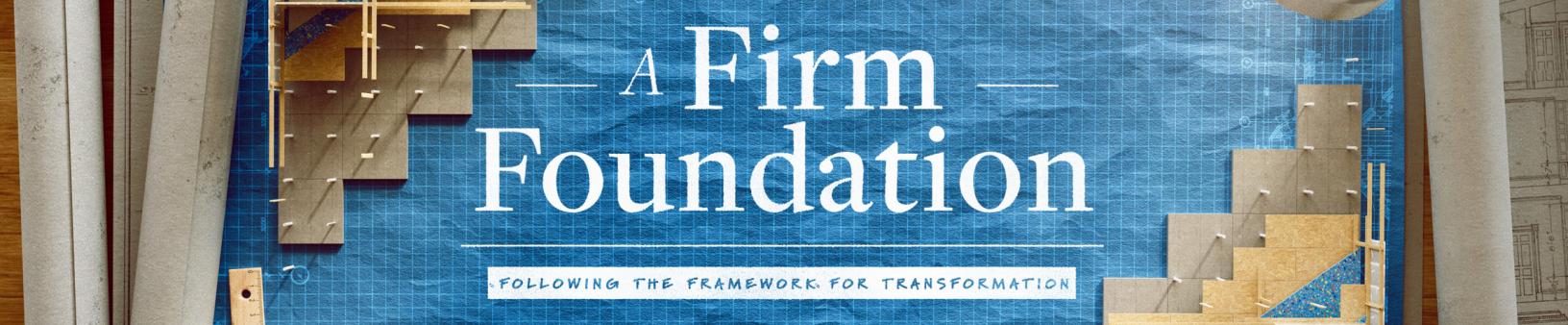




A Firm Foundation

FOLLOWING THE FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMATION

Small Group Study Guide

Sermon Title: Holding Up the Truth in a World of Lies

Scripture Focus: 1 Timothy 3:14-16, 1 Timothy 4:1-6, & 2 Timothy 4:3

Overview

We live in a culture where truth is often treated as subjective—something we can customize, edit, or define for ourselves. In this study, we will look at Paul's instructions to Timothy in Ephesus. We will explore what it means for the Church to be the "pillar and foundation of the truth," how God has revealed His ultimate truth in the person of Jesus, and how we can guard ourselves against the subtle, destructive lies of our modern world.

Icebreaker Question

- **What is your favorite board game?** If you could permanently change or delete just *one* rule of that game to make it easier for you to win, what would it be?

Part 1: The Blueprint for Daily Conduct

Read 1 Timothy 3:14–15a

"Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household..."

Discussion Questions

1. Paul wrote this letter because he desperately wanted to be with Timothy but was delayed. Have you ever felt the tension of wanting to guide or help someone you care about from a distance? How did you handle it?
2. The Greek word Paul uses for **"conduct"** literally means *"to move around in a place."*
 - How does viewing Christian conduct as "how we move through daily life" change the way we view our faith?
 - What is the danger of keeping our faith "on a shelf on Sundays" rather than letting it guide how we move through our homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods on Monday?

Part 2: What is Truth?

Read 1 Timothy 3:15b

"...which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth."

Deep Dive: Two Ways of Looking at Truth

- **Greek Word (*Aletheia*):** Means "un-hidden," "un-concealed," or "naked reality." It is like a spotlight piercing a dark room.
- **Hebrew Word (*Emet*):** Means stability, firmness, and absolute, unshakeable reliability. It is a rock beneath your feet.

Discussion Questions

1. Abraham Lincoln once asked an audience how many legs a dog has if you count the tail as a leg. When they answered "five," he corrected them: *"The answer is still four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg."*
 - Where do you see our culture trying to "call a tail a leg" when it comes to morality, identity, or truth?
 - Why is making the human heart the ultimate architect of reality so dangerous for a society?
2. Paul uses architectural terms to describe the Church's relationship to truth:
 - **The Pillar (Projects the Truth/Light):** Like the massive pillars of the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus that held up a giant pagan lie, the Church is called to hold the actual Truth high for the world to see.
 - **The Foundation/Buttress (Protects the Truth/Salt):** The Church stands immovable against shifting cultural tides.
 - **Question:** In what practical ways can our small group *project* (light) and *protect* (salt) the truth in our community today?

Part 3: The Mystery Revealed

Read 1 Timothy 3:16

"Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:

He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory."

Discussion Questions

1. David compares the "mystery of godliness" to a sealed envelope in the board game *Clue*. For centuries, humanity guessed at what was inside the cosmic envelope. But God didn't leave us guessing; He ripped it open.
 - According to verse 16, the mystery is not a set of rules, but a **Person** (Jesus). Why is it vital to remember that true godliness springs from a relationship with Jesus rather than a religious checklist?
2. Read the **Beloved Declaration** below:

The Beloved Declaration

"I am not defined by my past, my performance, or my productivity. I am defined by the voice of the Father who looks at me and says, *'This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.'*"

I do not work *for* God's love, I work *from* it. Because of Jesus, I have moved from the courtroom to the family room. I am no longer a defendant trying to prove my worth; I am an adopted heir with a permanent seat at the

table. I am 100% loved and 100% accepted, even when I am not 100% approved of in my actions...

Because I am securely loved, I am free to be holy. Grace does not give me a license to sin; it gives me the heart to obey. I say NO to ungodliness not because I am afraid of God's rejection, but because I am captivated by the One who died to keep me."

- Which phrase or sentence in this declaration resonates with you the most right now? Why? If you were to take God's Truth (Word) and write a personal declaration what would it focus on and look like?

Part 4: Don't Buy the Lies & Itching Ears

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-5 & 2 Timothy 4:3

"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons... For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."

Discussion Questions

1. In Paul's day, the false teachers in Ephesus were copying the local Artemis cult by forbidding marriage and certain foods (legalism). Today, we face different lies. Let's look at three modern cultural lies:
 - **Lie 1: "Greasy Grace"** (treating grace as a license to sin rather than a power to transform).
 - **Lie 2: "Deconstructionism"** (dismantling the core truths of Scripture under the guise of "embracing mystery").
 - **Lie 3: "Dismantling the Family Unit"** (redefining marriage, erasing biological gender, or normalizing cohabitation).
 - **Question:** Which of these three lies do you think is the most subtle and dangerous to Christians today? Why? What other lies are you spoken in our world today.
2. Statistics show a massive decline in belief among self-identified Christians regarding the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and biblical morality (e.g., only 33% believe in absolute moral truth).
 - How do we guard our own hearts against developing "itching ears" that seek out teachers who only tell us what we *want* to hear?

Conclusion & Application

- It is the truth of God that provides you the foundation to swim in the ocean of God's Grace and it is His grace that allows you to obey his truth. Truth gives grace its depth and grace gives truth its breadth.

What does this mean ?

If our theology doesn't change our trajectory, it isn't saving faith. As you close your group time, take a few minutes of quiet reflection or share together:

- **What is one area of your daily "conduct" (where you move around) that needs to be brought into alignment with God's absolute truth this week?**
- How can this group help keep you accountable in grace and truth?