

Foundations for Life

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. Matt 7:24-25

From the Scriptures, as well as psychological theories of attachment and development, we learn that every person needs a solid foundation for life. Ideally, we receive that foundation from our parents who stand in the place of God to the helpless infant, meeting physical, emotional and intellectual needs. Once firmly grounded, children launch from that foundation to explore their own paths in life.

From our families we are meant to learn the following basic truths. The first is based on faith in the generic sense, faith that there is logical order, physical protection and practical justice in the world. Faith teaches us that there is something larger than ourselves, some purpose or Person within which we are **SAFE** even in the storms of life. The second truth is based on unconditional love and comes directly from our inclusion in the family which teaches us that we **BELONG** in community. Finally, our family establishes us on the path to the third truth, personal identity. Family interactions teach us whether we are valuable, good, talented, intelligent, etc. Family teaches us whether we are **SPECIAL**, whether we are lovable. Look over the diagram below and consider how it applies to your upbringing.

Building Blocks

What we are supposed to learn:

What we struggle with when a block is missing or deficient:



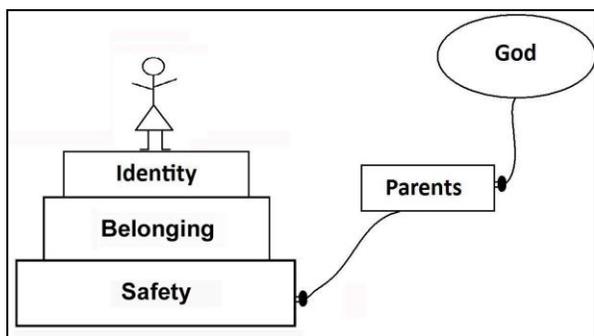
What did you learn about each of these truths from your early family life? What did you miss? Use the following spaces to journal some of your thoughts about each building block.

I am safe:

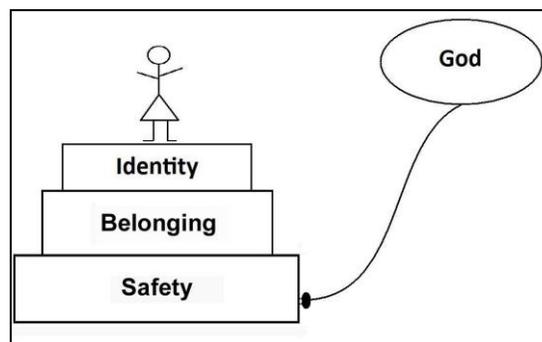
I belong:

I am special:

In “the perfect family” the source for a child’s foundation in life comes from her parents, who in turn draw their own foundation for life directly from God. As children grow, it is a natural process for the well-grounded child to begin to “unplug” from parents and for parents to gradually relinquish their control. As a result, the child grows into a healthy adult who is plugged directly into God as his or her own power source for safety, belonging and identity.



The Healthy Child



The Healthy Adult

When a child does not receive one or more of his foundational building blocks from parents, he will find ways of getting those things for himself. For example, the child who does not find safety at home may learn that she must control every situation or worry about every future possibility in order to be safe. A man who never fit in anywhere may go from woman to woman trying to find a sense of belonging. The child who is given an unhealthy identity, such as “the dumb one,” will search for other ways to feel valuable. When we supply our own safety, community and identity (usually with less-than-satisfactory results), *we never learn to base our security in God*. We don’t know how to draw power for secure living from an external source because we’ve always tried to create it for ourselves, and we continue doing that.

The good news is that it is not too late to find your grounding in the Lord of the universe. *Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me (Ps 27:10)*. He stands ready to be the source of your safety, belonging and identity if you are ready to unplug yourself from the other places where you have looked for these things. It may take some time. Remember that a child receives her foundation for life in small ways every day for 18 years or more. You can turn to God for that kind of parenting **every day**, too. As you forsake your other coping mechanisms and remind yourself of God's truths, your foundation blocks will become stronger and steadier.

Safety: *I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. Ps. 4:8*
See also Is. 41:10; Rom. 8:28-39.

* Where and when do you need to seek safety in Christ alone? How will you do this?

Belonging: *Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. John 8:35*
See also Rom. 8:15-17; Rom 14:8; Gal 3:29; 1 Peter 2:9-10.

* Where and when do you need to seek unconditional love in Christ alone? How will you do this?

* God also fulfills our need to belong through His body, the church. To what extent does the church (or other spiritual community) meet your need for belonging?

Identity: *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Ps 139:13-14*
See also Is. 43:4; Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 1.

* Where and when do you need to seek validation and purpose in Christ alone? How will you do this?

* Is there anyone you would like to ask to pray for you along this journey?