

LET GOD ARISE!

Like a Master Builder Prayer Guide #6

Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis



Master Builder of Living Stones

1 Corinthians 3.10-11

On the Sure Foundation

Don L. Davis (sung to the tune of Like a River Glorious, [meter: 6.5.6.5 doubled])

God's own fellow workers, his high call embrace
Toil upon God's building, by his wondrous grace
Like a master builder, set apart your skill
On God's sure foundation evermore to build.

On the Sure Foundation, Christ, the Cornerstone,
Chosen Stone and Precious—build on Christ alone.

On no other footing, or foundation laid
Only on the Savior, should your work be made
Take care how you labor on the Rock to frame
Living stones that honor his exalted name.

Stone that's tried and precious, laid in Zion strong
Stone the builders cast off, now, the Cornerstone
Wood, and hay, and straw, then, never on him lay
Trials of fire shall test and all our works display.

Gold and silver lay down, set the precious stones
Let the Day disclose it, make your labor known
From our Grand Designer get that full reward—
Joyful recognition from our risen Lord.

On the Sure Foundation, build, and labor long
Edify God's temple, make his people strong
Like a master builder, labor for the Son
Work till all is finished, and the job is done.



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Director of World
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as World Impact's Vice
President of Leadership
Development.*

The Challenge of Becoming a Master Builder

1 Cor. 3.5-15 - What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. [6] I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. [7] So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. [8] He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. [9] For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. [10] According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Jesus Is the Stone, the Foundation We Build Upon

Ps. 118.22-23 - The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. [23] This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Acts 4.5-12 - On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, [6] with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. [7] And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" [8] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, [9] if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, [10] let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you



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Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV)

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well. [11] This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. [12] And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Christ Builds His Church through His Builders on the Rock

Matt. 16.18 - And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Heb. 3.1-6 - Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, [2] who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. [3] For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. [4] (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) [5] Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, [6] but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

We Believers Are the Workmanship of God, Being Built into a Spiritual House

Eph. 2.10 - For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Eph. 2.19-22 - So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.



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1 Pet. 2.4-6 - As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, [5] you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [6] For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

God Has Given Master Builders to the Church to Build It to Maturity

Eph. 4.11-16 - And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Christ’s Desire for His People Is Unity

John 17.21-23 - that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

The Church Is the House of God

1 Tim. 3.15 - if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.



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2 Cor. 6.16 - What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

No One Can Build on Any Other Foundation Except Christ

1 Cor. 3.9-17 - For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. [10] According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as



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through fire. [16] Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

The House Is Also a Household

Gal. 6.10 - So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

1 John 3.13-19 - Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. [14] We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. [16] By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. [17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. [19] By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;

1 John 5.1 - Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of him.

3 John 1.5-8 - Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, [6] who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. [7] For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. [8] Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

All Building Is Done by Christ to Make Us Mature in Christ

Amos 9.11-12 - "In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of



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old, [12] that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the Lord who does this.

Matt. 16.18 - And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Eph. 2.10 - For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Eph. 2.20-22 - built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Col. 2.7 - Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ■

My Own Experience of Real Excellence

ONE OF the fondest memories I have is working with my father on his landscaping business. Every Saturday morning, my brother and I would join my father in his loud but faithful Chevy pickup (specially modified to carry more payload!) en route to his yards to mow and trim. With a full service business, my father did everything imaginable in a yard, commercial or residential. We took down and trimmed trees, did light carpentry work, mowed lawns, planted gardens, even re-landscaped entire areas. What was needed in taking care of this kind of work (in addition to a huge amount of sweat and brawn) were tools of all kinds, tools that cut, sawed, clipped, mowed, hammered, tightened, shaved, etc. My father was a master with tools, able to use all types in all kinds of venues and to solve all kinds of situations. I marveled at his ease and skill with them. He was cautiously



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respectful of their power and ability to do harm, but wielded them masterfully on the particular jobs for which he was hired.

To do the kind of sophisticated lawn care my father did demanded training and carefulness. I am not sure if I ever learned just where or how he acquired the various skills to enable him to do these kinds of tasks, but it was evident to me, even as a child, that he had great ability. To do the work of a master, to possess skill that results in transformed lawns and homes and businesses—that is something I grew up with and enjoyed, even though my father died when I was only ten years old. The few years I saw him work and worked beside him on seemingly countless lawns has greatly shaped to this day my own sense of care and excellence in my work, albeit I spend most of my time sharpening ideas and employing words as my tool and trade.

Paul, God's Master Builder

Paul was a person well acquainted with trade skills (as a professional tent maker himself), and wrote illustratively about the analogy between building up the people of God and working as a skilled master builder on a strong, secure foundation:

1 Cor. 3.10-15 - According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.



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In this important text, Paul speaks of his spiritual vocation as an apostle, and charges the Corinthians to join his work as a skilled master builder. In our work to make disciples in the city, and to facilitate church planting movements that will transform the cities of America and the world, we must be careful in both where we build and how we build.

As to where we build, Paul suggests that as a skilled master builder he laid a foundation, and someone else in building on it. No one can lay, says Paul, on any other foundation than the one which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. Only on the person and work of Jesus Christ can any lasting transformation of individual, family, and community life be affected. Only through faith in him can we see lasting change occur in the lives and walks of the millions who still do not know our Father. Paul was neither irresponsible nor disinterested in his work; he built with the highest skill and the finest materials on the most secure and strong foundation. This is the essence of what it means to labor as a master builder of the living stones on the foundation that is Christ.

As to how to build, Paul tells us that we can elect to build on the foundation with choice things or with fleeting things. We can employ in our building either gold, silver, precious stones or wood, hay, or straw—all of these are laid on the foundation that is Christ. At his coming, our Lord will disclose the value of each of our working, who will reveal as if by fire the kind of work we have done. If as master builders we carefully built on the foundation with the best materials and highest skills, our work will survive, and we will receive a reward. If, however, we build on the foundation with the weakest materials laid in a sloppy fashion, we will suffer loss, although we ourselves will be saved, as it were, as if we escaped from a burning building.

Anyone who knows anything about urban ministry understands that Paul's analogy makes good sense. Like master builders, we do construction work on the building of God. As those who live in neighborhoods in perpetual need of remodeling and renovation, we know how transformed a home or



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neighborhood can be when you get the right laborers with high quality materials on a construction site. Likewise, we also understand the havoc and injustice that can occur when unscrupulous, sloppy workers use defective materials in their work. The former work produces remarkable blessing and pride, the latter produces shame and waste.

Our Challenge: Becoming Master Builders in the City

Whatever we do to further the work of the Christ in the city, including the multitude of good and decent things that we ought to do for our neighbors in the city, we must preach and teach Christ. Nothing can obscure the fact that lasting change only occurs when men and women, boys and girls encounter the living Savior. Yet, we build on Christ, demonstrating in justice and love the practical deeds that make him clear and real to those for whom we labor. Paul's good insight should encourage us greatly; we all must build on the foundation laid, and all of us can either do that excellently with the best materials, or poorly with defective resources. The choice is ours, and everything is at stake in the choice we make on this.

After the work was done on a lawn, my father did something that has been etched in my mind decades later. After all the machines were off, all the work completed, all the trash removed, and lawn grass bagged, he would tour the property. Slowly and carefully my father would walk around the property, looking at the result of our work, checking out what might need to be made even a little more beautiful, tidy, or carefully done. After carefully observing everything that he had done, and canvassing all the property, he would give it his internal "OK," signing off, as it were, on the quality of his work before he presented it to the customer to assess and evaluate. His own internal commitment to excellence wouldn't allow him to do shoddy work; it had nothing to do with payment or remuneration. Truly, my father was a "master builder" in his implementation of his work.



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It has been many years since I as a kid observed my father take his tours. In all I strive to do for the Lord, I too want to take a mental tour, and ensure that we are building on the foundation that is Christ with the best materials, in the best manner, for the highest reasons. Those of us who love the city, who seek to evangelize the lost and do justice for the poor, who seek to facilitate church planting movements—we should revisit whether or not we are living as Paul envisioned his ministry to represent: *Are we working through God's good grace like skilled master builders with the finest materials on the foundation that has already been laid, the foundation which is Jesus Christ?*

Ultimately, only God's Spirit working through God's grace can enable us to become the kind of workers whose work, after Christ's testing by fire, will remain and last. May God grant us the vision and strength to strive to give our all for God's best, all for the sake of God's glory through his Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. ■

Biblical Principle of the Month

During this Season of Eastertide, with our recent celebration of Easter and the upcoming observance of the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, let us declare that God's grace has granted us the amazing privilege to become master builders, using the choicest materials with the highest levels of skill on the true foundation that is Jesus Christ. May the Lord grant us new energy, resourcefulness, and creativity to lay on the right foundation the kind of labor that will both glorify God and result in transformed lives and neighborhoods in the cities of America.

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An Example of a Master Builder: Paul, the Apostle

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