

“Firm Foundation”, Week 1 of “Finding Simple” Series

**Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 01-01-2017 at
Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.**

In our first scripture the Psalmist reminds us that in this world chaos abounds. But there is one solid foundation that we can always count on.

Psalm 18:2

He said: I love you, LORD, my strength.

²The LORD is my solid rock,
my fortress, my rescuer.

My God is my rock –

I take refuge in him! –

He’s my shield,
my salvation’s strength,
my place of safety.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus addresses the issue was all struggle with. We wonder where God is in all of our craziness. Like a child who can’t figure out why they are floundering, Jesus asks us:

Luke 6:46-49

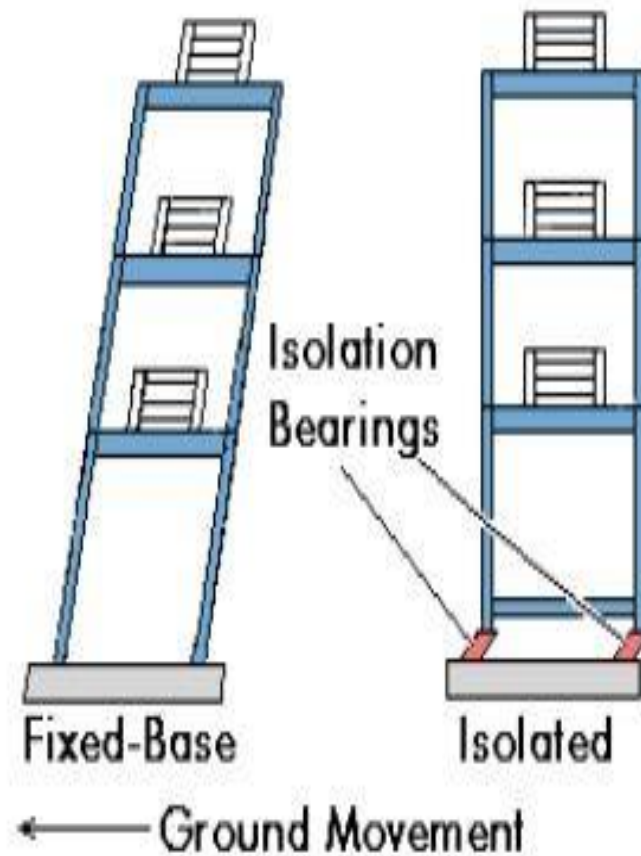
⁴⁶“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and don’t do what I say? ⁴⁷I’ll show what it’s like when someone comes to me, hears my words, and puts them into practice. ⁴⁸It’s like a person building a house by digging deep and laying the foundation on bedrock. When the flood came, the rising water smashed against that house, but the water couldn’t shake the house because it was well built. ⁴⁹But those who don’t put into practice what they hear are like a person who built a house without a foundation. The floodwater smashed against it and it collapsed instantly. It was completely destroyed.”

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In the mid-1920s, the great architect Frank Lloyd Wright was given the challenge of building the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, one of the most earthquake-prone cities in the world.

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Wright’s investigation showed that a solid foundation could be “floated” on a sixty-foot layer of soft mud underlying the hotel, which would provide a shock-absorbing but solid support for the immense building.

Shortly after the hotel was completed it withstood the worst earthquake in fifty-two years, while lesser buildings fell in ruins around it.

Wright knew something that other architects didn’t take into account – the importance of the right foundation.

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One of the things we yearn for in our lives is simplicity. But we live in a world of chaos. How do we find the peace that passes all understanding? How do we thrive in a world that sucks the life essence out of us and leaves us exhausted? Everywhere we turn, there's something that we need that will make our lives better, make us feel happier, fulfill us. But we are still left longing for the magic pill that will slow everything down and bring us back into a state of bliss.

Like the builders who hired Wright to design their building with consideration to the propensity for earthquakes, we need to consider what foundation we are building our lives upon in a world of upheaval. Too many people build their lives on shifting sand. When the storms of life come, they are unable to withstand them. They break.

Has anyone been to Italy and seen the leaning tower of Pisa?

Well, it's going to fall.

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Scientists travel every year to measure the building’s slow descent. They report that the 179-foot tower moves about one-twentieth of an inch a year, and is now 17 feet out of plumb.

Now, the tower was built several centuries ago. And one has to question the wisdom of the architects, because, quite significantly, the word “pisa” means “marshy land,” which gives some clue as to why the tower began to lean even before it was completed.

Also, its foundation is only 10 feet deep!

Considering the condition of the land, location and depth of the foundation should have been dually considered.

It took 199 years to build the tower of Pisa. The work began around 1100 and was stalled because of wars. During this time, but structure began to lean which caused architects and engineers to correct the structure by building some of the top floors with one side taller than the other, which means the tower is actually curved.

The tower was closed to the public on January 7, 1990, the bells were removed to relieve some weight, and cables were cinched around the third level and anchored several hundred meters away. Apartments and houses in the path of the tower were vacated for safety. The solution chosen to prevent the collapse of the tower was to slightly straighten it

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to a safer angle by removing (1,342 cubic feet) of soil from underneath the raised end. After a decade of corrective reconstruction and stabilization efforts, the tower was reopened to the public on December 15, 2001 and was declared stable for at least another 300 years.

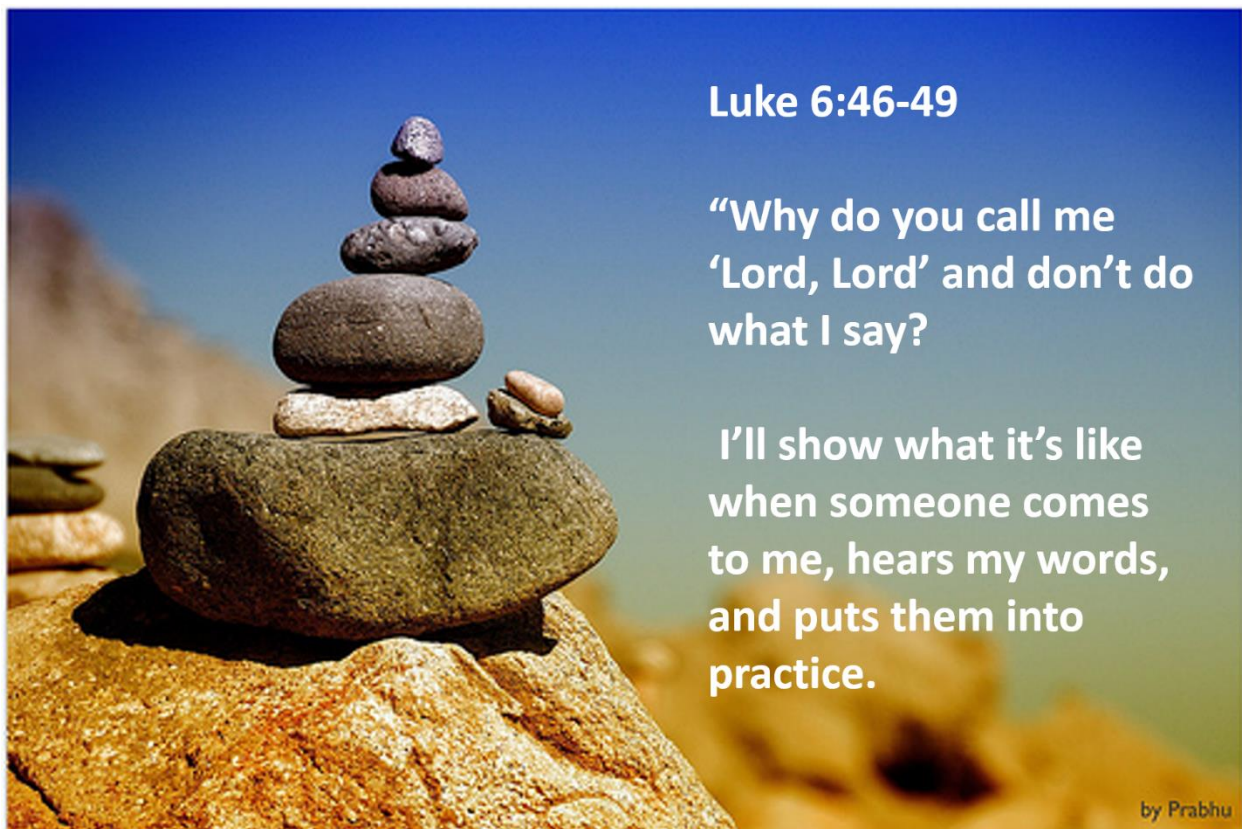
This reminds me of how some people live their lives. They build without a foundation. And then, when they are tested and tried by the world, they have no constitution. No inner strength. No way of handling what’s before them.

Luckily, we can build our foundation at any time during the construction of our lives.

We’re under construction our whole lives. So, at any time, one could realize the condition of things and solidify their foundation. But too many people just make different adjustments, they add something here or compensate there.

In the weeks ahead, we’re going to work at intentionally adding simplicity into 2017. The Bible tells us how to live a full, blessed, prosperous and happy life. Each week we’re going to look at scripture... what God tells us about living peacefully and simply in this world... and we’ll add one more rock to our structure. Each rock will represent a Biblical key to living that joy-filled life.

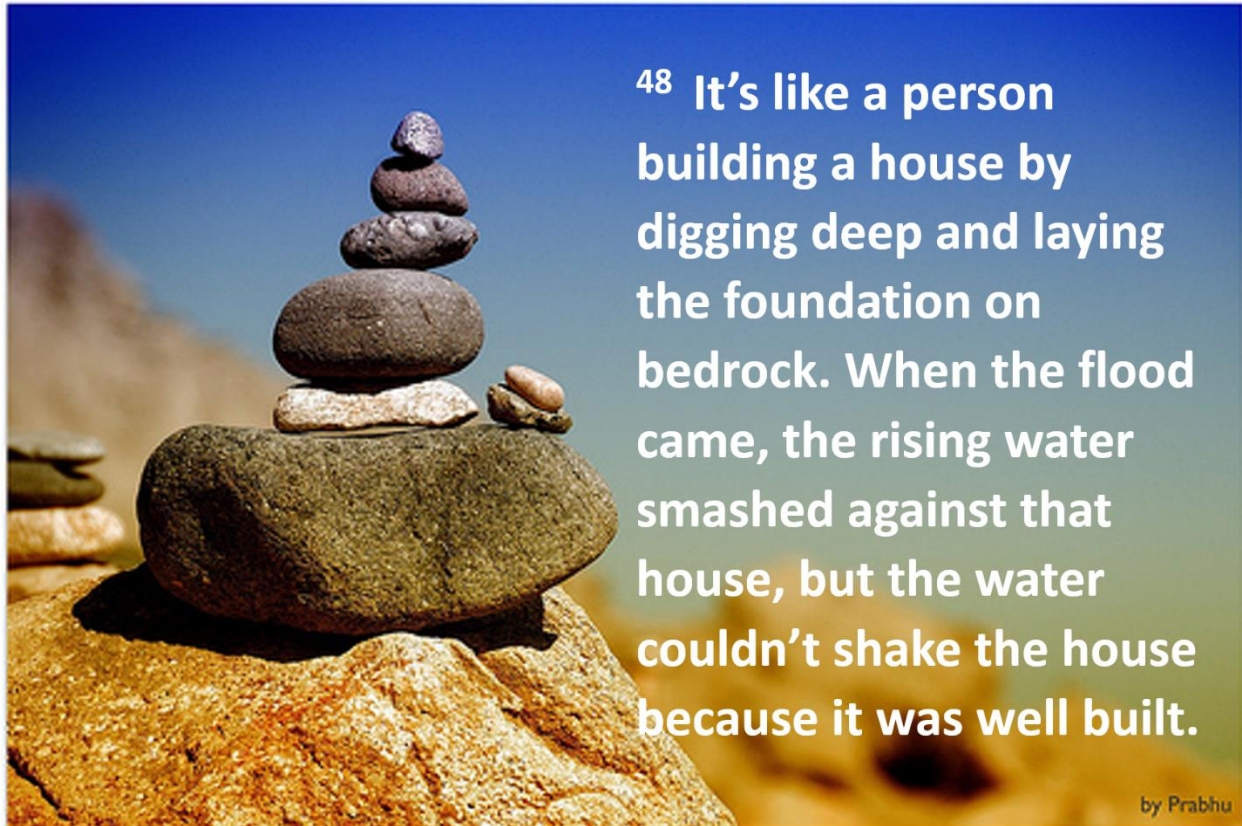
Today, we start at the only place we can start – the foundation.



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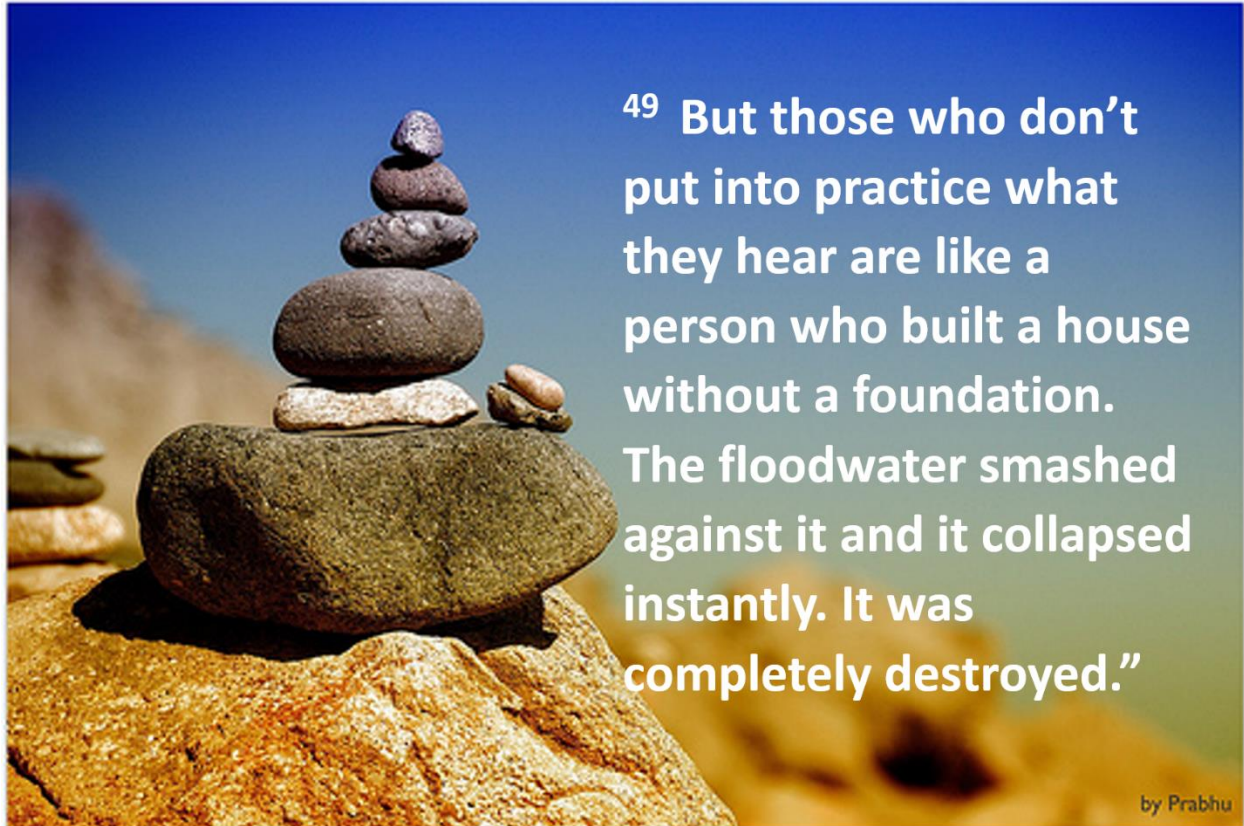
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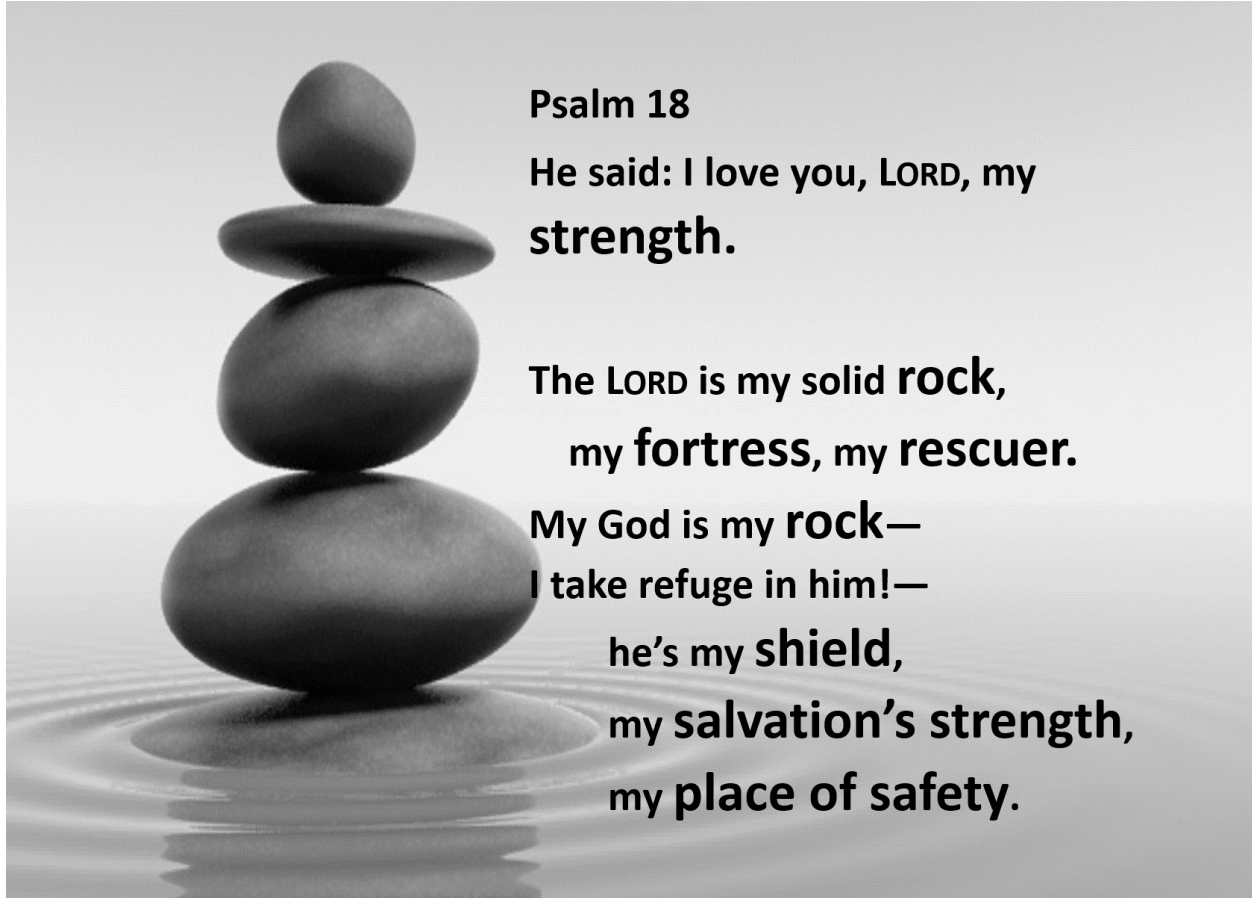
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Psalm 18

**He said: I love you, LORD, my
strength.**

**The LORD is my solid rock,
my fortress, my rescuer.**

**My God is my rock—
I take refuge in him!—
he’s my shield,
my salvation’s strength,
my place of safety.**

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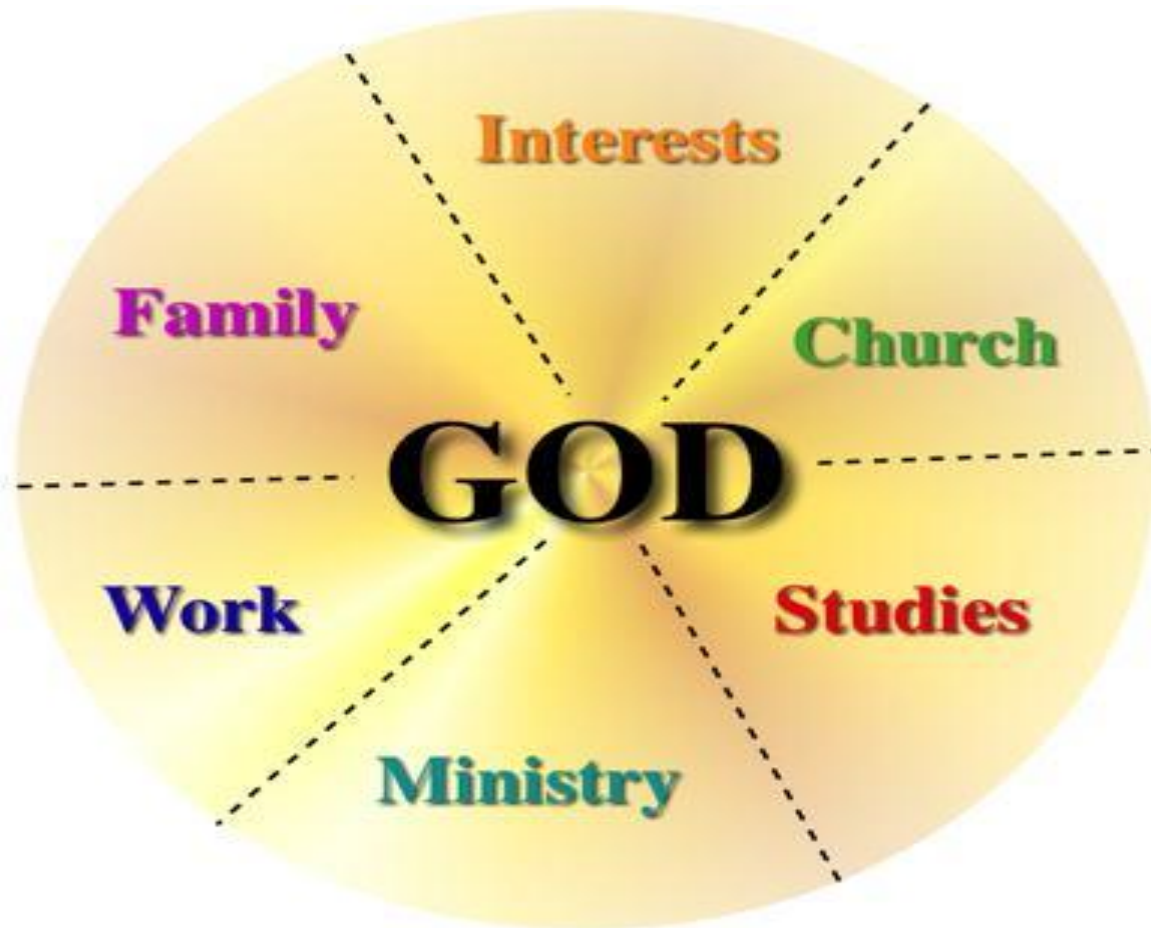
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What would it look like to build everything in your life on something solid enough to withstand any gale force wind the world can produce? What would it look like to add this kind of architecture to your life?

In this coming month, we're going to take some practical steps to refocus on how to simplify so that we can have that life of freedom that Christ promises us. Each week we'll talk about one idea and work on it in the week to come. This week, we start with our foundation...

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GOD. At the back of the sanctuary is a rock for you. If you want, you can write GOD on that rock. Take it with you and place it somewhere that will remind you to refocus on putting God at the center of your life... to continually make God your foundation... and we do this through things like refocusing and making God the lens through which we see the world... through prayer, through our daily actions.

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Next week, you'll receive another rock, and so on... so that after our series is done, you'll have a structure that will be a constant signpost pointing you continually toward that simplicity we all hunger for, that simplicity that God desires for our lives. Amen.