



A FIRM FOUNDATION IN A SHAKY WORLD



*Don't let something you don't know
shake your faith in something
you do know.*

BY ADAM C. OLSON
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On the morning of November 1, 1755, a massive earthquake leveled many Lisbon, Portugal, neighborhoods, unleashed a devastating 5- to 10-meter-high tsunami that surged into the seaport city, and started a fire that raged for more than three days. The disaster killed thousands.

But the devastating earthquake shook far more than just buildings. Because the catastrophe occurred as Christians gathered to observe a major religious holiday, All Saints' Day, it also shook the faith of believers across the continent.

Such spiritual shaking can occur in life just as unexpectedly as any seismic activity and has the potential to do just as much damage.

"We often face things that can

shake our faith," says Patricia Moreira, a member of the Lisbon Portugal Stake who says she has faced such things in the 20 years since she joined the Church alone. "They could be questions from nonmembers, attacks from those opposed to the Church, or even just things we don't understand."

When questions that don't seem to have answers build stress along the fault line between the world and the gospel, the resulting quake can cause casualties of faith among those whose foundations are weak.

How Firm a Foundation

In spiritual tectonics, it is not our proximity to the epicenter that determines the quake's effect on our testimony but our proximity to God.



“We often face things that can shake our faith. . . . [In those moments] our foundation makes all the difference.”

— Patricia Moreira at Castelo São Jorge, restored upon its original foundation after the 1755 Lisbon earthquake.

“Our foundation is Jesus Christ and His gospel” (see Luke 6:47–48), says Sister Moreira in a conversation on the topic with some of her single adult friends in the stake.

“We have no foundation without Him,” adds Darryl Nequetela, a convert of just over a year. “Some foundations are weak, but His is sure and true” (see Helaman 5:12).

No flood of doubts, no philosophical fire, no earthshaking skepticism of any magnitude can destroy the rock of our Redeemer, the Chief Cornerstone, our true foundation, Jesus Christ.

“I know I’m safe when I’m built on His foundation,” Brother Nequetela says.

When the Shaking Starts

These Latter-day Saints are familiar with Satan’s ground shaking.

At work, Francisco Lopes (who has since married) was subjected to frequent spiritual tremors. “Some of the people I worked with were skeptical of my beliefs and criticized me for what I believed in,” he says. “They often questioned me, using science that seemed to conflict with our faith.”

Brother Lopes recalls discussions about evolution, DNA, and more. “They did their best to convince me the Church is false,” he says of the questions for which he had few answers. “I had to rely upon my testimony of God and His gospel. I am grateful for that foundation.”

But as Brother Lopes can testify, once the ground starts shaking, it’s too late to begin preparing.

“We will need to have developed and nurtured faith in Jesus Christ long before Satan hits us,”¹ said Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.



OUR DAY OF TESTING

“What we will need in our day of testing is a spiritual preparation. It is to have developed faith in Jesus Christ so powerful that we can pass the test of life upon which everything for us in eternity depends. . . . We will need to have developed and nurtured faith in Jesus Christ long before Satan hits us, as he will, with doubts and appeals to our carnal desires and with lying voices saying that good is bad and that there is no sin. Those spiritual storms are already raging. We can expect that they will worsen until the Savior returns.”

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 37, 38.

Build upon the Rock

How do we make Christ our foundation?

Elder Eyring has taught: “We are safe on the rock which is the Savior when we have yielded in faith in Him, have responded to the Holy Spirit’s direction to keep the commandments long enough and faithfully enough that the power of the Atonement has changed our hearts. When we have, by that experience, become as a child in our capacity to love and obey, we are on the sure foundation.”²

It takes faith. It takes obedience and repentance. And it takes time.

“We need to nurture our faith with daily prayer, daily scripture study, service in our callings, keeping the commandments, doing our best to become better people,” says Sister Moreira, whose mother and sister have joined the Church since she first began building upon the rock. “I believe we need to follow the advice of President Monson to fill our minds with truth, fill our hearts with love, and fill our lives with service.”³

“We can prepare ourselves for trials by getting to know the Lord and how He helps His children [see 1 Nephi



2:12]. The scriptures help us with that,” says Brother Nequetela. “We develop our faith by walking the path of righteousness.”

Finding Answers to Tough Questions

Sometimes, as with Brother Lopes, members are faced with questions to which they don't have answers. But he didn't let something he *didn't* know shake his faith in something he *did* know.

“There are things that I don't know yet. But I don't question those things because I know that in time God will reveal what I need to know,” Brother Lopes says, “not in my time or when I want it, but when He thinks that it needs to be revealed.”

What does one do when faced with tough questions that don't seem to have answers?

“Most of our answers are in the scriptures,” says Brother Lopes, who has faced questions not only from friends and co-workers but from his parents, who questioned his decision to join the Church at age 14. “But finding and understanding those answers depends on personal revelation. I can also go to my Church leaders or ask God directly. I'm grateful for the Holy Ghost and a caring Father in Heaven.”

Patience in Revelation

When searching through praying, reading the scriptures, and studying the words of our leaders doesn't turn up an answer, we wait (see D&C 101:16).



“We are here to walk by faith, but we forget that . . . faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of all things. And our faith must be tested.”

— Darryl Nequetela, overlooking parts of Lisbon rebuilt after the earthquake.



“I seek to be patient,” says Brother Nequetela, who came from Angola in 2000 to study in Portugal. “Even though I don’t have an answer, the Holy Ghost comforts us with the answer that we should be patient, that God gives line upon line, precept upon precept, and that we should accept the firm decree of a just God. He knows what’s best for us, and He reveals everything in His own time.”

Patience in revelation is the story of the Restoration. The Church has been restored upon the original foundation—the gospel of Jesus Christ. But it did not occur all at once. According to the Prophet Joseph Smith, answers to gospel questions came “line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!” (D&C 128:21) and will continue to do so.

“We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

Latter-day Restoration

High above modern Lisbon, Brother Nequetela looks over the city from the battlements of Castelo São Jorge (St. George Castle) and considers the restoration work that has taken place since the 1755 disaster.

The rebuilt city is again thriving; the castle—severely damaged in the quake—has been restored using the surviving foundation. And through the Restoration of the gospel, the people are learning how and where to establish faith that will stand firm regardless of the source of the shaking. ■

NOTES

1. “Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady,” *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 38.
2. “As a Child,” *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2006, 15–16.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, “Formula for Success,” *Liabona*, Aug. 1995, 7; *Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 6.



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— Francisco Lopes
in front of Castelo
São Jorge, which rises
above modern Lisbon
(inset).

