

**“Choosing a Building Site” by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 02050529**  
**Romans 1:16-17; 3:22b-28 and Matthew 7:21-29**  
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Many families are camping out on this Memorial Day weekend. Campers must be careful about the location on which they pitch their tents. The tent should be placed on high ground. One weekend while camping on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, our family selected a site that looked comfortable and soft. We had great time touring the area and learning the history of the great logging period. We cooked a tasty dinner, cleaned up, and watched as storm clouds gathered above. With the first drops of rain, we headed for the tent. We were thankful for that tent because of the way it protected us from the downpour. But the tent, no matter how well constructed, did not protect us from the water that came rushing through later on the ground. We had pitched the tent in a low spot. Our sleeping bags were soaked.

Three years ago our daughter got married at our log cabin on Owasco Lake, one of the Finger Lakes of Central New York. Before we could host the wedding, we had to re-build the deck because I built the original deck incorrectly. It should have been dropped three inches below the first floor instead of on the same level which allowed water to seep in under the logs and cause some rotting. The original posts were only four by fours and were not buried deeply enough into the ground. Well, what could you expect? It was my first major building project. The new posts are six by sixes, sturdy enough to hold the crowd of two hundred that viewed the wedding. We sank the posts into holes dug forty-two inches deep. That keeps the bottoms below the frost line. Such a deep foundation is important, because the frost of central New York winters can get under the posts and heave them up and down. The heaving ruins a deck.

The selection of a building site is important, and Jesus gives us some tips for choosing one. Chapters five through seven of Matthew are called Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount.” Matthew says Jesus climbed up the mountain (in actuality, a hill on the Eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee), and instructed his followers.

That Sermon on the Mount includes what we call the “Beatitudes.” They are attitudes of happiness or blessedness, like, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup>In that Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught his followers what we call the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of his sermon on the mount he told his listeners that those who heard his words and did them were like the wise one who built a house upon a rock, and those who listened, as though being entertained, and did not do his words, were like the foolish one who built a house upon the sand. We all know what happened. The rains fell, the floods came and the wind beat upon the houses. The one built on rock withstood the storms but the one built on sand couldn’t take it and collapsed. There follow Jesus’ significant words, “And great was its fall.”

There were two different foundations, rock and sand. Doing Jesus’ words is the key. We are not in this Christianity business to merely say some words, like “I believe in Jesus.” We are followers of Jesus Christ, doing what he said. He gave us instructions, not to earn our way to heaven— our works will not save us— but to show or manifest the fact that we have been saved through him.

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 5:3

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 6:9-13

Our belief in Jesus Christ should make a difference in how we act. I recently heard the story of a minister who swindled and cheated a family out of their family business. He knew what he was doing and he was able to get away with it. When confronted about how he could be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and steal a business from a family, his reply was, “Oh, Christianity, that’s just a Sunday thing. The rest of the week, I’m out to make money.”

Christianity doesn’t work like that. It is a full-time commitment. What Jesus said in the preceding sermon on the mount included: be a light to the world around you; beware of anger and lustful looking; turn the other cheek; go the extra mile; love your enemies; don’t be conspicuous and hypocritical in prayer or other acts of faith; stop acquiring worldly possessions, but instead, store up divine treasures; do not judge others; ask God in faith, and do to others what you would like to have done to you.

This is the high ground. This is like pitching your tent away from the gullies of rainstorms and flooding. The rocky high ground is sturdy and stable, like the mountains of western North Carolina.

Jesus’ words in the sermon on the mount can be summed up this way: we cannot treat other persons as though they do not matter. Every person is a creation of God’s, a dearly-loved child of God. Start building your faith by digging a deep foundation, one that begins below the frost line. Avoid the chilly cold breezes of anger and judging the motives of others. Get below frosty doctrines and teachings that lead you to think you know the only proper way to worship God. Warm up to others, welcoming them in the name of Jesus Christ.

Build your faith by using sturdy six by six posts of firm commitment. Do not be afraid to commit yourself to another person. The only way to reach a full-numbered wedding anniversary of forty, fifty, or sixty years is to commit yourself in love to another.

Do not be afraid to commit yourself to the organized church. The only way to be a part of the body of Christ is to commit yourself in love to those who make up the body and to its very foundation, Jesus. As in marriage, we commit ourselves to church through good times and bad, not just when we think we’re deriving benefit. We commit ourselves in order to benefit others and the world around us.

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Do not be afraid to tear down a faith built on a poor foundation. Save the good building materials by carefully dismantling them. Choose a good new solid building site, and use strong sturdy materials, materials that come from Jesus’s words.