrown in prison?

A. They preached the good news of Jesus Christ, healed a slave girl of her evil spirit, and spoke against their false gods.

DAY 2 – OBJECT LESSON: POWER OF PRAISE

Supplies:

Paper chains – Connection Ministries will supply materials for making paper chains. Chains can be made on Days 1 and 2 before the Gathering begins. Our friends may make more chains than needed for the object lesson. If that is the case they can be used to decorate the small group, or large group areas.

Two chairs, for Paul and Silas to sit in.

Leader will pick friends beforehand to play the part of Paul and Silas, the Jailer and a few other friends to be other prisoners (Optional).

- **The Jailer will lead Paul and Silas to sit in the chairs and wrap paper chains around their hands and the other prisoners.**
- **PP 10>** “The Bible says that around midnight, Paul and Silas focused on praying and singing hymns to God—the other prisoners were listening!”
- “What do you think Paul and Silas sang about?” **(Invite a few friends to answer this question.)** “Yes, the good news of Jesus Christ!”

DAY 2 – OBJECT LESSON: POWER OF PRAISE

Continued

- **PP 11>** “We can know this good news too! Jesus tells us in *John 3:16* **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.”**”
- “This is the good news Paul and Silas were sharing with the people of Phillipi.
- “When we believe that Jesus died for our sins on the cross, and rose again, we can have eternal life too. Jesus gave them strength to keep their unshakable focus on praising God. Now that is something to sing about!”
- “Let’s sing some songs like Paul and Silas did.” **(Leader may choose one or both song and invite everyone to sing along.)**
- **PP 12>** Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. Rejoice, rejoice and again I say rejoice. Rejoice, rejoice and again I say rejoice.
- **PP 13>** Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.
- **PP 14>** “Suddenly, a powerful earthquake shook the prison from top to bottom.”
- **Leader tells the group to bang on the table to sound like an earthquake (optional).**
- The Bible says, *“All at once the prison doors flew open. Chains fell off all the prisoners!”* Wow! Praise is powerful! God shook the chains right off Paul and Silas and all the other prisoners! **(Paul and Silas break out of their paper chains).**
- “When we believe that Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose again conquering death, we can have eternal life. Jesus gave them strength to keep their unshakable **focus** on praising God. Now that is something to sing about!”

(The Leader can thank Paul and Silas and ask them to go back to their seats.)

DAY 2 – UNSHAKABLE FOCUS: ACTS 16:16-34

PP 15> Even when we go through hard things we can choose to focus our mind and heart on praying and praising God. Like Paul and Silas did. Remember we can pray and praise God anywhere!

He is always there to hear our prayers and listen to our praise. When we do, others around may be listening and learn about Jesus too.

Paul and Silas were still focused on their mission – to tell the good news of Jesus, even in prison. We can be missionaries and have unshakable **focus** like Paul and Silas. One of the songs they sang may have been our memory verse:

PP 16> *Psalm 30:12 “So my heart will sing your praises. I can’t keep silent.”*

Let’s say it together again.

Q. What happened while Paul and Silas were praying and singing to God?

A. There was a powerful earthquake. All at once the doors flew open. Paul and Silas’ chains fell off as well as the other prisoners. Wow! Praise is powerful.

PP 17> Wait! Our story isn’t over. This was Paul and Silas’ chance to escape, right? The earthquake made the jailer wake up. When he saw that the prison doors were open, he pulled out his sword and was going to harm himself. He thought the prisoners had escaped. The Romans had a rule that if a prisoner escaped the prison guard would be killed.

“Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’”

Everyone could have made a run for it. But Paul and Silas and the other prisoners stayed put. Paul assured the jailer that no one had left.

Q. What did the jailer do when he saw that the prison doors were open? And how did Paul respond?

DAY 2 – UNSHAKABLE FOCUS: ACTS 16:16-34

A. The jailer assumed the prisoners he was responsible for had escaped so he was going to harm himself. Paul cried out to him and stopped him from harming himself. He told him, “Don’t harm yourself. We are all here!”

Shaking with fear, the jailer fell down in front of Paul and Silas. “Sirs, what can I do to be saved?” Do you think the jailer may have been listening to Paul and Silas’ singing and praying?

PP 18> *They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you and everyone living in your house will be saved.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him.*

PP 19-20> That night, the jailer took Paul and Silas into his home and washed their wounds. He and his family were baptized. They shared a meal and rejoiced—they had become believers in Jesus Christ!

Q. How did the jailer and his whole family become believers in Jesus Christ?

A. The jailer may have been listening to them sing and pray. When the earthquake happened, all the prisoners, including Paul and Silas didn’t escape. The jailer fell down and asked them “Sirs, how can I be saved?”

Paul and Silas told them, “Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you and everyone living in your house will be saved.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him.

No one is too far from God’s love—not even those who hurt us. Sometimes we don’t understand why hard things happen. We may never know why. But because Paul and Silas stayed **focused** on their mission and didn’t try to escape, God used them to bring others to Jesus.

Just like Paul and Silas, we can praise God when we are hurting and trust Him through difficult times. And when we do, God may use us to share the good news of Jesus Christ to others.

DAY 2 – UNSHAKABLE FOCUS: ACTS 16:16-34

Praise is powerful—it reminds us that God is good, and that He is always with us. When we keep our eyes firmly **focused** on Jesus, even in difficult times, others will notice how we respond. Will we choose to focus on God praying and praising Him? If we do, people may notice, hear the good news, and even ask us, “What must I do to be saved?”

Leader’s Notes:

PP 1> DAY 3 – UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION: MATTHEW 7:24-27

Theme Memory Verse:

**PP 2> Psalm 16:8 “I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.”**

Leader: Practice with your group this week’s theme memory verse a couple of times.

Review and Introduction:

On our first day we learned about the unshakable faith of three young Hebrew men as they were thrown into the fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to the King’s idol. God proved He is the King of Kings.

Yesterday we joined Paul and Silas as they sang praises to God in a prison cell. They showed us their unshakable focus even in dark and painful circumstances. God used their praise to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Today, Jesus tells a parable of a wise man who built his house on unshakable foundation. The rains came and the winds blew but the house built on the Rock stood firm. We too can stand strong when our lives are built on the unshakable foundation of God’s Word.

Key Points:

- God’s Word is our unshakable foundation.
- It is not enough to simply hear God’s words – we must put them into practice.
- When we live by Jesus’ teachings, our lives stand firm through any storm.

<https://youtu.be/lkTZba7JD84> House Built on the Rock video

https://youtu.be/jDqc_rt74PM Parable of two builder’s video

The Leader may want to use a portion of either video during the lesson.

DAY 3 – UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION: MATTHEW 7:24-27

Leader: Today's word is foundation. Be listening for "foundation". Every time you hear it shout out "Unshakable".

Let's practice. The wise builder built his house on a solid **foundation**.

Daily Bible Verse: (Practice the daily Bible verse together)

PP 3> *Matthew 7:24 "So then, everyone who hears My words and puts them into practice is like a wise man. He builds his house on the rock."*

So what is a **foundation** anyway?

Leader: Give an opportunity for a few friends to answer the question.

PP 4> A **foundation** is the solid structure that holds up a building and keeps it steady.

PP 5> Without a solid **foundation**, a building can easily collapse with big storms or earthquakes.

PP 6> In the Day 1 lesson how were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego unshakable?

Leader: Allow a few friends to answer the question.

They had faith in God to save them from the flames—but even if He didn't, they refused to bow to an idol. They knew that only God was worthy of their worship. Their faith and trust in God were part of their strong foundation.

PP 7> In Day 2 how were Paul and Silas unshakable?

Leader: Allow a few friends to answer the question.

DAY 3 – UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION: MATTHEW 7:24-27

Even beaten and chained in a deep dark prison cell, they focused on God by praying and singing praise to Him. They focused on their mission not their circumstances – to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Their prayers and worship were part of their strong foundation.

In these two stories, they built their lives on an unshakable **foundation**.

Our lesson today comes from Matthew 5:1-2 and 7:24-27.

PP 8> *After Jesus called His disciples, He began to teach and heal people all over Galilee. Large crowds of people followed Him.*

When Jesus saw the large crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and he began to teach them.

Jesus taught them many things on the mountainside. This teaching is known as “The Sermon on the Mount.”

In His sermon Jesus taught:

1. **PP 9> How we are to pray.** He showed us an example by giving us “The Lord’s Prayer”. We can pray anytime, anywhere, about anything. Jesus loves us and wants us to spend time with Him talking to Him and asking Him for help. (Matthew 6:5-13)
2. **PP 10> We can seek God and His kingdom** rather than worry or be anxious about what we need. Instead of worrying, we can read our Bibles, say a favorite verse, ask God to give us His peace, go to church/Friendship group, call a friend who can help. (Matthew 6:25-27, 33)
3. **PP 11> We can love others** by treating them the way we would want to be treated. He taught us that we are even to love our enemies and forgive people who treat us badly. We can love others because God loves us. (Matthew 5:43-45)

DAY 3 – UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION: MATTHEW 7:24-27

4. **PP 12> We can let our light shine** so others will see Jesus in us and glorify God the Father. Showing love and compassion to others is a way to shine the light of Jesus. (Matthew 5:14-15)

Jesus taught many more lessons for us to live by in His Sermon on the Mount. These teachings are the building blocks for our unshakable foundation. He ended His teaching with a parable.

PP 13> I am not sure why Jesus used a pair of bulls to teach but...Is this what Jesus meant? No, of course not. Jesus was not talking about a pair of bulls.

Does anyone know what a parable is?

Leader: Allow a few friends to answer the question.

PP 14> A parable is a short, everyday story with an important message. Jesus loved using parables because they made His teaching easier to understand. They show us how God wants us to live.

Q. What is a parable?

A. A parable is a short, everyday story with an important message. Jesus loved using parables because they made His teaching easier to understand. They show us how God wants us to live.

This was the parable Jesus told. It is from Matthew 7:24-27.

PP 15,16> *“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. 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.*

DAY 3 – UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION: MATTHEW 7:24-27

PP 17, 18> *“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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

PP 19> Jesus is telling us about two builders. One who built his house on the unshakable foundation of rock, the other who built his house on just sand with no foundation.

PP 20> Jesus is teaching us an important spiritual lesson about how to live. If we build our lives on the solid rock of God's Word, we will be wise. When storms (trials and challenges) come into our lives, our foundation will stay strong and unshakable. It will hold firm through even the hardest times.

Q. Why is a foundation important in this parable?

A. Without a solid foundation, a building can easily collapse with stresses like storms or earthquakes. With a solid foundation of faith and trust in God, we can stand strong when the storms come.

PP 21> Have you ever gone through a storm in your life when you thought you wouldn't be able to stand strong? Maybe you were sick, maybe you had some trouble at work, maybe someone you love moved away or died. These are hard times or storms in our lives, and they happen to everyone at some point.

Or maybe you are still going through a hard season of life. When we face storms, it is important to be prepared. It's important to have our firm foundation in Jesus so we will not crumble.

But how can we build a strong foundation for our lives?

PP 22> The most important part of our foundation we can build our lives on is Jesus Christ, trusting Him to be our Lord and Savior. When we do, He will send His Holy Spirit to live in us. The Holy Spirit helps guide us, comfort us and encourages us through the storms that come our way.

DAY 3 – OBJECT LESSON: A FIRM FOUNDATION

Supplies:

A large Bible or several Bibles laid together to form a foundation

A white or tan bed sheet, curtain or cloth

Bricks with words on them (Connection Ministries will supply the bricks and words)

One 6-8 foot table or two smaller tables for the foundations

Arrange the sheet on one side of the table. Then put the large Bible, or several Bibles placed on the other side of the table.

- “We are going to build two walls for our houses on a foundation. Do you remember what a foundation is?” **(Give friends a chance to answer the question.)**
- “A foundation is the solid structure that holds up a building and keeps it steady. Without a solid foundation, a building can easily collapse when big storms come or when an earthquake makes the ground unsteady.”
- “The best foundation to build our lives on is God’s Word. **(Hold up a large Bible.)** This represents the rock in the parable Jesus told. He said when we hear His words and build our lives on His teaching, putting them into practice, we will be like the wise builder who built his house on the Rock.”
- “But if we hear His words and don’t put them into practice, we will be like the foolish builder who built his life on nothing but sand.” **(Show the sheet of sand)**
- “Here are a bunch of bricks to start our building project. Each brick has words on it. **(Hold a brick with the words)** Some are wise words and some are foolish. I would like you to choose which foundation they should go on. Let’s start building!”
- **Have friends take turns building the wall either on the strong foundation or a foundation on sand.** (God’s Word, Pray, Going to Church and Friendship Group, helping others, praising God, sharing Jesus with others, shining for Jesus, don’t worry but seek God, etc.) (watching too much TV, arguing with others, skipping church/Friendship, refusing to help others, laziness, complaining, gossip, etc.)

DAY 3 – OBJECT LESSON: A FIRM FOUNDATION

Continued

- **Build both walls until you get it about 8-10 bricks tall. Talk about each word and how they can either build a strong foundation or weak foundation.**

- “Which foundation is the firm foundation? The foundation built on sand or the foundation built on the Bible?”

- “Let’s see what happens when the wind blows on our walls.” **(Invite the whole group to blow on the walls from where they are sitting)**

- **You or another volunteer tug on the sheet until the bricks on the sand fall down.**

- “What did you notice about the two houses?”
Invite a few friends to answer the question.
 - They looked the same.
 - One was built on the **foundation** of God’s Word, the Bible.
 - The other was built on a foundation of sand. It was very weak and not strong enough to hold up the house during a storm.

- “If we want to stand strong during difficult times we need to build our lives on the strong foundation of God’s Word.”

- “At the beginning of the parable Jesus says that both builders heard His words, but only one put them into practice—only one chose to apply His teaching and obey.”

Q. Which builder heard Jesus’ teaching and chose to put it into practice?

A. The wise builder.

DAY 3 – UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION: MATTHEW 7:24-27

PP 23> Hearing God's Word is the beginning but putting it into practice makes a solid foundation. It's not enough to hear God's Word, read it, even memorize it. If we don't live it, that is, put it into practice, it doesn't change us. The real difference comes down to hearing and obeying versus hearing and doing nothing.

Let's look again at our list of a few of Jesus foundational teachings and how we can put them into practice. **Have the friends give ideas of ways we can put Jesus' words into practice.**

1. **Praying: How do you like to pray?** We can pray anytime, anywhere and for anything. We can pray in the morning, before a meal, at work, while waiting for someone, while going for a walk, or before we go to sleep at night.
2. **Seeking God instead of worry: How do you seek God?**
We can read or listen to the Bible, have a favorite memory verse, pray and ask God to help us, go to church or Friendship group, listen to praise music, call someone you know will encourage you.
3. **Loving others and forgiving our enemies: How do you love others?** Be kind to those who hurt us. Ask God to show you ways you can love others. Tell them you love them and forgive them. Do something nice for them.
4. **Shinning our light so others can see Jesus: How do you shine for Jesus?**
Lend a helping hand to those in need, show compassion and kindness to others. Encourage a friend, a neighbor, family member, or someone you just met. Give them a hug or smile.

DAY 3 – UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION: MATTHEW 7:24-27

PP 24> Just like the wise builder in Jesus' parable, we have a choice every day about where we build our lives, on rock or sand. Storms will come—challenges, disappointments, worries—but when our **foundation** is on the solid rock of God's Word, we will stand firm.

Let's not only hear Jesus' words but put them into practice. That's how we build an unshakable life that honors God.

Leader's Notes: