

## The Leaning Tower of Pisa

On August 9<sup>th</sup> 1173 work began on a bell tower. It took 200 years to finish! The tower is very famous because it leans to one side.

The tower is round. It is made out of white marble. Inside the tower is a spiral staircase. It has 296 steps on one side. There are only 294 steps on the other side. Can you guess why?



You can see the columns and arches in the picture. There are 15 columns at the bottom. The other layers all have 30 columns except the top layer. The bells are at the top in a smaller layer. The walls are very thick. Why does the tower lean? It leans because of the bad foundations. They do not go down very far or spread out very wide. Under the tower is soft ground.

The tower was not built all at once. The town of Pisa often had wars with other towns. When there was a war the tower building stopped. While no one was building the tower foundations could settle. They settled down into the soft ground. Then another layer was added. Then there was another war. The foundations could settle again. This went on until the tower was finished. In this part of Italy there are sometimes earthquakes. The tower did not fall down in an earthquake. The soft ground stopped it falling.

The tower began to lean before it was finished. The builders tried to put things right. They made some layers shorter on the uphill side. This did not work. The tower leaned more and more. All sorts of ideas were tried. Still the tower leaned more and more. In 1989 a bell tower in another town fell down. It had not been leaning. No one knew it was going to fall. People at Pisa were worried. Would

their tower fall too?

The Leaning Tower of Pisa was closed. Heavy weights were put round the higher side. The heavy bells were taken out. Strong cables were put round the tower. They were fastened to the ground. At the high side of the tower men began work to dig out the ground. Now the tower could move back a little and it began to lean a little less. The men made the tower stronger too. All the work took ten years. Engineers looked all over the tower carefully. "Now it is safe." said the engineers. "It will not move now. It will stand as it is for 200 years!"

Jesus told a story about a man who made a house on a bad foundation. Do you know it?<sup>1</sup> Being a Christian is like building your life on a good foundation – the Lord Jesus Christ!

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<sup>1</sup>You can read it in Matthew chapter 7 or Luke chapter 6.