

The Roof

Everyone puts their weight on something, and the question that matters is whether what we're standing on can actually hold us.

FROM THE BOOK: CHAPTER 1

BEFORE YOU MEET

- Read Chapter 1 of *The Weight of God*. It's short, and the roof story is the image for the whole series.
- Bring one sturdy chair for a quick demonstration at the start of "The idea", plus a few spare Bibles, pens and a copy of the participant sheet for each person.
- Read Matthew 7:24–27 yourself beforehand so you can introduce it in a sentence.
- Time plan for 75 minutes: 5 min to settle in, Open 10, The idea 15, Read together 10, Talk about it 25, This week 5, Pray 5.
- This first week, nobody needs to have read anything. Hand out the sheets and point people to Chapter 2 for next time.

OPEN

10 min

Have you ever climbed up a ladder, onto a roof, or out onto something you weren't sure would hold you? What did you do with your first step?

THE IDEA

15 min

Quick demo first (1 minute): put the chair in the middle and ask someone to sit on it. Then ask them, "Did you check it first?" Almost nobody does. Leave that hanging and go on.

The author of *The Weight of God* opens his book with two sentences most of us would rather not be able to write: "I fell through a roof. It collapsed under my weight."

He'd gone up to clear the summer leaves off the roof, which is close to a national pastime here. Anyone who's done it knows the rule. Don't walk in the middle of the metal sheet. Walk along the line of screws, because the screws show you where the timber is underneath.

So that's what he did. His first step was careful. He eased his weight onto one foot until he was sure it would hold. A little way along he stopped testing and just walked, his mind on the leaves.

The problem was the screws. At one point the line of screws kept going straight, and the joist underneath didn't. His foot sank, the sheet peeled away, and he fell

a full storey onto the concrete slab below. He ended up in hospital, and he still lives with pain and physical limits from that fall.

He puts it plainly: "I didn't know where the joists were. I knew where the screws were." He wasn't being reckless. He trusted something that looked trustworthy and wasn't.

Here's why that matters for the rest of us. We all put our weight on things, all day, mostly without noticing. A job we've built a mortgage around. A relationship we've built a home around. Our health, our savings, our own ability to cope. When one of those gives way, the hurt isn't measured by the thing itself. It's measured by how much of our life we'd stacked on top of it.

The roof shows one more thing: we stop checking. You test the first step, and after that you just walk. Most of us only inspect a foundation after it's failed.

The New Testament word usually translated "faith" or "believe" is *pistis*. Over these seven weeks we'll see that it was never mainly about agreeing with ideas in your head. It's about where you actually put your weight. When the author walked along that roof, he had faith in it in exactly that sense. His whole body was trusting it.

Jesus told a story about two builders and two foundations, and we'll read it next. But here is the question this whole series keeps coming back to, and it's worth asking before anything collapses:

Where is your weight?

READ TOGETHER

10 min

Matthew 7:24–27 (the wise and foolish builders).

Notice that both houses face exactly the same storm. The only difference is what's underneath, and in fine weather you can't see it.

- 1 Think back to the chair. When did you last check something before putting your weight on it? What made you check, or not bother?

LEADER NOTE *Keep this light and quick. You're listening for the idea that we only test things when we feel unsure, and once something has held a few times, we stop thinking about it.*

- 2 The author knew where the screws were, but not where the joists were. What are some "screws" in everyday life, things that tell us something is solid?

LEADER NOTE *Expect answers like a steady pay packet, a good reputation, a full calendar, feeling healthy. These aren't bad things. The point is that a good sign on the surface isn't the same as a structure underneath.*

- 3 In Jesus' story, both houses look fine until the storm arrives. Why do you think we tend to inspect our foundations only after something gives way?

LEADER NOTE *Listen for busyness, "if it isn't broken", or fear of what we might find. You could mention the book's point that nobody questions their career while they're being promoted.*

- 4 Think of a time something you relied on gave way: a job, a plan, a friendship, your health. Was the hurt bigger than the thing itself? Why?

LEADER NOTE *The book's answer is that the pain matches how much we'd stacked on top. Let people share at whatever depth they choose, and be ready for someone who is in the middle of a collapse right now.*

- 5 If you're honest, what is this week resting on?

LEADER NOTE *Gently steer away from the "right answer" ("God, of course"). This is an honest look, not a test, and someone new to faith can answer it just as well as someone who's been in church for fifty years.*

THIS WEEK

5 min

List what your week is resting on. Early in the week, take five minutes and write down the things you're counting on to get through it: income, people, your health, a plan, your own energy or competence. Beside each one, jot down what would happen if it gave way. You don't need to fix anything yet. Just look at where your weight is.

PRAY

5 min

Thank God for the things that have held you up. Ask him, honestly, to show each person where their weight really is this week, including the parts they'd rather not look at. Pray for anyone in the group whose floor has recently given way.