



# Foundation Stones

Joined to the Cornerstone

*Knowing & Experiencing Christ  
in, and by, and through Sound Doctrine*

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# At Christ's Table - ACTpublications

*"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."*

1 Corinthians 2:13

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Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

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# Hebrews 5:12 – 6:2<sup>1</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. <sup>13</sup> For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. <sup>1</sup> Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, <sup>2</sup> the doctrine of baptisms<sup>2</sup> and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> There were no chapter divisions in the original text.

<sup>2</sup> NKJV

# Introduction

I'd like to begin by trying to explain why I am burdened to give this message: I want to see individuals and churches built on the Foundation of Christ - firmly established in their relationship with God and pressing on to maturity in Christ.

This is not possible without knowing and experiencing “the elementary principles of the oracles of God” or “the elementary teaching about the Christ” – that is, the basic doctrines and essential experiences of the Christian life, as defined in the Word of God. Our need is to know and experience doctrine. Whenever I use the word “doctrine” in this message, please understand that I am not referring the doctrines found in the historic church creeds, although those are also essential to know. And I am definitely not referring to the distinctive teachings and traditions of particular groups of Christians and churches. I am referring to the specific doctrines listed in Hebrews 6:2, which are sourced in the Scriptures: repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms<sup>3</sup> and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. There is a similar list appearing in Acts 2:38 where to those 3000 people who were responding to his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said: “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

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<sup>3</sup> NKJV

Knowing and experiencing these doctrines is a pre-requisite to being a witness of Jesus Christ – we cannot communicate what we do not know and understand; and we cannot give to others what we do not have – we cannot share what we have not experienced. My burden is that everyone would know and experience doctrine and have their spiritual lives firmly built on the Foundation of Jesus Christ.

# Why Doctrine Matters

What is “doctrine”? Well firstly, it is something which is disappearing. About 2,000 years ago, the apostle Paul prophesied: “... the time will come when they will not endure doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths<sup>4</sup>.” The Greek word translated “myths” here means “a story, a narrative, a fable, fiction. While narrative is one of the types of literary styles found in the Scriptures, I think there is cause for concern when today the idea of story and narrative is increasingly pitted over and against a systematic and linear approach to the point of downplaying and even abandoning analysis and reasoning which are also found in much of Scripture.

In his article, “*Why Doctrine Matters*”, Dr. R. Albert Mohler writes: “The 20th century witnessed an increasingly energetic revolt against doctrine. A denial of specific formulations of classical Christian doctrine has been evident in some quarters, while others have rejected the very notion of doctrine itself.”

Do not be deceived by current attitudes and practices in modern-day Christianity. The negative attitudes and the downplaying of doctrine do not arise from the Spirit of God but from the spirit of the world – namely a culture of Postmodernism<sup>5</sup>. The truth is that throughout history, God has

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Timothy 4:3-4. (Greek) *muthos*: a story, narrative, fable, fiction.

<sup>5</sup> I address Postmodernism and Deconstruction of the faith in my eBook [“Deconstruction, Deconversion, & Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”](#).

always called His people to be devoted to serious Scripture study. We can see in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 the Israel of the Old Testament was called to be devoted to the word of God. We can see in Acts 2:38-42 that the Church of the New Testament was devoted to the very doctrines I will be referring to today in Hebrews 6:2. Throughout Church history, the torch of the testimony has been maintained and passed on by those groups of Christians who have been serious about Scripture study. So, do not be deceived by unfounded arguments such as: “The doctrinal analysis is of a Greek mindset. The Hebrew mindset is experiential.” Such faulty arguments arise out of mere cultural trends rather than the mind of Christ.

If we think that the mental discipline required for serious Scripture study is possessed by only a select few, and the vast majority of “regular” Christians are not even meant to pursue such a discipline, I would like to offer that it is not because God created us that way. Rather, it is because that is the way some powerful industries such as education, entertainment and media have conformed us to this world. And now, God wants us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind to what He intended before the Fall.<sup>6</sup> We cannot just continue to dumb down, taking our cues from the spirit of the age and the surrounding culture, and expect to be experiencing **“what God has provided for those who love Him”**.<sup>7</sup> We need, in fact, we are commanded, to love the Lord with all of our mind.

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9 (Greek) *hetoimazo*: to provide, create, construct, build – internally, as opposed to externally.

Following are two quotes summarizing the findings of a recent and extensive survey conducted by the Willow Creek Association<sup>8</sup>:

Firstly, the basis of the survey was that spiritual growth can be evaluated by people's love of God and love of others. Quote: "Researchers found that church activities do not spur long-term spiritual growth. In fact, people who engage in church activities don't love God and others much more than people who are not engaged in church activities." Secondly, the researchers said: "We were not looking for this, but the point is absolutely clear. When your mission is to help your people grow in their love for Christ, (personal engagement with) the Bible is hands-down the most powerful catalyst for doing that."

In his article, "*Why Doctrine Matters*", John Piper begins: "One step before the details of what you believe is the question of why it matters." So, just before I address the main question, "What doctrine?", let's first discuss a related question, "Why does doctrine matter?"

In his article, "*Why Doctrine Matters*", Albert Mohler agrees: "Doctrine is quite literally the teaching of the church – what the church understands to be the substance of its faith. It is no substitute for personal experience. Evangelical Christians have given witness to the necessity of personal faith in Jesus Christ, but the personal faith is based in some specific understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He accomplished on the cross.... Doctrine is not a challenge to experiential religion; it testifies to the content of that experience." He goes on to say: "Doctrine without piety (and discipleship) is dead, but piety (and discipleship) without doctrine is immature at best, and inauthentic at worst.... Some churches seem to think that doctrine is a concern for those of a certain intellectual bent, but

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<sup>8</sup> <https://ym.christianleadershipalliance.org/page/revealed>



unnecessary for most Christians. Interest in doctrine amounts to something like an intellectual hobby. Others steer clear of doctrine for fear of argument or division in the church. Both factors indicate a lack of respect for the Christian believer and an abdication of the teaching function of the church...”<sup>9</sup>

Charles Spurgeon told a story of a man who attended a particular church meeting. Telling of the meeting, the man recounted: “Oh, it was lovely: none of us knew anything and we all taught each other.”

As I said, knowing and experiencing doctrine is a pre-requisite to being a witness of Jesus Christ – we cannot communicate what we do not know and understand; and we cannot give what we do not have – we cannot share what we have not experienced.

Is our spiritual experience in agreement with the Scriptures? If not, then our faith and practice of the spiritual life will be inauthentic – that is to say, not truly Christian, because true Christianity is biblical.

Have we experienced all that God has to offer as is recorded in the Scriptures? If not, then our spiritual lives will be incomplete, that is immature. And consequently, our lives will be unstable and troubled. We cannot build a strong spiritual house on a faulty or weak foundation.

Let’s look at what the writer to the Hebrews has to say to the Church. The Letter to the Hebrews was written to Jewish believers who had converted from Judaism to Christianity. At the time of the writing of this

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<sup>9</sup> I would also add that it shows a lack of faith in the ministry of the Holy Spirit to “guide us into all the truth”, as Jesus promised in John 16:13.

letter<sup>10</sup>, they were located in Rome<sup>11</sup>, and suffering persecution<sup>12</sup>, before they were eventually dispersed throughout Asia Minor.<sup>13</sup> We will look at what the author wrote in Hebrews 5:12 – 6:2.<sup>14</sup> By studying this passage, I hope we become convinced of the importance of doctrine – specifically, experiencing doctrine. I want to point out that the writer is not addressing theologians, or pastors, or even church leaders – but rather regular believers.<sup>15</sup> Bible doctrine is not an “ivory tower” pastime of elite theologians. Every believer needs to know, understand and be able to teach the doctrines of the Christian faith – that is, be able to communicate to others in biblical terms their experience of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> A.D. 63-64

<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 13:24

<sup>12</sup> Hebrews 10:33-34

<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 1:1

<sup>14</sup> There were no chapter divisions in the original text

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 13:7, 24

## Hebrews 5:12a

**“For though by this time you ought to be teachers...”**

The people the author is writing to were born Jews, descendants of Abraham, raised on the Law of Moses, and the writings the Prophets and the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures. They had witnessed the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, received the gift of the Holy Spirit originally poured out on Pentecost, and for 30 years, had received the ministry of the apostles. So, the author rightly concludes **“by this time you ought to be teachers”**. But he feels compelled to also write this:

## Hebrews 5:12b – 14

**“... you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. <sup>13</sup> For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”**

Just like many Christians today, even after years of being in the faith, these Hebrew Christians were not able to communicate the foundational doctrines of their Christianity. The writer to the Hebrews was not expecting them all to carry out the ministry of “pastor-teacher”; but just as regular

everyday Christians, to communicate their faith and experience of Jesus Christ to others in biblically accurate terms.

The writer to the Hebrews used the analogy of food. I'd like to offer a few comments using that same analogy: To listen to a sermon or teaching, to read a book, or watch a DVD can be compared to going out to eat at a restaurant. There is nothing wrong with that – you are fed, it is convenient, usually pleasurable, and the meal is reasonably healthy (if the chef and his kitchen are clean). Whereas personal scripture and doctrinal study can be compared to a home-cooked meal which you yourself prepare – whipping the mashed potatoes, grilling the meat, chopping the salad vegetables – maybe coming up with your own unique recipes. You can invite family and friends over and serve them your special dishes.

But again - we cannot serve what we do not have – we cannot share what we have not experienced; we cannot communicate what we do not know and understand. Yet the Scriptures are clear: We are all called to be disciples – that is, learners<sup>16</sup>. And we are all commissioned to preach the gospel and be witnesses.<sup>17</sup> This commission<sup>18</sup> is not carried out by merely inviting people to come to a Bible study or Sunday morning worship service. Essentially, “church” is for the Church. Preaching the gospel and witnessing is for the not-yet church. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are to equip the Church so that the church can do “the work of

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<sup>16</sup> (Greek) mathetes. Strongs' number 3101 – literally, “a learner”.

<sup>17</sup> (Greek) martur. Strongs' number 3144 – “one who testifies”.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-8; John 20:19-23.

**ministry”**,<sup>19</sup> that is, preach and teach the gospel and be witnesses to those outside the Church. Once again: We cannot communicate what we do not know and understand; and we cannot give what we do not have – we cannot share what we have not experienced.

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<sup>19</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12

# What Doctrine?

It is my hope to convince you that sound doctrine is firstly that which describes a biblical experience of Jesus Christ; and secondly, is the biblical explanation we can share with others regarding a relationship with Jesus Christ. To coin a phrase, I would like to present the concept of “doctrine” to you as *“The Foundation Stones Joined to the Cornerstone”*. The foundation stones properly joined to the Cornerstone will pass the plumb line test of the Builder. Doctrine that properly joins you to Jesus Christ is sound doctrine.

## Hebrews 6:1a

**“Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity.”**

In Hebrews 5:12 we find the phrase: **“elementary principles of the oracles of God”**. And in Hebrews 6:1 we have the phrase: **“elementary teaching about the Christ”**. I believe the writer to the Hebrews regarded these two phrases to be essentially synonymous. Let’s look at them a little more closely. The literal translation of Hebrews 5:12 would be: **“The beginning (*arche*) of the orderly arrangement or system (*stoicheion*) of God’s word (*logos*).”** The author is pointing to the writings of the Old Testament – those writings which these Hebrews should have known very well.

The literal translation of Hebrews 6:1 would be: **“The beginning (*arche*) of the doctrine (*logos*) about the Christ”**. The beginning of the doctrine about the Christ also points to the writings of the Old Testament. When the resurrected Christ met the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, **“Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the (Old Testament) Scriptures.”**<sup>20</sup>

So, we see that the beginning of the doctrine about the Christ does not start in the gospels or the epistles, but in the Old Testament. Although it was in the symbols of typology in the Old Testament, the doctrine of Christ began in the Old Testament; and when these Hebrews had received the Spirit of Christ, they would have been able to see Christ revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. This revelation, along with the **“doctrine of the apostles”**<sup>21</sup> had they been devoting themselves to it, would have been sufficient to equip them to communicate their experience of Christ to others. But they were not communicating because they did not sufficiently know and understand the doctrine. They were not established disciples; they were not effective witnesses of Christ. So, the writer said, **“you have need for someone to teach you again”**. They needed “foundational repairs”. But exactly what was the doctrine they needed to learn again? The writer tells us exactly in the next two verses:

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<sup>20</sup> Luke 24:27

<sup>21</sup> Acts 2:42

## Hebrews 6:1b - 2

**“... not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,<sup>2</sup> the doctrine of baptisms and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.”**

Just a few reflections on the all-important “foundation”: The foundation is THE Foundation. The apostle Paul said: **“According to the grace of God, which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, .... no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”<sup>22</sup>** Paul identifies the Foundation as Jesus – a revelation and relationship with Jesus is the Foundation of a spiritual house. Jesus said He would build His Church upon the revelation of Himself.<sup>23</sup> The Church consists of those who are in relationship with Him.

The apostle Peter said: **“You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... The preciousness is for those who believe.”<sup>24</sup>** Just like the building you are in right now - everyone in the house depends on – exercises faith in – the Foundation which is Jesus Christ. Everything and every activity taking place in this spiritual house depend upon the Foundation which is Jesus Christ. *And these six foundation stones join us to the Cornerstone in the Foundation of that spiritual house.* As I said: The foundation stones properly joined to the

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:10-11

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 16:15-18

<sup>24</sup> 1 Peter 2:5, 7



Cornerstone will pass the plumb line test of the Builder. Doctrine that properly joins you to Jesus Christ is sound doctrine.

In Hebrews 6:2, there are listed the doctrines that describe a biblical experience of Jesus Christ. These are the doctrines which give a biblical explanation we can share with others regarding a relationship with Jesus Christ. The understanding and experience of each of these doctrines by way of revelation and relationship with Christ is what constitutes laying the Foundation of Christ in the life of a believer for that believer to achieve maturity.<sup>25</sup>

I would like to draw your attention to the inherent orderly arrangement of this list of doctrines. There are six doctrines listed. There are three groups of two doctrines. In each of these groups, the first doctrine leads to the second. Each of these groups leads to the next. The six doctrines cover the whole of the Christian life from here on the earth on into eternity – God’s entire plan of salvation – What it means to be “saved”.

- **repentance from dead works and of faith toward God** – these are Man’s acts toward God.
- **the doctrine of baptisms and laying on of hands** – these symbolize a uniting of Man with God.
- **the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment** – these are God’s acts toward Man.

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<sup>25</sup> I recommend my book [“CHANGED: A Closer Look at Things Relating to Conversion”](#). The material in this book is contained in the opening module of our [At Christ’s Table School](#). I can also recommend [“Laying the Foundation” by James Lee Beall](#). This excellent publication is in a catechismal format consisting of 36 personal home-study lessons with review questions.

I'd like to emphasize two things regarding these foundational doctrines: Firstly: The writer to the Hebrews encouraged us: **“Let us press on to maturity”**. There can be no authentic Christian maturity achieved without a proper foundation laid through the understanding and experience of these doctrines. And in saying, **“let us press on”**, in no wise is there any sense of “leaving behind” these foundational doctrines. Being foundational, they run profoundly deep. There is no leaving them behind, but rather “building upon” them with more revelation and relationship with Christ.<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, we must ever keep in mind that *the end goal of doctrine is to experience Christ through the doctrine*. To know Him, not just know about Him. So, while the knowledge, understanding and revelation of these doctrines of Christ is the bedrock on which the foundation is laid, the foundation itself is the resulting experiential relationship, and that is the ultimate goal.

As our relationship with Christ is the foundation, so too is our revelation of Christ an integral part of that foundation. *Our revelation of Christ determines our relationship with Christ*. Because we can only relate to what we know, our relationship with Christ is limited to our revelation of Christ. As our revelation of Christ grows, so our relationship with Christ grows.

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<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:12-14

# Postscript

What will you now do in response to this message? What will you now do regarding the joining of the foundation stones with the Cornerstone in your personal spiritual life? What will you now do with the doctrines of God's word when they are freely offered to you?

Most of us are familiar parable of the Sower of the Seed.<sup>27</sup> In the parable, the seed of God's word is sown on various types of poor soil which produced no fruit and lost the seed which was given - some because they didn't understand,<sup>28</sup> some because they were not rooted in their faith,<sup>29</sup> and some because of preoccupation with the things of the world.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus said to these **"it has not given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven"** because **"they see but don't perceive and hear but don't understand"**.<sup>31</sup>

But the seed of God's word is sown on good soil, and those with **"an honest and a good heart"**<sup>32</sup> accept<sup>33</sup> and understand<sup>34</sup> it and bear much fruit, and even more is given to them. Jesus said to His disciples, **"to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven"**. Now there were the twelve, but there were also other disciples. Who were these

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-25; Luke 8:4-15

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 13:19

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 13:21

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 13:22

<sup>31</sup> Mark 4:12

<sup>32</sup> Luke 8:15

<sup>33</sup> Mark 4:20

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 13:23

disciples to whom it was given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven? What made them different from all the others in the crowds? Just like all the others, even these disciples didn't understand the parable.<sup>35</sup> That's right, the gospel accounts say that the disciples did not understand the parable; but Jesus chose to give them the understanding and chose not to give the understanding to the others. Why? What was so different about them? Why were they distinguished as His disciples? The gospel accounts also give us the simple answer: **They came to Jesus and asked Him what it meant.**<sup>36</sup> What is so significant about that? Well, it's very significant to Jesus. In fact, He is testing all mankind's heart on this very issue. Do we really want **revelation and relationship** with Him? Will He be our "First Love"?<sup>37</sup> If we don't really want that enough to **"Come to Jesus and ask Him what it means"**, we don't get it. Christ and His word are precious. If we don't really want that enough to **"press into the Shepherd"**, then we don't deserve it. The Scripture says: **"God is not mocked." "Don't be under any illusion: you cannot make a fool of God! A man's harvest in life will depend entirely on what he sows."**<sup>38</sup>

What will you do regarding the joining of the Foundation Stones with the Cornerstone in your personal spiritual life? How much effort will you put into **"pressing into the Shepherd"**? What will you do with the doctrines of God when they are so freely given to you?

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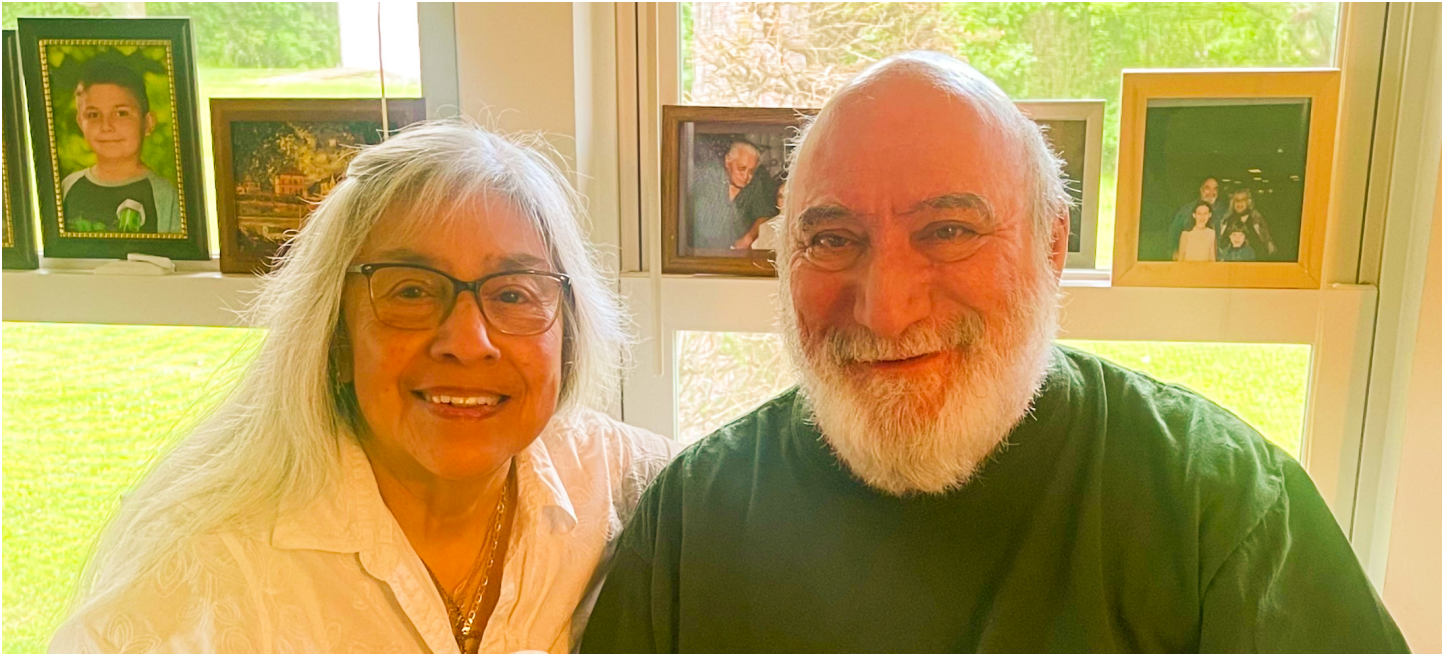
<sup>35</sup> Mark 4:13; Luke 8:9

<sup>36</sup> Mark 4:10; Luke 8:9

<sup>37</sup> Revelation 2:4; Jeremiah 2:2-3; Matthew 24:12

<sup>38</sup> Galatians 6:7 J.B. Phillips Translation

Bill & Frances Furioso  
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... [www.AtChristsTable.org](http://www.AtChristsTable.org)

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“Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

A teaching ministry from Bill and Frances Furioso

## At Christ's Table

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of Biblical Christianity

with a view to

REVELATION of Christ

RELATIONSHIP with Christ

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