

Solid Week 2 **Thinking Well** **Jeff Jones**

Today we continue our series, *Solid*—how to become the kind of solid people we all admire and that we all want to be. The pandemic has been a test of that. Some people have stayed so solid in the pandemic, unflappable, and others have fallen apart. What causes some who experience the same circumstances as the rest of us to be so solid?

That's what we are going to talk about the next couple of weeks, and this week we are focusing on where solid living starts. Solid living starts with solid thinking, thinking that anchors us as waves of trouble come at us or winds of bad ideas blow our way. Solid people have that anchor. That reminds me of a sailing story, and I haven't shared a sailing story in a long time. This one is in my book, *Distinct by Design*, which is about what makes Chase Oaks--Chase Oaks. If you haven't read that yet and you are new in our church, let me encourage you to read it. It will give you a big head start on understanding what makes this crazy place tick. To put everyone at ease, I get zero pennies from that book, so that's not why I'm asking you to read it. Doing so helps us all be aligned.

Christy and I love to sail, and occasionally we go with some friends and family to bareboat in the Caribbean, and by bareboat that's not about sailing naked. That kind of vacation does exist, just is not the way we roll. Bareboat sailing simply means that we have enough training and experience to captain our own boat. So, call me Captain Jeff. On one of our last trips to Belize, we were checking out the boat before sailing out and I noticed that it had a troubling characteristic—a very small anchor for such a large boat. When I saw it, I thought, “Hmm, this might be a problem.” I also knew that the anchorages were grassy, which would be a problem with that small anchor, but I decided to just go ahead and go with it. I did however swim the anchor line and make sure the anchor was set that first night, and we did okay. I noticed the next morning we had dug anchor about 20 feet, which made me nervous because I knew a storm was coming that night.

And the storm did come, a squall line with over 40 mph winds. As the storm blew in, to check our holding, I stepped out of the comfort of the cabin into the darkness toward the front of the boat. It was pitch black, but I did have a

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flashlight, and out of the corner of my eye I saw that the boat which had anchored next to us all of a sudden starting moving forward very rapidly. It was shocking, because they were going faster than a sailboat takes off. It was more like a ski boat. I was like, “How are they going that fast? And why are they taking off in the middle of the night?” And then it hit me. They weren’t going forwards. We were going backwards. Our anchor did not hold, and we were at the mercy of the storm, going about 40mph toward trouble. We had very dangerous coral reefs all behind us, with one exception—a little tiny mangrove island that had sand leading to it. By God’s grace, we hit that mangrove island rather than the reefs, which was a miracle. We sank into the sand fortunately, without damage. The rest of the trip however was miserable, because I couldn’t trust our anchor. I got almost no sleep, because as the captain of the boat I knew I was responsible and had to check our holding constantly.

It’s no fun being on a big ocean with real wind and real waves and real storms and no solid anchor. You will likely end up in trouble. So, let’s bring it back to sports, a Ticket way of saying, “Let’s bring it back to what we are talking about today.” In this world, a big ocean of ideas and stormy circumstances, solid people have a solid anchor I will call solid thinking. The reason they don’t get blown off course by bad ideas or get disillusioned when bad things happen is that they have a solid grid that filters and helps interpret all that comes at them.

I want all of us to have that. I originally was going to do another series right now, and Solid was a change. If you know me, you know that I am an advanced planner and usually stick with the advanced plan. But sometimes God gets in the way of those plans, and in prayer I know that we need to drop the plan and talk about something that is urgent and critical for the situation we are in. This is one of those times. Through the course of this pandemic, as a pastor, I’ve seen so many people blown off course onto various reefs in this pandemic storm. Now with social media and all kinds of media, so many ideas are blowing around out there, and also circumstances that seem unfair that can easily cause people to get disillusioned with God, as a pastor I realize we’ve got to do a better job making sure people are well grounded, solid enough in our thinking that we can stand strong and even get stronger in storms rather than blown off course.

This was a huge concern in the Bible as well, and today Paul is going to help us know how to become solid in our thinking. We will be in Colossians 2 in

the NT, and let's listen to his pastoral concern 2000 years ago that is just as relevant 2000 years later:

SLIDE _____) Colossians 1:28-29, 2:2-8

“[Jesus] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me...My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

He was working so hard for people to be solid in their faith, solid in their thinking. Did you notice phrases like *“fully mature,” “rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith,” “how firm your faith is.”*

SLIDE _____)

“fully mature”

“rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith”

“how firm your faith is.”

That's solid. That's anchored. Notice also why it is so important:

SLIDE _____) Colossians 2:4

“I tell you this so no one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments.”

And at the end,

SLIDE _____) Colossians 2:8

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

There are a lot of bad ideas out there that can blow us way off course. He even says that such thinking takes us captive, meaning what we think is what dictates our decisions, our direction, the whole course of our lives. So, it is possible to be held captive by bad thinking that will always take us a bad direction. The problem is that bad thinking is often disguised as really great thinking. That’s why Paul describes it as “fine sounding arguments” and “deceptive.” Bad thinking that is obviously stupid and easy to spot as bad thinking is not so dangerous. But what is dangerous is that bad thinking often sounds really great. It makes a lot of sense. Making all this even more dangerous is that it’s not just humans involved but Satan and his demons. That’s what Paul means by the “elemental forces of this world.” In 1 Timothy he says,

DELETE

SLIDE _____) 1 Timothy 4:1

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”

People will be blown off course not only by bad human ideas but by bad thinking promoted by demons. It reminds me a little bit of what is happening right now with social media, where nations like Russia and others who see themselves as our enemies spread bad ideas to mess up our thinking, to further divide our polarized culture, and to try to deepen our fears to an irrational level. It’s really smart for an enemy to do that, and Satan and demons are really smart and really good at this. They are always at work trying to destroy us and destroy all that is good, and the most effective way to do that is with bad thinking.

There is a good reason for that, because as Proverbs says,

SLIDE _____) Proverbs 23:7

“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”

How we think determines how we live. It's why the New Testament talks so much about it, and even describes the process of becoming spiritually mature a process of changing our thinking. Romans 12:2,

DELETE

SLIDE _____) Romans 12:2

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

And 2 Corinthians 10:5,

KEEP BUT DISABLE

SLIDE _____) 2 Corinthians 10:5

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

The word "repent," you've heard that word, simply means to change your mind about something, to change your thinking...because the way we are thinking is dictating the way we are living. To change your life, it starts with your mind. A solid life starts with solid thinking.

It would be nice if every idea was filtered the way our phone companies filter our phone calls. How many "Scam Likely" calls do you get every day? Anybody need a car warranty? Three times a day every day they are kind enough to give me a "final courtesy call." I wish final meant final. But I do love that "Scam Likely" feature that helps me avoid the whole thing. If ideas that float around our culture and that Satan and demons try to plant in our thinking came with the "scam likely" label, that would be awesome. But they don't. In fact, they can sound really great.

If you and I don't have a solid filter of our own, solid thinking that provides a grid to funnel ideas through and a grid that helps us think through disappointing circumstances through, then we will constantly be blown off

course. It's similar to what Paul says in Ephesians about developing that filter so that:

KEEP BUT DISABLE

SLIDE _____) Ephesians 4:14

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming."

Here's the scary part about this whole deception thing, is that people who are deceived don't know they are deceived. They think they are thinking clearly, because at the time it makes sense. I don't know if you have ever been duped by some deceptive person or scheme or not, but it is no fun once you realize that you were duped. Early in our marriage, when I was in seminary and we had no money, one way we were able to do vacations was going to timeshare presentation trips that were free, but of course you had to sit through the presentation. I have no inherent problem with the concept of timeshares, and they can be great when people know what they are doing and make an informed decision. The problem, of course, is that often those sales people aren't the paragon of integrity. The good news for us is that we were so poor that we tended to get out of the presentation. At the beginning, I'd say, "You know, we live on about 18,000 a year, and are in seminary preparing to be a pastor, so I'm not sure how whatever you are going to try to sell me can possibly fit into that budget." And usually they'd say, "How did you even get the invite?" And we'd get off without having to do the presentation. One time though after seminary while newly on staff here at Chase Oaks we did sit through one, and the guy was really good. He also told us a really big lie, a way too good to be true kind of lie, and we signed up because that lie seemed true if it was true then it was a really good deal. Later that night, as we discussed it, we realized there is no way that the too good to be true could be true. When we looked more deeply at what we signed, sure enough, it was too good to be true. We had been duped. I didn't sleep much that night, and we met with him the next morning and confronted him with what we found and what he had said, asking him to let us out of the contract and give our money back.

He was smooth, and he smoothly let us know that they don't do that, and that we should have read more carefully what we signed. That's when I went full pastor on him. Occasionally that helps. I said, "Look, you lied and made

a sale, and I guess that's our fault. But you have to understand why this matters so much to us. I am a pastor, and every dollar I have I believe is God's. I'm a steward of all that he gives me, and every dollar I receive is from people at my church who give their money to honor him. So, I can't just make mistakes like this, because this is God's money. But I did make that mistake. and I can't do anything about that. You, however, can. You get to decide whether to stick with it and misuse God's money or let us out of this. It's really between you and God, and I've been praying that you will do the right thing." That's what going full pastor means. He started to say something, and then stopped himself. He then said, "You know, my grandmother who raised me was a Christian and very faithful to her church that she contributed to. I shouldn't do this, but I can hear what my grandmother would say to me right now, so I am going to give you your money back and destroy the contract." I said, "Well, your grandmother I'm sure is looking down from heaven and is very proud right now." Going full pastor doesn't always work, but it's nice when it does.

But that realization of being duped is a horrible one, and usually by the time we realize it so much damage is done. As a pastor, I see that all the time with people who don't have a solid filter and are blown off course by bad ideas that sound really great. Or, when bad circumstances come, they crumble because they don't have a solid filter to interpret those circumstances in a way where they could actually grow and come out of that with a more solid faith.

This pandemic time has been a storm, where winds of doctrines have blown and waves of adversity have come, and some have stood strong. Many others have been blown way off course. As a pastor, here are some of the bad ideas that sound good at the time that I've heard over these months:

SLIDE _____)

"Jesus is my vaccine."

"We are a Christian nation and must take America back."

"Let's not talk about issues like race. Let's stick to the Bible."

"God would never let me suffer more than I can handle."

"Follow your heart."

"I know it is God's will because I have perfect peace."

"I know it would be better to do my sexual life the way God says, but it's not that big of a deal and I'll know he'll forgive me anyway."

“It wasn’t God’s will for me to marry her in the first place, and I know now she isn’t the person he had for me.”

“I like to hear X preacher because he is so ‘deep’”

when they are not a reliable Bible teacher.

I could go on, but a scary thought is, “Where am I duped right now?” How would we know? What do we do about this? Well, Paul tells us what to do. We already read it:

SLIDE _____)

“Just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live in him, **rooted and built up in him, **strengthened** in the faith as you were taught.”**

Notice this is a command to us as individual believers. It is up to us to do this, to not only receive Christ Jesus the Lord, but to take the next step to be rooted and built up, to be strengthened in the faith, in other words, to be established.

This is our responsibility. And it’s not to learn about all the bad ideas out there so that we can spot them. That would be impossible. Instead, it is to become solid in our own faith, in our own thinking, so that we can more easily spot bad ideas as “Scam Likely” because we have a good filter. That’s the secret of those Christians who are so solid. Solid living starts with solid thinking. They have a good filter, so when bad circumstances come they filter that in a way that makes them stronger and when good-sounding bad ideas come their way they can spot them for what they are.

You can develop the reliable filter of solid thinking, and we want to help. This summer we want to make it easy for everyone to take a step and solidify their faith.

The first opportunity to consider is called *Established*, which was designed here at Chase Oaks to do just what we are talking about today—to help our roots go deep. Over 6,000 people have gone through it and we ask every Chase Oaker at some point to do it, whether you’re kicking the tires or a

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seasoned Christ-follower. It'll give you a chance to discuss the foundational elements of faith, Jesus, the Bible, and share your story with others. This Summer we're launching several *Established* groups, both digital and in-person. They'll start toward the end of May. If you haven't done it yet, I can't think of a better next step to do. Register on our website.

SLIDE _____) **Special Sermon Slide**
Web address and Established (chaseoaks.org/established)

We know many of you have done *Established* and all of us are called to keep growing, to keep getting equipped in our faith journeys. This summer we want to make it really accessible for all of us to take a step and grow. So, we're launching **five masterclasses** around topics like understanding the Bible, financial stewardship, parenting, gifting and leadership. We've curated some resources from great experts to learn from in key areas of faith. These classes are **digital** and **on-demand**, so you can do them from your home, from the beach, as you're out and about, wherever. We will guide you through the content as we release some of it each week and ask you to have a few conversations with fellow classmates along the way. These masterclasses mean none of us has any excuse not to grow this summer. Course content will become available on

SLIDE _____) **Special Sermon Slide**
Masterclasses Info. & web address

Sign up on our website (chaseoaks.org/masterclasses).

The New Chase Oaks App is also on its way, and one of the big features of that new app is a way for us to be in the Bible every day and to grow our roots that way. Coming soon.

SLIDE _____)
The New Chase Oaks App

ADDED

SLIDE _____)

Humility

Let's all choose to take one step to go one step deeper in our thinking this summer, no matter how long you've followed Jesus. Today is one of those trajectory changing days for a whole lot of people, for all those who take an important step. If we are not established, rooted, then our whole lives are compromised in ways we don't even know. We may have this idea that things are not as they should be, that they should be better, or more solid, but we just get used to that feeling. But we don't have to. God wants us to flourish, to live solid lives that bear fruit. The only way for that to happen is to grow our roots deep in the faith, and the opportunity is right there in front of us this summer. With that in mind, let's go to God in prayer.