



# Series Overview and Guides

2018-2019 ANNUAL THEME | SERIES 1

SEPTEMBER 2018

## Objective

*what we hope to see God accomplish in us through this study*

That we practice the proven principles of the only institution truly built to last – Jesus’ church.

### STATEMENTS OF THE OBJECTIVE

“Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, overflowing with gratitude.”

—Colossians 2:6-7 HCSB

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock.”

—Matthew 7:24 HCSB

“The only truly reliable source of stability is a strong inner core and the willingness to change and adapt everything except that core.”

—Jim Collins & Jerry Porras  
*Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*

## Premise

*why we are studying this*

In a world of vacillation and uncertainty, Christians need to build their lives on scripture, solidarity, and the Spirit. These practices transformed our forefathers’ lives and can do the same for us. Following their lead allows us to rejoice in the amazing truth that Jesus’ universal, invisible church has endured and will continue to outlast all that can possibly be thrown at it.

### STATEMENTS OF THE PREMISE

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

—Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV

“But you, dear friends, as you build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life... Now to Him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.”

—Jude 20-25 HCSB

## Theme

*what the study is about*

The very first Christians in the very first church approached this new *ekklesia* (assembly) with wonder and wisdom. They adopted three important practices that all Christians of all eras should emulate:

- Devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching; i.e., holding fast to truth.
- Broke bread as members of the new covenant fellowship.
- Prayed under the Spirit’s influence (the major context of the passage).

### STATEMENTS OF THE THEME

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

—Acts 2:42 NASB

“At various times in Acts, especially in the early chapters, Luke gives summary reports of how the church is doing. Here we have the first. In it our author describes what a biblical church really looks like, not only in the first century, but in every century from the Lord’s ascension until his second coming.”

—Kenneth O. Gangel  
*Learning to be the Church: A Study of Acts*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

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## PERMISSION

You are welcome to copy and distribute this study guide for your personal or group study.

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SERIES 1 | SESSION 1

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2018-2019

BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 2:42, Matthew 16:18

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus establishes His church and the believers who comprise it. He expects and encourages all His church to build upon His words so that all is constructed for permanence. In the very first moments of the church's birth, we see a powerful combination of scripture, solidarity, and the Spirit. This combination is the plan for continuing to establish Christians and churches that are built to last.

OBJECTIVE

We build for permanence.

THE PLAN

The early Church—the *ekklesia*—was characterized by three attributes that reveal God's plan for the Church. In Acts 2:42, the believers were:

- Holding fast
- Growing together
- Yielding to God's Spirit

Each of these characteristics will be the focus of a lesson in this series.

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we will build to last personally and corporately for the glory of God.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

# Session 1: Build to Last

1. Read Matthew 16:13-18.
  - Who is the builder of the universal Church?
  - What are some other images in the New Testament used to describe who Christ Jesus is? Consider the following:
    - Hebrews 12:1-2
    - Luke 20:17; Ephesians 2:19-21
    - 1 Corinthians 3:10-11
2. Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.
  - In verse 10, how does Paul encourage us to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ?
  - What do verses 13-15 tell us about our work built on the foundation of Christ?
3. In Acts 2:42, Luke describes the early church of the disciples and 3,000 new converts. Discuss how the three aspects of scripture, solidarity, and Spirit were—and are still—essential in the work of building the church to last.
4. The Church is built up of individual Christians. As we grow personally and corporately in the areas of scripture, solidarity, and yielding to the Spirit, we help build the Church to last. Use the addendum to assess yourself in each area.
  - If you are weak at holding fast to truth, engage in a genuine Bible study, and commit to attending worship regularly at a Bible-centered church.
  - If you are weak at growing together with other believers (solidarity), seek to join a small group in that Bible-centered church. Also, get to know those who worship near you at church.
  - If you are weak at yielding to the Holy Spirit, commit to a daily set time of prayer and surrender
5. Read 1 Peter 4:7-11.
  - How should we act believing that the end of all things is at hand?
  - What is the grand goal of all of our building, and of everything (vs.11)?





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BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Selected scriptures

KEY IDEAS

THEME

The first Christians stood on the truth despite serious opposition and cultural upheaval. They held/devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. This becomes a hallmark of servant-leadership, listed in 1 Timothy 3 as a character quality needed in Elders.

OBJECTIVE

We stand on God's Word.

HOLDING FAST

The early believers held fast (προσκαρτερέω *proskartereo*) to the apostles' teaching. Holding fast to the truth...

- informs who we are (1 John 3:1)
- gets us through the storms (Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:13-15)
- changes us (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

SCRIPTURE DEFINES US

"There may be danger, there may be challenges, there may be defeats, there may be hardships; but those things don't define us. Only scripture defines us."

—Hiram Sasser

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that the Holy Spirit deepens our desire for God's Word.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

## Session 2: Hold Fast

1. Do you spend as much time reading, studying, discussing, and meditating on God's Word as you would like? If not, what distracts us from doing so? What keeps us from having God's Word as our constant guide?
2. Read Acts 2:42-47.
  - What did these believers do to hold fast to truth?
  - How did they show and reinforce their unity of purpose?
3. 1 John 3:1 states that as believers we are children of God. God's Word informs who we are. Which of these biblical descriptions of a Christian is your favorite expression, and why?
  - 1 Corinthians 12:27;
  - Ephesians 1:5
  - Philippians 3:20
  - 2 Corinthians 5:20
4. Read 2 Timothy 3:13-17 together.
  - Identify the many benefits of holding fast to God's Word found in these verses.
  - Discuss which of these benefits are relevant today. What should our response be?
5. How can we be more earnest about God's Word and its role in our life? Discuss the following suggestions. What other ways have been effective for you?
  - Lean on God's amazing grace, not your own strength. Ask God to give you a deeper hunger for His Word.
  - Proverbs has 30 chapters. Build a daily and monthly habit of reading the chapter corresponding to today's date.
  - Use down time to meditate on God's Word. For example, put a Bible app on the first screen of your phone, and move games and social media apps to a different screen. Prioritize God's Word over entertainment.
  - Use a study Bible to read the introductions to each book of the Bible, and prayerfully decide which one hits closest to what you need to change or learn right now. Then read and pray through that book.
  - Join a Bible study, and hold fast to God's Word with brothers and sisters in Christ



SERIES 1 | SESSION 3

GROUP DISCUSSION



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BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

1 John 4:9-19, 5:3-5; 1 Thess. 5:21-22

KEY IDEAS

THEME

God calls us to establish genuine community with the Lord, family, the church, and society. In each case, this requires great capacities that are sadly rare: love and discernment.

OBJECTIVE

We practice redeemed community.

DEVOTED TO FELLOWSHIP

The second activity to which they [the early Church] devoted themselves was "the fellowship." The Greek word used here (*koinōnia*) is one Paul often used, but it appears only here in all of Luke-Acts. Its basic meaning is "association, communion, fellowship, close relationship."

—John B. Polhill

*Acts (The New American Commentary)*

THE BASIS FOR FELLOWSHIP

"We love because He first loved us."

—1 John 4:19

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that God helps us to build and grow in pure community based on *agape* love.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

## Session 3: Grow Together

1. Two foundations of community are *agape* love and discernment.

- As a redeemed community of believers, why do we love one another? Read 1 John 4:19.
- Why is it important that this love is *agape* love?
- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22. What is the importance of discernment to true community?

2. Good interpersonal relationships begin with community with the Lord. Read 1 John 4:13-16.

- How do we share in community with God?
- How does good community with God help our community with our family?

3. The early church in Acts 2:42 held fast to God's Word and participated in daily community (*koinonia*) with each other.

- How do we express such community in our church?
- Read 1 John 4:9-12. What is the basis of all community between believers?

4. Read John 14:15 and 1 John 5:3-5.

- How does one demonstrate one's love for God?
- How does this impact our community with the society around us?





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BUILD TO LAST

SCRIPTURE READING

Selected scriptures

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Living by the Spirit is possibly the most difficult skill to explain, and certainly one of the hardest to master. Our insane pride makes yielding difficult, but when we recognize our paltry lack of power we are positioned to embrace God’s grace expressed in His present Spirit. Yielding to that Spirit we are readied for lasting impact.

OBJECTIVE

We yield to the Spirit.

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

By various terms the Bible teaches that there are two classes of Christians: those who "abide in Christ," and those who "abide not"; those who are "walking in the light," and those who "walk in darkness"; those who "walk by the Spirit," and those who "walk as men"; those who "walk in newness of life," and those who "walk after the flesh;"...those who are "spiritual" and those who are "carnal"; those who are "filled with the Spirit," and those who are not. All this has to do with the quality of daily life of saved people and is in no way a contrast between the saved and the unsaved.

—Lewis Sperry Chafer  
*He That is Spiritual*

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we yield to the Holy Spirit’s influence in our lives every day.

## Session 4: Live Under the Influence

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. List all of the commands in these seven verses. Which of these are hard for you to live out in your everyday life, and why?
  
2. Read Ephesians 5:18.
  - In this verse, “be filled” is more literally “be continually being filled.” How would you explain this phrase to a new Christian?
  
  - “To be filled is not the problem of getting more of the Spirit: it is rather the problem of the Spirit getting more of us.” –Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That is Spiritual*
  
  - Why don’t we need “more” of the Spirit?
  
3. Why is yielding to the Spirit important in order to be filled by the Spirit?
  
4. Why is it foolish to try to live a powerful, fruitful, long-lasting Christian witness in our own power?
  - What is inherently wrong with self-reliance?
  
  - How does this stifle or quench the Spirit?
  
5. What spiritual disciplines can we exercise on a daily basis that will help us to live under the Spirit’s influence more constantly?





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BUILD TO LAST

SCORING

Note the number of True answers in each of these groups:

**Holding Fast**  
Questions 1, 4, 7, 10, 13

**Growing Together**  
Questions 2, 5, 8, 11, 14

**Yielding to the Spirit**  
Questions 3, 6, 9, 12, 15

ASSESSMENT

As is likely evident, it would be wonderful for each Christian to score false on every question. However, that is very unlikely in an honest assessment, at least according to those believers among whom I piloted this survey.

- If you scored 3 or more “true” on any section of the assessment, you need to work with the Lord according to that same powerful combination of scripture, solidarity, and the Spirit.
- Any “True” answer likely indicates an area of need, but 3 or more represents a serious problem if you wish yourself & your church to be built to last.

# Personal Assessment

Use this survey in conjunction with Session 1 to assess how well you are following God’s plan. Answer **True** or **False** to each of the following questions:

1. I sometimes skip church when the series or teacher doesn’t interest me.
2. I do not know the names of those who sit near me in church.
3. I have one or more areas of sin that I just excuse as “my normal.”
4. I am rarely convicted by a Bible text.
5. My only buddies in life are non-Christians or unhealthy Christians.
6. I usually feel strained when doing good deeds.
7. There are parts of the Bible that I think are wrong and should not be studied today.
8. I have no one with whom I am totally honest.
9. I have little or no desire to pray, unless I am in danger.
10. I hide the fact that I am a Bible-believing Christian.
11. The mistakes and sins of others bother me more than my own.
12. I frankly doubt God’s ability to lead me better than I can myself.
13. When uncertain about meaning of a Bible text, I never seek educated help.
14. I am not committed to a Christian life group or an ongoing position of service.
15. I have never experienced God’s empowerment.

